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SITTING DAYS—2014

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- **CANBERRA** 103.9FM
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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—THIRD PERIOD

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

Senate Office holders
President—Senator Hon. John Joseph Hogg
Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Stephen Parry
Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Cory Bernardi, Thomas Mark Bishop, Suzanne Kay Boyce, Sean Edwards, David Julian Fawcett, Mark Lionel Furner, Alexander McEachian Gallacher, Scott Ludlam, Gavin Mark Marshall, Anne Sowerby Ruston, Dean Anthony Smith, Ursula Mary Stephens, Glenn Sterle and Peter Stuart Whish-Wilson
Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. George Henry Brandis QC
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy
Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator Hon. Mitchell Peter Fifield
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Claire Moore

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

Printed by authority of the Senate
## Members of the Senate

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<th>Senator</th>
<th>State or Territory</th>
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<th>Party</th>
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<td>Abetz, Hon. Eric</td>
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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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<th>Party</th>
<th>Senator</th>
<th>Party</th>
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(1) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice H. Coonan, resigned 22.8.11), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
DLP—Democratic Labor Party; IND—Independent, LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals
Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing

Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder

Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills

Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs Board</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>The Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Acting Assistant Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Steven Ciobo MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Bob Baldwin MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon David Johnston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</em></td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. *Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.* As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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BILLS

Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 [No. 2]

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (09:31): I rise today to oppose the government's move to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. It is critical that the government faces the fact that we are living in a global climate emergency. That is the fact of the matter. The greatest threat to human civilisation this century is global warming, and it is disgraceful that the Prime Minister refuses to acknowledge that. I want to talk about the Clean Energy Finance Corporation in that context. It is intergenerational theft not to face the threat of climate change. What it means is that life is going to be worse for generations to come if we do not deal with this threat now. We may already have gone beyond the tipping points from which there is no return.

The World Economic Forum have recognised that climate change is right up there in the 10 top threats—global risks of highest concern in 2014. They list in those 10 highest risks water crises, failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation, greater incidence of extreme weather events—floods, storms and fires—food crises and profound political and social instability. So at least five of the top 10 risks to the planet this century, recognised by the World Economic Forum, are covered in the climate space.

Not only that, but we know it from our own experience here in Australia. We only have to look at the consequences of the fires that we have suffered, the intense fires in the Blue Mountains and in Tasmania most recently, and the floods, the cyclones and the droughts we have had. We are seeing more intense extreme weather events. The losses are not just to people and property; the losses are very much to the environment. On the radio just today was a story about the koala population. They are already under huge threat because of loss of habitat, feral species, dogs and cats the environment, and disease, but because of the intensity and frequency of extreme heat and drought they are going extinct in Western Queensland. That is going to happen right across the planet. We are going to see a third of all species made extinct because of global warming, and that is likely to accelerate. That is the kind of planet that we will be leaving our children, and that is why I describe it as intergenerational theft.

You only have to look at our nearest neighbours in the Pacific. Just recently I hosted a delegation from Tuvalu and Kiribati. Those people came to see us to say that they are already suffering greatly, from the saltwater incursion into the freshwater systems and from storm surge. They are terrified that there is a point coming where they will be washed away from their island home, in the case of Tuvalu in particular. They are saying this happened as long
ago as 2006. The Prime Minister of Tuvalu stood up in a conference in Kenya and said, 'Who
will take my people?'

These are serious issues facing the planet, and Australia has its head in the sand if it thinks
we can get away with pretending it is not happening and refusing to do something about it. The
UN knows particularly that this is happening, and that is why there is now growing
global momentum to deal with climate change. That is why Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-
General of the United Nations, is having a conference shortly, in September, to call on the
leaders of governments around the world to act on global warming. Australia is snubbing—
the Prime Minister is snubbing—the United Nations by refusing to attend, and I find that
disgusting and disgraceful. Prime Minister Abbott needs to change his mind and get to that
summit and explain to the rest of the world why he is going in the opposite direction as the
rest of the world is starting to move.

Not only have we got the summit in September but we have the G20 in Australia in
November, then we have the UNFCCC meeting in Peru leading into the global negotiations in
2015. Let me tell you in this Senate and in this parliament: the world is serious about getting
to a global treaty. I was ashamed that our Prime Minister stood in Canada with the Canadian
Prime Minister to say that they will do what they can to effectively tear down the success of
achieving a global treaty. That is the context in which we are today discussing the Clean
Energy Finance Corporation and its abolition. In Australia set up an architecture, if you like,
to deal with these issues: the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. It is interesting that just
overnight—and this really highlights the point and the value of the Clean Energy Finance
Corporation—the United Kingdom signed a climate change agreement with China. In the
signed statement from the leaders they talk about their commitment to Ban Ki-moon's summit
in September. They go on to say:

The United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China have both taken substantial action to put in
place policies to limit or reduce emissions and promote low carbon development. We welcome our
existing strong relationship on low carbon cooperation that underpins our international work. Both sides
agree to intensify bilateral policy dialogue and practical collaboration through the China-UK Working
Group on Climate Change.
It is very interesting that they go on to list what the collaboration will actually focus on. The
first thing is:

Green Growth and the Economics of Climate Change: The transition to a lower carbon, more energy
efficient economy is an opportunity to drive new sources of growth and jobs in both economies.

Point 2 is:

Clean technology: The UK and China have launched a joint £20 million research programme on Low
Carbon Innovation, including work on offshore renewables, low carbon manufacturing processes and
technologies, and low carbon cities … electric vehicles, smart grids, cleaner fossil fuels and energy
storage.
This is not a radical fringe. This is the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. It is also the
Premier of China actually doing this. Going on, renewable energy is the third thing they want
to work on and then green finance. This is where the Clean Energy Finance Corporation
comes in. On green finance they say:

The levels of investment needed to deliver a 2 degree world cannot be met by public finance alone—
significant amounts of private investment are needed to achieve a sustainable low-carbon transition.
This presents a major opportunity for business. The UK and China have been working together on areas including green finance, green credit and green procurement …

Are you listening, Senator Cormann? Green finance, green procurement, why will you not recognise green credit? They go on to say they want to build on London's reputation as the green financial capital of the world.

The countries will continue this cooperation through the climate public private partnership. The UK aims at catalysing private finance specifically from institutional investors such as pension funds and sovereign wealth funds into low-carbon investments in China and other countries.

They go on to say they want carbon markets. Carbon emissions trading schemes achieve higher levels of emissions reductions at low cost while creating clean energy investments. And it says the UK has provided advice and expertise in the development of China's emissions trading scheme—if ever you saw an opportunity sitting there and saw the way the world is going. What you are doing in this country by trying to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is actually taking out of Australia the very mechanism that other countries are now trying to build in, and the opportunity cost to us is huge.

There is a report out today from CEDA, the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, that makes the point that it is an undeniable fact that Australia's economy will be critically exposed on two economic fronts if we do not ensure an appropriate response to climate change. The first is the costs of extreme weather events and the economic and social impacts of these events. But the second point is that where Australia stands exposed economically to the effects of climate change relates to the availability of capital to fund its infrastructure and other capital needs. The report goes on to say:

Australia is reliant on foreign capital to fund major projects and new developments in international climate change policy are likely to impact international capital flow and investment decision making. Applying climate related risk assessment when considering investment and financing decisions is an emerging trend globally. It is the divestment trend and that is why the Greens keep saying, 'If you keep trying to invest in coal mines, coal ports, coal railways, you will fail.' These are stranded assets of the future. You are totally going in the wrong direction. Frankly, this move that you are trying to engage in now to destroy the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is such a wrong-way-go-back policy is unbelievable. It is dumb economics; it is dumb politics; it is dumb international engagement; and it is an isolationist rust-bucket strategy. That is what it is and that is why this parliament should reject it—and we will reject it.

I have been thinking about this point. If you had a prime minister sitting here in Australia and there was an army offshore and that prime minister said, 'I do not see it. In fact I cannot see it to the point where I am going to stand down our own army.' We would say the person is barking mad and needs to be removed. We have to actually act on the threat and we have to actually deal with this issue. But here we have a prime minister who is effectively barking mad on climate change, barking mad on the greatest threat that is facing this country and he is now the biggest opportunity cost to the nation in research and development, in rolling out new technology, in new jobs, in bringing down prices to the community in energy efficiency and in renewable energy.

The Clean Energy Finance Corporation now has $582.5 million of investment. It has now got a portfolio of $2.35 billion in investments. They are investments in a fantastic range of
projects and proposals around the country. Its portfolio goes to manufacturing and to energy efficiency. Just yesterday I was talking to the local government association and there are so many councils that are pleased that they are going to get more energy efficient buildings, recreation centres and street lighting. Abattoirs are benefitting. Carnegie Wave Energy’s future is tied up now with being assisted by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

You have got refrigeration upgrades, live scale solar boosted technology investments. You have got a tomato farm with solar innovation to bring down its heating costs, and great innovation at the Sundrop Farms in South Australia. You have got Pacific Hydro's Portland wind energy project. You have got egg producers turning waste into energy. You have got buildings transformed by upgrading. You have got converting waste to energy around the country, and it goes on and on.

A hospital saves on car park lighting, a leading pork exporter saves on energy and a stadium lighting upgrade in New South Wales reduced its energy by 60 per cent. The Gold Coast Burleigh Bears Leagues Club reduced its lighting bills by 65 per cent. A frozen food manufacturer replaced their existing commercial-style blast freezer with an industrial spiral freezer system that has cut annual energy consumption by 55 per cent, and on and on it goes.

Cool stores are reducing their energy costs, and a $1.15 million coolrooms upgrade is allowing a fruit supplier to save around a quarter on its refrigeration energy bills. A hotel complex, a multi-storey, multiuse building in Queen Street, Melbourne has undergone a $1.3 million energy efficient upgrade making energy cost savings of more than 50 per cent. A foam manufacturer is reducing its lighting bills by more than 50 per cent, following a lighting upgrade to its Moorebank in Sydney's west plant, and so on and so forth.

Project after project after project is bringing down costs and making these projects cheaper to the community: more efficient manufacturing, more competitive. That is what the government wants to get rid of. Not only that but they have got in their pipeline a huge number of additional projects. For example, I asked at estimates: 'In the pipeline, what have you got?’ The total project value of what the CEFC has in its pipeline is $10.7 billion worth of investment and what they have put in a bid for the CEFC to fund is $3.6 million. So you have got a massive leverage of private-sector finance out there ready to go in to make Australia competitive and, when you consider what I have just said about China and the UK and then you hear President Obama saying that he has brought in through the EPA a requirement for power stations to reduce their emissions and that that can be spread across states through emissions trading schemes or whatever, Australia is going to be left behind.

Some of our best brains are going to leave the country. Some of our best technologies will go overseas, and what are we going to be left with? We are going to be left with a Prime Minister standing next to a coal pit telling us that that is the future for Australia. Well, it isn’t. It is wrong. It is so last century. It is unbelievable, and that is why we have to get behind the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

I recognise that, when we vote down this abolition bill today, it will be a trigger for a double dissolution. I say to the Prime Minister: if you are so convinced that ignoring climate change, tearing down the clean energy price, destroying the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and ARENA is the way to go, go to an election on it. I say: Go to an election on it because, increasingly, Australians are recognising how conned they were by the absolute trite, superficial nonsense of ‘axe the tax’. Now the polls are showing that Australians want
our country to take a leadership role in global warming. They want the benefits of energy efficiency. They want to get to 100 per cent renewable energy.

People are showing, as they go out and buy solar panels for their roofs, that they want to engage in the new technology and they are becoming increasingly aware of how the rest of the world is moving and the risk to us of being left behind. As they get their insurance bills and their premiums have gone through the roof, they recognise that, if we don't deal with global warming and get these kinds of things that the CEFC is out there investing in—the energy efficiency measures—and we don't get a national disaster fund, then we are in big trouble and it is the community that is going to have to pay. What they will find is that the government is prepared to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, this $10 billion into improving Australia's renewable energy and energy efficiency future, and instead we are going to pay the polluters and take the money out of the pockets of the community in this budget through co-payments, through a tax on the unemployed. They are starting to see what a huge con job that this government has been on climate change all along.

I just want to go back to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and its architecture. Most people do not realise that when we set up the Clean Energy Finance Corporation—this amazing Green bank to leverage finance in this—the idea was not only that it would bring down emissions. Part of its goal is to bring down emissions, and it is doing that at a negative $2.40 cost. You cannot get cheaper abatement than negative $2.40 a tonne. Negative! And the government is going to rob the taxpayers to pay the polluters goodness knows how much a tonne when they are actually getting negative $2.40 benefit a tonne.

If the Clean Energy Finance Corporation could roll out all of its financing it says that it could meet half of a lousy five per cent target. Of course, we need to be going to a 40 to 60 per cent emission reduction target by 2030, as the Climate Change Authority says. But that is the contribution that the Clean Energy Finance Corporation could make. And the profits that it makes are being put back into the Australian Renewable Energy Agency—ARENA. That is to fund research that is hard to fund, that early stage research and pilot development. So we have set up a situation where we are improving manufacturing efficiency, jobs and investment and the profit from that is going back to pay the research that brings on the new technologies. So we have a fantastic cycle happening that the government wants to smash. I just think it is the most backward and appalling policy position.

People might ask, 'Well, why would the government go to an election on one thing like the Clean Energy Finance Corporation?' The answer is that it is not on one thing; it is a choice. It is a choice about a future where you deal with the biggest threat you are facing and you adapt your economy; you get ahead of it and you make new jobs, new investment, new decisions and new leadership. You invest in your universities and you get into that scene or you get yourself locked into the past—leg roped to the past. That is why this is important and we should not support the abolition. (Time expired)

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (09:51): We are here this morning debating a critical policy agenda, which is around climate change and the mechanisms that we can put in place to address those issues.

What we discovered on the return of the Prime Minister from his recent overseas travels is that we have a new 'axis of carbon' in the world, which is the real problem that we are all confronting. Senator Milne just highlighted what is happening in the rest of the world and the
ways in which the rest of the world is seeking to address a reduction in carbon emissions and the issue of climate change. But what we witnessed on the television last week was Prime Minister Abbott journeying to Texas, where he gave a talk to oil men and was awarded a 10-gallon stetson hat. He put it on and said, 'Yee-ha!' just like the good old cowboys of the Texan era. But his international travels were about protecting Australia's coal industry, whose expansion plans are going to make it absolutely impossible to bring climate change under control. And that is denying the science that surrounds us, with more evidence being brought to the public domain every day about the critical impacts of climate change.

And so the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 (No. 2) which we are debating this morning is fundamental to what Australia has been trying to do. The 'abolition' bill actually describes very benignly that it contains arrangements to ensure the orderly administration of the investments and the transfer of the existing contractual assets and the liabilities of the CEFC to the Commonwealth to hold and manage.

Senator Milne just talked about what those assets and contractual arrangements actually represent: more than $700 million in investments in more than 50 projects, with 150 projects in the pipeline—all of them making significant impacts. There is no logical argument for closing the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. The argument is an ideological one; the argument is, as Senator Milne just said, sticking to the mantra of abolishing the carbon tax and all of the associated arrangements around that, without any concession to the logic and the economic value of organisations such as the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

The financial impact statement for the bill identifies—and I will quote from the explanatory memorandum:

These estimates do not make any allowance for the costs of shutting down the CEFC, such as employee redundancies and contract termination costs, nor do they make any allowance for the lower public debt interest costs of ceasing further CEFC investment.

So again we have a pretty dodgy economic argument that has been put up as a furphy to hide the fact that this is an ideological position of the government.

When the bill was first introduced late last year, CEFC chairperson, Jillian Broadbent, told Radio National Breakfast that the corporation, which was only established in 2012, had rapidly invested funds in 39 programs and delivered a 7.3 per cent return. She identified then that the CEFC could potentially deliver half of the coalition's targeted 2020 carbon cuts. At the same time, former Assistant Treasurer Arthur Sinodinos suggested that the CEFC's recent profits were evidence that it should be able to survive without government support. He said that scrapping the carbon tax and introducing the coalition's Direct Action Plan would deliver the promised 2020 targets. He said:

If this was commercially viable, it wouldn't need the government.

Senator Sinodinos missed the point. Ms Broadbent went on to say that ditching the corporation would be a huge economic mistake for the government, arguing that it is both making money and cutting emissions.

There has been plenty debate. We have had this debate several times here in the chamber already. The CEFC has already proved itself as a very cost-effective tool in the pursuit of emissions reductions. We all want to achieve emissions reductions—even the government acknowledges that—and we want Australian industry to be competitive in a lower carbon
world. We have to engage in the marketplace, encouraging co-financiers to join us in pursuing those investments. Key to Ms Broadbent's pitch at the time was the argument that the CEFC could potentially save 64 million tonnes of carbon emissions every year. That is half of the five per cent abatement target for 2020.

We heard too from Senator Milne this morning about how the CEFC has been a catalyst for investment in the clean energy sector. As Ms Broadbent said, 'We've invested $536 million.' The most recent figure from the CEFC in May was $700 million, matched three to one from the private sector. That is a generation of almost $4 billion of private capital investment. That just does not happen by itself; it actually needs a mechanism, it needs an institution and it needs arrangements to enable that to happen.

When the bill was introduced last December without success, the government indicated that it was determined to pursue the abolition of yet one more independent organisation based purely on its ideological obsession to dismantle the achievements of previous Labor governments. There is no other logic to this. Of course, government senators are going to argue again that the government has a mandate for this. The problem is that the Prime Minister, having returned from his overseas travels—yee-ha—knows that the rest of the world wants to talk about climate change and wants to mobilise global action to reduce carbon emissions by investing in renewable energies and efficient technologies, and here in Australia we are moving backwards. The environment minister continues to promote the coalition's Direct Action Plan, although he was caught out with his million solar roofs announcement and swiftly swatted by the Treasurer, so he has retreated back to the shallow rhetoric of the Direct Action mantra.

The argument is so fundamentally flawed. If the coalition government believed in climate change then it would not be exposing the Australian economy to future costs and risks because we failed to take adequate action now. That action should include responding to the need to invest in renewable energy in this country and the need to be more efficient in our energy generation from fossil fuels. They, of course, are the core tasks. They are the key responsibility of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. It is the most effective form of direct action. It is an important mechanism and has continued, despite the best efforts of the government, to play an important role in the market, facilitating investment in renewable energy and other efficient energy generation, cutting emissions, cutting energy consumption and those opportunities would otherwise be missed by normal commercial banks.

So the arguments do not stack up. They have never stacked up. The government argues that the CEFC is full of risky ventures. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have a $10 billion fund generating a return to the taxpayer and the government, a negative cost abatement of, at last estimate, $2.40 per tonne with legislated good governance mechanisms in tax. $2.40 is generated for each tonne of abatement, compared with the spurious Direct Action policy—dodgy costings and dodgy cost-benefit analysis, where the ultimate outcome is that the government is going to pay polluters to pollute. The clean energy investments reduce emissions, and we can do a lot more through this $10 billion fund. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation creates assets that are owned and leverages more funds as Senator Milne so rightly said this morning, but the government wants to abolish a $10 billion fund which is able to leverage well above that in other investments and replace it with what can only be described as a half-baked, muddled, $3 billion direct action plan.
There is plenty of evidence to the environment committee around the success of the CEFC and the capacity it has to make investments that would account for 50 per cent of the five per cent emissions reduction by 2020. There are 50 projects in partnership with major trading banks, which means that now we have private sector cofinanciers leveraging and multiplying the available funding. That is the tragedy of the abolition of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. They are great projects, and I am wondering why we have heard nothing—we have no Nationals senators here in the chamber today. There are great energy projects, great projects like the Sundrop solar thermal greenhouse, 200 jobs and demonstrating sustainable food production and the re-use of desalinated—

Senator Fieravanti-Wells: Ursula, what do you think Bridget is?

Senator STEPHENS: Oh, we have one now. Desalinated water in South Australia. Or there is the Moree solar farm, which needed an investment to underwrite the senior debt and which, by the way, also benefited from an ARENA grant and the Australian Agricultural Company. There are 15 grid connected solar PV units across sites in Queensland. What are the nationals saying about these projects? Absolutely nothing.

The climate change deniers are arguing we can combat climate change by planting trees, which of course would work better if we were not battling constant drought and record heat. As we have heard in Senate estimates, there is a huge pipeline of projects—more than 150 projects under active assessment by the CEFC. The CEO of the Investor Group on Climate Change told the Senate committee that there are about 14 financing organisations around the world now playing a similar role. They are co-investing to finance low-carbon alternatives to meet the two-degree outcome. They are helping to build a robust low-carbon investment market. They are strengthening the capacity of the finance sector to understand and finance carbon-reducing investments. They are supporting investment opportunities in new markets, opening new markets and earning financial returns for governments delivering abatement at negative costs.

So why is it that this government is so determined to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation? I think the budget explains exactly why. Not only did we have the election of the coalition government slamming the brakes on Australia’s climate and clean energy progress; we are now going backwards. It is a budget that shifts the burden for pollution reduction from polluters to taxpayers. It is a budget that slashes renewable energy agencies and funding programs that are helping create the jobs and industries of the 21st century. It is a budget that rips hundreds of millions of dollars away from climate science, international climate finance and clean technology research programs. Climate and renewable energy did not even make it into the budget speech. That speaks volumes. Certainty about the future of coalition’s Emissions Reduction Fund was not helped by the budget overview saying that the $2.55 billion thought to be for the first four years is all we get over 10 years. In Senate estimates, the minister said that was a misprint. Oops!

The government has reinforced concerns that any climate action is set to be hostage to the vagaries of the annual budget process. How much confidence can anybody—industry, investors, ordinary Australians—have in the now four-year-old promise that, once the ERF is up and running, it will spend an average of $1.2 billion a year? John Connor, writing for ABC Environment, belled the cat:
What’s most tragic is that Australia was just starting to get on track. Our greenhouse gas emissions, which had been growing steadily for decades, have begun to decline. Emissions from electricity, the single most polluting sector, fell an impressive 8.7 per cent since 2012. Solar and wind energy tripled in the last five years, while solar and wind jobs nearly quadrupled.

We have laws that price and limit carbon emissions from 60 per cent of the economy; laws that require companies to take responsibility for their pollution. We have independent, non-partisan institutions investing in research and development for the next wave of clean energy technologies. All these steps are necessary to ensure low-carbon competitiveness and sustainable economic prosperity. Ironically, on the same day as the budget, all these forward steps were included in the conservative International Energy Agency’s recommended toolkit for energy policies to help avoid two degrees of global warming.

Now the government is intent on winding back those achievements by repealing the carbon laws. Not only will this will give polluters a free pass on their pollution, but it comes, as many speakers will continue to emphasise, at a great cost to the economy: over $12.5 billion in forgone carbon revenue over the forward estimates. As well, taxpayers will be forking out $2.55 billion for the Emissions Reduction Fund, all while the government works out how it is going to ensure reductions from big polluters. Taxpayers are being asked to buy a half-baked carbon pollution policy from government and bin the credible alternative that the Labor government put in place. This is about putting lipstick on a pig.

And, in an effort to silence the dissenters, the government wants to take down the independent agencies. The coalition supported ARENA before the election and promised to keep it going, and what have we got? Another broken promise. ARENA now joins the Climate Change Authority and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation on the chopping block.

Why should motorists be paying, while miners’ fuel subsidies remain? The fuel excise indexation is effectively a price on carbon and it should encourage greater efficiency, but why is it that ordinary consumers will be paying, while miners’ fuel subsidies, worth more than $3 billion a year, stay in place? And why cut investment in public transport? Why ditch the logistics and corridor acquisition for the Very Fast Train route, which would have been such a sensible and catalytic infrastructure project?

The coalition promised hundreds of millions of dollars for homeowners, schools and towns for solar power—another broken promise. We have got $2.1 million in the budget for seven solar towns over four years. So make no mistake, colleagues: the government’s retreat from climate action and clean energy is going to cost Australia dearly. Australia’s prosperity this century depends on the world avoiding dangerous climate change, and that means we have to play our part and be ready for the transition to a low-carbon, ultimately carbon-removing, economy in the future.

With very few exceptions, the budget dodges all of those issues and asks Australians to gamble on a half-formed carbon pollution policy. We know that the government senators are going to argue in this debate that Australia should not have to go it alone. This budget shows that if there is anywhere we are at risk of going alone it is backwards.

Today in The Sydney Morning Herald Bill McKibben wrote a fascinating article:

Prime Minister Abbott’s only real concern is protecting Australia’s world topping coal industry …

Germany is what the future looks like. The leaders of Canada and Australia—highly educated, sophisticated, and wealthy nations, not to mention some of the most spectacularly beautiful places on earth—are clinging to the past, on behalf of the fossil fuel industries that dominate their governments.
Eventually (and hopefully before the planet’s physics are completely out of control) voters in these countries will realise they’re being driven off a cliff.

We are all being driven off a cliff by the fact that this government—in seeking to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, in seeking to repeal the carbon reduction bills that have been before the Senate, and in seeking to undermine the co-investment and the opportunities that are developing across Australia in these new renewable energy technologies and the unimagined potential of new clean energy technologies—is denying Australia's future and is denying our students, our universities, our economies and our communities. That is the folly of the government's position.

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (10:11): I rise today to speak on the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 [No. 2], which has, sadly, again come before this place. We can all look to the fact that Tony Abbott has long been established as being unbelievable, as someone who cannot be believed, on climate change. He has demonstrated time and time again—not only by his words but also, more significantly, by his actions—that he does not believe in the science of climate change. If he did, the government would realise that Australia's emissions reductions target cannot be met without increased investment in clean and renewable technologies. This is what the Clean Energy Finance Corporation's core business is. It delivers and drives that investment in clean and renewable energy. Very sadly, because of the holistic abandonment of the CEFC and ARENA, it is very obvious to this nation that the government has no intention at all of taking advantage of the opportunities that are associated with clean energy technology and fuel energy. This will leave an appalling economic and social legacy for Australia. Not only will we not make our environmental contribution but we will be leaving behind the economy and the jobs of tomorrow.

Just a few weeks ago we had the Treasurer, Joe Hockey, calling wind turbines offensive and saying that they were a blight on the landscape. In fact they have incredibly successful energy generators making a great contribution to renewable energy in this country. We know that the Abbott government has appointed Dick Warburton to chair the review of the renewable energy target. This is a further indication of the government's lack of commitment to a clean energy future for Australia. Mr Warburton, incredibly for someone put in this position, has previously said that he does not accept the science of climate change. He has confirmed his scepticism of the contribution of human activity to climate change. To put someone like Mr Warburton in that position really indicates that those on the other side of this chamber have no understanding of the science of climate change, that they have suspended their scientific endeavour and any sense of logic when it comes to these issues and what is in our national interest. How can Mr Warburton be objective in his analysis of the renewable energy sector if he does not think that climate change has any connection with fossil fuel burning? It is an incredible proposition. He cannot possibly be objective. Sure, if fossil fuels had nothing to do with climate change then perhaps he could, but if you look at the scientific evidence that is simply not the case so it is extraordinary that the government would put him in that position.

Previous reviews of the renewable energy target have clearly shown that the policy is delivering. It is delivering clean energy, such as solar and wind, and it has created thousands of jobs and significant investment around our nation—jobs and investment that will be left behind because this government is refusing to make the transition to a clean energy future.
We know that these industries are also making a significant contribution to Australia's emissions reduction target.

Very sadly, in the budget this year we saw ARENA, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, scrapped. The one million solar roofs program is scrapped, despite the fact that that was a recent election promise. This again demonstrates that the coalition cannot be trusted for anything that it says about climate change. Solar schools and solar communities are scrapped. The only thing left is a lousy $2 million for solar towns and that is a long way off the $600 million that was committed at the last election.

Those opposite like to carry on and say it is all about debt and deficit. This is about a return to our economy. These good solid investments generate jobs, but they do not see it that way because of their ideological blinkers in relation to climate change. This is all proof that as a government they are not serious about climate change and not serious about the renewable energy sector. They are simply treating this sector as a joke.

All around the world you can see bodies like the Clean Energy Finance Corporation providing support and investment to economies. There are roughly 14 organisations around the world that act as catalysts for investment in renewable energy and clean technologies. The CEFC is one of these and it puts us in a strong competitive position to develop our industries here. I really hope that this place will protect and maintain this organisation. It is within the role of the Senate to be able to do that.

We can see the CEFC playing a significantly important role in mobilising capital for investment. It is facilitating comprehensive commercial loans for both renewable and clean energy technology investments and is set to fund emissions reductions at a negative cost to government, as we have long said in this place—that is, it generates a return to the bottom line. When you look at the costs of abatement, that stands in stark contrast to the coalition's emissions reduction fund, which in effect is a big pile of money being handed to polluters.

Since being created by Labor as part of our clean energy future package, the CEFC has committed some $536 million of its own budget and has mobilised a massive $1.5 billion in private capital. When you want to look at efficient investment, you cannot go past the way the CEFC does business. Return on investment is currently about seven per cent, with the potential to return $200 million per year or $1.5 billion out to 2020, as well as doing the job we want it to do, which is significantly reduce our carbon pollution. Surely you cannot look past this. This argument was acknowledged by the Senate last time this legislation was considered here and it was soundly defeated.

We know that the CEFC has the capacity to make investments that would account for 50 per cent of Australia's current five per cent emissions reduction target—and that is not at a cost to the taxpayer, but at a profit to the taxpayer of $2.40 a tonne. Yet, despite all of this success, the government still seeks to abolish this organisation which returns significant benefit to our budget. You want to replace it with an alternative plan that will actually consume billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. What a waste.

The coalition have been unable to see past their free-market blinkers and appreciate the role that this organisation plays in facilitating renewable energy that would otherwise be missed by normal commercial banks. I know that you want to be able to say that you can just leave this stuff to the private sector and you can just get out of the way. But this organisation has
been incredibly successful. It has been duplicated, with organisations like it doing similar work all around the world, for good reason. It does have the capacity to add that extra value and drive the extra investment. Why would you need your Emissions Reduction Fund at all if you could just leave it to the free market to drive these things?

The CEFC does not engage in risky loans. It is helping to develop a relatively clean energy investment sector. For example, in March this year it provided an innovative $20 million loan facility to Carnegie Wave for an incredibly groundbreaking wave energy installation in Fremantle. That technology truly has the capacity to generate significant renewable energy and jobs for the future of this country. The CEFC provided a $100 million debt facility to the Balmain Corporation for retrofitting ageing building stock, again making a difference not just with investment in renewable technology but in efficient buildings and efficient energy consumption. There was $50 million in debt finance for waste-to-gas facilities in Western Australia, again a project that is using cutting-edge Australian designed technology. Also, the Warrnambool City Council is set to become the first council in Australia to change its street lights to high-efficiency LED lighting. These are all projects that would have been on the margins of banking investment but can attract the extra leverage through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

Instead of accepting the success of the CEFC and acknowledging these projects, the government just wants to scrap it completely as part of its agenda to replace anything that was in the whole Clean Energy Future package for this nation with a thing called Direct Action. Let's have a look at direct action. The Senate Environment and Communications References Committee inquiry, which I was part of, got considerable evidence that demonstrated that the CEFC should not be abolished due to its positive investment in renewable and clean energy technology and its return to government. I will highlight some of that evidence.

AUSTELA declared that the CEFC 'has performed its intended and mandated functions effectively and is needed to address key market failures and barriers to investment'. You can still get that return on investment and you can still use a market mechanism, but you cannot just rely on the market to pick those winners for you. Mr Buckley from the Institute of Energy Economics and Financial Analysis told the committee that the function the CEFC performs in the market is unique and necessary for Australia to reduce its carbon emissions. He said:

… the CEFC is meant to lead the way, to pave for new technologies for deployment in the Australian market to show they are financially viable. In a regulatory framework that works, that makes entire sense. The domestic institutions will learn by that process and then follow. They will probably invest in deal 3, 4, 5 or 6 and then fund 100 per cent thereafter. You need the CEFC to pave the way to show that this can be done economically and viably with the right policy.

The Conservation Council of Western Australia suggested that the CEFC performs a unique function that does not duplicate other funding bodies as it is specifically focused on the low-emissions sector. The Council therefore rationalised that any decision to abandon the CEFC:

… could only be based on ideological grounds rather than consideration of the financial and investment merits of the fund.

That is the place we have arrived at today. Doctors for the Environment remarked that, even without accounting for health externalities:

The CEFC has proven economically successful and pays dividends to the government.
Another tick. 350 Australia similarly questioned the rationale for abolishing the CEFC while it makes a return on investment and contributes to emissions reduction:

… the Clean Energy Finance Corporation must remain as an essential and commercially viable part of moving Australia to a low carbon and ultimately zero emission economy. The CEFC is already growing long term business investment and jobs in clean, low carbon technologies.

Again, another tick.

The abolition bills in front of us today are nothing more than the misguided ideological position of a misguided government. The CEFC has been, and should continue to be, a clear success in driving investment in this country, reducing carbon pollution and boosting the government's bottom line. Instead the government is leaving us with a climate policy that has no intrinsic logic. It has no cap on emissions and no capacity to drive investment in renewables—only a plan for more pollution where the Australian economy, and the jobs of the future, are completely left behind.

Senator THORP (Tasmania) (10:27): The bill before us today, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 (No2), shows the heights of absurdity and hypocrisy that the government has reached in its desperation to tear down each and every tool that Australia has in our arsenal to address climate change. Recently, those opposite have not been able to string a sentence together that does not include references to their confected budget emergency. Ludicrously, at the same time, they are busy trying to shut down the organisation that has not only leveraged $1.5 billion of private sector investment and cut carbon emissions by an estimated 3.9 million tonnes, but has added millions of dollars in profits to our national coffers at the same time.

We are often told by the conservative side of politics that only the free market can save us. However, when they are given a shining beacon example of a program that is leveraging private sector investment for the good of the nation, what do they do? They shut it down. If ever there was solid proof that this government is determined to maintain a fact-free zone around all policies relating to climate change, it is in this attempted repeal of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

The bill before us today shows with crystal clarity how those opposite are ignoring the advice of experts, presumably so their welded-on climate change blinkers do not shatter under the weight of real evidence. A recent opinion piece in The Age by Ian Berryman got it right when he said the Prime Minister has declared war on the Australian renewable energy industry, the environment and science itself.

If, as those opposite say, there is a budget emergency, why on earth would they be closing down the very organisation that has cut our nation's carbon emissions while returning a profit to Australian taxpayers? The plan to close down the profit-making Clean Energy Finance Corporation is not just a callous act of environmental and economic vandalism but one completely devoid of any reasonable justification. It is further proof that there is no budget emergency, just an unbridled ideological rampage that presents the clearest and most wide-reaching attack on the environment that I have seen.

If those opposite truly believe that the budget is in such a dire situation and if, as they say, they believe wholeheartedly in the very real risks of climate change, then why would they make one of their own first acts the shutting down of an organisation that has a proven track
record of cutting carbon emissions while turning a multimillion-dollar profit? Frankly, it defies belief.

Of course, a closer perusal of the budget beyond the three-word slogans will reveal that this is actually entirely consistent with their true agenda of attacking Australia's climate change response wherever possible. Last week Mr Abbott told the world that he takes climate change very seriously. But the truth is that he has not moved forward an inch from the days when he actually told the truth that he believes climate change to be 'crap'. If Mr Abbott really took it seriously, would he be trying to organise a global right-wing uprising against action on climate change? Again, it does not take a climate scientist to realise that it is nothing short of a bald-faced lie.

To get to the truth of the matter, let us look at the government's record so far in this area. First, they banished climate change from the ministerial portfolio titles, significantly demoting and devaluing its importance. Then they cut the Climate Commission, which was set up to advise on the science and economics of carbon management. The Climate Change Authority, which provides advice on our national carbon targets and our progress towards meeting them is also on the hit list. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency is to be abolished. The promise of one million solar roofs is to be broken. The renewable energy target is set for the chopping block, with a review headed by former Caltex head, Dick Warburton, who has publicly questioned whether carbon emissions cause global warming.

There will be $111 million in cuts to CSIRO's overall budget, which will undoubtedly impact on Australia's ability to be at the forefront of climate research. Even the future of the government's climate policy, the Emissions Reduction Fund, appears in doubt. The budget committed only $1.14 billion over the next four years, well short of the $2.55 billion pledged by minister Greg Hunt nearly a month ago. In fact, the budget papers show funds for climate change related programs will shrink from $5.75 billion this year to $500 million by 2017-18. And we have the bill before us today, to eradicate the Clean Finance Corporation.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the former head of CSIRO's atmospheric research team, Graeme Pearman, has labelled the government's response as an 'extreme ideological approach that all but rejects global warming as an issue, despite ever-mounting evidence'.

The truth is that Mr Abbott clearly does not believe the science on climate change. If he did, his government would realise that emissions reduction targets simply cannot be met without increased investment in clean and renewable energy technologies. And that is exactly what the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is doing.

Abolishing the Clean Energy Finance Corporation runs counter to expert opinion and global commitments, at the expense of future generations, our international reputation and the future. The truth of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is that it has been a spectacular and widely acclaimed success. The truth of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is that it is run by some of the brightest business minds in Australia. It has also leveraged investment from the biggest investors around. The truth of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is that it actually grows government coffers to the tune of $200 million a year. By 2020, it will return $1.5 billion to our economy, while reducing carbon pollution at the same time.
So it is nothing short of perverse for the coalition to set out to dismantle something that is so undeniably successful in meeting its objectives—the very objectives that they purport to support. How could it be that those opposite are willing to force a $200 million hit to the budget, whilst the chance to meet our carbon targets recedes further and further into the distance?

Last time we considered this bill, it was interesting to note that many of the government speakers hardly mentioned the Clean Energy Finance Corporation in their contributions, despite the fact that that was the very reason we were talking. This leads me to believe that those opposite know, just as I do, that the arguments to justify this action simply do not exist and that it is, quite simply, indefensible.

The $10 billion Clean Energy Finance Corporation was set up by the previous Labor government to mobilise private sector investment in the commercialisation and deployment of Australian-based renewable energy, low-emissions and energy-efficient technologies. Its self-described mission is: ‘To accelerate Australia's transformation towards a more competitive economy in a carbon constrained world, by acting as a catalyst to increase private sector investment in emissions reduction.’ That is exactly what it has been doing. The CEFC was created to respond to a slow uptake on behalf of investors when it came to adopting green investment opportunities. This was not due to a lack of financial viability of energy-efficient projects, but it resulted from investor unfamiliarity, the size of the loans required and the relative level of technological complexity involved.

The CEFC helped address these problems by acting as a bridge between investors and projects. It provides invaluable independent advice, tailored finance and advocacy in the marketplace. In its short life, the CEFC has provided $1 for every $2.90 of private sector investment in green initiatives. In doing so, it has leveraged more than $1.55 billion in private capital investment and facilitated more than $2.2 billion in projects. Together, these projects account for a reduction of 3.9 million tonnes of carbon—an impressive outcome for an organisation still so young.

On its own, this is a very laudable outcome, but it becomes even more remarkable when you learn that the CEFC has also been able to secure a return to Australian taxpayers of over seven per cent for their investments. This is particularly impressive when you consider that the five-year bond rate across the portfolio was only 3.11 per cent.

The CEFC has invested in a diverse portfolio mix across the economy. It has invested in projects including wind, solar and bioenergy across Australia, as well as energy efficiency and low-emissions technology projects in manufacturing, building and local government. They boast benefits including improved energy productivity, faster technological advances and greater acceptance of green projects in the finance sector. We have also seen improvements in technology design, supply-chain depth, construction practices, operating skills, financing structure and market-risk appetite.

There is little doubt that the CEFC is supporting 21st century jobs in rural and regional Australia and building Australia's clean energy supply-chain capability. If allowed to continue to do their good work, the CEFC has the capacity to make investments that would make up half of our five per cent emissions target by 2020, and in doing so they would return a profit to the taxpayer of $2.40 per tonne of abatement.
Really, it is not surprising that the Australian Financial Review recently said:

Getting rid of the CEFC makes sense to few business people who have observed its commercial success in its short existence.

In its submission to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation inquiry, the Responsible Investment Association Australia said:

The CEFC co-investment model is a prudent and cost effective way to allocate limited public funds to leverage private investment to do the heavy lifting in the investment into a low carbon transition. A testament to this model is that global trend by many countries to put in place such public finance institutions to help catalyse investment flows into low carbon assets, including the UK Green Investment Bank, Germany's KfW, China's Development Bank, the US Department of Environment's Loan Program Office, the New York Green Bank, California Clean Energy Fund, European Investment Bank and many of the multilateral development banks such as the Asian Development Bank.

The truth is that co-financing is a tested and proven model to encourage private sector investment, reduce emissions and provide a return to taxpayers.

The CEFC is just one of 14 such co-investment schemes across the globe. Its work is overseen by chair and respected businesswoman Jillian Broadbent, who has a distinguished career in the banking sector and was one of the longest-serving members of the Reserve Bank Board. In her evidence to the recent inquiry, Ms Broadbent presented a compelling overview of the incredible achievements of the CEFC.

She was also clear when asked about the government's proposed Direct Action scheme, which will provide grants to big polluters. She said:

I don't think you have to make a grant to get that emissions reduction. Our experience is you're better to make an investment to get the emissions reduction.

Of course, this opinion is entirely in keeping with the opinions of climate scientists, economists and policymakers right around the world.

It baffles the mind that the coalition would choose to waste more than a billion dollars on their Direct Action plan, which has been widely and vigorously criticised by experts, rather than maintain a body which has proven itself not only to reduce emissions but also to bolster the budget bottom line.

Currently, I serve as the Chair of the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, which was recently charged with considering the impacts of the government's Direct Action policy. The inquiry received more than 100 submissions from across the country, and the overwhelming message we got was that the Direct Action Plan is simply not up to the task; it is expensive, is riddled with design problems and will not come close to meeting Australia's carbon emission reduction targets. In fact, the committee did not hear evidence from one single witness who was willing to support Direct Action as an effective or appropriate stand-alone solution to address climate change.

The greatest failing of Direct Action is that it throws away the widely accepted market based model of 'polluter pays', in favour of an under-resourced 'taxpayer pays the polluter' plan. Direct action is nothing but a billion-dollar slush fund for big polluters. But, worse than that, it's virtually a foregone conclusion that it will not meet its emission reduction targets. In fact, we heard last week that Direct Action may fall as much as 300 million tonnes short of Australia's 2020 emissions reduction goal, according to modelling by RepuTex. To meet the 2020 target, Australia needs to cut emissions by 421 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.
equivalent between 2015 and the end of the decade. However, the Emissions Reductions Fund is likely to buy just 30 million to 120 million tonnes of emissions, leaving a shortfall of about 70 per cent of the abatement challenge. Despite what those opposite say about believing in climate change, it is hard to believe them when they are systematically dismantling all the tools we have at our disposal to tackle it.

Last year, China's second-largest province, Guangdong, which has a population of around 100 million, set up the world's second-largest emissions trading scheme. In fact, 99 countries have pledged to reduce or limit emissions by 2020. This covers 80 per cent of global emissions and includes all major emitters.

The truth is that the global economy has embraced the renewable energy industry. Last year wind power grew by 25 per cent worldwide and solar power by 30 per cent. On May 11, Germany met 74 per cent of its electricity demand with renewable energy. Only Australia is moving backward.

The government would have you believe that just because they won a majority in the other place that gives them carte blanche to do whatever they choose. Given the chance, those opposite have proven they will gladly dispose of all the annoying dissenting voices, particularly those who provide rational, reasoned evidence of their failed policies. They tell us again and again that it is the Senate's responsibility to rubber stamp whatever nonsense is placed before us, and to suggest otherwise is somehow undemocratic. Those opposite seem to hold the curious idea that being in government makes it somehow illegal or unethical for anyone to oppose them. They seem to say that no-one in this place has the right to maintain opposition to their policies, regardless of how ludicrous, counterproductive and ideologically driven they may be.

What the government did achieve was a mandate to introduce their policies and present the arguments for their passage through this place. And it is our democratic responsibility to stand up against regressive ham-fisted policies like this one. We in Labor will not 'get out of the way'—as Mr Hockey so arrogantly put it yesterday—and acquiesce to the dishonest and dangerously antiscientific policy regime that the government is waging. We also have a responsibility to the Australian people to fight as hard as we can for the very best policy outcomes for all of us, not just for the rich and entitled. So, no, a win at the election does not mean we will simply wave through bad policy. We will stand strong and we will not be bullied into supporting a bill that will be detrimental to the budgetary bottom line, our nation and the planet.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (10:45): I rise to speak on this debate on the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013. This is the second time that I have spoken on this bill and I will not be supporting it. This time I hope that government senators and members listen to this debate and consider the benefits of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. I hope that those opposite can put aside their ideological opposition to government co-financing and see the potential for the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

We have a bipartisan emissions reduction target in this country. We are agreed that we must reduce Australia's emissions by at least five per cent of 2000 levels by 2020. Clearly, we are not agreed on the path to achieve that target. On this side, we want to stimulate private sector investment and use market-based mechanisms both to reward innovative businesses
and to send a price signal. This argument is based on many rigorous economic assessments conducted by Australian and international professionals on how to achieve emissions reduction at the least cost for our economy. At this stage, the Australian people are unsure what those opposite believe. On one hand, there is the fierce belief in the market over government control, such as their decisions around the car industry and SPC Ardmona; yet, on climate change and the Cadbury chocolate factory in Hobart, they want to throw out the market and revert to their favourite pastime of populist politics.

The Clean Energy Finance Corporation was established to assist companies and organisations finance clean energy technology and energy efficiency measures through commercial loans, not through government grants. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation is forecast to achieve a positive return to taxpayers of $2.40 per tonne of abatement—a remarkable achievement that no-one could have predicted when the corporation was founded around a year ago; an achievement that we will no doubt be hearing a lot about today and into the future, as we grapple with the best way for government to set policies and implement programs to reduce carbon emissions.

How can we preserve jobs, preserve growth and prevent a carbon shock in future years? I participated in the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee's inquiry into this bill and the suite of carbon price repeal bills late last year. It was definitely a quick inquiry. It was not fair on the witnesses or on the organisations and individuals who sought to make submissions and it was not fair on the Australian people that it was done so quickly. The new coalition government referred the suite of repeal bills to the committee to examine the costs of pricing carbon on households and businesses. The opposition referred the bills on the basis of examining how they fitted with Australia's long-term climate change obligations. Put simply, we start from and continue to see this problem through very different lenses. On one side, the new coalition government see climate change in terms of purely the here and now, while on our side we see the problem in terms of the medium- to long-term. As important as any 2020 target is the need to have in place a pricing mechanism for emissions reduction beyond 2020, with targets for reductions at 2030 and 2050. We want to ensure the transition is a smooth one, but we acknowledge we have to start somewhere.

The former Labor government put in place a suite of measures to address climate change, including the establishment of Low Carbon Australia and subsequently the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. The value of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation extends beyond carbon pricing. The current clean energy legislation has put in place a clear path for Australia to transition to a low carbon economy. Fundamental to that passage is government's role in fostering the development and the rollout of clean energy in Australia. Labor established the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to facilitate finance for renewable and clean energy technology investments.

I note the depths of the submission that the CEFC provided to the Senate inquiry, as well as the comprehensive further updates the parliament and the people of Australia have received over the course of this year. I thank the staff at the CEFC for their efforts in providing this detailed information. I encourage all members and senators to read their great work. The submission covered the role of the corporation; the policy rationale for introducing the corporation and its expected use-by-date; the impact of abolition, including the cost to the
taxpayer; and some comprehensive case studies of how the corporation is investing taxpayer dollars to reduce emissions and to turn a profit.

The CEFC has been able to coordinate finance for emissions reduction that benefits business, provides returns to private sector investors and achieves a profit to government. The CEFC has funded projects that will generate or support over 500 megawatts of clean electricity. These investments are across a broad range of technologies, including wind, solar, energy efficiency and low-emissions technologies. Importantly, the CEFC’s investments will deliver an estimated annual carbon abatement of 3.88 million tonnes. The CEFC has demonstrated it actually has the capacity to make investments that would account for 50 per cent of the five per cent emissions reduction target.

The CEFC invests in projects that are demonstrating the benefits of proven technologies in the Australian market. Its team of financial experts, all with significant experience with major banks and financial institutions, conducts comprehensive risk assessments and financial evaluations of projects. This allows the CEFC to demonstrate to the private sector its confidence in a project. As the CEFC staff members are drawn from the private sector, they utilise their networks and contacts to build confidence in clean energy projects.

The CEFC’s investments assist in building Australia’s clean energy supply chain capability, funding projects in regional and rural Australia and supporting 21st century jobs in our local communities. Many industries are benefiting from the CEFC financing, including agribusiness, property, manufacturing, utilities and local government. I commend Dr Jillian Broadbent, the chair, and Mr Oliver Yates, the CEO, together with their team, for the quality of the work they are doing every day to help financiers appreciate the benefits to their business of investing in clean energy and in energy efficient technology. Last year’s hearing in particular was a difficult forum where, despite the best explanations from the CEFC officials, some Liberal and National senators just could not comprehend the purpose of the CEFC.

The officials had to spend most of the hearing explaining that private investors need the coordinator to come to the table with some skin in the game, that chief financial officers would not turn up if the CEFC was not a co-investor in a project and that the CEFC is much more than just a $10 billion government bank. The Liberal and National senators have been unable to see past their free-market blinkers and appreciate the role the CEFC plays in facilitating investment in renewable energy that would otherwise be missed by normal commercial banks. The CEFC does not engage in risky loans; it is helping to develop a relatively new clean energy investment sector.

Turning to evidence provided by the business and investor community, I note the summary from Mr Fabian from the Investor Group on Climate Change on the need for the CEFC:

Investors do not turn up for a chat; they turn up when there is a deal to be done. If we know that the counterparty can make the investment more attractive, then we are interested. We are not just going to come along for a bit of a chat about what might occur or what investment might take place.

Mr Yates highlighted the importance of financing in the corporation’s role:

We need the ability to deploy cash so we are a real participant in the market, so that we can participate equally and on level terms with the private sector, so that we can actually facilitate transactions.

So where does this leave us? The CEFC cannot operate without providing finance. It cannot leverage the private sector funds. The projects it has financed so far—$2.2 billion worth of
investment—will see over four million tonnes of abatement achieved, at a profit to the taxpayer. This seems to be a good program. The market does not provide the service required by all sides to achieve the bipartisan emissions reduction target. A government corporation utilises innovative financing to provide such a service and to return a profit to the government. Surely the new coalition government would seriously consider keeping this corporation as part of its direct action policy? Unfortunately, as is occurring all too often with this new government, ideology is getting in the way of good policy. Meanwhile, the emissions reduction fund will, as far as we are aware, consume billions from the budget, taking money from education, from health and from programs for families. The Prime Minister has made it clear that the Emissions Reduction Fund will not receive the additional funds we all know it will need to meet the five per cent reduction. It is clear that coalition senators have been unable to see past their free-market blinkers and appreciate the role that the CEFC plays in facilitating investment in renewable energy that would otherwise be missed by normal commercial banks.

As I mentioned earlier, the CEFC provided some quality case studies to the inquiry. I will read one for the Leader of the Government in the Senate, as I imagine he has firsthand knowledge of this building. The CEFC has invested in a lighting upgrade for the Civic Centre in Kingston, Tasmania, which has cut the building's lighting energy costs by 75 per cent. The Kingborough Council replaced the building's fluorescent lighting system with more energy-efficient LED tube lighting, to make energy savings of more than $11,000 a year. The council covered the $45,000 up-front cost with finance from Low Carbon Australia, now the CEFC. The 20-year life expectancy of LED lighting, compared with four years for the old fluorescents, means that the council is also saving on its maintenance costs. I congratulate the member for Franklin, Julie Collins, on her work assisting the council with this loan. I urge the Leader of the Government in the Senate to venture up the road to the council chambers and flick the light on.

There have been a range of comments made by those opposite to deride the work of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. Once again, the detailed submission of the corporation brought these to the attention of the committee, and I would like to share these with the Senate. On 'crowding out of private sector investment', the CEFC has actually done the opposite and encouraged investment where links were not being made. Dr Broadbent said to the hearing:

I think we have got evidence that there has certainly been crowding in rather than crowding out, because new financial institutions have come to participate in the market, being encouraged by a government owned entity's participation.

Crowding in is a fascinating concept—where there is a market failure and government intervention and investment is supporting and encouraging private sector investment rather than discouraging it.

I turn to the Emissions Reduction Fund. Would this crowd out or crowd in investment? Would it encourage investment or is it simply doling out grants? Almost every investment by the corporation has included co-financiers encompassing many of Australia's major financial commercial entities. Would these entities, the big banks, investment funds et cetera, be interested in supporting a government grants program? Indeed, would they even be asked? The supposed party of the market appears to be doing its best to exclude the market from this.
vital area of investment and policy into the future. As I outlined earlier, the CEFC has received proposals from over 170 proponents seeking finance of $15 billion to roll out clean energy technology and create jobs in Australia. It is clear that demand for the CEFC from the market remains high. The question is: why abolish it, is it about risk?

Claims have been made that the CEFC invests taxpayer's money in 'high-risk' ventures. Treasurer Hockey claimed in his second reading speech last year that the CEFC was investing in high-risk ventures. I am sure the Treasurer is actually aware of the Australian government's own direction to the corporation, which clearly states that the CEFC must invest across the spectrum of clean energy technologies. It must in aggregate have an acceptable but not excessive level of risk relative to the sector. They are not allowed to venture into the high risk arena, so they have not. Its portfolio is mostly in relatively low-risk, loan-based transactions and as at the end of last year none of Low Carbon Australia's loans were in default after three years of operation.

In addition, to protect taxpayers into the future the CEFC has rigorous procedures in place. If senators have a quick look at the experience of CEFC staff and board members it is clear this is a team of experienced people who have operated credit and risk areas in traditional banks. The CEFC knows finance and they know risk. Further, not all projects make it to financing, with numerous checks by staff and the board ensuring only the best investments are made. This is probably a significant reason why the CEFC is set to yield around seven per cent and abate emissions at a profit to government of $2.40 per tonne abated. It is a sophisticated institution, and it is embarrassing that the current Treasurer, Mr Hockey, has not bothered to move beyond the rhetoric—particularly when he is all too happy to dole out cash to the second-biggest food manufacturer in the world. Sure the tourism centre at Cadbury will create a few jobs. But if taxpayer resources are so precious, as our Treasurer claims, then surely they should be spent on co-financing clean energy projects before being used to reward lobbyists.

The embarrassment does not stop with the Treasurer. Soon after the election, in seeking to beat his chest and show that he could be an anti-environment minister for the environment, Mr Hunt said that the CEFC was a 'giant green hedge fund' and demanded that the institution stop issuing finance. But I would take on board the advice of the CEFC and Mr Fabian from the Investor Group on Climate Change on the role and purpose of the corporation. Firstly, the CEFC claims that it is not in any way acting like a hedge fund; of its $536 million of investments, there are no dollars invested in hedging, there are no dollars invested in derivatives and there are no dollars invested in guarantees. Mr Fabian noted at the hearing that the business model of the CEFC is not an investment banking business model. It is not there to maximise the returns for the broker. It is this distinction—that a finance corporation can exist to seek to grow a market rather than simply grow profits—that appears to be the real issue for those opposite.

A further slight on the CEFC perpetrated by those opposite is that it is undercutting the market by providing concessional loans. This is despite it being established that there is insufficient private sector appetite for engaging in the types of finance provided by the CEFC, and the basic fact that many private sector providers also offer discount rates. The facts are that the CEFC has only provided discounts amounting to $14 million, or just around 2.5 per cent of the total funds that it has lent. This sort of proportion seems very low and indicates...
that the rate of a loan has not been an issue for the clean energy industry; it is the availability of finance that is the issue. Plainly, the CEFC cannot be accused of undercutting the market. The facts are clear.

A final attack on the CEFC that I will use my time to debate is the notion that the CEFC does not produce any clean energy. The argument goes: there is a renewable energy target of 20 per cent, so why do we need to spend $10 billion of borrowed money? Basic maths shows that 20 per cent is not 100 per cent. Also, the renewable energy target is quite narrowly defined, so cleaner energies, such as gas, quite rightly do not comply. Therefore, there is a strong potential for the CEFC to finance renewable and cleaner energy outside of the RET.

The CEFC provided examples for the inquiry of clean energy investments which are not RET-supported. Interestingly, these investments seek to lower energy costs for rural and regional users. Maybe those opposite just cannot stomach that co-financing can be used to achieve an environmental policy objective. Depending on this cabinet's mood, it is fine for other industries and for other sectors of our economy and our society, but it is wasteful spending if it is about protecting our environment and setting our economy up for a low-carbon future.

It is this sort of lack of leadership that is why they have had the quickest fall from grace of any government in living memory. Their budget stinks. Their environment policies stink. And their lack of a coherent industry policy stinks. The Australian people have had enough of their attitude of running government like they are still in opposition.

Labor will fight tooth and nail to keep the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. We know it is not a 'great green hedge fund experimenting in all sorts of unviable projects', and we need those coalition senators who appreciate that to stand up and be counted, as we saw with the deficit levy debate where two coalition senators opposed the levy. Regardless that they opposed the levy for different reasons, they spoke their mind and took a chance. Senators who understand and appreciate the benefits of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation need to come out of their offices today and be heard. They need to do so because it is one of the right policy tools for tackling climate change. The free marketeers over there must be hating the thought of that great big slush fund, the Emissions Reduction Fund, doling out cash in an inefficient, ineffective manner, wasting taxpayers' dollars that could be used to pay for fighter jets or tax cuts.

The CEFC is allowing Australia to get chief investment officers of renewable and clean energy projects and bank officials around the table talking about the deals they can do. Abolishing the CEFC comes at a cost to the taxpayer. It is reckless and irresponsible to remove this tool from our policy suite in tackling climate change. I know that it is foggy outside today, but I urge coalition senators to get their heads out of the clouds on climate change and vote no on this legislation.

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (11:04): I am very pleased to be speaking on the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 [No. 2] again. We are standing here today at a tipping point in the politics of global warming. It is long overdue and in fact it may well be arriving far too late, but at least it is here.

The global climate science community is watching the fingerprints of another El Nino cycle forming across the Pacific, and Australia just recorded its warmest year since
instrumental records began. What happens if we swing back into another El Nino is really anybody's guess. Global warming is no longer a matter of theoretical conjecture for the future; it is a matter of life and death today. And the signs are everywhere.

I want to just pick three different examples of the various ways in which this issue touches everyone. The Center for Climate and Security is a non-profit policy institute in the United States and it has on its distinguished board mainly retired military and national security professionals from the United States. They do excellent work on the impacts of global warming on US security policy. I will just read into the record one representative quote. CCS Advisory Board member Rear Admiral David W Titey, retired from the United States Navy, points out:

Compared to many other threats the Department of Defense faces, we know a lot about both the timing and the magnitude of climate change. As today's testimonies make clear—the time for action is now.

The United States military might view global warming through the prism of the security challenge and of how they need to change US military posture—and we might have a very interesting conversation about the degree to which Australian military doctrine lags probably a decade behind some of the thinking going on in the United States—but, nonetheless, this body is not, you would have thought, a likely candidate for being part of the global socialist conspiracy that some in this country seem to believe that global warming is.

From the worlds of commerce and finance, a correspondent with Senator Milne this week who works in currency markets in the city of London wrote:

Where a conservative government would seek to repeal an institution that is, from my research, successful in acting as a commercial entity and turning a profit means it can only be a pure anti-climate change act.

We might pause to consider those words for a moment. Again, it is not exactly someone coming from the margins.

The third example is from local government. I, Senator Rachel Siewert from WA and a number of other WA MPs from across the political spectrum breakfasted yesterday with mayors, CEOs, councillors and staff from the Western Australian local government sector and I had the good fortune to sit and spend a bit of time with Mayor Tracey Roberts from the city of Wanneroo. I had not really put two and two together that one of the fastest growing areas of local government expenditure is adapting to coastal erosion as infrastructure, coastal housing, parks, roads and power conduits are eaten away by coastal erosion.

These are three indicators from across the world and across very different areas of our community that show just how deeply entrenched and ongoing this problem is. What is bearing down on us is utterly forbidding. I refer to the most recent State of Our Cities report before the government abolished the Major Cities Unit that was doing such useful work on documenting Australian cities. We are one of the most urbanised societies in the world and must make real attempts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, amongst other things. The last State of Our Cities report before the Abbott government bowled that entity over said that heat deaths would double by 2050 in all Australian cities and quadruple in Perth and Brisbane. That is people within our lifetime dying as a result of the increased heat strokes and heat impacts from heatwaves in Australian cities. That is something we could do something about, but of course this government seems determined to blindfold itself from the challenges
bearing down on us. We appear to be now looking not at a metre sea level rise by the end of this century but potentially three metres of unavoidable sea level rise if the West Antarctic ice sheet continues to collapse. That does not happen necessarily within our lifetimes but it is a relentless accelerating problem that we are leaving for our kids and grandkids to content with. I do not imagine they would thank this present generation for walking them into that future with our eyes open even though we knew that is what we were committing them to. I believe now the evidence is sufficiently strong that we can say with confidence that we live in the age of dangerous climate change, and the choice that we face is whether to press over the edge and commit ourselves to catastrophic climate change.

Renewable energy obviously is one important part of the answer. During the brief, rapidly shrinking window of agency that we have to prevent the very worst impacts where things are basically irreversible and nothing we do really matters and it is simply a question of bracing for impact, renewable energy is obviously a very big part of the answer. Particularly in a fossil and carbon intensive economy like Australia's, it helps in decoupling economic development from growth in fossil fuel combustion. Renewable energy as a relatively new part of the energy sector needs assistance. It needs assistance in research and development, in industry development and in education and training, and we should not treat that as though it is some kind of aberration from the economic development of industrialised economies.

The coal industry was built entirely by taxpayer endeavour. In my home state the Swan River colony effectively took one of its great growth spurts on the construction of the East Perth power station, of course at taxpayer expense. How else was that economy going to develop? Similarly the gas industry decades later benefited—in the public interest, you can argue, if you are setting aside climate change issues—from billions, not millions, of dollars of taxpayers’ investment in the development of the Burrup and the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline. Again it was done for the purposes of state economic development with taxpayers’ expense. Now the very same players and the same industries have benefited from such largess, you could argue in the public interest, are determined to slam the door on the renewable energy sector, condemning subsidies and assistance quite clearly to prevent a fast-moving competitor from eating up their market share.

Of course renewable energy needs industry development assistance while it gets on its feet. That is how the Chinese government built the largest PV fabrication plants in the world. That is how the German government, with the use of a feed-in tariff legislated and negotiated by the German Greens, built a photovoltaics industry out of nothing. You put the supports in the place and when the industry matures you take that supports away, and that is precisely what we are seeing occur in Europe now that the industry is mature. Australia is benefiting from that industrial development, much of it led by Australian research and ingenuity at the University of New South Wales and elsewhere. Those people then distributed that through solar PV companies in China, Europe and North America, leading to some of the greatest innovations in the world, and Australians then gets the benefit of that in the form of very low cost photovoltaics.

Regarding the form of industry assistance that has come about, let us pay some bipartisan credit here. It was John Howard's government that introduced the Renewable Energy Target. It was only two per cent at the time but it did get the industry on its feet. It was the Rudd government, with the legislative support of the Australian Greens, that expanded that target...
out to 20 per cent. That is effectively bootstrapping an industry into existence. The Renewable Energy Target is one of the most important industry supports to mature and diversify the renewable energy sector and it is extraordinary that the Australian government has chosen to install Mr Dick Warburton, who is under something of a cloud as a result of his involvement—

Senator Johnston: Cut it out.

Senator LUDLAM: Well, release the documents so that we can all see.

Senator Johnston: What about the other members of the panel?

Senator LUDLAM: Not a single person on the panel that has been tasked with reviewing the Renewable Energy Target has the faintest amount of experience in the renewable energy sector. In fact, the government has installed a climate change denier to lead that review.

The other elements of the policy obviously include the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the bill to abolish which we are debating today, which makes a positive return for every tonne of carbon that it abates. It creates jobs and it returns a positive benefit of $2.40 a tonne to taxpayer. The surplus it has generated is then folded back into the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, which does the research and development, the commercialisation, the early work, some of the risk capital in bringing the next generation of renewable energy technology to market. This is precisely what this government, led by someone who thinks climate change is absolute crap, is proposing to bowl over.

It is going to cost the taxpayers money. And you are screaming all over the landscape about a budget emergency, yet you are proposing to knock the Clean Energy Finance Corporation over. In case you have not noticed, it generates a positive return for the taxpayer while creating Australian jobs and bringing forward the next generation of renewable energy plants for deployment in Australia. It is absolutely unbelievable. No wonder none of you can make eye contact in here this morning. I note also a significant lack of coalition—Liberal or National—speakers on this bill. That is because you know it is indefensible.

In the pipeline, up for grabs by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, is $10.7 billion in total project value, two-thirds of it private sector capital. There is $3.7 billion of investment by the CEFC in the pipeline. What that looks like in my home state of WA is $460 million invested by the CEFC, which has a positive return to the taxpayer, leveraging just over $1 billion in private sector finance. What on earth is wrong with that? I am a little sick of being accused of being the socialist by these so-called capitalists on the other side of the chamber. They somehow think that bringing about a market mechanism that takes $6 billion or $7 billion a year from the heaviest polluters, the heaviest and most carbon-intensive quarters of industry, and transfers it into clean energy at a positive return to the taxpayer is part of some gargantuan left-wing conspiracy.

Senator Johnston interjecting—

Senator LUDLAM: Speak up if you like, Senator Johnston. Why don't you put yourself on the speakers list and defend this obscene policy you are bringing forward. I do not think you will. I would also like to add my commendation of the CEFC Chair, Jillian Broadbent, and the CEO, Oliver Yates, for standing up to the absurd bullying that has been levelled at them over the last 12 months. It started when this government was in opposition and said, 'At some point we're going to bowl you over, so we want you to stop investing.' Thank goodness
Ms Broadbent and Mr Yates had the common sense to say, 'Our legislation says we invest $2 billion a year, and that's exactly what we're going to do.'

In Western Australia there are direct benefits to companies like Carnegie Wave Energy. This is exactly the kind of innovative technology we are talking about. It is based in my home town of North Fremantle. It is a plant that operates 24/7 on wave energy. It can generate clean electricity from the limitless power of the oceans, or it can be switched across to desalinate water. Their first commercial client is the Australian Navy—something I would have thought Senator Johnston would be a bit interested in. That is precisely the kind of industry and investment we should be encouraging here in Australia. Instead we are getting precisely the opposite: you are trying to cut those people off at the knees.

This is the tipping point that I referred to, and this is why I think what is about to happen in the Senate today is so powerful. The tipping point in climate politics is that you have lost the argument. We saw that in Western Australia, where Liberal and National senators could barely show their face in public. They are still feebly murmuring the same tired talking points about abolishing the carbon tax. Senator Back, I notice your furrowed brow. You are the one honourable exception—ironically enough, not somebody who was up for re-election. Senator Back did front an energy panel at the Perth Town Hall. But at virtually every other public meeting I attended the Liberals were completely invisible—because what you are up to is indefensible. Your vote fell by another five per cent. The Australian Greens, campaigning almost solely on a clean energy platform of saving the CEFC, recorded our highest ever vote. So now let's talk about just how confident you are that 'Whyalla is about to be wiped off the map' and 'climate change is absolute crap'!

I think what we have seen is a very powerful sea change in the Australian community. Maybe people believed what they were told about the so-called toxic carbon tax over the last couple of years and it has worn increasingly hollow as people realise that your Prime Minister was simply making it up. In Western Australia, because the state government, similar to its federal colleagues, has basically abandoned the policy space and is simply locked in behind the coal and gas industry, the Australian Greens engaged an independent consultant, Sustainable Energy Now, to conduct a study on what 100 per cent renewable energy for the south-west grid would look like. We called it Energy 2029. Since we released it at the end of last year, we have had to revise the figures because the operating costs of large-scale renewable energy have come down so rapidly. What it shows is that the cost of 'business as usual' is more expensive than the cost of transitioning to renewable energy.

It might sound a little unusual that that would be the case; but, when you think about it, by the end of that transition to renewable energy, you have eliminated your fuel bill for all time. It is capital intensive upfront, it is vastly more labour-intensive than old fossil fuel fired power stations; but, once that transition is completed, you have eliminated the coal and gas bill, you have eliminated your fuel bill for all time, and there are only operating and maintenance expenses from there on. In one year, the average cost of electricity generation for onshore wind power fell by 18 per cent. The cost of tracking solar PV fell by 20 to 30 per cent depending on the energy market. The cost of concentrating solar power—that is, solar thermal, the next generation of better than base load large scale solar plants—fell by anywhere between eight and 27 per cent depending on the technology type and the energy market. Renewables overall saw levelised cost of electricity reductions of about 20 per cent.
And that, I think, is the key to this debate. People like me are scratching their heads wondering why a party of so-called economic rationalists would bowl over an entity like the CEFC, which is making a positive return and contributing more than its fair share to the cost of driving greenhouse gas emissions down. It is not because renewable energy cannot do the job, it is not because the clean energy sector is not effective enough. It is because it is succeeding a little too well—and it has deeply rattled your financial backers in the Liberal and National parties, who receive so much money every year. You scoff, Senator Johnston. Why don't you read into Hansard what the coal and gas industry spend proping up the Liberal and National parties every year—and then the position and the picture becomes much more clear. The renewable energy industry is doing a little bit too well, and it is in the process of stranding the assets of your coal and gas backers. That is what is actually going on here. You are doing everything you can, using your position of political incumbency, to nobble a competitor. It is no more simple or complex than that.

Imagine, just for a moment, that you are standing in the wheelhouse of the Titanic. A dirty grey iceberg has come looming out of the fog and the ship's navigators and engineers are screaming at those on the bridge to turn the wheel before impact. Imagine how it would feel to elect a captain who would confidently declare the iceberg to be absolute crap, sack the navigators, smear the reputations of the engineers and order that the ship immediately increase speed. In the fog of statistical uncertainty and the unpredictability of the weather at the best of times, we do not know how far ahead the iceberg is. Some in the climate science community think we might have hit it already. We do not have the luxury of knowing; we just have to turn the ship, if it is still possible, or, at the very least, open our eyes and brace for impact.

This is the political tipping point that I am referring to. Prime Minister Abbott, if you really believe that this is absolute crap and that the Clean Energy Act is going to wipe Whyalla off the map, how is that working out? If you really believe that renewable energy cannot deliver, then here is the double dissolution election trigger you have been waiting for. The world is starting to move—in fact, parts of the world are well ahead of Australia. We are lagging and the hour is late. So, if it is an election you want, then bring it on.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (11:23): My remarks will be relatively brief. I want to comment first on the process by which the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 (No. 2) was brought on, which was a resolution of the Senate that I supported. I want to put on the record that I supported that resolution with some reluctance, because I am concerned about the business of the Senate being taken out of the hands of the government. But, ultimately, it is the will of the Senate to determine how the business is determined.

I do understand the urgency that Senator Milne placed on this piece of legislation, and I respect that. I did vote for the resolution for this bill to be given precedence over all other bills. I want to say that there ought to be a heavy onus before you vote in such circumstances to take away the business of the Senate from the government of the day. I thought that, on balance, it was justified, but it was still a close call in my view as to whether it should have been done at this time.

Let us go to the legislation at hand and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. I previously spoke on this back on 4 December 2013, so I do not want to unnecessarily restate what I have
already said, but there have been some developments in respect of that. I want to set out that, rather than attacking the government in respect of this, I want to put forward a different perspective. I am taking a conservative view in respect of this piece of legislation, and the conservative view—in the small ‘c’ conservative way—is that we ought not to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is set up to provide a commercial rate of return. Secondly, in relation to the government’s position that this is a piece of legislation that is not needed because the market will sort it out, there are precedents here and elsewhere that show that, where there is evidence of the markets not working, of market failure or of market dysfunction, there is a role for government to play to provide a finance mechanism. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, until the early 1980s, we had the Commonwealth Development Bank that had a very valuable role for regional Australia in helping rural businesses obtain finance and succeed where they could not get finance through the commercial banking sector. So there is a precedent—a sensible precedent—in terms of having this sort of mechanism to provide finance for the sector.

Thirdly, there is the issue of the state of play of carbon bills and carbon legislation. I did not vote for the carbon tax and I raised a number of concerns, not least because it was a reverse mandate of the former government not to introduce it, given the promises made by my former Prime Minister Gillard. Notwithstanding that, there is a bipartisan commitment, which was given at the last election, that there ought to be a five per cent reduction on greenhouse gases by 2020 based on 2000 levels. That is an important commitment. It is basically a bipartisan commitment where both sides—the major parties—are saying that we ought to be reducing our greenhouse gases, not increasing them, and tackling it in an effective way. There is a debate as to whether that five per cent target is adequate, and many scientists and commentators are saying that we need to go further in relation to that. Notwithstanding that, there is that commitment that the government, when in opposition, made of a five per cent reduction.

The government also made a commitment not just to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation but also to maintain ARENA, which is the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. That was a commitment that was broken in the budget. I do not want to talk about which commitments were broken and which were not kept, but I think we need to look at the overall issue of climate policy in this country. I think that getting rid of ARENA is a retrograde step for a number of reasons. We have huge reserves of geothermal energy in my home state of South Australia. Geothermal energy can provide a real alternative to coal-fired power stations. Because of its nature, if you can tap the technology and overcome the technical difficulties there are at the moment in this sector, you can have 24-7 power. Between them, each of those geothermal pools can last 20 to 30 years, and it provides that stable, long-term power. I think that planning to get rid of ARENA, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, is a backwards step and it must be considered in the context of this piece of legislation in relation to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. That is why I am taking a conservative approach to say that it is very unwise to be looking at abolishing the CEFC.

I know I have had many arguments with my colleagues from the Greens about the whole issue of wind energy and its impact on communities, and one of the issues that I have raised in respect of wind energy—leaving aside the issues of community impact—is that the
economics of wind energy concern me for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is not reliable. It is intermittent in its nature and, on those very hot days when energy demand is at its highest, a number of wind turbines have to be shut down because of a number of operational issues, including the risk of being a fire hazard. So I have an issue with the extent of wind energy we have in this country, particularly in my home state of South Australia where I believe the Rann and now Weatherill governments have gone down a path of over-reliance on wind energy in the renewable energy basket, because of the effects it can have on electricity prices, the distortion it can cause on the merit order of electricity pricing and also on the investment in other forms of renewable energy. I think it is a bad move and I think there is a lot of scope for, effectively, baseload renewables in terms of solar thermal and even PV solar being much more reliable than wind energy—without the community concerns and impacts that have arisen in relation to the proliferation of wind energy that we have.

That is not an argument to get rid of the CEFC; in fact, it is an argument to say that we should keep it to ensure that we can build up other forms of renewable energy in the energy basket. These are the sorts of issues we ought to be looking at. I believe the CEFC has played a valuable role in ensuring that renewable, cleaner energy is given a chance to be financed and to provide a commercial rate of return. I do not think it is inconsistent with the aims of the CEFC for the government to provide a directive to express its concerns in relation to wind energy projects, given the concerns that have been expressed in terms of the economics of wind and also the real potential that solar thermal and PV solar have, as well as other forms of renewable energy, such as tidal power, to fill the need for greater levels of cleaner energy. The CEFC needs to work in conjunction with ARENA, the Renewable Energy Agency, in some projects and the finance that that can provide. The two can work hand in hand. Abolishing ARENA, as proposed by the government, creates even greater problems for the CEFC. I think the CEFC does play a valuable role in ensuring that we meet that bipartisan target of a minimum five per cent reduction in greenhouse gases on 2000 levels by 2020.

I think that we need to take a conservative, cautious and sensible approach to this issue. We do not have enough detail about the Direct Action Plan—and I am not implacably opposed to Direct Action. I think with sufficient modification it can be an efficient way of reducing greenhouse gases, but not in the form in which it has been presented. We need to listen to sensible think tanks in relation to this. Before we go further on the Direct Action Plan, we need to listen to people such as the Carbon Market Institute, who, I think, have some sensible, practical ideas to improve Direct Action in a very substantial and appreciable way. But the details are scant in respect of that—and it is not a criticism of Minister Hunt who, I believe, genuinely wants to do the right thing by the environment and genuinely wants to see that target of five per cent, as conservative as it is, met by this government. But I think it is important that we achieve that in a sensible way.

I believe that to abolish the CEFC, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, at this time would be most unwise. From what I have seen of its activities, its charter and the way that it has operated, it has done many good things in terms of the sector. So I think it is unwise. I think coalition supporters need to understand that there is bipartisan commitment to reduce greenhouse gas, and there also was a commitment by the coalition to keep ARENA, which itself could play a valuable role in unlocking the potential of geothermal energy, of which my home state of South Australia has enormous reserves. To seek to abolish ARENA—despite
the coalition saying the contrary, and I am not going to beat up on the government in relation to that; I do not think that would be useful at this point—and to not have the details that we require in relation to Direct Action, and to not make it unambiguously clear that those targets will be met in terms of what the government is proposing, and then to seek to get rid of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation as part of that mix would be, in my view, very unwise and reckless. From my point of view, the government has not made the case to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

I want to make it clear that I want to engage with the government and my crossbench colleagues constructively—with my colleagues in the Greens, with Victorian DLP Senator John Madigan and the incoming senators from the Palmer United Party, the Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party, the Liberal Democrats Senator-elect David Leyonhjelm and Family First's Bob Day—to get a good public policy result where we actually do something good for the environment and tackle the issue of unnecessarily high electricity prices, which are not simply due to the carbon tax. I think the research, the findings and the evidence show that only about one-third of our electricity price rises are due to the carbon tax and that about two-thirds of it is due to unnecessarily high network fees. This morning I was on radio, on the Leon Byner show in South Australia—which you are familiar with, Mr Acting Deputy President Fawcett—and the Australian Energy Regulator was explaining what their powers are and looking at the whole issue of network charges.

I think if we are serious about reducing unnecessary burdens on electricity prices we need to give more power back to the AER and reduce network spending proposals. We need to deal with the ability of the Australian Energy Regulator to conduct detailed optimisation analyses of electricity networks’ asset bases to uncover instances of excessive or premature spending—and those powers do not exist to the extent that they ought to. If we give the AER more powers, and if we shake up the national electricity market rules, I believe we can give real and significant benefits to consumers in terms of lower electricity prices and to businesses, large and small, who are paying too high a price for electricity in this country.

If we can relieve that burden for those businesses, it gives us more scope to do good things when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases. If you can ameliorate the price effects of some of these antiquated rules that allow power networks to—I believe in some cases—price gouge consumers, then it gives you more leeway and scope to do more in terms of reducing greenhouse gases, given that renewable energy is generally more expensive. So that is where I am coming from in relation to this. I believe the CEFC does still have a useful and valuable role to play. I cannot support the repeal of it. I want to make it clear to the government that I actually want to see lower electricity prices in this country, but at the same time I believe you can do some sensible work in terms of being bolder in terms of reducing greenhouse gases. I am taking a conservative, cautious approach. That is why I cannot support this legislation.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (11:38): Firstly let me thank all senators who have contributed to this debate on the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 [No. 2]. Let me also say that the Australian people have already voted on this legislation. Indeed, the government took a very clear policy to the last election, which was to abolish the carbon tax and to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. The judgement of the Australian people is very clear. Labor and the Greens are
about to ignore the government's mandate in relation to this for the second time, in defiance of the Australian people and the judgement they made at the last election.

Fundamentally, we do not believe it is appropriate for the government to continue to borrow in order to underwrite a $10 billion taxpayer funded bank which cherry picks investments in direct competition to the private sector. This is really what goes to the crux of the issue. Australia does not have a good history when it comes to running government owned banks. I suspect Senator Xenophon would be very well aware—indeed you, Mr Acting Deputy President Fawcett, would be very well aware—of the history of the great state of South Australia when it comes to the issues that developed with government owned banks. Some senators in this debate have again asserted that this Clean Energy Finance Corporation, this government owned bank, is delivering a commercial rate of return. To make that assertion less than a year after this government bank has started to write loans is very heroic indeed. It reminds me of the former Treasurer Wayne Swan in May 2012 asserting that he had delivered a surplus. Of course we know what happened to that. You cannot make judgements and you cannot make assertions about what an organisation like the Clean Energy Finance Corporation will deliver in terms of a rate of return until you have come to the ultimate conclusion on the loans they are currently writing.

Fundamentally, we do not think this is an area government should be involved in. Fundamentally, we do not think it is appropriate, given our fiscally challenging circumstances, that we continue to borrow money in order to underwrite this sort of activity. We do have a superior policy when it comes to achieving the emissions reduction target of five per cent by 2020, which we will continue to implement. But, consistent with the judgements made by the Australian people at the last election, we urge the Senate to support this bill. I can flag that the government intends to reintroduce a bill to abolish the CEFC next week, ahead of the new Senate taking effect from 1 July 2014, if this particular bill should be unsuccessful.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013 (No. 2) be read a second time.

The Senate divided. [11:46]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ...................... 28

Noes ...................... 35

Majority ............... 7

AYES

Back, CJ (teller)  Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ  Boswell, RLD
Boyce, SK  Bushby, DC
Colbeck, R  Cormann, M
Edwards, S  Eggleston, A
Fawcett, DJ  Fieravanti-Wells, C
Fifield, MP  Heffernan, W
Johnston, D  Macdonald, ID
McKenzie, B  O'Sullivan, B
Parry, S  Payne, MA
Ronaldson, M  Ruston, A
Ryan, SM  Scullion, NG
To resume where I left off yesterday on my contribution on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014, we believe that the Green Army program should be considered as ordinary income—and participants remain eligible for income support—or there be mandated a minimum number of hours per week that ensures that the amount received by the participant is not less than the amount that they would receive under youth allowance. There is also a denial of basic compensation if participants are injured at work. Participants in the Green Army program are not regarded as employees or trainees. Participants will not be entitled to the protection of workplace health and safety laws, workers...
compensation laws, superannuation, leave, job protection, antidiscrimination protection or fair dismissal procedures. They will exist in a vacuum.

Clearly this program is not a genuine training program and will continue many of the disempowering and exploitative practices of other earlier programs. Given that many program participants are likely to be highly vulnerable, with some having just left school, they should be afforded the strongest possible workplace protections. Workers who are injured at work should be able to receive compensation for that injury. Workers who are harassed, bullied or discriminated against should be able to turn to the relevant Commonwealth ombudsman, and the structure of this bill does not offer these guarantees. The Australian Greens will not support any 'workforce' program where the workers are not legally workers and have no workplace rights.

The Australian Greens recognise that providing ongoing training and support and designing and implementing programs that will lead to genuine outcomes requires administrative funding for both the sponsor and the service provider organisations, yet the program guidelines do not demonstrate that this funding will be adequately provided. A lack of administrative funding will prevent organisations from delivering quality programs that would have genuine environmental and social benefits.

Even if all these practical design flaws were addressed, there is still no reason to believe that this program will lead to work readiness or genuine environmental outcomes. In fact, during the consultation phase of the program, the department was quite clear in stating that this is not a job readiness initiative. After participants come out of the six months in the program, they are likely to be even less work ready than they were when they entered it because a job seeker participating in this program will no longer be actively looking for permanent work or connected to their job service agency, so they are going to be caught between the two.

The department has also acknowledged in the information it provided about the project guidelines that the skills obtained by the participants are unlikely to lead to employment in the environmental area. This is because they will just basically be planting trees. This scheme is extremely unsuitable for young job seekers. A training program should lead to clear employment prospects, but, given that accredited training is not necessarily a part of this program, there is absolutely no guarantee that participants will build their skill level to that required for further employment.

Even if these concerns were addressed, the readiness to move into study or employment is not particularly useful if there are neither jobs nor transition pathways available to the program participants. The reality is that this government is putting more pressure on environmental funding, and it is likely to reduce rather than increase the number of employment opportunities available to young people in natural resource management. At this point, I move a second-reading amendment:

At the end of the motion, add "but the Senate
(a) notes the recent reduction to Landcare funding;
(b) regrets that the Green Army Programme funding allocation will in part replace the funding that was previously available to Natural Resource Management groups to undertake high quality conservation work and that the net effect of this program will be to transfer funding from skilled
Natural Resource Management workers with a long term focus, to unskilled, work-for-the-dole style volunteers and short term projects; and

(c) condemns the Government for introducing a program that will reduce the funding available for conservation in Australia”.

The dismantling of the Biodiversity Fund, which would have injected millions of dollars of program funding into NRM, is a prime example of this.

Nor has it been shown that this program could lead to genuine environmental outcomes. Previous programs that directed unskilled workers to undertake environmental works have been largely unsuccessful in delivering significant and lasting environmental outcomes. The examples that I have seen which have in fact had positive environmental outcomes have been delivered by very dedicated conservation, Landcare or NRM type groups that put in a lot of volunteer hours themselves to make them work. I do not think that the model that is going to be presented here with the Green Army will ensure that sort of commitment from a lot of the organisations involved, and I seriously doubt that we are going to get strong environmental outcomes out of this process. The Murdoch University Professor of Sustainability, Glenn Albrecht, is reported as having said:

If it’s really just weeding and tree planting, similar to the sorts of things that were done under the Howard government's programs, a lot of that work, particularly in periods of savage drought, was simply undone because there was no long-term follow up …

The Green Army may increase the number of people working in the landscape, but, by its very nature as a supposed training program, it cannot replace the work of skilled environmental workers. But, if the gutting of the Landcare management program continues, the Green Army is likely to just allow program sponsors to replace what would otherwise have been done by that workforce with Green Army workers on cheap, casual wages but with fewer on-costs, and the workers do not even get the benefits of proper training or support that will in fact make them job ready. This is a keep-people-busy program rather than a training program.

By replacing rather than expanding our pool of environmental workers, the government will further undermine the quality of Australia's conservation workforce by taking away well-paid jobs and replacing them with low-paid, unsafe jobs. This should not be a program for providing an alternative, cheap workforce for rural and regional employers, but that is what it is going to be. It will soak up available NRM funding, which will not have either an environmental outcome or a significant job or training outcome for the people involved. It will look like it is doing something, but you will not get those environmental outcomes. It will not be strategic.

Another point that has been raised with me is that people in the bush are very concerned that in fact they would not even see assistance from the Green Army because it will be hard to get these workers out past peri-urban projects. So you will also see a distortion of where the Green Army actually goes.

In conclusion, it is nothing short of exploitative to direct potentially tens of thousands of unskilled young people into short-term projects which will not lead to permanent employment, simply to cover up the fact that this government is not prepared to take genuine action on either providing positive incentives or genuinely supporting young people with
training and helping them overcome their barriers to employment. It will not provide genuine action on environmental issues.

This is particularly disturbing, given that the government are also cutting back on both higher education funding and supports available to help young people enter the workforce on a permanent basis. It seems that they are having a go at every end, which will make life harder for young Australians who are trying to find work and who are trying to acquire skills. This measure keeps people off income support for a period but does not enable them to genuinely gain the skills that they need if they do want to enter NRM or Landcare. This bill is not supported by the Greens. There are too many fundamental flaws in the scheme. It is a repeat of schemes that have not provided significant outcomes for either the environment or young people. It should go back to the drawing board. We should have genuine training requirements built in. The Landcare groups and the NRM groups that are expected to deliver this program should have their funding returned to them. We need to invest in Landcare.

The Minister for Agriculture, Minister Joyce, said that the Green Army is a replacement for Landcare or an addition to Landcare. It is not a replacement for Landcare and Landcare groups are furious about that. They need proper funding, not funding taken off them to give to the Green Army. The Greens will not be supporting this bill.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (12:02): It is remarkable that we are here in the Senate today debating the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014, which delivers for the environment, delivers for young Australians and yet we have opposition from no less than the Australian Greens. It is of course an important package and it is an important delivery of an election promise that the coalition made. It is important that we achieve this and achieve the benefits it will deliver for local environmental projects and the opportunities for many young Australians.

The Green Army is a key coalition election commitment. We committed some $525 million to this project over four years, a scale of commitment and funding that I would have thought would have been welcomed by all around this chamber.

It will commence from July this year. The Green Army will generate real benefits for the Australian environment and will give young Australians, aged between 17 and 24, the opportunity to gain training and experience in both environmental and heritage projects in delivering those projects on the ground.

This bill provides a framework for the operation of the Green Army scheme. It provides certain specifics around how it will interact in particular with social security arrangements. It specifies that participants in the Green Army scheme cannot also get social security payments or benefits; that participants are not considered employees for the purposes of Commonwealth laws; and that income-testing arrangements, where a partner receives social security payments or benefits, are duly adjusted to take account of their participation in the Green Army arrangement.

This is important because the Green Army will ultimately be a very large program involving a large number of young Australians. In fact, it will become Australia's largest ever team supporting environmental action across the country, building to some 15,000 young Australians, aged between 17 and 24, by 2018. These young Australians will work as small
teams, supporting practical, grassroots environmental and heritage conservation projects across urban, regional and remote Australia.

Delivery of the Green Army project is well underway, as evidenced of course not only by this legislation but also by request tenders for service providers that opened on 31 March and closed on 7 May, as well as the opportunities that people have had to comment on the selection guidelines to ensure that this is indeed a rigorous process that delivers for both the environment and young Australians.

From July this year, 250 Green Army projects will be established in the first year of operation. This will provide work experience and training to around 2½ thousand participants in that first year of operation. These young people will work around 30 hours per week. They will be paid wages commensurate with a minimum trainee wage. A minimum trainee hourly wage for a 21-year-old, for example, ranges from between $14.76 and $16.45 per hour, as well as a fortnightly allowance, recognising the nature of the work and training that they will be doing, of between $885 and $987.

In delivering the Green Army, our government are delivering on an election commitment taken to both the 2010 and 2013 elections. Pleasingly, in the lead-up to the 2013 election, more than 150 projects were announced and committed to by the government. I was pleased to have been there both initially in the Sydney harbourside suburbs, with the now Prime Minister and now Minister for the Environment, for the announcement of the Green Army policy in the 2013 election, and later to announce and support many different projects during that campaign. These projects that we committed to pre election will be rolled out as a priority from July this year.

In our home state of South Australia, Madam Acting Deputy President Ruston, one of these projects is within the Mount Laura Conservation Park, which is aimed at protecting the natural environment of the conservation reserve from soil erosion, stormwater damage and unauthorised access from random off-road vehicles. You can see the type of practical work that is envisaged from these projects that will give real experience to young people on the ground, as well as delivering tangible and practical benefits to the local environment and to environs such as the Mount Laura Conservation Park.

I was pleased to join the member for Longman, Wyatt Roy, during the campaign at Burpengary Creek to announce the major riparian repair and boardwalk project that will be funded and built as part of the Green Army operations along the fringe of that creek. The work at this site will involve the removal of lantana and other pest flora, invasive species that harm the operation of the creek and other native species in that area. It will support the revegetation of 100,000 native trees and shrub plantings, in what is a beautiful part of Queensland that I would encourage many people to visit.

Up in the Northern Territory, Green Army projects will include: the eradication of Gamba grass in the Greater Darwin area; Rapid Creek and Mitchell Creek conservation projects; and a 'roadbuster team', which will see strategic fencing placed in and around water sources to prevent cane toad access to water and try to stymie the growth of the cane toad population in the Northern Territory. These are once again, truly practical measures that will deliver real benefit to the local environment in these communities.
The Green Army will make a significant difference to local environs, to our overall environment, to the management and support of threatened species and of course to the environment for local communities, through projects that include: propagation and planting of native seedlings; weed control; revegetation and regeneration of local parks; habitat protection and restoration; and creek bank restoration.

The Green Army is building on theHoward government's successful Green Corps program, established in 1996 to employ young people in environmental projects similar to this to preserve and restore our natural and cultural environment. That is a program that is still fondly spoken of by many of those who participated in it; many of whom have gone on to a lifetime of volunteerism or work supporting local environmental activity.

Participants will be eligible to receive an allowance and will have the opportunity to gain certificate I or certificate II qualifications in a range of areas—including, land management, park management, landscaping or horticulture. At the same time as improving the local environment and providing opportunities, the Green Army will foster volunteerism, teamwork, local ownership and community spirit in all of the areas of its operation.

I commend this bill to the Senate as I commend the Green Army program to all Australians. I look forward to seeing its exciting delivery over the years ahead. It will see tens of thousands of young Australians given an opportunity to give to our environment.

SenatorFIERRAVANTI-WELLS (New South Wales—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services) (12:10): I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in support of the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014.

The green light for the creation of a Green Army to deliver environmental projects in Australian communities was first given with legislation passing the House of Representatives on May 15. This important milestone followed the commitment of $525 million over four years in the federal budget. The Green Army will generate real benefits for the Australian environment and will give young people aged 17-24 the opportunity to gain training and experience in environmental and heritage conservation projects.

The Green Army is a key coalition election commitment and will support practical, grassroots environment and heritage conservation projects across urban, regional and remote Australia. From July this year, 250 Green Army projects will be established, providing employment and training to around 2,500 participants. The Green Army will become Australia’s largest-ever team supporting environmental action across the country, building to 15,000 young people by 2018. It is capable of delivering 1,500 on-ground environmental projects in communities across Australia.

The Green Army will make a real difference to the environment and local communities through projects such as: restoring and protecting habitat; weeding; planting; cleaning up creeks and rivers; and restoring cultural heritage places. More specifically, as Minister Hunt said to the House on February 24, the Green Army will make a real difference to the environment and local communities through projects such as: propagation and planting of native seedlings; weed control; revegetation and regeneration of local parks; habitat protection and restoration; improving water quality by cleaning up waterways; revegetation of sand dunes and mangroves; creek bank regeneration; foreshore and beach restoration;
construction of boardwalks and walking tracks to protect local wildlife; and cultural heritage conservation.

More than 150 projects were announced by the coalition during the 2013 election right across Australia—for example, the Cumberland Conservation Corridor in Sydney; the Kings Bridge to Duck Reach area of the South Esk River in Tasmania; at Cape Moreton on Moreton Island, in Queensland; at Victoria's Barham River system between Apollo Bay and the Marengo Flora Reserve; in the Mettams Pool area in Stirling, Western Australia; and within the Mount Laura Conservation Park in South Australia.

Most importantly the Green Army will provide opportunities for our young Australians looking for a hand-up rather than a handout, as it provides training. It is an initiative designed to be built from the grassroots; fostering teamwork, local ownership and community spirit. The Green Army will deliver tangible benefits for the environment and skills development for thousands of young Australians. It will have significant benefits for young Australians. This is both an environment program and a training program. It will help young people increase their skills base, gain practical experience and enhance their job readiness. It is a matter of choice for our young Australians because it is voluntary. It will recruit young people ages 17-24 who are interested in protecting their local environment while gaining hands-on practical skills and experience. Participants will be eligible to receive an allowance and have the opportunity to gain certificate I or certificate II qualifications in areas such as land management, park management, landscaping or horticulture.

Projects announced during the election campaign will be rolled out from July. This is an example of the coalition government at work, rolling up its sleeves and working carefully and methodically to deliver its promises and commitments to the Australian people.

Applications for service providers closed on 7 May for the tender. Applications for additional first-round projects were subject to a tender process, which closed on 9 May; and, to be eligible projects, had to be ready to commence between July 2014 and June 2015. Applications are currently being assessed, and the Minister Hunt will announce the project in the coming weeks.

Round two of the applications for projects will be released in due course. Projects will be assessed on a merit basis against their environmental benefits, their contribution to the local community and their potential to enhance skills training for participants. I understand that project proposals submitted by individual groups and organisations to the Australian government are diverse. The passing of this legislation will be great news for communities around Australia that will benefit from the rollout of very worthwhile environmental projects.

Given the time, I will not go through the specifics of this bill. I know that Senator Birmingham has indicated some of those specifics. I say, though, that a priority for investment through the initial rounds of the program will be our election commitments. The projects will run between 20 and 26 weeks with participants having the opportunity to develop job ready skills and to undertake training. A Green Army team will be made up of a team supervisor and up to nine eligible participants. While participating in the program, participants will receive a Green Army allowance, which will be disbursed by the provider. Those receiving such an allowance will not receive a social security benefit or social security pension simultaneously—in other words, no double dipping. Team supervisors will be employed and paid a wage by the service provider. Placements will be of a six-month
duration and will provide an alternative to income support for young Australians interested in engaging in work-like experience, activities and training.

The Green Army is a central component of the government's cleaner environmental plan, which is focused on the four pillars of clean air, clean land, clean water and heritage protection. Clean land is essential for a cleaner environment. Our plan is focused on cleaning up and revegetating urban and regional environments and other complementary reforms to strengthen natural resource management and landcare delivery across Australia. The Green Army itself complements the government's Direct Action approach to climate change. It will provide Australians with the opportunity for individuals, communities, organisations and companies to help address our environmental challenges and reduce our emissions on the lowest possible cost basis.

The Green Army builds on the Howard government's successful Green Corps program established in 1996. Over the life of the Green Corps program, participants delivered the following outcomes: propagated and planted more than 14 million trees; erected more than 8,000 kilometres of fencing; cleared more than 50,000 weeds; and constructed or maintained more than 5,000 kilometres of walking track or boardwalks. I wanted particularly to speak on this bill to acknowledge the success of Green Corps in the Illawarra, where my electorate office is located and where I grew up. Along the shores of Lake Illawarra, close to where my parents' home is located, I observed the success of many young Australians who enthusiastically and diligently turned the Lake Illawarra foreshore into a stunning environment where people now walk, talk and play. Also, it was my great pleasure to participate in quite a number of presentation ceremonies after people received their certificates.

Regrettably, though, under Labor's watch, this important initiative was torn apart, rebadged and failed to improve the environment. Then, consistent with other Rudd-Gillard-Rudd programs, it was terminated in 2012. Young people no longer had the opportunity to gain practical skills and improve their local environment. Labor's approach to the environment is to hit families, businesses and the economy with the carbon tax. The carbon tax is an attack on the entire Australian economy. What is worse is that it does not even work. Despite a $7.6 billion tax, emissions for the first 12 months barely changed, by 0.1 per cent. While I am talking about Labor, let me reflect on Labor's commitment to the environment. It is embodied in a carbon tax—and 'Electricity Bill' Shorten is living up to his name.

This project is a plus for the all sections of society, even the Greens. This is surprising, given their claim to green credentials. We are even proposing to look after protected species. The minister recently noted a significant proportion of the work will be focused on protecting species, such as the Tasmanian Devil, the quoll and the bilby—Australian mammals which have been critically damaged or endangered—and yet the Greens are not going to support this bill.

In summary, this is an initiative that has something for everyone, whether it is local or community based or broader with regional benefits. It will provide opportunities for and engage young Australians with a passion for horticulture and community, and protecting endangered species, the beaches, parks, waterways and paths by roadways. I commend the bill to the House.
Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (12:20): I had a forum last week in my electorate that involved a number of participants from Salvation Army job providers and a whole range of other people associated with young people getting jobs in our community. One of the things that they talked about in that process was the concern that they had about what this bill, the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014, would mean for young people and the lack of training and other progressive opportunities beyond the Green Army program. The main thing they talked about was what the program will actually deliver to the young people who are involved in it and what the outcomes were that they would achieve. There are a number of questions that they still have in relation to that.

We believe that environmentally based work and training programs can be effective. They can be an effective pathway to work for many job seekers and they can provide environmental benefits, but they need to be implemented in a proper way where the people involved not only have a good outcome but also have a job to go to at the end of the day. There are a number of questions that remain unanswered in relation to this.

We agree that we need opportunities to get as many people into work as we can, that every individual who can work should be given that chance, but we know that can happen only with appropriate support. That is one of the things we are not sure about with this bill. Does it have appropriate support for young people to gain the skills to have the support they need, to have supervisory experience given to them by trained supervisors? There are a number of issues on which we would like some answers.

One of the main issues is about what it is going to do to young people in terms of coverage under the workplace health and safety act, the compensation act and a range of other questions which are still not answered. There needs to be access to formally recognised training delivered by a registered training organisation under the Australian Qualifications Framework, which gives confidence to participants that they will get appropriate training. We did not get that sense of confidence from people who support job seekers, certainly not in my community, and this is one of the major problems we see with this bill. There is no confidence out in the community in people who are responsible for looking after job seekers to provide them with support and give them confidence to go forward. There are a number of matters in this bill which need to be rectified in relation to that.

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland) (12:24): I rise to speak on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014. I acknowledge at the outset that we do not oppose this legislation. We acknowledge that it provides only a small part of the program but it does provide the necessary legislative underpinning to give effect to payments and allowances for program participants. But one of the critical issues here is: have you got it right? The way you test whether you have got it right is to look at the program, to look at the detail and to look at what the program is going to achieve. You look at how it is going to achieve those things to provide value for money for the Commonwealth and, more importantly, for participants.

What we see from those opposite are slogans; what we have not seen is the detail of how they are going to meet all requirements in the program, those I have just outlined and for individuals who are going to participate. Those opposite can push all that aside and say, ‘We’ll sort that out on the way through.’ If you are going to run a program like this, it is not a case of
sorting it out on the way through. If you look at previous examples in this area, they have not ended well. In this instance workplace rights are paramount, to ensure that individuals who participate in these programs are protected and have sufficient workers compensation cover, that they are paid for what and they have a meaningful outcome to contribute to society through a program like this and not just a slogan to be bandied about. They are the critical parts of any program like this that you would want to see. And can we see it? No, we cannot see. It is opaque like this government. The government does not want to provide the detail—just like in immigration and in other areas.

What we will continue to do—and the Senate is fortunate to be able to do this—is to ensure the effectiveness of this policy. While similar programs have had a long pedigree under governments of both sides, this budget allocates a significant amount of funding to establish this Green Army at the expense of many programs that go to the environment and conservation areas, programs which had been very effective over a long period. Skills and training programs have also been cut to allow this program to go forward. It is the prerogative of the government to do that, but you want to see an outcome. I am concerned that this will produce very little outcome. And where is the detail for the $2.5 billion which the government is committing to its Emissions Reduction Fund? It is not there. Again, they have just set up another slush fund.

I am concerned that they are simply setting up slush funds for money to be handed out to direct action, to add the Green Army to it and say that all of this will contribute to reducing greenhouse gases and that this is our commitment to improving outcomes for young people and also to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. But you would want more than simply the money in a bucket and some people sitting around with a shovel and then digging holes for trees. What you want is more transparency: how they are going to achieve these goals, how they are going to manage these programs and provide value for money, how the programs will be measured to see what outcomes they produce and, importantly in the Green Army space, how to protect individuals to make sure that they have an outcome.

If you look at some of the examples from the past in this area, the main concern you have, when you boil it all down, about a program such as this Green Army program, is this: is the Commonwealth providing a sufficiently robust duty of care to support the Green Army participants? And you come to the conclusion that—based on past practice, where previous coalition governments have made arrangements such as this—this concern should not be dismissed lightly. This concern has been expressed during this debate. I hope it is a concern that will not come to fruition because, if it does, it will not be those opposite, the constructors of these programs, who will be affected; it will not be the ministers or other people who sit in this chamber; it will not be me. It will be the young, vulnerable individuals who will participate in these programs, full of excitement about doing the work, who will find that the protections that should ensure that they are taken care of are not there. As I have said, if you look at past practice, you will see that those fears are there. And those opposite have not done any work to disabuse this chamber of those views at this point.

So I hope that, in the summing up speech by the duty minister, they can disarm me of my concerns and give me the assurance that these programs will be well managed, that they will take into consideration the nature of the individuals who work in these programs—that they
will be young and may be vulnerable—and that sufficient workers compensation and protections will be put in place for these workers, and that they will be working for a goal.

It would be good to see an Australian standards framework put in place. It would be good to see that participants could get certification for the types of work that they participate in. It would be good to see how the end results are going to be measured. It would be good to see how all of that work will come together to give meaningful work to individuals.

Also, in the summing up speech, it would be good to see how the minister can address the ACTU's concerns as put by ACTU President Ged Kearney. She is reported to have said that she is highly critical of the Green Army program. The concerns of the ACTU are reflected in the question: are they going to take away well-paid, well-protected jobs from people and replace them with low-paid, unsafe jobs done by these people? It would be good to see in the summing up speech that that concern is scotched completely—to see that that is not the aim of this program.

In this instance, the summing up speech is an important part of this debate, because it is where we, the opposition, can hold you, the government, to account for the work that you are going to commence today. You will not be able to say in three, six or 12 months time, 'We weren't aware of all these concerns.' You should be able to say, 'We knew of these concerns, we understood them and we then said what we would do about them to ensure that that was not going to be the outcome—that they were going to be addressed right from day one,' because, if it is about getting people who are on the margins of the workforce into work, then there are benefits that can be shared, but if it is about taking well-paid jobs with individuals in them already and shunting out those individuals through this Green Army program, then that would not be a good outcome, quite frankly, at all. That would be about an ideology, not about the individuals and their opportunities. If you examine the past practices and learn from those experiences, then you can take the opportunity of addressing them in the broad work which you are going to commence—because it appears that the work to construct the program has not been done to date, other than constructing a broad slogan.

Another area which I touched on in the beginning which did concern and continues to concern me is this: where is the money coming from? If you look at the budget, the Green Army program is receiving a substantial amount of funding—at the expense of other successful environmental and conservation programs. Programs like Landcare are receiving almost a $500-million cut, along with cuts to research. So if you are going to take away very successful existing programs, then take it on notice that I will continue to oppose those cuts where they trash good work and do not allow good work to be continued. Many other programs will also be affected. There are almost $150 million in cuts to the CSIRO, as well as the 500 jobs. It does seem clear to me that this is a government that simply does not value or understand the importance of science and research. I also worry about how much they value the work of the natural resource management area, and the various bodies that make up that area—56 in total—and the work that they do on the environment, through volunteers, including the work that Landcare does. I worry about how much they value the work that the CSIRO does. They are slashing funding to those bodies to support this program. Ultimately that is a choice I can complain about. What I can do, though, is hold this government to account for its failings in both areas. If the result is that you do not advance and improve on the environmental outcome that the NRM s do, that Landcare does, and you have a less
effective program, such as the Green Army, and also do not ensure that the young vulnerable
defined in that program are looked after, you have failed abysmally to ensure both
the environmental outcomes and the work outcomes for these individuals.

If you look at the work being done in these areas, it is as broad as it is large. The Landcare
groups that I have visited and met over the years have done significant work in ensuring that
our environment is well taken care of. They work all through the South-East Queensland
catchments. Senator Nash is nodding. I assume you know them and work with them from a
New South Wales perspective. You would have NRMs in your group. If you think they are
unimportant, you should also contribute to this debate, Senator. They are important and what
you are doing is now making it completely unclear how they are going to be funded into the
future. Perhaps the Nats are not sure of this; perhaps again the Liberals are treating them like
doormats. The money is being taken out of Caring for Our Country, a significant program that
farmers all across Australia participate in and work in. You are taking it into the Green Army
program, but what you are doing then is leaving groups such as those in complete limbo as to
the work that they will be doing into the future. Both Landcare and NRMs are a great concern
for me and for those groups and many of the volunteers that work in that area.

I turn to how the government is going to provide the outcome of a reduction in carbon. We
continue to remain very concerned about direct action, its effectiveness and expense as a
policy. I think you will find over time that it will have a negligible effect on emissions
reductions and it will not do the job you have said it will do. Labor continues to be concerned
that $500 million is taken from Landcare and that any conservation benefit from the Green
Army will be cancelled out by the value of the work the Landcare volunteers do that will no
longer be done. The National Party knows quite well that Landcare have spent an enormous
amount of time in rural Australia working with farming groups and individual farmers to
improve outcomes for the environment that farmers have engaged in. I will give one example.
One Landcare group in New South Wales had spent 10 or 15 years working in the rural area
and a local farmer had not participated in assisting them in that work, but over time they drew
him in. Why? Because he could see the benefits to the local

environment and decided to
participate and work with Landcare to improve the whole catchment with them.

You are putting at risk all of that with the reduction of funding that could occur in this area.
Farming communities will not volunteer because what they may expect is your Green Army
to turn up to fix all of their problems. You know that is not going to happen. You know that
those outcomes are far from evident. What you have done, though, is create uncertainty where
certainty existed. That is a problem you will have to address as a government in these areas,
because the Landcare groups and natural resource management structures do need certainty
on where their funding is going to come from so that they can continue to do the good work
that they currently do.

You have as a government given repeated assurances to the opposition that this program's
guidelines and contractual arrangements address all of our concerns around training
opportunities and occupational health and safety, and the summing-up speech gives you the
perfect opportunity to do that again. But you could add a little bit more detail when you do
provide that summing-up rather than an assurance. Maybe I am a little harsh, but from this
government an assurance is, quite frankly, not good enough. What I would want to see from
this government is a commitment that the participants will have the opportunity to obtain
formal qualifications, that you will provide structured training, that you will provide safety and safeguards that are required.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Gallacher): Senator Xenophon, you have one minute.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:44): I can do a lot of damage in one minute, Mr Acting Deputy President. I will commence and will continue my speech later. At this stage I cannot support this bill. I believe it is important to provide training pathways and support to help people find gainful employment. In that sense I support the intention of this bill and particularly its aim of linking social and environmental outcomes. They are laudable aims, but my fear is that this bill as it stands does not achieve those aims. Instead, it is missing essential, basic safeguards that would ensure both the protection of workers in the program and the outcomes the bill seeks to achieve.

Debate interrupted.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

John Curtin School of Medical Research

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (12:45): Today I want to speak about what I think is a great adornment to Canberra and also our nation, and that is the John Curtin School of Medical Research. The school was founded in 1948 on the initiative of Howard Florey, who won a Nobel Prize for his contribution to the creation of penicillin. Named after the former Prime Minister John Curtin, the school was established following Florey's vision for an Australian based world class medical research school. One of the driving factors in Florey's desire to see a medical research school in Australia was the reality that many of Australia's most talented scientists and researchers were being lost to overseas institutions.

The idea of a national medical research school was incorporated into The Australian National University Act 1946, and between 1948 and 1951 the first researchers were recruited. The first four heads of department to be appointed were Hugh Ennor, as Professor of Biochemistry, in August 1948; Adrien Albert, as Professor of Medical Chemistry, in January 1949; Frank Fenner, as Professor of Microbiology, in July 1949; and John Eccles, as Professor of Physiology, in December 1951. There was, however, no building or laboratory facilities in Canberra to house this new medical research school. Florey and the team of heads of department met regularly in Canberra to lobby the government for funding and develop plans for a building, but the process was a long and difficult one as Australia emerged from the Second World War.

Nonetheless, researchers were already working away at making some of the great discoveries of medical science. They used facilities in far-flung places such as Melbourne, Dunedin, London and Oxford to do work on, among other things, the influenza virus, tuberculosis and anaemia. It was not until 1952 that temporary buildings were constructed and the first experiments and studies were done here in Canberra. Finally, on 27 March 1958, 10 years after the school was established, the permanent home of the John Curtin School of Medical Research was opened in Canberra by Sir Howard Florey, with Prime Minister Robert Menzies in attendance.

Since then, the school has been a world leader in medical research. At present, there are over 300 members of the John Curtin School of Medical Research, including staff, students
and visitors. It has an operating income of $39.8 million. The John Curtin school can lay claim to four Nobel Prize winners: Sir John Eccles, in 1963, for his research on neuroscience; Peter Doherty and Rolf Zinkernagel, in 1996, for their work on immunology; and, of course, Howard Florey, who had already won his Nobel Prize by the time he came to help launch the school. One of the original heads of department, Professor Frank Fenner, was the chairman of the Global Commission for the certification of smallpox eradication in 1977. More recently, Professor Carola Vinuesa was named Australian Life Scientist of the Year in 2008, and Professor Chris Goodnow was awarded the prestigious GlaxoSmithKline Award for Research Excellence and was elected to the US National Academy of Science in 2013.

The John Curtin School has undertaken medical research on a whole range of important medical issues. The school currently has five departments: the Eccles Institute of Neuroscience, headed by Professor Greg Stuart; the Immunology Department, headed by Professor Chris Goodnow; the Pathogens and Immunity Department, headed by Professor Carola Vinuesa; the Genome Biology Department, headed by Professor David Tremethick; and the Molecular Bioscience Department, headed by Professor Angela Dulhunty. Their research aims to understand and provide novel insights into diseases including cancer, autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis, and neurological conditions such as epilepsy and vision impairment.

The researchers at the John Curtin School of Medical Research are doing real work that will have a real effect on people's lives. For example, a research team led by Associate Professor Mauricio Arcos Burgos, which has been doing work on the genetic component on ADHD, has discovered the role of a particular gene that indicates susceptibility to ADHD and how a patient may respond to particular medications. The results of this research could help identify people who may be diagnosed with ADHD and also help doctors understand what medications different patients will respond to. Researchers are also doing work on cancer treatment. Cancer remains one of the leading causes of death in Australia and it is important that we continue to strive for treatments that help manage the disease and possible cures. At the John Curtin School, researchers led by Dr Anneke Blackburn are working on treatments with less toxicity than current cancer treatments. It is hoped particular drugs will be able to slow the growth of cancer, meaning patients need less toxic treatment, which will lead to better health outcomes.

Another significant area of research is heart disease and, in particular, hypertension—one of the leading risk factors for heart disease in the world. Hypertension is a complex condition and no single drug is effective with all patients. Professor Caryl Hill has led research in exploring the molecular mechanisms of high blood pressure that can lead to hypertension. Dr Hill hopes to develop a new drug that targets certain previously untreated molecular processes to deal with hypertension.

We are all aware of the serious HIV and AIDS problem around the world. Researchers here in Canberra, led by Dr Charani Ranasinghe, are working on a vaccine that will deal with the HIV virus at the molecular level. This research is in its early stages but success could mean millions of lives saved around the world. These are just a few examples—there are many more—and all of these research projects will result in genuine health outcomes for people not just in Australia but around the world.
I had the privilege of visiting the John Curtin School of Medical Research last month and got a glimpse of the world-leading work these scientists are doing. I met the current Director, Professor Chris Parish, and learnt about how they are taking real steps to make sure that we can continue to lead healthy and productive lives. As they look to the future, the John Curtin School of Medical Research has two great initiatives in the pipeline. As a legacy of Canberra’s centenary last year, the school has established a Chair of Cancer Research that will further expand and develop the already strong work the school is doing in cancer research. That position will be filled by the end of this year. The school is also launching a new Centre for Personalised Immunology that will bring together some of Australia’s top researchers and clinicians to explore improvements in diagnosis and individual treatment of patients with immunological diseases.

However, it is not all good news for the John Curtin School of Medical Research. They, like many medical research facilities around Australia, face an ongoing uphill battle to keep up with the increased costs of research and the real issue of new young researchers being lured overseas looking for more funding to find the treatments and cures of the future. This is the same problem Howard Florey identified when the John Curtin School of Medical Research was just an idea. That is one of the reasons that the government’s $20 billion Medical Research Future Fund is so important for the future of our nation. The government understands that healthcare costs are not limited to what a patient pays or does not pay at the doctor or at the pharmacy. Healthcare costs are also affected by preventing and curing diseases and coming up with more effective treatments for medical conditions. To make that happen, we need to fund institutions like the John Curtin School of Medical Research and others around the nation.

In the coming decades, Australia faces many challenges with an ageing population and the rising cost of chronic illness. Investing in medical research will help us deal with those challenges. Australia-wide, we have a health and medical research sector worth around $6 billion that employs 22,000 people, with a further 12½ thousand postgraduate students engaged in research. This is a $20 billion investment into that research sector and into the health system. We will draw on the earnings initially in 2015-16 to provide $20 million a year to supplement the almost $800 million a year that we spend on medical research today, ramping up to a billion dollars by 2022-23, which will be a considerable health and economic benefit to Australia.

For over 60 years, the John Curtin School of Medical Research has been proof that investment in medical research can and will deliver on real-world health outcomes. When it comes to the legacy of the school, it is not just the prizes we should consider; it is the countless lives that have been saved, and will be saved, due to the work being done in this city. This government believes in the ingenuity and enterprise of Australians, and the John Curtin School of Medical Research is testament to that spirit. I thank and congratulate the director of the school, Professor Chris Parish, and his team for the work they are doing, and I look forward to seeing where their world-class research takes us forward in the coming decades.

Australian Human Rights Commission

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (12:54): He works tirelessly to advocate on behalf of people living with a disability, which accounts for 39 per cent of the Australian Human Rights
Commission's caseloads—the largest component of the commission's work, which continues to increase each year—yet soon his role will no longer exist. Graeme Innes has been the Disability Discrimination Commissioner since 2005 and, as well as undertaking roles as the Human Rights Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner during his tenure, he has been the full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner since 2011. In that time, he has been an advocate for individuals and communities affected by discrimination, engaged Australians in a national conversation about human rights and worked with the public service and the private sector to break down barriers to people with a disability.

At budget estimates, he told me that he spends at least 60 hours on average each week working in his field—no wonder, when you consider that complaints on the grounds of disability account for about double the next highest category at about 39 per cent of the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission. Mr Innes believes that complaint levels that high indicate the level of issues and concerns the disability sector faces. Along with helping manage this enormous caseload, Mr Innes has also been an integral part of shaping the new National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The position of Disability Discrimination Commissioner was established in 1993. For more than 20 years, commissioners have been at the forefront of securing access to work, education, premises and services for people with disabilities. But the fight for the rights of Australians with disability is set to become a group effort after changes announced in the Abbott government's first budget. It was revealed that each commissioner has agreed to take a share of the disability workload as it relates to their existing portfolios—as it is the only choice they have under this budget constraint. So, in addition to their current full-time workloads, each commissioner will take a slice of the 39 per cent of the Australian Human Rights Commission's caseload.

It remains to be seen how they will juggle already full-time roles alongside disability discrimination responsibilities—an additional 60 hours a week, the current workload of the Disability Discrimination Commissioner—without compromising the current quality of their own work. The promised appointment of a spokesperson with a lived experience of disability at a downgraded level from commissioner does little to compensate for the loss of Mr Innes in that role. The commission has been dealt a devastating hand and is making a genuine effort to deal with this blow; however, integrating this role should never have been an option.

As the NDIS rolls out across the country, it is more important than ever for there to be a federal advocate devoted to those the scheme is assisting. Equally, people forced over and over again to go through reassessment for their disability support pension as a result of the budget deserve to have a commissioner looking out for their rights.

The last time the Abbott government altered the arrangements for commissioners, the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis, gave the new commissioner a courtesy call ahead of the announcement. Mr Innes has been in contact with Senator Brandis's office and the department since the start of this year trying to discover the fate of his position, but the very first Mr Innes heard that his contract was not going to be renewed was actually on budget night. Buried in the budget papers is a line that callously notes that the dismissal of the Disability Discrimination Commissioner 'will achieve efficiencies within the Human Rights Commission'. Mr Innes is entitled to be a little angry, I would think, but he is surprisingly philosophical about things. As he noted at estimates:
The first that I knew about this issue was when I read it in the budget papers. That was a bit surprising to me because it has been the normal practice in my experience at the commission for there to be discussions when these things are going to occur. I had been contacting the minister's office and the department for the past three or four months, for several reasons. Firstly, obviously I was interested to know what plans I should be making or whether there was any consideration of the possibility of reappointment. Secondly, and more significantly, the previous appointment process, in my view, put the commission at significant risk of losing its A status under the Paris principles, because there was not an open appointment process and I was keen to encourage the department and the minister to appoint a disability discrimination commissioner through an applications process—which has been the practice—and through an open process because I was concerned, from the commission's point of view, about the risk to our A status. So I was not provided with the opportunity to have those discussions and, as I say, the first I knew that the position was to be downgraded was when I read it on the night of the budget in the budget papers.

That is the way that Mr Innes found out about the downgrading of his position—his position as a full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner. That is no way to treat this Disability Discrimination Commissioner, who has been in his role since 2005. It is absolutely disgraceful.

We know, of course, that the terms for individual commissioners are set in statute and Mr Innes understands that it is the prerogative of the Attorney-General to appoint commissioners by whatever process, or lack thereof, that he chooses, even if it contradicts the Paris Principles of an open application process. With characteristic vigour, however, Mr Innes has prosecuted the case for a full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner and has spoken out against the downgrading of his role. As Mr Innes described in Senate budget estimates, people living with a disability in Australia continue to be disadvantaged. He said:

I have done major work in the last 12 months on access to justice—achieving, if you like, freedom of speech and equal access to the justice system for people with disabilities, where we are overrepresented both as victims and as offenders and alleged offenders. We get half the educational outcomes: 25 per cent of people with disabilities achieve year 12 and 50 per cent of the general population achieve year 12. Also, 45 per cent of us live in poverty.

Forty-five per cent of people with disabilities continue to live in poverty, yet the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis, is taking away the person that can advocate for and represent them.

Ahead of what the Abbott government had always foreshadowed was going a tight budget, Senator Brandis made the curious decision to add a commissioner while at the same time taking away more than $1.5 million of funding from the Australian Human Rights Commission's budget. Clearly the Abbott government's decision to appoint Tim Wilson as the freedom commissioner has come at the expense of Australia's first full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner. Clearly the Abbott government has prioritised freedom commissioner over having a Disability Discrimination Commissioner.

The issues faced by the disability sector are complex and multifaceted. Disability transforms the perspective of those it affects—a point that Mr Innes made to the estimates committee when arguing for a full-time commissioner. But we know that when a former fellow of the Institute of Public Affairs, and a personal friend of Senator Brandis, Tim Wilson, became the freedom commissioner in February, it hit the Australian Human Rights Commission's budget by around $700,000. Something had to give, obviously. To cope with the new budgetary constraints, the commission will be forced to relegate the disability
discrimination role to a part-time role or a shared responsibility. I think it is absolutely shameful that there will no longer be a full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner when I have outlined the weight of the caseload that the commission faces and the issues facing the disability sector in Australia. So many Australians living with a disability will no longer have a full-time advocate.

During budget estimates Mr Innes described some of the issues that he dealt with as Disability Discrimination Commissioner. I quote:

I have dealt with issues of concern in Brisbane, where audible traffic signals are turned off at night; so there is effectively a curfew for people who are blind or who have low vision. I have dealt with a range of issues arising from the budget, both positive and negative. The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme: I have been very involved in its development and rollout and the benefits that that will bring for people with disabilities; the impact of the budget in a range of other areas; the disproportionate impact of any medical co-payments on people with disability-related illnesses; the disadvantage for people on the disability support pension who are being assessed again when they have already been assessed for that; for people under 35; the problems with regard to employment for people with disabilities, where we work at a rate 30 per cent lower than the general population.

This is a significantly disadvantaged sector and I am dealing with issues that relate to that every day that I am in this role. … I do not suggest for a minute that my colleagues and staff at the commission will not continue to work very effectively in this role, but that will be a significant disadvantage to them and to the disability sector in Australia.

That makes the impact of Senator Brandis's decision, the Abbott government's decision—reducing the commission's budget and no longer having a full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner—fairly clear.

I particularly want to draw on impact that Graeme Innes has had in his role. He has had such an impact in our Australian community in dealing with issues to do with disability from his own personal experience. I think he summed it up very well during budget estimates when he said:

I think there is little doubt in my mind, having been a commissioner for some eight years, and in the mind of the disability sector, that the disability sector is significantly advantaged by having a full-time disability discrimination commissioner with lived experience of disability and with knowledge of the disability sector. My lived experience of disability goes through all of my life. My experience in the disability sector started in my 20s, so I bring to the role 30 or 40 years' experience. Whilst all of my colleagues at the commission are skilled and I have a lot of regard for them, none of them would be able to bring that experience to the role and, in my view, that would be a significant downgrading of the position.

I stand in support of the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, who has asked Prime Minister Tony Abbott to reinstate the Disability Discrimination Commissioner as a full-time role. What Australians with a disability have had for all of these years is someone who understands too well the challenges they face, who has empathy for their difficulties. What they need for the future is a full-time commissioner who can imagine an Australia without barriers for people who are born with or acquire a disability. Mr Graeme Innes was that man and will leave a lasting legacy. He has been an extremely powerful advocate for people with disability, working hard every day to ensure that people with disability have access to the same rights and opportunities as all Australians. That is the kind of society that we should want for all people, and that is the role that Mr Innes has been able to provide. Labor thanks
Graeme Innes for the remarkable work that he has done at the Australian Human Rights Commission over the last decade on disability rights. He is leaving a lasting legacy. It is just such a shame that Senator Brandis is so short-sighted and is doing this terrible injustice for people in the disability community.

Budget

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (13:09): After a group of students disrupted the normally carefully stage managed ABC Q&A program in early May, many people, particularly on the conservative side of politics, grumbled about their attitude and apparent disrespect. Not surprisingly, most of those tut-tutting are not going to be directly affected by the government's sweeping changes to higher education. Many of them were established media columnists and TV show hosts who enjoy a significant voice in our democracy. But most Australians—particularly young Australians, the ones who will be hardest hit by this budget—do not have this voice, do not have access to public discourse.

The Abbott government's budget is an attack on public higher education. For the first time, the government will give private for-profit education companies the same access to government funding as public universities, forcing our public universities to compete with private companies for funds. The government will also deregulate university fees for the first time, allowing more prestigious institutions to set their own fees, with no cap from the government. The Commonwealth subsidy per place has also been reduced, and the government will now charge interest rates of up to six per cent on student debt. Under the coalition's model, students will bear the cost of a new elitist university system though higher fees and more debt. Under this government, $5.8 billion has been ripped out of the sector. Student fees will skyrocket under deregulation. Students will pay higher interest rates on their HECS debt and be required to pay it back earlier. Postgraduate students will pay thousands of dollars a year in extra fees. And public universities will now be forced to compete with private education companies for government funding.

While deregulation of student fees and government subsidies to the private sector will drastically change the higher education landscape, the single biggest direct cut is the scrapping of current HECS debt arrangements and the implementation of a new regressive model for repayment. Students will pay an extra $3.2 billion for university in the form of a lower repayment threshold, the amount one can earn before being required to pay back the HECS debt, and the charging of real interest rates of up to six per cent on their debt. The latter change is perhaps the most insidious. Currently, HECS debt earns interest only at the rate of inflation, which is currently about 2.9 per cent. Charging real interest means an individual's debt will continue to grow over the course of their working life, at a rate higher than wage increases.

These changes are massively out of step with public opinion. Polling conducted over many years reaffirms the view that the public want our universities to be well funded. A recent poll commissioned by the National Tertiary Education Union showed that 70 per cent of Australians oppose university fee increases for students and that higher education reforms are one of the most unpopular measures in the budget. Polling by Essential Media has also confirmed that the government's cuts to higher education are one of the most despised elements of this budget. This is because Australians understand the vital role higher education

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plays in our society, in terms of both promoting equality of opportunity and laying the foundations for the smart and innovative economy we need in the 21st century.

The coalition's brutal budget would make our system more elitist and more unfair. Let us have no doubts about why these changes are being made. They are not in the interests of most students and future workers. They benefit a handful of the country's wealthiest people and private institutions that stand to make windfall profits from students and workers. These changes are about looking after the interests of the corporations close to the coalition. The private education sector donates large sums of money to the coalition parties. It is worth noting that the private education sector has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party in the past decade and is now poised to subsidise their profits with taxpayer funds in a deregulated free-for-all environment.

Analysis released by the Greens today reveals that the Abbott government's approach to higher education policy is to rob the public university system to subsidise private providers. The government's massive budget cuts will rip hundreds of millions of dollars out of our public universities, increase student fees and saddle students with more debt—all so it can fund almost $1 billion in public subsidies to the private sector. The Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, needs to front up to university students who will pay tens of thousands of dollars more for their degrees and explain why he is taking money out of their pockets to subsidise the private sector.

To subsidise private profits while gutting the public sector is a stark reflection of this government's priorities. Pushing costs and risks onto those in the community who can least afford it pushes us further on the road to a US model of education. For students, this dashes their hopes of education being an equaliser. For education institutions and their staff, we have seen what this model has done to TAFE under the direction of conservative state governments. The coalition's moves to Americanise higher education will see the Australian university system mimic the worse aspects of the US system. In the United States, total student debt is over $1 trillion. Students in the US will graduate with an average debt of US$29,000 or A$31,000.

Analysis by the Grattan Institute's Andrew Norton, a higher education policy advisor to the coalition government, has estimated student fees—and, as a result, student debt in Australia—will be significantly higher under the coalition's reforms. This is very telling information. Similar analysis by the National Tertiary Education Union and Universities Australia backs up these figures from Mr Norton, the coalition's adviser. It is very likely students in Australia will graduate with more debt than students in the US. It is hard to believe, but that is where we are heading: Australians graduating with more debt than students in the US.

But it gets worse, as the interest rate on student debt could also be higher in Australia than in the US. Students who receive government loans in the US in 2013 will pay off their loans at a fixed interest rate of 3.86 per cent. This interest rate will not change regardless of how long it takes a graduate to pay back their debt. Under the coalition's changes, current and future students—as well as anyone with an existing student debt—will pay off their loans with a variable interest rate, tied to the 10-year government bond rate, up to a cap of six per cent. The current bond rate is 3.76 per cent. However, the long-term average is 5.5 per cent. So it is very likely students in Australia will be paying higher interest rates on their debt than those in US.
Women, people from disadvantaged backgrounds and low-income earners will be the hardest hit by these changes. We know from the US example that people from disadvantaged backgrounds are debt averse and will not consider university education if they are faced with a huge debt at the end of it. I know this very well myself. I come from a working-class family and I am the first in my family to have the opportunity to go to university. I was then, and I continue to be, surrounded by people from working-class backgrounds who do not want to start off life with a debt. That is already deterring them from even considering going to university.

The government's refusal to be open and transparent and to release its own modelling on the impact of its massive changes prompted the Greens to build the whatwillmydegrecost.com.au website, to help students, future students and graduates assess the potential impact of these changes. If this government was honest, it would have provided such a website—because people need this information. The website has been accessed more than two million times and thousands of students a day continue to use it.

The phenomenal response to our website shows that enormous numbers of students, graduates, future students and their families are deeply worried about the coalition government's brutal budget cuts to higher education. This concern about this issue is not stopping; it is rippling across Australia—not just through working-class families but also middle-class families. It has a very big reach. It is calculated that students will, on average, have $46,000 more student debt and take eight more years to pay it off. These changes are going to have severe financial repercussions on students and their families. Right now, parents across Australia are wondering how their kids will afford to go to university. Even university vice chancellors, many of whom have been pushing for deregulation, are calling on the Minister for Education to rethink his reforms, particularly the proposals to increase interest rates on student debt and for there to be direct cuts to Commonwealth grants.

The world is facing unprecedented economic, environmental and migration challenges. At the very time we need a smart and innovative workforce to drive a renewable energy revolution, the coalition is gutting the labs and factories. At the very time we need a more knowledgeable and empathetic community to embrace people from all over the world, the coalition is engineering a more individualistic and selfish dog-eat-dog Australia.

Already, the University of Melbourne has announced that it will cut 540 administrative jobs as part of a $70 million savings program. Victoria University will shed about 300 staff as it battles to find up to $50 million in savings. La Trobe University will axe 350 jobs. In New South Wales, Southern Cross University is looking at cutting five per cent of its general staff. Other universities are engaged in protracted battles with staff unions over job cuts, wages and conditions.

Australia is a rich country. We can afford to fund our universities. The Greens have put forward many revenue measures that could be put in place to support education—from ending subsidies to polluting industries through to taxing Australia's big banks. Instead, at the same time as this government is making savage cuts to higher education, it is rolling back the carbon tax and the mining tax, forcing the burden onto our students and researchers. Last year, the Greens' plan to increase funding to Australia's universities was costed at $1.4 billion over four years. Fuel tax credits for miners alone cost the budget $2 billion per year. Every
Australian student, researcher and university staff member should remember this when they cast their vote at the next election. It is a damning indictment on this government's priorities.

In the end, this government's higher education agenda, like the rest of its budget, is unfair. The attempt to sell it as a tough but fair budget is simply laughable, and the public recognises it for the fraud that argument is. The government is giving companies $4 billion in cuts at the same time as it is cutting the value of pensions. It is cutting a tax on polluters and replacing it with a handout to them. It is giving tens of millions of dollars in superannuation concessions to wealthy people and cutting the low-income superannuation guarantee. This budget was not an attack on waste or an attempt to make our financial situation more sustainable; it was a massive transfer of a burden away from wealthy people and corporations onto low-income people, pensioners and students. The Greens will continue to stand with Australians who want education to be a force for equality and innovation, while Mr Hockey, Mr Abbott and their mates in big business remain set on protecting privilege and profits of unsustainable and unimaginative 19th-century industries.

**Domestic Violence**

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (13:23): The 23rd of May this year was a mild, sunny day in Santa Barbara, California. Shoppers were out buying their groceries. University students from the University of California were catching the warm spring sun. The Californian tranquillity was broken by a killing spree, with six people dead and 13 injured at the hands of 22-year-old Elliot Rodger before he turned the gun on himself.

This incident is remarkable in a number of respects. Firstly, it is shocking that a young person with their whole life ahead of them would commit such an atrocity. Mental health is a significant issue for young adults worldwide. It is also appalling that Elliot Rodger had such easy access to Glock and SIG Sauer pistols, but that is an issue for my colleagues in the United States congress to consider. What is most deplorable is the bigoted, chauvinistic, prejudiced contempt shown by Elliot Rodger towards all women for no reason other than the fact that they happen to be female.

Elliot Rodger, though, I have to say, was not alone in his hatred of women. On the contrary, Elliot Rodger was one of many young men who are united in their violent thoughts, abusive comments and sadistic outlook towards women. The events of 23 May exemplify the horrendous and degrading treatment that many women, particularly young women, are facing in the modern world. This gives me food for thought as I reflect on the prevalence of domestic violence.

Domestic violence and violence against women do not just happen in the home. Domestic violence is not limited to hitting, kicking, pinching, punching or even, dare I say, shooting a woman. Elliot Rodger felt that women needed to be punished for refusing to sleep with him. He spoke of women as objects to possess, to acquire, to dominate or even to control. The disturbing events of 23 May exemplify the objectification and degradation of women as a form of domestic violence. Women should never be punished for seeking to control their own lives, their own destinies or their own sexuality. Male entitlement is a challenge to all societies and communities, whether they are in boardrooms, classrooms or offices, on sporting fields or in the realms of cyberspace.
Society needs to do much more to identify and manage misogyny. The consequences will be enormous if we fail at this task. Friends, families, mental health professionals, GPs, coworkers and colleagues are all responsible for identifying and recognising misogyny and domestic violence and calling it out when it exists. We all need to take more responsibility for encouraging young boys and girls to respect each other in the professional, recreational and personal spheres.

The media has a vital role in ensuring that misogynistic comments are not considered the norm. I can think of one recent occasion where I turned on breakfast television to see a male co-anchor turn to his female colleague and tell her: 'Hug it out, b-ch'—and I think you can use your imagination. Regardless of how hip or trendy these turns of phrase are, they can do lasting damage to the younger members of our society who see media personalities as idols or people worth emulating.

It is the same misogynistic approach that has fuelled the rage and hatred that claimed the life of Jill Meagher—someone whose sad loss of life I have spoken of at length in this place—and encourages men to see rape as a tool of assertion, self-projection, domination and alpha masculinity.

This may seem radical—and it is—but fanatical haters of women are much more commonplace in our society than we like to think. They can range from people like Elliot Rodger, who sought to physically harm and punish women for being female, to people who claim that women become pregnant to get paid or have children so they can access a paid leave scheme from their workplace. We have actually heard this in the commentary here not so long ago.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey provides a snapshot of the prevalence of domestic violence in Australia, covering physical violence, physical threat, sexual assault and sexual intimidation. Just under 20 per cent of Australian women aged 18 years and over have experienced violence from a partner since the age of 15. These statistics are shocking, especially when we factor in those who do not wish to disclose this information in a public survey. We can take the liberty to presume that the real numbers may be somewhat larger, particularly given that one Australian woman will die each week at the hands of her partner.

I would like to briefly touch on the importance of ensuring that children bear witness to our best behaviour and best attitudes as adults. In the ABS survey, the majority of women who had experienced physical and/or sexual abuse had children in their care at the time of the abuse. A number of women reported it likely that children had seen or heard the violence. International research has shown that infants, children, adolescents and young adults have suffered developmental, social, psychological and emotional damage from seeing or hearing domestic violence. Children copy what they see. They follow what we do, not just what we say.

Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has described violence against women as 'the most shameful human rights violation [which] knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth' and that it has significant repercussions for global development, equality and peace. I am sickened that one in three young girls today will suffer violence, because she happened to be born female. Kofi Annan has likened gender-based violence to:
... a pandemic as HIV/AIDS or malaria. But is generally downplayed by the public at large and by policy makers who fail to create and fund programs to eradicate it.

Domestic violence, misogyny and gender harassment are not just women's issues: every man has a mother; some have sisters, wives and daughters. We all have the power to prevent violence against women.

According to the White Ribbon Foundation, most perpetrators of domestic abuse are 'respectable men who are very much in control'. There is absolutely nothing—zero, nada, zilch; however you want to put it—that is respectable about domestic abuse. We must blow this perception out of the water at every possible opportunity.

Violence against women is the biggest cause of death or serious injury for women between the ages of 18 and 45. Let me just say that again: it is the biggest cause of death—domestic violence kills more women between 18 and 45 than anything else in the modern world. We need to ask ourselves as concerned citizens and policymakers what more we can do to ensure that women grow up with the freedom to choose who they marry, who they associate with and who they sleep with.

It is not that we are failing. Organisations like the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights are making vast progress in identifying and educating women from different backgrounds and with different language requirements about domestic violence and what they can do to support women in their communities. I want to put on the record my commendation for the work that they do, because they work in incredibly difficult and tight circumstances and cultural situations and they do tremendous work.

Today I use this forum as a call to arms for all Australian men, because it is men who should be listening today. Australia needs a champion of domestic violence so that we start thinking of violence against women as a male issue—and it is—not just as an issue about women for women. We need a male champion.

And this is not to say it is a purely male problem either. Just as Jeff Kennett and my colleague the Hon. Andrew Robb have become the public faces of male depression—and we know the wonderful book that Hon. Andrew Robb wrote in relation to his 'black dog'—and Danny Green has become the public champion of drunken violence, we need a champion of domestic violence who can make a compelling case for men like Elliot Rodger to reconsider their actions and think twice before they commit heinous acts of terror against and abuse towards women.

Domestic violence, violence against women—however you want to label it—violates a number of fundamental human rights. As a very proud member of the Liberal Party, I believe in freedom as the best equaliser and means to provide opportunity. All individuals should have the right to freedom of association, freedom of communication, dignity, the right to live safely in their own home, freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of religion. Just because an individual is born male or female does not mean that they have the right to dominate, abuse or sexually mistreat those of the opposite sex.

It is vital that we do all we can to tackle the issue of domestic violence internationally but also here in Australia. A lot of conversation happens in this chamber and the other place at times about women's rights issues overseas, but we do not give enough attention to it in our own country.
Women should never be objectified or degraded. We should never be punished for wanting to control our own destiny. This is not just an issue of fundamental, moral and ethical right; it is an issue of national importance to our productivity, our economy, our way of life, our democracy. Every one of us needs to champion women's rights and every one of us needs to stand up and be counted and be a champion against domestic violence.

Aged Care

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (13:36): On several occasions this year and last year I spoke about the challenges that the aged-care sector faces as the baby boomer generation heads towards retirement. It goes without saying that we should never consider an ageing population to be a problem. In fact, the very incidence of an ageing population demonstrates how far first-world nations like Australia have come in terms of health outcomes that are extending our lives. We should all be thankful for that. But, of course, an ageing population does present challenges as well as opportunities, and we need to carefully consider how we are going to prepare ourselves.

As many people in this chamber are well aware, the pressures on the aged-care system, including on residential facilities, are enormous and are growing by the day. One option to confront these challenges is simply to cut away at aged-care expenditure and hope that these small changes will pacify those agitating for real change and direction. This is essentially what the Abbott government has opted to do in its first budget. First on the chopping block was the Andrew Fisher Applied Policy Institute for Ageing, which is a body charged with placing Australia at the forefront of policy development on the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population. There was also the cessation of the aged care payroll tax supplement and changes to the indexation of pensions. Both changes spelt disaster for aged-care providers, which I will explore in a moment, but that was not all. There was also the decision to cut the rate of real growth in the home support and respite program, and confirmation that the government intended to reprioritise the workforce supplement. As a result of this last change, there is absolutely no guarantee that workers in the aged-care sector will see an improvement in their pay and conditions.

The key point to note from examining these changes in close detail is that there is no real leadership or vision from this government on aged-care or ageing policy. The Treasurer's budget moved some figures about, made some undoubtedly harmful cuts, and presented itself as a government quite willing to create sovereign risk to investment in the sector. These changes generally slipped under the radar of the mainstream media as attention was focused elsewhere. This is simply a reality when it comes to journalistic coverage of aged care in this country.

Those with a real interest in this sector agree—and I repeat—there was quite simply no leadership or vision from this government. The Treasurer's budget moved some figures about, made some undoubtedly harmful cuts, and presented itself as a government quite willing to create sovereign risk to investment in the sector. These changes generally slipped under the radar of the mainstream media as attention was focused elsewhere. This is simply a reality when it comes to journalistic coverage of aged care in this country.

Those with a real interest in this sector agree—and I repeat—there was quite simply no leadership or vision from this government. It is almost as if those opposite are uninterested in aged-care policy and the outcomes that will impact older people. There was no plan beyond cuts, no scope for future reforms, nothing to indicate that this government takes the welfare of older Australians seriously. This was made abundantly clear during the recent Senate estimates hearings when the responsible minister, Senator Fifield, refused to even vaguely defend the government's budgetary changes. He was given numerous opportunities to spell out how his government would address the challenges facing the sector and baulked at every opportunity. The most notable example occurred when he was asked about the significant
challenges facing the aged-care workforce and what his government's plans were. His response was glib and uninspiring. He said:

The main workforce pressure facing the workforce is bodies, and creating many, many more.

That was it. That was his answer to how the government would solve the pressures faced by a sector under enormous burden to provide care and support for older Australians.

Half of the aged-care workforce will retire in the next 10 years from this sector. It is a sector that suffers from a high turnover of staff, low pay and poor conditions. It is a sector that we will increasingly rely upon as our baby boomer generation ages and as more and more people require care at home or in a residential facility. This is the situation we face and the minister's answer was to say that we need more bodies. Well thanks, 'Captain Obvious', but how exactly do you plan to boost the aged-care workforce and attract new staff? Or, in language that you may prefer, how are you going to locate more bodies? What is the plan?

Labor's vision was to improve the pay and conditions of those in the aged-care workforce. That is why we dedicated $1.2 billion dollars to a workforce supplement, which was going to deliver pay rises for some 350,000 aged-care workers. It was a pay rise to people who earn very little as it is—nurses who are paid less than those in hospitals and people who are dedicated to caring for the elderly. Instead, in this budget we found out that this supplement would be reprioritised and simply handed to providers to spend as they wish. Now, of course, the response from the coalition is that this money will naturally flow to aged-care workers via the providers. But, if you look closely at this short-sighted and deceitful budget, you will find out that that is not the case. Why? Because for-profit providers are reeling from the cessation of the aged care payroll tax supplement, which is a supplement that they have relied on for decades. These providers have noted that this cut will significantly affect their bottom line and restrict their capacity to use the extra subsidised funds to boost the pay and conditions of workers. So, really, the reprioritisation of the workforce supplement was just a tricky way of moving money around.

The government has performed a neat magic trick here. It has redirected the workforce supplement funds to providers via an extra subsidy, but this will not make up for the hit that for-profit providers will take with the scrapping of the payroll supplement. It is basically a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. The government clearly thinks that aged-care providers and the aged-care workforce will be too busy to notice. This is a real kick in the teeth for people who work extremely hard in trying conditions, with very little pay, to care for our older people at the most vulnerable point in their lives.

This is a heartless government and one completely unconcerned about what the future of aged care looks like in this country. Do not believe what they are saying publicly about the budget. Workers will not really benefit, and once again I emphasise that they have no long-term plan for addressing challenges that the sector faces in attracting staff. The scrapping of the payroll tax supplement occurred with no consultation and will have an enormous impact. Even the Commission of Audit warned that, if the supplement was scrapped:

… it is likely that these costs would be passed on to new residents.

That is right, it is the older Australians that will have to make up for the shortfall. The document also said:
The aged care sector is generally not characterised by high profits and some providers may struggle to continue without this subsidy.

And that is right; it is a real threat. In the long term this cut may prove disastrous and, indeed, more costly for future governments. This is because a lack of proper funding or shortfalls in revenue may lead to residential facilities closing, which could potentially propel thousands of older Australians into the public system. The cost of providing a hospital bed is more than six times that of the highest residential care funding, yet that is something that this government is seemingly willing to risk.

Another reason this change is so short-sighted and self-defeating is that it deters investment into the aged-care sector. When the announcement was made that the payroll tax supplement would be scrapped, a large company, Japara Healthcare, went into a trading halt whilst it considered this drastic cut. The fact that this company decided to take these steps in examining potential damage to its earnings outlook demonstrates how damaging the cessation of the supplement is for the sector as a whole. It comes at a time when the residential aged-care sector would need to build close to 80,000 additional aged-care places over the next decade. This involves an estimated investment of around $25 billion over the next decade, and we have a government intent on creating sovereign risk.

The cessation of this supplement does not just eat away at the tight profit margins that many for-profit providers survive on. It does something else that this government is apparently concerned about: it creates more red tape. It is true that the providers can seek an exemption from paying payroll tax, but to do so they will have to apply to each state and territory, one by one. Minister Fifield should take responsibility for this, but his response during the estimates hearings was simply to say, and again I quote directly:

The states and territories are responsible for their own tax base. Payroll is a state and territory tax base; they are responsible for determining the application of the taxes.

So much for a government that is going to cut red tape. According to him it is as simple as that. The government was responsible for suddenly pulling the rug out from under the profit providers and introducing this change with precisely zero warning or consultation. It is little wonder that they did not consult, because they would have known what the answer would be. This is, as I would describe it, a dereliction of their duty. They have not thought through the implications of this. It is as simple as that.

Let us take another example: the decision to achieve savings by changes to how pensions and equivalent payments are indexed. It really is no surprise that the government was silent on how this would impact on aged-care revenue, which is worked out at 85 per cent of the age pension. Therefore, this change will not only hit the hip pockets of pensioners, which is bad enough, but it will also have a dramatic impact on the revenue of residential providers who, as I mentioned a moment ago, already operate on extremely tight profit margins. Sure, the government achieves an initial saving, but in the long term the very viability of the sector is harmed.

I cannot stress enough the point that nothing in the budget will, in the long term, really solve the underlying challenges we face in providing proper care and support for our ageing population. Cuts and sneaky tactics to 'reprioritise' money may in the short term provide some cover, but that is not what leadership is about. If we rely on cuts, we quite simply will not be able to properly manage the challenges that this sector faces.
As the Grattan Institute pointed out in their report *Game-changers: economic reform priorities for Australia*, we already have one of the most efficient health systems in the OECD. The costs of caring for an ageing population are so great that no level of cost-cutting, no matter how severe, will really address the problem. Instead, this government needs to consider new innovations and comprehensive plans for how we are going to provide for an ageing population.

For a start they can consider something that Labor is 100 per cent committed to: new technologies to improve the lives of older Australians and save billions in unnecessary health expenditure. There is the potential of telehealth. On numerous occasions in this chamber I have highlighted the benefits that would bring to Australia generally, but in particular to older Australians. Telehealth allows medical professionals to monitor and consult people in their homes, where they can live comfortably rather than being in a residential facility or hospital bed. But, as I have said previously, to fully realise the potential of telehealth, we need all of our older Australians to have access to reliable, medical-grade internet connections. We need them to be connected to 21st century fibre-to-the-home broadband, and Labor's National Broadband Network model would deliver such a connection to 93 per cent of our premises. The technology to support telehealth is available right now and is moving ahead in leaps and bounds. High-definition, internet-ready 4K televisions and monitors are already on the market and they are going to require more and more bandwidth.

Telehealth consultations will not function properly if medical professionals have access to 21st century broadband but older Australians at home are relying on only 19th century copper wire. There will be insufficient service at the recipient's end in terms of the bandwidth going out of the home. We must see Labor's NBN model for what it really is: a massive infrastructure achievement that will enable older Australians to access medical-grade broadband connections.

Older Australians deserve better. They deserve a government that is willing to prepare for the future, to invest in aged care, to encourage development in the sector and to boost the pay and conditions of workers. Right now, older Australians have been let down by a budget that was derived out of spite and heartless consideration for the people that they are attacking in this budget—those who are less able to look after themselves: pensioners, families and older Australians. We deserve better. Those on the other side of the chamber should hang their heads in shame for having no vision and no plan for the future care of older Australians.

**Defence Abuse Response Taskforce**

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (13:51): I refer to two documents that have been tabled in this chamber this morning. The first is the sixth interim report of the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce, the DART. This is the three-monthly report provided to me and the Attorney-General by the head of the task force, the Hon. Len Roberts-Smith. I would like to personally thank, and put on the record my thanks, Len Roberts-Smith and his team for the outstanding work that they have done in addressing the matter of Defence abuse in recent times.

I am very grateful for the report. It makes clear that significant and positive progress is being made in dealing with some of the 2,400 complaints to the DART. While I will have more to say on the future of the DART following the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee inquiry, in consultation with the Attorney-General and the head
of the DART, I really wanted to say a few words about the second document that was tabled today.

The second document is the DART's report on abuse at HMAS Leeuwin. The report is a record of allegations of widespread serious and institutionalised abuse experienced by more than 200 junior recruits—young men, or I should say children, aged between 15 and 17 years of age—who trained at HMAS Leeuwin between the 1960s and the 1980s. Certainly, many of the boys who were trained at HMAS Leeuwin were not abused or mistreated; but that is no particular triumph because for a significant number of the boys who trained with them, training was a horror and something that has profoundly damaged them, with significant adverse consequences for the way they live, and have lived, their lives. I have read the report and I have to say that I am very, very disturbed by some of the things I have read. More personally, I can tell you that I am profoundly moved by the direct and courageous way these men were able to revisit and recount events that occurred when they were children.

All Australians would, and should, be shocked and appalled at many of the stories captured in this report. These are things that should never have happened. They should never have happened to anyone, and certainly not to some 200 children who were under our care. The report is a powerful record of things past, things that were done and things remembered. Along with the repeated stories of sexual assault and humiliation, there is one quote that particularly upset me. It came from a man who said that, while he could tell his father some of the things that happened to him, he could not tell him everything:

I was too ashamed to tell my dad all the graphic details of the sexual attacks. Shame and discussed, mingled with self-hatred, is a very powerful deterrent to spilling guts even when it could save you.

No-one should have to feel this way, and certainly no-one in our care. No-one in the Australian Navy, the Australian Army for the Australian air force—in fact, no person in any workplace in Australia—should ever feel they cannot tell their family about what happens to them at work. No-one should ever feel that they cannot save themselves by speaking up.

As many senators know, I am very proud to be Australia's Defence minister; it is the best job in government. As the Defence minister I am making it my business and my quest, and the business of every person in the Australian Defence Force, to make each section, platoon, flight, ship or brigade a better place to be. In the next few weeks I will have more to say about how to make the Australian Defence Force a better place—a place that is, simply put, more just.

I do note the report's comment that complaints of abuse occurring at recruiting training schools make up very high proportion of the complaints received by the task force. As I have said before, Defence is on a pathway to significant cultural change—and I will have more to say about that, too, in the future. I also note that the head of the task force believes that a royal commission may not necessarily result in a broader understanding of the nature and extent of the abuse at HMAS Leeuwin than is provided in the report. However, I note that many of the allegations of abuse fall within the terms of reference of the current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse and I understand that the head of the task force will be working closely with the HMAS Leeuwin men, seeking their consent to hand their information to that royal commission.

There are many stories in the report. Senators will be profoundly disturbed and appalled by many of them. You will also be moved by the courage, as I have said, of the men who have
come forward to tell their stories now. We need to do more, we must do more and we will do more. We owe nothing less to our young people in the Australian Defence Force, their parents and, in particular, those children of HMAS Leeuwin who were so hurt and so damaged and were unable to save themselves. They were, quite frankly, utterly abandoned.

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (13:56): by leave—I would like to make a brief statement in relation to today's report on abuse at HMAS Leeuwin. The abuse detailed in the defence abuse review tribunal's report is appalling and I extend my sympathies on behalf of the Labor Party to the victims of this horrific treatment. I would like to thank the task force for their dedicated work on this report and the more than 200 former junior recruits who have shown commendable courage in providing personal accounts to the task force. I would also like to commend the Chief of the Defence Force and the service chiefs for the good work they have done and continue to do to prevent all forms of abuse in the ADF. Labor will continue to support the ADF leadership with their ongoing program of cultural change.

Sitting suspended from 13:58 to 14:00

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Paid Parental Leave

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (14:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Abetz—and it is not a point of order at this stage, Senator Abetz!

The PRESIDENT: Very well said, Senator Moore.

Senator MOORE: I refer to comments made by senior Liberal Senator Ian Macdonald yesterday when he described the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave scheme as:

... an age-of-entitlement allowance to certain individual Australians.

Does the minister agree with senior Liberal Senator Macdonald?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:00): I am sure that Senator Moore is referring to Senator Macdonald's seniority in this place rather than the years that he has lived on this planet. But I can indicate that the government's position on the Paid Parental Leave scheme is very clear. As I indicated yesterday, we believe that it is good, sound public policy. I simply remind Senator Moore that these are the sorts of conditions that public servants in Canberra enjoy, and we want to have those conditions enjoyed by other women in the community who do not happen to have the good fortune of being employed in the Public Service.

As I indicated to the Senate yesterday, the Liberal Party is a broad church that brings together a diversity of opinions and views on a whole range of issues and therefore it does not surprise that within the broad church of the Liberal Party there are also diverse views in relation to the Paid Parental Leave scheme. Because we are a party of freedom of speech, because we are a party that believes in individuals being able to express themselves, it stands to reason that we will have people within our parliamentary party who do not necessarily fully accept and adopt all policies of the government. Having said that, the government is determined to press ahead with this vitally important social reform which will be good for our country's population, will be good for our country's productivity and will be good for the
participation rate within the workforce and the maintenance of skills, especially of the women within our community.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (14:02): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Allowing for the fact of the very broad church of the government, I would like to find out further, Minister, whether you agree with other comments made by Senator Ian Macdonald—who has now joined us—yesterday when he said about the Paid Parental Leave scheme that it is giving businesses a tax cut so that they do not have to use their own funds for a Paid Parental Leave scheme, but that then whacking them with a 1.5 per cent levy to pay for the universal scheme just does not make sense. Does the minister, allowing for the broad church, agree with those comments from Senator Macdonald?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:03): I agree with Senator Macdonald about the need to abolish the carbon tax. I agree with Senator Macdonald about the need to abolish the mining tax. I agree with Senator Ian Macdonald about the need to ensure that we have a proper framework for the live export trade, and—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I raise a very personal point of order in terms of relevance. In terms of the process, we would like to know whether the minister agrees with Senator Macdonald not on all those other things but particularly on the comments that I asked.

The PRESIDENT: I do draw the minister's attention to the question, and there are 39 seconds remaining, Minister.

Senator ABETZ: What I was wanting to show and put on public display is that the things that unite Senator Ian Macdonald and myself are a lot greater than the very few issues on which we might part company. That was the purpose of my introduction to that answer, because Senator Ian Macdonald is a great contributor to this place, a wonderful contributor—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Abetz, resume your seat as you are entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator Cameron: Senator Macdonald has carved youse up!

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On my right and on my left! Senator Abetz.

Senator ABETZ: Mr President, reaching across the political divide, I agree with Senator Mark Bishop's observations about how Labor Party policies were destroying his home state of Western Australia. That does not mean I agree with everything he said, but I do agree with that. (Time expired)

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: When there is silence on both sides we will proceed.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (14:05): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer to the fact that as late as yesterday afternoon in this chamber the government had not convinced Senator Macdonald of the benefits of the Paid Parental Leave scheme. If the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave scheme is not supported by his own parliamentary colleagues, how can the government expect the Australian people to support it at all?
**Senator ABETZ** (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:06): The simple fact is that the Paid Parental Leave scheme is supported by Mr Abbott's parliamentary colleagues. It is a Liberal Party coalition policy. It is supported.

*Opposition senators interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Senator Abetz, resume your seat; you are entitled to be heard in silence. Order on my left! When there is silence we will proceed. Senator Abetz.

**Senator ABETZ:** For all the hullabaloo emanating from the other side, it reminds of all the protestations of loyalty to Ms Gillard by those opposite. Oh, how we remember those public protestations of absolute loyalty. And you then knifed her.

*Honourable senators interjecting—*

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance, as stated in the standing orders. There is no way that those comments could be seen as directly relevant to a question about the paid parental leave in our community, which is what the question asked.

**The PRESIDENT:** I am listening closely to the minister's answer, and it would assist in listening to the answer if people desisted from interjecting. It would make listening to the answer a lot easier. At this stage there is no point of order. The minister has 22 seconds remaining. Minister.

**Senator ABETZ:** Let nobody come in here and claim that everybody within their party fully agrees with absolutely every policy position of their party, but the one thing that is different is that we on this side actually allow people to give public expression to those views. That is why we quite rightly deserve greater support from— (Time expired)

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The PRESIDENT** (14:09): I draw to the attention of Honourable Senators the presence in the chamber of a parliamentary delegation from Afghanistan led by His Excellency Mr Ikram Sayed MP.

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**

**Budget**

**Senator BUSHBY** (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:09): My question is to Senator Cormann, the Minister for Finance and the Minister representing the Treasurer. Can the minister explain to the Senate the importance of enacting the government's economic action plan to repair the budgetary damage inflicted by the previous government and to build a strong and prosperous economy?

**Senator CORMANN** (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:09): I thank Senator Bushby for that question and I thank him and congratulate him on the outstanding job he did as Chair of the Senate Economics Legislation Committee through the Senate estimates process. If we are committed to protecting our living standards for the future, if we are
committed to building prosperity and opportunity for the future, then there is no choice but to pass the budget that we delivered just over a month ago.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask Senator Cormann to resume his seat as Senator Cormann is entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator Hanson-Young interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: I remind honourable senators that it is disorderly to be in that part of the chamber. Senator Hanson-Young, will you resume your seat please.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on both sides! The minister in giving his answer is entitled to be heard in silence. The minister.

Senator CORMANN: Thank you very much. As I was saying, if we want to protect our living standards, if we want to build opportunity and prosperity for the future, there is no alternative to the budget that we have delivered, because the spending growth trajectory that we inherited from the Labor Party was unsustainable, unaffordable and unrealistic.

Senator Wong interjecting—

Senator CORMANN: I hear Senator Wong interjecting here. There used to be a time when Senator Wong as the Minister for Finance believed in surplus budgets. Remember when Senator Wong delivered her first budget as finance minister, when she told us in 2011 that the return to surplus by 2012-13 was 'not negotiable'. Remember that? She said also in her first budget there would be three years of black ink from 2012-13 onwards. In her second budget she did even better: she said the government had delivered a budget surplus and the surpluses would grow year after year. And, of course, everybody knows that what we inherited was $191 billion in accumulated deficits from Labor's first five budgets, another $123 billion in projected deficits from Labor's last budget, government debt heading for $667 billion within the decade and rising beyond that, government having to spend $1 billion a month in interest— (Time expired)

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:12): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate whether there are any risks to the government's fiscal and economic reforms?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:13): I thank Senator Bushby for that supplementary; and, yes, there are risks to these reforms. The biggest risk is, of course, the fact that the Labor Party still refuses to face up to the mess that they created in government. They still refuse to take responsibility for the budget mess they left behind. Right now they are telling us that they are opposed to $40 billion in savings measures. Extraordinarily, that includes $5 billion in savings which the Labor Party initiated in government, banked in their last budget and now, of course—after they refused to do the heavy lifting in getting it through the parliament—are here opposing today. That is the reckless approach of the Labor Party under Bill Shorten's leadership.

There is no alternative economic plan here in Australia right now. There is no alternative fiscal plan right now in Australia. The only plan here is ours. (Time expired)
Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:14): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate of the implications today's reform decisions will have for the future living standards of all Australians?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:14): I, again, thank Senator Bushby for his question. The prosperity that we are enjoying today is as a result of the decisions that have been made in the past. Of course, the previous government took Australia's prosperity for granted. They thought that no amount of additional tax, no amount of additional red tape, no amount of attacks on successful people across Australia would do any harm to our economy. Of course, they were wrong.

They left a situation where our economy was growing below trend, unemployment was rising, consumer confidence was low, business investment had plateaued and our budget was in very bad shape, with an unsustainable spending growth trajectory. Here they are now, trying to stand in the way of a government that is working hard to build a stronger economy, to create opportunities for everyone to get ahead. Quite frankly, they still cannot face up to the mess they left behind; they still cannot take responsibility. The sooner they do, the sooner they change their attitude, the better it will be for— (Time expired)

Paid Parental Leave

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (14:15): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Cormann. Is the minister aware of a submission by the Australian Industry Group, which states, 'The Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave Scheme is unlikely to improve productivity, is gold-plated and should be abandoned'? Is the AiG correct?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:15): No, the AiG is not correct. The government's paid parental leave policy is an important social and economic reform, as the Leader of the Government in the Senate has said earlier today.

It is a central part of our plan to build a stronger, more prosperous economy. One of the big structural challenges that we are facing as a nation is that, as a result of the ageing population, we are confronted with falling workforce participation rates. In order to lift workforce participation rates, we need to encourage older Australians to work longer and we need to lift workforce participation by women. Our Paid Parental Leave Scheme will be an important part of that.

I ask Senator Cameron, a union official from way back: do you think that paid parental leave is a welfare entitlement? Do you think that sick leave is a welfare entitlement? Do you think that annual leave is a welfare entitlement? This is the whole point. We on this side of the parliament say that, when the working women of Australia have a baby and have to take leave from work, they deserve to have, up to a certain level, their replacement wage paid to them during that period, in the same way as somebody, whom you might have represented as a worker in the past, has access to sick leave entitlements at their replacement wage, access to long service leave at their replacement wage and access to their annual leave at their replacement wage.

It is quite unbelievable that it has to be the coalition that is standing up for working women across Australia, that it is the coalition that is working towards a fair deal for working women
across Australia, because the Labor Party is selling out the working women of Australia. You have long lost the plot when it comes to building a stronger, more prosperous economy.

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (14:17): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Senator Cormann, I think $50,000 for millionaire families, when you have written pensioners off, is unacceptable.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cameron, that is a comment. We need the question.

Senator CAMERON: I refer to the Commission of Audit report, handed down by the Business Council of Australia chairman, Tony Shepherd, which rejects the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave Scheme and, instead, recommends 'targeting expenditure to those most in need'. Does the minister agree?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:18): I have a very high regard for Mr Shepherd, but I have long been on the record as saying that I disagree with him on this occasion. We have taken the Paid Parental Leave Scheme that the government is putting forward to two elections. It has been widely—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On my left: if you wish to debate the issue, the time to debate it is after three o'clock when taking note of answers, not now.

Senator CORMANN: I know that the Australian Labor Party does not care about the judgements made by the Australian people at successive elections. I know that the Australian Labor Party is quite happy to join in with the Greens, to act in defiance of the will of the Australian people, as they did earlier today when they, again, refused to support the repeal of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

This is a Labor Party which is out of touch with modern Australia. This is a Labor Party which, quite frankly, needs to get into the 21st century. You should start standing up for the interests of working women and you should start standing up for a stronger, more prosperous economy where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead.

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (14:19): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I wonder whether the minister has given the same lecture to his colleagues—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Cameron, that is a debate. You are asked to ask a question.

Senator CAMERON: Given the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave Scheme is opposed by his own Liberal and National colleagues, as well as the business community, can the minister advise the Senate if there is anyone left who supports the government paying $50,000 to wealthy women to have a baby?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:20): This is not the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave Scheme; this is the Liberal-National Party Paid Parental Leave Scheme. This is the policy that we have taken to two elections. This is the policy that was extensively litigated in the lead-up to the last election. It is the policy that we are committed to deliver because it is in the interests of our economy and it is in the interests of working women across Australia. It will help us lift workforce participation and it will help us lift productivity. It is a very important part of our Economic Action Strategy, to start repairing the mess that you left behind. You clearly do not understand about a 21st century economy.
You clearly do not understand what is required in order to repair the mess you left behind.
You clearly do not understand what is required to build a stronger, more prosperous economy
where we can create jobs again, instead of losing them. Well, we will continue to get on with
the job.

Financial Services

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (14:21): My question is to Senator Cormann in
his capacity as Acting Assistant Treasurer. The senator may be aware that hundreds of
Australians are facing the loss of their homes—indeed, foreclosure today by the ANZ Bank,
because they are victims of unscrupulous financial advisers, who leveraged them into risky
and complex management investment schemes, such as Timbercorp. Did you meet with any
of the victims of the Timbercorp collapse in Parliament House yesterday? And does the
Liberal government, the architect of management investment schemes in Australia, accept any
responsibility for the catastrophic regulatory and policy failure now surrounding management
investment schemes in Australia?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:22): The answer to
that final question is: no. Let me just make a general point. Here in Australia we have a very
good financial services industry. Australian financial products and services performed very
well by global standards throughout the GFC. Every now and then, there are bad apples in
every industry; whenever there is a bad apple, they ought to be prosecuted and they ought to
have the book thrown at them. Our expectation as a government is that—and the regulatory
requirements that are in place right now and will continue to be in place in the future require
that—financial advisers will act in the best interests of their clients. That is a statutory
requirement that was introduced into the Corporations Act with bipartisan support.

It is a requirement that continues to have our support and will have our support into the
future. Obviously government cannot be behind every individual transaction in the private
sector everywhere across Australia. We need to ensure that we have the right balance between
consumer protection, when it comes to our regulatory arrangements, while making sure that
access to high-quality advice is affordable.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann, resume your seat. Senator Whish-Wilson is on his
feet.

Senator Whish-Wilson: Mr President, I rise on a point of order: relevance. I asked
whether the Liberal Party took responsibility for the catastrophic failure of MIS schemes.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The minister is addressing the question and
the minister still has 46 seconds remaining.

Senator CORMANN: Thank you. I could not have been more direct in my answer to that
question. I said, 'No', right at the beginning to that part of the question. You clearly did not
listen to what I had to say. The senator was clearly just jumping up with his pre-organised
point of order, making an assumption about what I was going to say rather than about what I
actually said. As far as we are concerned, we on this side of the parliament understand that
good financial advisers across Australia fulfil a very important role. They help people with
their financial health and wellbeing. They help people manage financial risks and maximise
financial opportunities. They are dealing with other people's money so there ought to be an
appropriately robust regulatory framework in place, but it has to be one where you have an appropriate balance between high level consumer protection—(Time expired)

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (14:24): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Following on from that answer, given that it is obvious many financial advisers did not have the best interests of their clients at heart, and that the culture and practice—not a few bad apples—of paying commissions on general advice has already forced many Australians, including the Timbercorp victims, to the edge of financial, mental and physical ruin, why is the government now so determined to amend the FOFA legislation to overturn bans on commissions for general advice?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:25): Firstly, I completely reject the assertion that 'many financial advisers' have done the wrong thing. There are some that have done the wrong thing and wherever they do, as I said earlier, they ought to have the book thrown at them. But most financial advisers across Australia do a very good job for Australians saving for their retirement every single day.

In relation to the allegation that we were somehow reintroducing commissions on general advice, I reject that out of hand. That is just not true. If you had caught up with developments, you would have read the ABC Fact Check—hardly an apologist for coalition policy—which said, in response to a similar assertion by shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen, that it was 'scaremongering' and that he had his facts wrong. If the senator had done a bit more research when he was putting his questions together he would have found out that that particular assertion is completely false.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (14:26): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I will be pleased when the senator puts his money where his mouth is. When will the government introduce legislation to amend the future of financial advice laws? And will you rule out the use of regulation to ensure that the big banks and financial houses are not forced to comply with the FOFA laws before 1 July?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:26): Clearly, again, Senator Whish-Wilson is not following parliamentary procedures all that carefully. In relation to his first question, if he was aware of what was actually happening, he would know that such legislation has already been introduced into the parliament; indeed it has been the subject of a Senate economics committee inquiry, chaired by none other than my good friend Senator Bushby. That committee inquiry reported earlier this week. The government is currently considering the recommendations that were made in that report.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann, resume your seat. Senator Whish-Wilson, you have a point of order?

Senator Whish-Wilson: Mr President, I believe I am being verballed by the senator. That was not the question I asked. I asked whether he would be introducing legislation—whether he would be introducing regulations if he does not get his legislation through the Senate.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Resume your seat. That is not a point of order.

Senator Siewert interjecting—

Senator Whish-Wilson interjecting—
Senator CORMANN: I cannot believe that Senator Whish-Wilson repeated that part of the question, because my answer could not have been more directly relevant. I said that that legislation had already been introduced; it is already in the parliament; it is currently before the parliament. There has been a Senate inquiry into the legislation, which reported earlier this week, which made recommendations on what possible adjustments the government might want to consider. (Time expired)

Asylum Seekers

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:28): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator Cash. Will the minister update the Senate on a ruling by the High Court this morning and any implications this has on the government's ability to maintain the offshore processing of those who attempt to arrive in Australia illegally by boat?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:28): I thank Senator Edwards for his question. I am pleased to advise the Senate that this morning the High Court of Australia handed down its judgement in the matter of Plaintiff S156/2013 v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection & Anor. In a unanimous decision—and a very short decision—the court found as follows.

The regional processing provisions in the Migration Act are consistent with the Constitution and are therefore valid laws. The decision to designate Papua New Guinea as a regional processing country and the minister's decision as to whether IMAs should be taken to PNG or Nauru were both lawful. The High Court's decision means that IMAs will continue to be transferred to regional processing countries and their claims will be assessed and processed in those countries.

In relation to the second part of the senator's question, I confirm that the High Court ruling has no impact at all on Operation Sovereign Borders and the continuation under the Abbott government of offshore processing. Offshore processing clearly works. I will again go through the figures to remind those on the other side of the success of the policies that they failed to implement. To date, it has been 181 days, or almost 25 weeks, since there has been a successful people-smuggling venture to Australia. There has been no life lost at sea in that time, unlike the thousand people who were confirmed dead under the former government's policies, which were wholeheartedly supported by Senator Hanson-Young. It is a little ironic that it is Refugee Week isn't it, when Senator Hanson-Young supported policies that ultimately resulted in the deaths of 1,000 people. In terms of the number of people who arrived between 20 December 2012 and 18 June, 12,632 people—(Time expired)

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:30): I thank the minister and ask a supplementary question. Is the minister aware of any continuing opposition to offshore processing which may jeopardise its continuation?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:30): We saw that on display yesterday in relation to the hopelessly divided Labor Party. You have the shadow minister for immigration who is on the record as saying the Labor Party continues to be committed to offshore—
Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Cash, please resume your seat.

Senator Colbeck interjecting—

Senator Jacinta Collins interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senators Colbeck and Collins! It will assist the conduct of business if people do not shout across the chamber.

Senator CASH: Clearly, the truth hurts—because it clearly got a reaction from the other side. They remain hopelessly divided when it comes to the issue of offshore processing. You have the current shadow minister for immigration who puts what I believe is his position on the record, and that is that Labor is committed to offshore processing. You then have a former minister for immigration, in former Minister O'Connor, who comes out and openly says the Labor Party may revisit the issue of offshore processing in the future. It is a little bit like, ‘There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.’ We have heard that one before and we all know what happened. We are committed to offshore processing—(Time expired)

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:32): My final question of the minister is: can you, Minister, inform the Senate how the prevention of any successful people-smuggling ventures to Australia by boat for nearly six months has alleviated pressure on the offshore detention network?

Senator Kim Carr: Tell us about the prison ship. How many are on the prison ship?

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! When there is silence, we will proceed.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:33): When you have a government that introduces a policy that is a successful policy and results in 181 days, to date, of no people arriving, it means that you can finally start to reverse the detention centre revolution that the other side put in place. Because we have reduced the number of people coming to Australia, because of the fact that a total of 1,127 people have voluntarily departed or been removed since the inception of Operation Sovereign Borders—this government is now able to commence to close, or in some cases has closed, the detention centres that the former government opened because of their failed policies. Senator Edwards is from South Australia. He will be well aware that the Inverbrackie detention centre will be closed by the end of 2014. That is because our policies work.

Budget

Senator BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (14:35): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash. I refer to the minister's answer in the Senate on Monday when she said arrangements for the co-payment are ultimately a matter for the GPs. Is the minister aware of comments by the President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia, Dr Ian Kamerman, that rural doctors will face a tough choice to force more of their struggling patients to make the co-payment or to treat more of their patients free of charge? Is the Rural Doctors Association of Australia right?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:35): I can advise senators on the other side that this
government is going to do what we were elected to do, and that is get the budget back on track and fix the economic mess that the previous Labor government left us. That meant that in the budget we had to make some tough decisions. When we were looking at an MBS going to blow out in 10 years time—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Nash, resume your seat as I need to hear the answer and I cannot hear it. When there is silence, we will proceed.

Senator NASH: There has been a range of views on the budget and this government has been absolutely clear in saying that the priority is making sure—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. There was a direct question about a quote from the Rural Doctors Association, which was: is the Rural Doctors Association right? We have not got anywhere near that yet, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: While there is one minute 18 remaining for the question to be answered, I remind the minister of the question.

Senator NASH: I am being absolutely relevant. The question is around a tough budget decision. I am being relevant in pointing out exactly why—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senators on my left! Senator Moore is on her feet.

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise again on a point of order on direct relevance. It is a simple question about the quote from the Rural Doctors Association. The minister has not as yet turned her answer to that question.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I did draw the minister's attention to the question at the one minute 18 mark. There is now one minute and two seconds remaining. I draw the minister's attention to the question.

Senator NASH: This government is going to ensure that we have a sustainable health system for rural Australia, unlike those on the other side who did absolutely nothing except leave us with an economic mess.

Senator BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (14:39): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. A yes or no would have been a surprise answer, but can the minister—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Wait a minute, Senator Bilyk. You are on your feet asking a question and people are interjecting. It is very hard to hear the question.

Senator BILYK: Can the minister confirm that if a rural or regional GP waives the $7 GP tax that they will receive $14 less for bulk billing than they would for bulk billing the same patient today—yes or no?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:39): In answering what seems to be almost exactly the same question just a couple of days ago, I indicated to the chamber that it is a matter for GPs.
Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order again or direct relevance. It was a direct question about the impact of the GP co-payment: will the doctors receive $14 less for bulk billing than they would for bulk billing the same patient today? It is a very simple question. I ask for a direct answer.

The PRESIDENT: I cannot instruct the minister how to answer the question. The minister still has 46 seconds remaining to address the question.

Senator NASH: Perhaps had the manager of Opposition Business waited a little longer than 14 seconds we could have got to the answer. There have been some changes in arrangements to the GP payments as a result of the economic mess left to us by the previous Labor government. Those on the other side do not like to hear this but it is a tough budget with some changes in arrangements that will ensure a sustainable health system the future.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: When there is silence on my left I will call the senator to ask the question. None of the people calling out have the call for the question. I am waiting to call the senator to ask the question.

Senator BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (14:42): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Why has the government slugged rural Australians with a $7 GP tax each time they go to the doctor, a $5 prescription fee each time they buy medication and a fuel excise each time they have to travel to go to the doctor?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:42): I think we have been extremely clear saying that this is a tough budget because of the mess the previous Labor government left us. If the previous Labor government had not wasted so much money, if the previous Labor government had not left us with a trajectory of $667 billion worth of debt, if the previous Labor government had not left us an interest bill of over $30 million a day, then we would not have had to make the tough decisions and the $12 billion a year we are paying on the interest on the previous Labor government's debt could have funded a new teaching hospital in every capital city around this country. That is why it is a tough budget. We are making the right decisions so that we will have a sustainable system for the country in future.

Indigenous Education

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (14:43): My question is to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion. Will the minister advise the chamber on the progress of the Remote School Attendance Strategy to increase school attendance rates for Indigenous children?

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: It does not help when senators interject and I have not called the minister.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:44): Thank you, Senator McKenzie. I am pleased to report that the government's new approach is taking effect. Getting Aboriginal and Islander children to school of course is one of the government's top priorities in this area. We have committed significant funds to lift school attendance rates in remote Australia through the Remote
School Attendance Strategy. We have rolled that out in 73 schools from Western Australia to Queensland, and from South Australia to the Northern Territory. But of course it is not how much we have invested—it is the results. I am happy to report to the Senate that the results, in terms of the attendance data, are showing an overall upward trend, and that trend is sustainable. The average daily attendance rate is up by 5.1 per cent compared with term 1 in 40 communities participating in stage 1.

We are already getting unprecedented levels of data and cooperation from all the jurisdictions, and for that I thank them. This even comes down to receiving daily data. Education departments are telling us that, in many cases, this is the first time that they have been able to peruse the data on a daily basis. And of course we know that we cannot manage what we cannot measure.

I congratulate everyone who has taken up this challenge in this very important area, particularly the communities. As I have travelled around the communities, I have noticed that they are talking about what they are going to do in their own context, without assistance, to ensure that their children are engaged with school. But the ante has been upped, and I think that the communities have decided that they are going to take control and ensure that this negative narrative is in fact turned around.

Very importantly, COAG has now agreed to the new target to close the gap on school attendance within five years. All those jurisdictions have made that commitment. My department is working closely with the providers; most importantly, with families; and with communities to ensure that this fantastic trend continues.

**Senator McKENZIE** (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (14:46): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister highlight any particular instances of success in increasing student attendance under the Remote School Attendance Strategy?

**Senator SCULLION** (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:46): Thanks again for the supplementary question, Senator McKenzie. There have been some dramatic improvements. Specifically, the Queensland and Northern Territory governments have actually granted permission to release publicly the term 1 attendance data, and that demonstrates very much that the strategy is working. Attendance rates rose in almost all the Queensland and Northern Territory schools. In Doomadgee, for example, they rose from 49 per cent—tragic—in term 1 to 67.8 per cent, an absolute victory: an increase of 18 percentage points. In Wugularr in the Northern Territory, attendance rates are 15 per cent up on what they were in 2013. In Borroloola, a very difficult case, they rose by, again, 15 per cent. Those are fantastic outcomes from those communities and those parents.

So, in 14 of the 21 RSAS schools, attendance is up more than five percentage points across those schools compared to last year. This stands in stark contrast to the outcomes of the previous five years.

**Senator McKENZIE** (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (14:47): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister highlight how many jobs for Indigenous Australians have been created in remote communities under the Remote School Attendance Strategy?
Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:48): When you have got a challenge like this you have got to be able to chew gum and walk at the same time. There are a number of challenges in communities that are not about school attendance, and one of the principle ones is employment. That is why I am delighted to advise that, now, more than 500 local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been engaged as school attendance officers and supervisors. From the beginning I insisted that this program employ 100 per cent Aboriginal and Islander people, and that has been done. Few of the people who are now employed had been employed before. Most of them were unemployed—but that was not because they did not have a particular set of skills. The skills they have are like having a degree in 'Wiluna' or a degree in 'Yuendumu'; they are not available anywhere else. These individuals have those special talents of knowing exactly where a family is up to, where the mobility is, and exactly what the barriers facing those families are. We are capturing that skill set. So congratulations very much to those communities and those members for their efforts. (Time expired)

Infrastructure

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (14:49): My question is to Senator Johnston representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. In the budget the government announced that the $18 million South Australian supplementary local road fund would not be extended beyond this financial year. That means, in effect, that cuts to road funding are proportionally bigger for South Australians than for anyone else in the nation. With South Australian local government currently managing 11 per cent or 75,000 kilometres of the nation's local road network, covering 7.2 per cent of the nation's population, but only receiving 5.5 per cent of identified local roads grants funding, could the minister outline to the Senate how they plan to address this inequitable funding situation for South Australia?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:49): I thank the senator for the question. As he has identified, the supplementary local road funding program lapses on 30 June this year, and I will say a little more about that in a moment. This year, councils in South Australia will receive $17.8 million in supplementary—and I underline the word 'supplementary'—funding for local roads. Supplementary funding to South Australian councils is made, as I am sure the senator knows, in addition to the local roads component of the financial assistance grants program. Other councils around Australia have not received any supplementary funding under the financial assistance grants program. Of the $2.3 billion allocation under the financial assistance grants program in 2014-15, local government in South Australia will receive an estimated $152.5 million. South Australian councils, as well as others around Australia, will receive more Black Spot and Roads to Recovery funding following the budget announcement. So supplementary funding is made to South Australia in addition.

The Australian government is very committed to supporting local government to provide the infrastructure and services that drive productivity. The government is continuing the financial assistance grants program which will provide an estimated—as I have said—$152 million specifically to South Australia in 2014-15. This is 'in addition', because the previous government made no provision for the extension of the supplementary roads funding beyond 30 June this year. This is important with respect to legislation that is soon to come before this chamber.
I understand that the equity of the funding formula for local roads has been an issue for some years, particularly from a South Australian perspective. The South Australian local government association and the Australian national body—(Time expired)

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (14:51): I ask a supplementary question, Mr President. I have been advised that close to two-thirds of South Australian local councils have written to the Minister and Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development in relation to the slashing of the South Australian supplementary local road funding, asking for a reason for it. The only response given is to tell the local councils to go to the federal Local Government Association. Will the minister actually provide a justification for these cuts and does he acknowledge that South Australia gets much less per road kilometre and per capita than every other state and territory?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:52): Senator, I thank you for that, but let me say that South Australia will be the key beneficiary of the government's record investments in infrastructure. South Australian councils will receive twice as much Roads to Recovery funding in 2015-16, increasing South Australia's component to $220 million over six years. In order for the government's commitment to extend and increase the Roads to Recovery program, it is imperative that the opposition support the National Land Transport Amendment Bill currently before the Senate. As I indicated previously, this bill establishes authority for payments—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Xenophon is endeavouring to listen to the answer but it is very difficult for him as people have an exchange across the chamber in front of Senator Xenophon. It is completely unfair to him and disorderly and it should stop.

Senator JOHNSTON: The bill I was referring to establishes the authority for payments to be made under the Roads to Recovery program which will alleviate and assist South Australia greatly. The Deputy Prime Minister has recently set out that South Australian councils must apply for local roads funding under the government's—(Time expired)

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (14:54): Finally, can the minister advise, either now or in due course, the difference in dollar per kilometre and dollar per capita Commonwealth identified local road grants in 2013-14 and subsequent years? Does he acknowledge that the dollar per kilometre rate is, for instance, less than half that of New South Wales and Victoria and on a per capita basis is less than a fifth compared to Tasmania? Does the minister consider that to be fair to South Australia?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:54): I thank the senator for the question. I do not have the data at my fingertips but coming from Western Australia as I do I am concerned about that equation and I will take that aspect of the question on notice. I just want a highlight, in terms of the funding that you have raised more broadly, $16 million to fix South Australian black spots in 2015-16 and $29 million base funding for the program over the next six years. This is what we are doing specifically for South Australia to addressing the anomalies that you have raised, Senator.

Disability Discrimination Commissioner

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (14:55): My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. Why is the government refusing to replace outgoing Disability Discrimination
Commissioner Mr Graeme Innes with a full-time commissioner who has an understanding and experience of disability issues and is dedicated full-time to promoting the rights of Australians with a disability?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:55): I am extremely surprised that Senator Singh would criticise the government for not replacing Mr Innes with a full-time commissioner because, Senator Singh, for the entirety of the period of the previous government, for every single day there was not a day on which the Human Rights Commission was fully constituted. For every single day of the previous Labor government one or more of the human rights commissioners had a double commission. And, Senator Singh, I am particularly surprised that you would be criticising the government for not intending to replace Mr Innes with a full-time commissioner, because for most of the period of the Labor government in which you served Mr Innes held two portfolios. Mr Innes was from 2005 until 2009 the Disability Discrimination Commissioner but during those periods he also acted as the Race Discrimination Commissioner and the Human Rights Commissioner respectively.

Senator Singh, I heard your speech in the matters of public interest session earlier today when you said that it was shameful that Mr Innes was not being replaced by a full-time commissioner. If it is shameful, why was it not shameful that for most of the period of the Labor government Mr Innes held two portfolios?

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: The minister is entitled to be heard in silence. If there are supplementary questions, you have got the time then. If you wish to debate it, it is after 3 o'clock.

Senator BRANDIS: That, by the way, Senator Singh, included the entirety of the time for which responsibility for disabilities was held by Mr Bill Shorten when he was parliamentary secretary for disabilities. For the entire time that Mr Shorten had responsibility for this area Mr Innes served as both the Disability Discrimination Commissioner and the Race Discrimination Commissioner. So I am very surprised to hear this criticism come from your side of politics. (Time expired)

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (14:58): Mr President, I have a supplementary question. I refer to evidence at estimates that the position of a disability discrimination commissioner has a full 60-hour-week workload. Why is this government so dismissive of the rights of Australians with a disability that they would downgrade this role to a part-time position?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:59): The role will not be downgraded. The role will be treated with the same respect as it was treated when you were in office and when the Disability Discrimination Commissioner also served as the Race Discrimination Commissioner. Might I say, Senator Singh, while we are treating the Human Rights Commission, with respect, why was it that while your side of politics was in power the role of Human Rights Commissioner was left entirely vacant? The fact is that, as I said in answer to your primary question, there was not a day during the life of your government when the roles of all the human rights commissioners were fully constituted and
for more than a year before you went out of office the role of human rights commissioner was allowed to fall entirely vacant. The first Attorney-General to fully constitute the Human Rights Commission happens to be me.

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (15:00): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer to a recent open letter by Mr Innes, who wrote that '37 per cent of discrimination complaints relate to disability and 45 per cent of people with disabilities live in poverty'. Given that the so-called Freedom Commissioner, Tim Wilson, will be taking responsibility for freedom issues around disability, can the Attorney-General confirm that the most vulnerable in our society will be free to experience discrimination and nothing more?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (15:00): The only difference between the way in which the Human Rights Commission is being treated by our government and the way in which it was treated by the previous government is that, under this government, the Human Rights Commission will be fully constituted and all the portfolios will be filled in the way they never were under the previous Labor government. I can confirm that the name of a person to serve as the Disability Discrimination Commissioner when Mr Innes retires at the beginning of July will be announced soon. On behalf of the government, I thank Mr Innes for his service.

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

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Distinguished Visitors

The PRESIDENT (15:01): I want to refer to matters that happened in the chamber today and a matter that takes place when we have valedictories and first speeches in this place—that is, senators approaching people in the private areas of the chamber. I remind senators of rulings given by President Calvert that it is not in order for senators to approach distinguished guests in the chamber. That was Senator Calvert's ruling. He went on to say that this is a rule of the Senate which applies to all visitors in the galleries on the floor of the chamber at all times, including visitors from the other place. When we have visitors from the other place here, I understand that people would like to engage with them after a valedictory or after a first speech, but the appropriate place to do it is outside the chamber, not on the floor of the chamber. Thank you.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (15:03): Mr Deputy President, under standing order 191 I want to raise an issue where I have been misquoted. It happened during question time, but I did not want to interrupt question time so I have left it until now. The first question of the day, by Senator Moore, alleged that I had made certain decisions and commitments in relation to an issue in the budget. For the purpose of accuracy can I read out exactly what I said yesterday which was referred to by Senator Moore—

Senator Faulkner: Mr Deputy President, on a point of order: Senator Macdonald is effectively making a personal explanation about a matter that occurred in question time. It is totally fair enough that that be done, but ordinarily it requires leave; and, by convention in this place, these personal explanations are made after the conclusion of taking note of answers. I do not in any way want to stop Senator Macdonald from making any of the points he cares to
make but, given the nature of this current contribution, the tradition is that it ought to conform with longstanding precedent and convention in the chamber.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Mr Deputy President, I am not seeking a personal explanation by leave under standing order 190. I am relying on standing order 191, which says:

A senator who has spoken to a question may again be heard, to explain some material part of the senator’s speech which has been misquoted or misunderstood, but shall not introduce any new matter, or interrupt any senator speaking …

I could have done this at the time Senator Moore misquoted me. I did not, because it was question time and I am not one to make grandstanding statements during question time. This is the appropriate time. Senator Faulkner may have a view about what is the convention of this parliament, but I happen to have a different view. I have not been here as long as Senator Faulkner, but I have been here almost as long and there is no such convention that this must be done at the end of taking note.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Faulkner, there is no point of order. Senator Macdonald, on the point that you have raised, you are seeking to address a situation where it did not occur in question time. You really were starting to debate the point in question time. Can I suggest that we reflect on this matter. If we feel that there should be an opportunity for you to make a statement, I am sure leave will be granted after taking note. Senator Macdonald, I think that would be the quickest and most efficient way to handle this. I would like to reflect on it a bit more because of the particular standing order you have raised.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Mr Deputy President, I accept your ruling as always but I must point out that I was maligned in the first question. This is the first time I have the opportunity of doing it and I am complying with the standing order. I should be given the right at the same time and, might I say, in the same news cycle to put on record exactly what was said, which was not what Senator Moore, in her question, indicated I had said.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Macdonald. I appreciate your points. I would like to reflect on that, and I will take further advice from the Clerk. I think we can get back to you, Senator Macdonald, with an appropriate juncture.

BUDGET

Consideration by Estimates Committees

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (15:07): Pursuant to standing order 74(5), I ask the Attorney-General for an explanation as to why, after 30 days or more, answers have not been provided to questions on notice Nos 20, 43, 52, 53, 56, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 100, 102, 114, 127, 130, 137, 157, 227, 229 and 237 asked during the additional estimates hearings of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee in February of 2014.

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (15:08): Senator Singh did give me advance notice of this question, although I did not receive it until about an hour or so before question time. In the time that has been available to me, I have asked my department and my office to look into the matter. The preliminary advice I have received is that, of the 304 questions that were taken on notice during the February estimates during the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee hearings, there are seven remaining with me to
be cleared. I do not know what those are—and I think there may be some with the Minister for Justice as well—so I will have a look into that and I will deal with them as soon as I reasonably can.

**Senator SINGH** (Tasmania) (15:09): I move:

That the Senate take note of the explanation.

According to Senator Brandis, there are only seven before him that are on notice. According to my last check with the secretariat of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, there are 120 in total that are still outstanding, and within those are the numbers that I have just read out. These answers were due on 23 April. There have been some 56 days since that time—56 days that these answers have been sitting there late—and it is not seven, but 120 questions. That is pretty poor form, I believe, of the Attorney-General.

We already know that there are a number of questions on notice from budget estimates that will be due in due course. But February estimates was some time ago—we are now in June. I did wait the 30 days after the due date of 23 April for answers to those questions, but even after then there had still been a failure to provide an answer to a number of those questions. It is a staggering number and I think it is an indictment on the work ethos of the Attorney-General and his commitment to the processes of democracy within and outside of this chamber.

Senate estimates—be it additional estimates or budget estimates—is an important part of our democratic system. At the moment, the number of questions that remain unanswered represents 40 per cent of the questions asked of him—303 in total. That is almost half of the entire number of questions put on behalf of the Australian people by senators to Senator Brandis during estimates. I think that goes to the heart of how our democratic system is treated by this government. I do think that it is being treated with contempt. I say that because there has been such a long period of time.

Some of these questions that remain on notice without an answer are really important questions, and they go to the heart of the budget cuts that have just been referred in the latest budget. I know that it relates to February estimates, but a lot of the questions relate to the MYEFO cuts that carried over into the budget. They are important questions that relating to cuts to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services of some $43.1 million and questions relating to freedom of information to our Freedom Commissioner—and we know in some detail what has happened there as well. We would like more detail, and I am sure that the Australian public would like more detail. Whilst it is all well and good to go slashing the budget, there is some level of accountability and transparency that, when in government, you have to abide by—that is part of our democratic system—and part of that is through the Senate estimates process.

The Attorney-General may not be interested in examining some of the policy decisions in any detail—he may resist that attempt to do so—but others do want to know about the policy decisions that have been made in the Attorney-General's Department. Why do they want to know? They want to know because it affects the very heart of our social fabric. It affects our access to justice services, and that includes community legal centres, women's legal services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services as well as environmental defenders offices. There are also some 72 questions to the Australian Federal Police that remain outstanding.
I do not understand what the Attorney-General seeks to hide by not answering these questions in any way, shape or form in a timely manner. I listened to his explanation just now, and I do not quite understand why he says there are only seven outstanding questions. He may want to go back and check that with his advisers and the department. The number that is outstanding has been made very clear to me by the secretariat of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, and, from my current records—unless that has changed since I have come into this chamber—it remains at some 120 questions.

I think there is a lot of work that needs to be done within the Attorney-General's office to ensure that he does want to remain an Attorney-General that abides by the democratic process that is set out in this parliament—an important democratic process—that relates to transparency and accountability through our Senate estimates process. It is a very important part of our Westminster system of government, and it is an opportunity for senators to be able to ask pertinent questions of officials—and Senator Brandis often likes to answer the questions himself in great length—about the delivery of services that keep our government, our economy and our society functioning. I think the power of the legislature to do this should not be compromised by the failure of members of the executive—and I refer here, obviously, to Senator Brandis in his capacity as Attorney-General and as Minister for the Arts—to respond to questions to which the Australian public and their representatives in the parliament have a legitimate right to seek answers. It is something that is set out very clearly—I think Senator Brandis and I went through this during the last budget estimates—in the latest version of *Odgers*. Page 468 of the 13th edition of *Odgers* sets out in great detail the scrutiny process of estimates, the importance of it being on the Senate calendar and a key part of the Senate's role as a check on government.

How can a senator do a check on government when the particular minister—in this case, the Attorney-General—has refused to provide answers to questions some 56 days later? Where is the accountability? Where is the transparency? They are happy to go out and slash programs, Aboriginal legal services, front-line services and access to justice. There are other areas, as I mentioned—the AFP, civil law sections and the like—all outstanding. I have them here in a huge list, all needing to be answered, and they need to be answered because they would provide answers to those in our community, those working in areas that are feeling very harshly the pinch by this government to their bottom line through the budget cuts. They want some answers around these decisions. That is where it remains. It remains unanswered. I hope that Senator Brandis is listening to my motion to take note of his explanation and that he realises that there are many more than seven questions remaining on notice. I think it seems a mystery to all of us here why Senator Brandis—who has participated in the process of estimates for many years—should be seeking to frustrate what is a fundamental part of the democratic process in Australia.

Question agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:17): Before moving to the next item of business, I would like to return to the matter raised by Senator Macdonald and the subsequent point of order raised by Senator Faulkner. Senator Macdonald, you raised a matter for which you would not need leave if it had been correct under standing order 191, 'Explanation of speeches'. Because it was not in the context of a speech that you were involved in or a speech
given—it was more relating to a question—standing order 191 is not applicable. But Senator Faulkner was right in his point of order that 190 is applicable. Senator Faulkner also alluded to the fact that traditionally these things happen after taking note. That may or may not be correct. It has happened on many occasions. You do have the right, though, Senator Macdonald, to seek leave at any time to make a personal explanation. In giving that personal explanation you may not debate the issue. Senator Macdonald, the matter is in your hands. You have already canvassed the matter to the chamber, but if you wish to seek leave to make a personal explanation I will have that now if you would like to deal with it now.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (15:18): Thank you, Mr Deputy President. I can only accept your ruling whilst disagreeing with it. I accept your ruling and perhaps another time we could have a debate on this. Senator Moore was quoting a speech—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Macdonald, are you now seeking leave under standing order 190?

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I will seek leave. It is not really a personal explanation but, in view of your ruling, I will seek leave under standing order 190 to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Is leave granted?

Senator Faulkner: Normally it would not be granted at this time. It will be after taking note.

Senator Conroy: No, we are not granting it at this time, I'm sorry.

Leave not granted.

Senator Ian Macdonald: I raise a point of order. Mr Deputy President, if the point being raised by the opposition is that we should move on immediately to the debate on question time, why then have we just had 15 minutes by Senator Singh—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order, Senator Macdonald.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Paid Parental Leave

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (15:20): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Minister for Employment (Senator Abetz) and the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann) to questions without notice asked by Senators Moore and Cameron today relating to paid parental leave.

Today we heard again about the extraordinarily broad church that the government has, and the LNP, to allow individual members to make comment, to be concerned and to have different opinions. We heard that in great detail, particularly from Senator Abetz, when he went into detail about the numbers of times that he agreed with particular senators—in this case, Senator Macdonald—but actually made the case in a much wider area. An integral part of the way that the LNP operates is that individual members can disagree or agree on certain elements of policy and principle. The point that we are getting in consistent questions over the last couple of weeks is around the fact that individual members of the LNP have different views around the paid parental scheme, and many have made it very public through the media and through discussions in the community.
We asked questions of Senator Cormann about the AiG. If industry and business groups have been raising specific concerns about the proposed paid parental scheme, then a simple question that we asked—a very simple question—was: who then supports it? Who agrees with the paid parental scheme that we believe is going to be put before the Australian parliament? We have not seen it yet. We keep hearing about what is going to be in it, but we believe there is a proposal coming forward. In terms of today's straw poll, we had two brave hands come up, which I know cannot be recorded in *Hansard*. We asked a direct question and for once there was a direct answer from the government, which we seem to have some trouble getting through question time. Two brave senators raised their hands. One, of course—and we have to admire it—was Senator Boswell's. Actually, until this stage I had not heard of any great support of the Prime Minister's proposed paid parental scheme from Senator Boswell, but today we had it in this chamber. His hand was briefly raised to say that he is a strong supporter of the paid parental scheme.

The point, consistently, is that this is a proposal that has been talked about and, as Senator Cormann said today in parliament, has been taken to the people throughout two elections. It has been taken to the people but obviously not to all the members of the LNP caucus, because consistently within the LNP caucus there are people who are raising concerns about how it will work, about how much it is going to cost, about the timing—a whole range of issues about how this new paid parental scheme is going to work.

One of the problems of actually being involved in this discussion around paid parental leave for a very long time is that I remember the debates we had and I remember the Senate inquiry we had around paid parental leave schemes when we introduced the one that is active now. The paid parental scheme which we introduced as a government has recently had yet another one of the standard reviews which points out how many people in the community have received and worked with the current paid parental scheme. I remember considerable concerns being raised by members of the then opposition about how this particular payment should fit into the system. Senator Cormann today strongly questioned whether the scheme is a workplace scheme or a welfare scheme. There is no doubt in our minds that this paid parental scheme for working families, for fathers and for mothers, is a work entitlement. It is not a welfare payment. Yet seemingly one of the core aspects of the paid parental scheme being talked about now and into the future is the need to have the payment of this paid parental scheme through Centrelink. I have some issues there in terms of the logic of that argument.

Certainly the core aspect of the discussions we have been having is to find out who actually supports this scheme in the way it has been presented. We have had discussions with the community. We have had discussions around the areas of people who are currently using the scheme. We have even tried to get information out of the department around what work has been done, through the Senate estimates process. We did not have a lot of success in finding out exactly with whom these consultations have taken place. We are still unsure about the details of this scheme and the way it will operate. The amount of money is still under discussion. We believe $50,000 is now the cap. Nonetheless, our question remains. *(Time expired)*

Senator **RYAN** (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (15:25): I love it when the Labor Party come in here so incredibly frustrated at the idea that a member
of this parliament can have a conscience. I love the way the Labor Party seems to want to constantly remind people that when you vote Labor the opinion of that person on that ballot paper is irrelevant: they must run with the mob. In the modern-day Labor Party the lobby is increasingly controlled by those outside parliament. Since the Labor Party adopted the binding caucus, it has successfully pushed people away. It pushed away people like Joe Lyons, who went on to become Prime Minister in that case, and people who felt that they were not going to be controlled by forces external to this parliament, that they were not going to be controlled and have their consciences overridden by a mere simple majority of factional bullies in one party room.

Senator Moore betrays the fact that members of the Labor Party cannot understand the role of individual conscience when she refers to our party room as a caucus. It is not. It never was. When Sir Robert Menzies founded the Liberal Party, the right of a Liberal Party member to cross the floor, to question party policy and to do so publicly was entrenched—and it has not been questioned. In every division of the Liberal Party around Australia a member of parliament has the right to do that. That is a right we all cherish. But the people opposite cannot comprehend it.

For the last six years in the corridors of this place, behind the President's chair or eventually in the newspaper, we knew what Labor Party members thought of their own government. We knew what Labor Party members thought of policies. They would mutter it under their breath as they crossed the chamber to vote, like drones, like sheep. But they never have the courage to stand up. Why? Because of their rules and culture. Their rules prohibit it. That allows every member opposite to absolve themselves of responsibility for their own vote. They hide behind the caucus. They hide behind the binding caucus and they hide behind the idea and say, 'Look, I'm sorry. The caucus decided it, so my vote's irrelevant.' They did that on border protection. They did it on the carbon tax. They did it when they broke their promise on the carbon tax. And they are doing it now when they vote to oppose explicit policies, such as the repeal of the carbon tax, that this government took to an election. This is a profound difference between the parties. I disagree with what Senator Macdonald said yesterday. But I defend his right as a member of my party to say it. That is a critical difference, and it is one that every Liberal will stand to protect.

Senator Moore pointed out that somehow this particular argument was inconsistent because under our policy we plan to make the payments via Centrelink. That again betrayed the weakness and the narrowness from which Labor Party members are drawn. When Labor did bring in the current paid parental scheme, we tried to amend it. When as a new parent you have to fill out all the forms at Centrelink, when Centrelink makes payments for everything from immunisation to child care to family tax benefits, why on earth when it comes to this one issue of paid parental leave would you make the small business do the paperwork? Why would you make the small business fill out an extra form and send it into Centrelink? The payment comes from Centrelink and then that payment is given by the employer doing work on MYOB on their kitchen table, mind you, to their employee on parental leave. That betrays the narrow background of those opposite. They have no concept of what it is like to run a small business. That betrays. It simply makes no sense to make that happen.

In fact, one of the things they never thought of was that because their system did not include superannuation payments, no business accounting software used by every small
business in this country actually had the facility to make a payment without incurring state payroll tax liability and superannuation liability. So the software had to be redesigned. Small businesses spent hours trying to figure out why their books were not balancing, but it was because Labor's paid parental scheme forced them to incur liabilities that they did not have to pay.

We want this payment to be made through Centrelink because it is has the most efficient means to do so, because it takes an utterly unnecessary burden off the back of small business and because Centrelink already collects the data. Labor's hypocrisy on the issue of individual conscience in this place—on this policy, in particular—is well known by all.

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales) (15:30): We know that the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave Scheme is unpopular. It is very unpopular amongst the Prime Minister's own supporters. The Prime Minister's Commission of Audit did not like it. The Australian Industry Group do not like it. They said it is gold-plated and should be abandoned. The Business Council of Australia do not like it. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry do not like it. Even the Institute of Public Affairs do not like it. But most embarrassingly of all, many members of the parliamentary Liberal Party do not like it and members of the National Party hate it.

Senators Williams, Smith, Bernardi, Boswell and O'Sullivan and, so far, lower house MPs Mr Hawke, Mr Christensen and Mr Chester have indicated they do not like it. They have said so. Even the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Truss, admitted on the ABC's Insiders program how unpopular the paid parental scheme is. He said: I accept that there are people in our party room, and for that matter the Liberal party room, who are not that keen on the scheme.

But of all the opponents to the Paid Parental Leave Scheme, I do have to today particularly single out Senator Ian Macdonald. That is because Senator Ian Macdonald is not just against the Prime Minister's PPL scheme; he is against everything. This came about, I think, on 15 September last year—a day when Senator Macdonald said:

What should have been one of the proudest days in my life has turned into one of the worst.

Since that time, Senator Macdonald has turned opposing the Abbott government into an art form.

He has accused the Prime Minister's staff of running the government with obsessive, centralised control phobia. He accused unelected advisers in the Prime Minister's office of ignoring commitments and breaking promises to Queenslanders. In May of this year, Senator Macdonald accused his own government of displaying a lack of 'maturity' in keeping the Commission of Audit secret for too long and in not selling the federal budget properly. He attacked the deficit levy. He said that was unfair.

Senator Bernardi: Hear, hear!

Senator FAULKNER: I know you agree, Senator Bernardi. Yesterday, Senator Macdonald accused poor old finance minister Cormann of not making any sense. I thought that was harsh, but fair from Senator Macdonald. But, even after the Prime Minister's very, very clumsy attempts that we have seen to water down his Paid Parental Leave Scheme in April, his own mates from the big end of town are running away from this policy at a million miles an hour. So you have to ask yourself: who does support this scheme? If the Prime
Minister cannot convince his own party and his own backbench to support this ill-conceived scheme, why should the rest of us support it?

We have just had the spectacle after question time of a point of order from Senator Macdonald that was ruled correctly out of order by the Deputy President. My advice to Senator Macdonald—who of course said that he and I are very long-serving senators, which is true—is: make sure, as you move towards the end of your career, with six years to go, Senator Macdonald, that you are treated by your party and colleagues with respect and loyalty. Do not—(Time expired)

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (15:35): I rise to take note of answers given today by Minister Cormann and Minister Cash. I support my colleague Senator Ryan's early comments in his protests about the shrill nature of the argument that is coming from the other side. There is some kind of inference that a discussion amongst parliamentary peers on this side is somewhat unusual. It is unusual for us on this side to imagine that you could be muzzled in your parliamentary debate publicly, as we see so often in this chamber where everybody on the other side mundanely and routinely votes in the same way, have no colour, have no character and have no conversation about various policies that are before the country.

What that turns into is an inane conversation. When it is in government, which we saw for six years prior to the September election in 2013, a dysfunction starts to occur and that robust argument—which we on this side of the chamber enjoy—is muzzled and therefore the backroom deals start. That is where the dysfunction that we saw with the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government era occurs. They drive everything underground. It is a subversive culture. It is one which is not healthy in a functioning, First World democracy. We have seen it bubble out in the way in which the unions—where all but a couple of the members from the other side come from—run themselves. That is playing out in royal commissions now in the south of this country, where we have seen suggestions of slush funds and other secret issues which affect the culture and the way in which governance on the other side is bred. You see that type of dysfunction come from those organisations, and they bring it here.

We do not do that. You are going to be talking about Senator Macdonald and you are going to be talking about this. It really is a bit ho-hum. It is somewhat boring. Senator Bernardi is here. We agree on a lot of things. We agree on the majority of things. But we do not agree on all things, and we are quite happy to air those. But we will not be expelled from our party for doing that. We will not be jettisoned out of here in some way. We will see the trappings of parliament and the trappings of being in this place—

Senator Bernardi interjecting—

Senator EDWARDS: Yes, that is right, Senator Bernardi. You will see the trappings finish. Of course, those people would not want to see that, because it is a club over there, and they make all these agreements outside.

I am absolutely delighted to see the conversations that go on between people on my side over here. I think it is a bit of a stretch to suggest that you know how everybody is going to vote on this issue, because you do not know. There have been suggestions, and I know that there are a lot of conversations going on about it.
But what I do know is that the Prime Minister is absolutely committed to paid parental leave, in his eyes an equitable solution for mothers in this community. He is absolutely committed to ensuring that there is an extension from the current 18 weeks to 26 weeks, and he is absolutely committed to ensuring that that is paid at a rate which reflects the professional standing which people had before they had their baby. He views it as a progressive policy, a policy which he stands behind and a policy which I am sure will be argued somewhat democratically over here over the next days and weeks, and which we can be proud of in this place.

I just remind those on the other side of the answer from Senator Cash about border protection. It is projected that some 200-odd lives have been saved by boats not coming to this country. (Time expired)

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (15:40): We have known for some time that Senator Macdonald has not been a happy camper on the government side. It has been well reported. He has certainly used his opportunity, his freedom of speech within the Liberal Party, to make it very well known to the Australian public how unhappy he is. In fact, I would go so far as to say that I think Senator Macdonald is the grumpiest senator in this place. He is a grumpy guts. He is the grumpiest senator in this place.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Singh, first of all I think you need to withdraw your last comment.

An opposition senator: What, grumpy?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It was following on from that, and I am not going to repeat it. Senator Singh, it would assist the chamber if you withdrew that.

Senator SINGH: I will withdraw.

Before I call Senator Singh to continue, could I have order on both sides of the chamber.

Senator SINGH: Thank you, Mr Deputy President. Senator Macdonald has been unhappy for some time in relation to a number of decisions which the government has made. What we have heard from the answers to questions during question time today is in relation to another area which he is not happy with, and that is the government’s Paid Parental Leave scheme. He has made it very clear to this chamber how unhappy he is with this scheme, as have his colleagues—as has Senator Bernardi. I know that Senator Bernardi wants to be added as also being very clearly not supportive of this scheme—as well as the National Party senators, including Senator Williams, Senator Smith, Senator Boswell and Senator O’Sullivan, and the list goes on. They are just the senators. Then of course there are the House of Representatives members as well.

Clearly, they have been thinking about this particular policy area, and clearly they know how out of touch it is at this current time with the broader Australian community. The answer provided by Senator Abetz to Senator Moore's question in this regard was: 'It is good, sound public policy.' Good, sound public policy? How can Minister Abetz regard this as good, sound public policy while at the same time saying that it is not good, sound public policy to have affordable child care, that it is not good, sound public policy to have a full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner and that it is not good, sound public policy to have a safety net
for people under 30 who might lose their job? They are just three of the examples by which this government affects so many ordinary Australians.

On the one hand, they are quite happy to regard it as good, sound public policy to give women on salaries of $100,000 or more a year $50,000 in paid parental leave, but at the same time, if a young person loses their job, what do they get? They get nothing. They get nothing! That is simply bad, unsound public policy. There is nothing sound about that, and that is what this budget provides. It may be a pet policy of the Prime Minister's, but he needs to start listening to some of his own coalition members, like Senator Macdonald, who has provided a fulsome contribution in this place against this paid parental leave policy. Because if he cannot convince his own MPs—and I do not think that he will ever convince Senator Macdonald on a lot of things; as I said earlier, I think he is pretty unhappy about most things—if he cannot convince the majority of the National Party senators, a number of Liberal Party senators, as well as a number of lower house MPs, to support these budget measures, to support this gold, Rolls-Royce scheme, then why on earth should the rest of the Australian public support it as well?

We have had very clear rejections from the AiG. The government is happy to support the AiG on most other things but, at the moment, apparently, according to Senator Cormann, they are not correct. And while the AiG, according to Senator Cormann, are not correct, what about the government's own Commission of Audit report? They are not correct, either. Surprise, surprise! They have rejected this Paid Parental Leave scheme, recommending a 'targeted expenditure at those most in need'. Yet, no, they are not correct. They do not want to think about those most in need, they do not want to talk about those most in need—those such as young people who become unemployed or those perhaps on a pension—they do not want to think about them, so we are just not going to agree with our own Commission of Audit. Then there is their friend, the IPA— (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

Financial Services

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (15:46): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann) to a question without notice asked by Senator Whish-Wilson today relating to the regulation of financial services.

On the 7.30 report last night there was a long piece on almost 300 Australians who are going to lose their homes today. Korda Mentha and ANZ are liquidators for the collapse of Timbercorp, a managed investment scheme, which had been leveraged. Not only did people have their life savings put into managed investment schemes; they were also leveraged into these schemes by financial planners and their accountants. So they lost their life savings and now they are going to have their assets foreclosed or removed today.

I met two of these unfortunate people yesterday. Timbercorp is just one of many managed investment schemes that have collapsed and failed in this country—and quite spectacularly—with catastrophic results for those investors who are put into these things. The reason that this happened is that what we classify as 'general advice' was provided—in other words, financial planners received commissions, but they did not have to take into account the personal
circumstances of the investors concerned, nor did they have to put the best interests of the client ahead of their own interests.

The FoFA—future of financial advice—laws in this country were brought in by Labor. I have dealt with these issues. They were designed to try to prevent this type of catastrophe from occurring again. The reason I asked a question in question time today is that, apart from these 300 Australians who are going to lose their homes today, this issue is about to be revived, in the sense that the government is trying to bring in amendments to the FoFA laws, a set of reforms, which weaken the protections that were put in place.

I asked Senator Cormann today why the government are planning to overturn bans on commissions for general advice. It is unfortunate that he chose to play the man rather than the ball and tried to discredit my question by referring to some sort of obscure ABC fact check, saying that there was no such thing as the removal of bans or exemptions on conflicted remuneration to do with general advice.

I have here in front of me the explanatory memorandum relating to the FoFA reforms, which were before the House of Representatives. It makes it very clear that the bill includes the following amendments. The final amendment reads:

… providing a targeted exemption for general advice from the ban on conflicted remuneration in certain circumstances.

On page 27, there is a summary of the new law. It states:
The Bill amends the Corporations Act to broaden and clarify exemptions from the ban on conflicted remuneration. Specifically, the amendments:

• provide a targeted general advice exemption from the ban on conflicted remuneration;

Further, on page 41, under 'The right to work and rights in work,' it states:

This Bill increases the number of avenues through which certain employees in the financial services industry can earn commissions.

It could not be any clearer; there it is. Senator Cormann either misled the Senate in his answer to me or has not read his own explanatory memorandum in relation to these FoFA amendments.

I then asked, very clearly, when this legislation was going to come to the Senate and, if it did not get through, would the government be introducing regulations to ensure the big banks and financial houses are not forced to comply with the FoFA laws, because they are due to kick in on 1 July? I know from the Senate Economics Legislation Committee inquiry, which I was on, that the Australian Bankers' Association said they had had an assurance from the government that they would get these laws changed prior to 1 July—there was obviously some sort of deal behind closed doors—because it was going to cost them a significant amount to change their compliance systems.

These are very real questions and it is a shame I did not get a direct answer from Senator Cormann on this today. If there is going to be a watering down of things such as a ban on commissions on general advice, then I would like to see the detail on that so that it can, at least, be debated in parliament. The Greens have very clearly said in their dissenting report of the Senate committee that we would not be accepting the amendments to the FoFA laws. I think the Labor Party has said the same.
But what I thought was most serious and of most concern today was that Senator Cormann still believes that it is only a few bad eggs that are causing problems in the financial services industry. Greg Medcraft, the chairman of ASIC, has very clearly said that it is a cultural issue. It is a culture that needs to be changed and most of the stakeholders in the FoFA inquiry said that it is the culture that needs to change, not just a few bad eggs. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (15:51): Mr Deputy President, yesterday I spoke on a question and I have since been deliberately misquoted by three people this afternoon.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Macdonald, are you seeking leave?

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Well, I am, again, seeking, under standing order 191, to make an explanation of the speech I made yesterday, which has been misquoted deliberately and maliciously on three occasions in the last half hour.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Macdonald, on that point, let me make it very clear that standing order 191 is not the appropriate avenue for what you are raising today. That was in a speech yesterday. You had the opportunity yesterday, if you were in the chamber, to again speak to the matter, under standing order 191, if you wished to, to clarify the way you were misrepresented. That is not the case today.

The case today was: that speech was raised in a question directed to a minister today. That was not in the context of standing order 191. You do have a right, though, under standing order 190, as I mentioned earlier, to raise this matter by leave of the Senate. In giving any explanation, you must not debate the issue. You now have opportunity to seek leave. The ruling is quite firm on 191. You are within your rights to seek leave to make an explanation under 190.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Mr Deputy President, I can do nothing but accept your ruling. Accordingly, I seek leave to speak for no more than five minutes to give a personal explanation under standing order 190.

Leave granted.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Yesterday in a speech, I made some comments not deliberately or specifically about the Paid Parental Leave Scheme; it was brought into a question by the minister at the table. I made some other comments, which I will now quote verbatim from the Hansard so that the incorrect statements made not only by Senator Moore in the question, but subsequently in the 'take note' debate—and by Senator Faulkner, dishonestly, capriciously and quite viciously and personally, and also by Senator Singh in the same way. I want to quote to the Senate what I actually said yesterday:

Yet many have said to me that, with the paid parental scheme, the age of entitlement is finished. I will not enter into that. That is a debate for another place and another time. It is a debate, as I understand, is yet to be held. I read in the paper that there are—quoting the Deputy Prime Minister—'different issues' being looked at by the government in relation to the paid parental scheme. I look forward at some time to being taken into confidence by the government on just what is going to happen with it. But, as I say, that is another debate for another time.

I also said:
So wouldn't this be an appropriate time—with the support of the Commission of Audit—to say, 'The paid parental scheme is a good goal to head towards. It is something that a wealthy, prosperous Australia could and should enter into, but perhaps now is not the right time because now, at this stage in our game, we are trying desperately to pay off Labor's debt'?

I will leave it there. Any fair-minded person in reading what I actually said—and then having a look at what Senator Moore, Senator Faulkner and Senator Singh allege that I said—to see how I was deliberately misquoted in relation to those issues.

NOTICES

Presentation

The following notices were presented:

Senator Sterle to move:
That the following matter be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 3 December 2014:

Grain export networks, including the on- and off-farm storage, transport, handling and export of Australian grain, with particular reference to:
(a) the principles and practices underpinning an efficient grain supply chain from farm-gate to port;
(b) grain marketing and export arrangements and their impact on farm-gate returns;
(c) competition constraints on grain transport, storage and handling services;
(d) the extent to which transport, storage and handling arrangements are transparent and accountable; and
(e) any other related matter.

Senator Wright to move:
That the following matter be referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 2 October 2014:

The ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community, with reference to:
(a) the estimated number, distribution and lethality of illegal guns, including both outlawed and stolen guns, in Australia;
(b) the operation and consequences of the illicit firearms trade, including both outlawed and stolen guns within Australia;
(c) the adequacy of current laws and resourcing to enable law enforcement authorities to respond to technological advances in gun technology, including firearms made from parts which have been imported separately or covertly to avoid detection, and firearms made with the use of 3D printers;
(d) the extent to which the number and types of guns stolen each year in Australia increase the risk posed to the safety of police and the community, including the proportion of gun-related crime involving legal firearms which are illegally held;
(e) the effect banning semi-automatic handguns would have on the number of illegally held firearms in Australia;
(f) stricter storage requirements and the use of electronic alarm systems for guns stored in homes; and
(g) any related matters.

Senator Whish-Wilson to move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes:
   (i) the World Blind Union estimates that currently only 5 per cent of all published books in the
developed countries and less than 1 per cent in developing countries are ever produced in accessible
formats for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled,
   (ii) the Marrakesh Treaty, which facilitates access to published works for these persons, closes for
signature on 26 June 2014,
   (iii) the instrumental work Australia did during the Marrakesh Treaty negotiations, and
   (iv) the Australian Government is yet to sign the treaty despite Australia’s major trading partners,
including China, the United States, the European Union and Indonesia having already signed; and
(b) calls on the Government to sign, and ratify the Marrakesh Treaty.

**Senator Xenophon** to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that cheap cigarettes are currently being sold in Australia, reportedly as low as $13 for a
packet of 25 cigarettes, following the introduction of plain packaging for tobacco products; and
(b) calls on the Australian Government to:
   (i) introduce a minimum floor price on cheap and/or cross-subsidised tobacco products to remove the
cost differential,
   (ii) recognise the value of preventative measures such as Quitline and the National Tobacco
Campaign, and increase funding accordingly to maximise the effectiveness of these measures and
campaigns, and
   (iii) consider the financial burden being placed on retailers, particularly small business, as a result of
plain packaging in respect of shop fit-out and higher insurance premiums, and whether this burden is
consistent with the aims of plain packaging.

**Senator Hanson-Young** to move:

That the Senate—

(a) recognises that:
   (i) over 500,000 Iraqis have been displaced in the past week due to the ongoing deadly conflict in
their country, and
   (ii) this is a humanitarian crisis that will have flow-on effects in our region;
(b) notes that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has called on countries around the
world, including Australia, to assist with this humanitarian crisis; and
(c) calls on the Government to issue a moratorium on the return of any asylum seekers back to Iraq and
offer a reprieve to those detained in immigration detention on Manus Island, Nauru and Christmas
Island to allow them to apply for protection in Australia.

**Postponement**

The following items of business were postponed:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of Senator Hanson-Young for
today, proposing the disallowance of the Migration Amendment (Bridging Visas—Code of Behaviour)
Regulation 2013, postponed till 8 July 2014.

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 2 standing in the name of Senator Rhiannon for today,
proposing a reference to the Education and Employment References Committee, postponed till 19 June
2014.
Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 5 standing in the name of Senator Xenophon for today, proposing a reference to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee, postponed till 19 June 2014.

General business notice of motion no. 271 standing in the name of Senator Di Natale for today, proposing the establishment of a select committee into the Abbott Government’s budget cuts, postponed till 19 June 2014.

COMMITTEES
Privileges Committee
Reference
Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (15:58): by leave—I, and also on behalf of Senator Faulkner, move:

That the following matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges for inquiry and report:

In relation to the use of closed circuit television footage by officers of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) for internal investigations involving DPS staff:

(a) whether there was any improper interference, or attempted improper interference, with the free performance by Senator Faulkner or any other senator of their duties as a senator;
(b) whether disciplinary action was taken against any person in connection with the provision of information to Senator Faulkner or any other senator; and
(c) if so, whether any contempts were committed in respect of those matters.

Question agreed to.

Community Affairs References Committee
Reference
Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:58): by leave—I move:

That the following matter be referred to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 26 November 2014:

(a) the extent of income inequality in Australia and the rate at which income inequality is increasing in our community;
(b) the impact of income inequality on access to health, housing, education and work in Australia, and on the quality of the outcomes achieved;
(c) the specific impacts of inequality on disadvantaged groups within the community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, older job seekers, people living with a disability or mental illness, refugees, single parents, those on a low income, people at risk of poverty in retirement as well as the relationship between gender and inequality;
(d) the likely impact of Government policies on current and future rates of inequality particularly the changes proposed in the 2014-15 Budget;
(e) the principles that should underpin the provision of social security payments in Australia; and
(f) the practical measures that could be implemented by Governments to address inequality, particularly appropriate and adequate income support payments.

Question agreed to.
Environment and Communications References Committee

Reference

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (15:59): by leave—I move:

That the following matter be referred to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by the third sitting day in 2015:

The Abbott Government's attacks on Australia's environment, and their effects on our natural heritage and future prosperity, including:

(a) attacks on carbon pricing, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the renewable energy target, the Climate Change Authority and the Climate Commission;

(b) attacks on federal environmental protection through handing approval powers over to state governments, which have poor track records and recent environment staff cuts;

(c) attacks on funding for community environment organisations and the Environmental Defenders Offices, abolition of the Biodiversity Fund, and cuts to programs including, Landcare and Caring for our Country;

(d) undermining Australia's compliance with the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Ramsar Convention, in particular by attacking the Great Barrier Reef and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Areas; and

(e) any other related matters.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Racial Discrimination Act

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (16:00): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes the:

(i) serious concern among Victorians and representatives of Victoria's multicultural community over the Government's proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, and

(ii) the work of the Action 18C campaign, which has resulted in 47 local councils passing motions opposing the change, representing over 5 million Australians;

(b) supports the right of every Victorian to live without fear of discrimination or hostility based on race, culture or religion; and

(c) calls on the Attorney-General to abandon the proposed changes, particularly to section 18C, that would repeal protections against racial vilification and embolden the enemies of Australia's vibrant multicultural community.

I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator DI NATALE: This motion not only expresses serious concerns about the proposal to open the door to race hate but also seeks to congratulate people from right around the country who are working tirelessly to protect the right of every person to live without the fear of discrimination. In particular, it congratulates people like Erin Chew and Kingsley Liu from the Project 18C campaign—people who have worked with local councils from right across the country, now with 48 councils signing onto resolutions representing over five million constituents who have expressed their concern about the changes to the Racial
Discrimination Act. It is through actions like these from local councils and the work of people like those people behind Project 18C that we will see this racist, hateful discrimination defeated here in this place in the Senate.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Migration Amendment (Protecting Babies Born in Australia) Bill 2014

First Reading

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (16:01): by leave—I move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Migration Act 1958, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: I present the bill and move:

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (16:02): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to table an explanatory memorandum relating to the bill.

Leave granted.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: I table the explanatory memorandum and seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

As I stand here today and introduce this Bill, dozens of newborn babies and their parents anxiously await their imminent deportation to Australia's offshore detention centres. These babies, however, were not born in their parents' home country, they were born here in Australia. These babies did not enter Australia by sea or by air, they were born safely on Australian soil and this is where they should remain.

This is not purely a question of policy nor is it simply political; it is in fact a question of morality. We have an obligation to provide these children with the safety and protection they need and deserve. We must find common ground and ensure that these children are provided with the best start in life. This cannot be achieved if we send them offshore to be detained in immigration detention.

These children and their families are already here in Australia, therefore the argument that this policy acts as a deterrence is void. They are here, they were born in Australia, and they deserve to be cared for and protected from further harm. Offshore detention is no place for a child to grow up. The best option for these children is to be able to stay in Australia with their parents while their claims for protection are assessed.

Australia made a commitment to protect and uphold the basic rights of children when it signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in December 1990. Australia agreed that any laws or actions affecting children should put their best interests first and benefit them in the best possible way. Australia is currently falling short of this obligation by deporting and detaining newborn babies and their siblings in the Nauru offshore detention centre.
We know that the wellbeing of these children is compromised every day we leave them languishing in detention. The detention environment is not conducive to a caring and protective family life and the opportunities for these children to have access to the things that most of us believe children should have, such as a proper education, play, a sense of safety, is unachievable.

Many reports have shown that a child's development is significantly hampered by the negative impacts of detention. The psychological and psychiatric damage is long term and consistent.

It is important that we reflect on how the policies of today impact on the wellbeing and welfare of innocent children. This Bill will ensure that the rights of children who are born in Australia to asylum seeker parents are upheld and protected.

The Bill amends the Migration Act 1958 (The Act) to ensure that a child who is born in Australia is not classified to have 'entered Australia by sea' and is therefore not an 'unauthorised maritime arrival' subject to transfer to Australia's offshore detention centres.

History will judge us here in this place on how we respond to this moral, yet highly politically charged, issue. On the matter of protecting children and newborn babies we can make a small but life changing step that will protect them from further harm. I believe that one part of this vexed issue that most of us can agree on is that we must protect these children, whose only crime was being born to parents who fled their homeland in search of safety, from further damage and abuse.

I commend this Bill to the Senate.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity Committee

Meeting

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (16:03): I move:

That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 19 June 2014, from 5 pm, to take evidence for the committee's inquiry into the jurisdiction of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity.

Question agreed to.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Reporting Date

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (16:03): I move:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee on the future of beekeeping and pollination service industries in Australia be extended to 25 June 2014.

Question agreed to.

Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee

Meeting

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (16:03): I move:

That the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee be authorised to hold a private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 19 June 2014, from 3.45 pm.
MOTIONS

Greenhouse Pollution

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (16:03): I move:

That the Senate—
(a) recognises the commitment of the world's two largest emitters, the People's Republic of China and the United States of America, to limit and drive down their greenhouse pollution over the coming years;
(b) supports their cooperative approach to use international fora such as the G20 and the United Nations to ensure a global agreement is secured in the Paris Conference of the Parties in 2015;
(c) acknowledges these governments' preferred approach to drive down pollution is through market based, cap and trade systems; and
(d) insists the Government stop making misleading statements that its 'direct action' plan is capable of significantly driving down Australia's emissions or is anyway comparable to the Obama Administration's Clean Power Plan.

Question agreed to.

Mandatory Fuel Efficiency Standards

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (16:04): I move:

That the Senate—
(a) acknowledges that Australian motorists can achieve significant hip-pocket savings at the petrol pump if mandatory fuel efficiency standards are gradually introduced for new vehicles;
(b) notes that new Australian cars consume more petrol than new vehicles sold in China, India, Europe and Japan;
(c) recognises that light passenger and commercial vehicles account for 10 per cent of Australia's total carbon pollution, but this can be easily reduced; and
(d) supports the introduction of mandatory fuel efficiency standards.

Question agreed to.

National TAFE Day

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (16:04): I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 279 standing in my name for today relating to National TAFE Day by amending subparagraph (ii).

Leave granted.

Senator RHIANNON: I move the motion as amended:

That the Senate—
(a) notes:
   (i) that National TAFE day will be held on 18 June 2014,
   (ii) the proposed cuts to technical and further education (TAFE) budgets across Australia will have disastrous impacts on staff and students and Australia’s economic future and social well-being,
   (iii) the changes to TAFE are adversely impacting regional, rural and disadvantaged communities and people with varying abilities, and
(iv) the Senate inquiry into TAFE unearthed widespread concerns across industries and interests about the quality of education and training provided through the private vocational and education market; and

(b) calls on the federal and state governments to:
   (i) reverse the harsh budget cuts to TAFE and to abandon changes proposed to vocational education and training that undermine TAFE as a public provider,
   (ii) review the current competitive tendering model of government funding as it impacts on TAFE,
   (iii) support and expand the capacity of the public TAFE system to allow it to continue its historic role providing high quality technical and further education to Australians of all ages and backgrounds,
   (iv) properly recognise the importance of TAFE in providing vocational and technical education in areas of high and low demand, in rural and remote areas and in supporting access and participation for disadvantaged learners, and
   (v) work collaboratively to develop a national workforce strategy for the TAFE sector.

Question agreed to.

Carers

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (16:06): I, and also on behalf of Senators Moore and Boyce, move:

That the Senate

(a) recognises the role that carers play in our community, particularly family carers, and acknowledges the over $40 billion of unpaid care that carers provide;
(b) celebrates the diversity of carers in our community, who may be caring for a spouse, a sibling, a parent or a child, and particularly recognises the contribution of our young carers; and
(c) calls on the Government to maintain its support of carers and ensure that its welfare reform process does not adversely affect carers or reduce their access to income support.

Question agreed to.

Christmas Island Tragedy

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (16:06): At the request of Senator Cash, I move:

That the Senate

(a) notes that on 15 December 2010, a vessel now known as SIEV 221 foundered on rocks at Rocky Point near Flying Fish Cove, Christmas Island, resulting in a significant search and rescue event and tragic loss of life; and
(b) acknowledges the:
   (i) bravery of the crews of the Customs and Border Protection vessel, ACV Triton, and the Royal Australian Navy vessel, HMAS Pirie, and the people of Christmas Island who rescued 41 survivors in treacherous conditions at considerable risk to their own personal safety,
   (ii) work done by officers of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and the Australian Navy who serve as part of Border Protection Command in protecting our borders, is recognised and appreciated, and
   (iii) findings of the Joint Select Committee on the Christmas Island Tragedy in relation to the efforts of Customs, Navy and Australian Federal Police (AFP) on the day and that 'The committee believes the response by Customs, Navy and AFP on the day was a tremendous rescue effort made in atrocious circumstances'.
Question agreed to.

Middle East

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (16:07): I ask that general business notice of motion No. 276 standing in my name and in the name of Senator Xenophon for today relating to recognition the United Nations accepted term 'occupied Palestinian territories' be taken as a formal motion.

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

Senator Fifield: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: Formality has been denied, Senator Milne.

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

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator MILNE: I rise to say how disappointed I am that formality has been blocked for this particular matter. It is a critical issue, something which the Senate ought to be able to resolve today. The fact of the matter is 'occupied Palestinian territories' is an internationally accepted term and is used by the United Nations. The Australian government is an embarrassing Australia every day by refusing to use the United Nations recognised term. I do not accept the idea that because this is a foreign affairs matter it cannot be resolved. It is very specific. It is clear in the fourth Geneva convention and the Australian Greens believe that this Senate should make a very fair statement to the government in particular that we stand by the United Nations and the force Geneva convention. (Time expired)

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:09): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for two minutes.

Senator WONG: I thank the chamber. Labor is denying formality on this motion for the reasons outlined in my statement to the Senate on 25 March this year. The Australian Labor Party believes that complex or contested matters of foreign policy should not be dealt with in summary fashion by this chamber and nor, in the absence of extraordinary circumstance, do we support the suspension of standing orders to bring on immediate debate. Senator Milne in her contribution, conflates two issues. One is the substantive issue and the second is the capacity of the Senate to resolve these matters. I do not think even the most ambitious of senators would suggest that a motion dealt with in summary fashion will resolve a foreign policy matter such as the one which is the substance of this motion.

I would emphasise that there is much in this motion which reflects the position of the Australian Labor Party on Palestine and the occupied territories including occupied east Jerusalem. Indeed, much of the motion is consistent with what used to be the bipartisan consensus in this country. Labor remains committed to supporting and enduring and just two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The term 'occupied territories', including in relation to occupied east Jerusalem, is accepted in the international community. The United Nations General Assembly has, in many of its resolutions, used the same language. Freelancing on foreign policy has serious consequences. Senator Brandis's actions have isolated Australia from the international community and are another foreign policy embarrassment the Abbott government.
Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (16:11): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator XENOPHON: As co-sponsor with Senator Milne, I indicate my disappointment that we cannot have a vote on this motion. I refer to what Professor Ben Saul, Professor of International Law at the University of Sydney, has stated:

Australia’s new view is starkly at odds with the true status of east Jerusalem under international law.

It also corrodes the international rule of law and violates Australia’s international law obligations.

The term 'occupation' is therefore not pejorative or judgmental. It is an objective legal description of Israel’s physical control of a place beyond Israel’s borders at independence in 1948. I also refer honourable senators to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 2004 which confirmed that territory can be occupied even if there is an underlying dispute about sovereign ownership of that territory. I believe the Australian government has made a mistake in going down this course and I regret that we cannot vote on this motion.

Asylum Seekers

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (16:12): I ask that general business notice of motion No. 281 standing in my name for today relating to a moratorium on deporting Iraqi asylum seekers back to Iraq be taken as formal.

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

Senator Fifield: Yes.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Formality has been denied, Senator Hanson-Young.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: I find it extremely disappointing to hear, of all people, the Labor Party denying leave to have this issue dealt with in the Senate today. This is a matter of such urgency. There is unrest, horror and war unfolding before our eyes in Iraq and the government continues to remove Iraqi asylum seekers as recently as this week. Today I was given the flight details of an asylum seeker who was returned to Iraq last Sunday. He was forcibly removed by this government. That is why this issue is so urgent. There should be a moratorium on their return so that nobody else has to die. (Time expired)


The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator FIFIELD: A fundamental part of Australia’s immigration system is that people found not to engage Australia’s protection obligations and/or who have no lawful basis to remain in Australia are expected to depart. If someone is considering returning home, it is important to remember the decision to return is theirs. It is not always an easy decision to make. The government is continuing to monitor what is a dynamic and evolving situation in Iraq to take into account any emerging risks. Refugee status determination decisions, whether
in Australia, or by the Papua New Guinea or Nauruan governments, are made using the most recent country information available.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (16:14): Mr Deputy President, I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator MOORE: Labor objects to this particular motion being taken as formal. As stated by Senator Wong previously, we do not believe that a complex matter such as this should be dealt with in a summary fashion in this chamber. The matter is an outstanding example of one that senators should be afforded an opportunity to consider with more than one day’s notice. That is Labor’s longstanding position.

The humanitarian crisis unfolding in Iraq is of grave concern, and we share that concern—that is not owned by any particular senator in this place. It will have flow on effects across the world.

We have a strong and proud history of compassion in circumstances where events in home countries make it difficult to return—for instance, the Tiananmen Square massacre, and issues in Bosnia and East Timor. Most recently, Labor’s shadow minister for foreign affairs, Tanya Plibersek, made representations to the government regarding the unfolding situation in Ukraine.

We have been assured that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has confirmed that there are NGOs operating in Iraq who are in a position to effectively deliver Australian-funded humanitarian assistance.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Moore. That concludes formal business.

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

World Heritage Areas

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (16:16): The President has received the following letter from Senator Siewert:

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

The Abbott government’s failure to protect Australia’s World Heritage listed sites.

Is the proposal supported?

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

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

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (16:16): I rise today to support the notion that the Abbott government is failing to protect Australia’s World Heritage areas, and there is ample evidence of that when you look at the World Heritage areas around the country and the fact that, as we stand here today, in Doha the World Heritage Committee is meeting and on its agenda are two matters concerning World Heritage sites in Australia.
The first matter is with regard to the Great Barrier Reef. Australia's failure to stop the expansion of coalmines and coal ports and the dredging of coal ports and the dumping of that spoil into the waters off the Queensland coast is actually jeopardising that World Heritage area—jeopardising the outstanding universal value inherent in our Great Barrier Reef. It is an area recognised around the world. It is one of the major features of Australia of which we as a nation are proud and with which we connect. It is also one of the iconic sites that define Australia in a global context. Yet we have a government prepared to risk the Great Barrier Reef being listed as 'World Heritage in danger'. Let me tell you, Mr Deputy President: if an 'in danger' listing was put on the Great Barrier Reef, it would smash the tourism industry straightaway. It would bring global attention to the fact that the state party with responsibility for looking after that World Heritage area was derelict in its duty and that the world has had to act. What sort of shame would that be for Australia?

The World Heritage Committee has already sent a group of people here on a mission to look at the Great Barrier Reef. Australia has been warned more than once to stop this port development up and down the Queensland coast. Then, yesterday, we had Minister Hunt defer a decision until after the meeting in Doha, hoping that nobody would find out that he was not going to make his decision until after the meeting, in a way that would probably push the issue right over the edge. But I am going to allow my colleague Senator Waters to discuss the Great Barrier Reef more fully.

The Australian Greens have been big supporters of the World Heritage Convention for a long time. It recognises areas around the world for their outstanding universal value as natural areas or as cultural areas or both, and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has been listed as a site which has both natural and cultural values. It is outstanding.

Of the list of World Heritage properties globally, natural sites are a small percentage. There are many, many cathedrals; there are many, many cultural sites from around the world. But natural areas are very special. People recognise that because the areas are of outstanding universal value they need to be protected forever more, and that is the responsibility of a state party. I can tell you, having been to many of those meetings, that country state parties do everything in their power to get one of their sites listed, because, once a site is listed, it gives such prestige to that country, in all kinds of ways but particularly with regard to their global reputation and their tourism industry. Yet here we have Australia trying to undermine the outstanding universal values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area by trying to excise 74,000 hectares of an area that was included last year.

The history of the eastern boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is a very long and difficult one. The values of the area were listed right back in the late eighties, and the only reason those areas—those magnificent forests—were not included in the World Heritage area back then was a political one. David Llewellyn and Michael Field blocked those areas going into World Heritage, drawing what can only be described as a dog's-teeth boundary up the eastern boundary to exclude all of the forests, so that they could be kept out for logging. Finally, after years of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO asking for those forest to be included, they were, last year. There was universal celebration in Tasmania when the World Heritage area was expanded.
Now we are seeing the Abbott government trying to tear down the integrity of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, and I am hoping that the World Heritage Committee will throw it out—absolutely just reject it—as an appalling precedent that a developed, rich country like Australia should attempt to destroy outstanding universal values in order to log a site. The only reason that you would reduce a boundary of a World Heritage area would have to be in terms of what it does to your outstanding universal values. As Peter Hitchcock, an expert in this field, has said quite clearly, taking out this area would destroy outstanding universal values.

Those outstanding universal values are there for all to be able to see. You have got tall eucalypt forests which are famous for their ecological diversity, their outstanding natural beauty, their connectivity and the ecological processes over time that they represent. There are rainforests recognised for their ecological diversity, threatened species and communities of plant and animal. There are habitats of threatened animal species. You have got magnificent cast and cave systems, the geodiversity that that provides and the hydrological integrity that is given to particularly the Florentine Valley by this particular listing. You have got scenic landscapes, areas of outstanding natural beauty, wild river conditions, geological sites, fossil sites, geomorphological sites, glacial features, moraines, gouged valleys, lateral gouging in evidence and, finally, Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.

So it is absolutely essential that we keep this area intact and that the Abbott government's proposal is seen for what it is. There is every reason to keep this area intact, and for the coalition to be suggesting that the area is degraded has been proved to be wrong. No evidence has been brought forward to substantiate the claims that were made by the minister, and even the department has come out and said they were told to do this, they did not consult outside the department, and they say that the government's claims in terms of degraded areas are wrong. In fact, the World Heritage Committee itself and its expert body, IUCN, have come out and said that when they made the listing last year they knew full well there were some degraded areas there but they included them for connectivity and for integrity in the boundaries, and Australia was given the job of rehabilitating those areas. That is what we should be doing.

Instead of that, in order to try and engage in a crass debate to free up forests for logging which will destroy cast systems particularly in the Florentine, we are seeing the government going ahead and humiliating Australia in a global forum. What is more, the precedent if this were allowed is to give a wink wink, nudge nudge to other countries around the world to excise areas for mines, excise them for resort development, for logging, for whatever you like, and have it both ways—have World Heritage and smash other parts of it. It would be like the Egyptians saying, 'Oh well, so long as we keep one of the pyramids we can smash the rest to fix up the roads.' That is how ridiculous this proposition is and how it will be seen as vandalism.

I am very pleased to say that in my conversations with other governments who are on the World Heritage Committee they are instructing their delegations in Doha to reject the Australian position out of hand. I am hoping that the World Heritage Committee rejects the Abbott government's proposal. All it will do is further humiliate and isolate Australia. Far from being a conservationist, as the Prime Minister claims to be, he is an environmental
vandal who is on the record saying that there are too many forests 'locked up', that there are too many national parks. That is not where somebody facing climate change and habitat loss and species extinction would be going. We need to protect our World Heritage areas and the Australian Greens will be doing everything we can supporting those in Doha, actually arguing for and working with responsible countries who like global treaties, who want to see areas around the world of outstanding universal value protected. This will be a very black mark against the Abbott government in international environmental circles.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (16:26): It is a pleasure to take my place in this debate. Can I say right at the outset that I agree with Senator Milne that areas of genuine wilderness that are recognised as genuine wilderness should be protected and should be respected. I agree with Senator Milne in that case. But what we should not have is what we had here in Australia last year, and particularly in Tasmania, where a political process that excluded the community brings about a political result that actually includes areas that should never have been listed in the first place. It is very clear that that is exactly what happened.

History shows that that is what happened. In fact, Senator Milne and her Greens colleagues were saying prior to 2008 that the forestry operations that were happening in these areas we are now talking about were degrading the values of the wilderness estate in Tasmania. They made that complaint to the World Heritage commission, that the forestry operations in the areas just outside the boundaries of the existing estate were diminishing the values inside the estate. So the World Heritage commission sent a monitoring mission to Australia to assess the claim made by the environment groups and the Greens that the forestry operations outside the boundaries, in the very areas that we are talking about now, were diminishing values inside. So the Greens try and have it both ways. It is a consistent process that they undertake. But this is what the World Heritage commission said in 2008. This is not the Australian government, this is not Tony Abbott, it is not me, it is the World Heritage commission, who sent monitors out to check the claims of the Greens. It said:

The area managed under the TWWHA management plan provides a good representation of well-managed tall Eucalyptus forest and there is similar forest outside the property which is also well-managed, but for both conservation and development objectives. The threats to these forests from production forestry activities are well managed and there is no need for the boundary of the property to be changed to deal with such threats.

So that is the World Heritage commission passing judgement on the claims of the Greens and the environment movement and this boundary.

Subsequent to that Peter Garrett, then environment minister, in 2010 said in response to the monitoring mission from the World Heritage Committee, 'We will not extend the boundaries any further.' That was a decision of the Australian government in 2010 under the stewardship of then minister Peter Garrett. So not only have the claims of the environment groups at that particular point in time been debunked by the World Heritage commission, the Labor Party in government at the time said we would not be extending World Heritage area any further.

We then had a political process that shut-out large sections of the community that disenfranchised large sections of the community, that took away people's livelihoods. It was a poor and bad political process, driven by Minister Burke, who went into the Tasmanian Legislative Council and said, 'I'm not sure if I'm actually going to do this,' and then walked
into a press conference and announced the nomination for an extension of the Wilderness World Heritage Area. I mean, you could not believe a word that man said!

And the same goes for the Greens. In fact, the Greens have said that the values of these areas have been destroyed. Vica Bailey, who I think is in Doha at the moment, said of one of the areas that we are currently considering:
The forest at Mother Cummings was pristine oldgrowth, with all the associated environmental values. Logging has removed these values. Although a so-called forest remains, these unique values are gone.

That is the voice of the Greens themselves. So it is not just us saying that the forestry operations outside the old boundaries have degraded those areas, it is also the Greens themselves. The Greens will say anything to get an argument across. Bob Brown, before he was a senator, when he was campaigning against hydro dams in 1981 was actually arguing for coal fired power stations! We regard hydro-electricity these days as a very valuable renewable energy. But Bob Brown preferred coal fired power stations to hydro-electricity in 1981 when he was arguing against the construction of hydro dams in Tasmania! The Greens will say anything they like. In fact, in this very place, the Greens voted against Senator Bob Brown’s own words. Senator Bob Brown, at that time, said new forest, regrowing forest, had a whole range of values. We put those words into a motion and tested it on the floor of the parliament. Senator Brown and Senator Milne actually voted against their own words. They would say absolutely anything to get their point of view across, and they will change their view as it suits.

As I said, genuine wilderness, whether it is the Tasmanian forests or the Great Barrier Reef, should be respected and protected. Minister Hunt has done a great job, in my view, in putting in place a long-term plan to sustain and protect the reef. I congratulate him for doing that. In Tasmania the Greens have one objective, and that is to destroy the Tasmanian forest industry. In fact, the Greens movement in Tasmania has asked the World Heritage Commission to list an extra 806,000 hectares as Wilderness World Heritage Area, not just 172,000 hectares as was put in last year.

I have an assessment of genuine wilderness in Tasmania that was conducted by the Tasmanian government in 2003, defining those wilderness values under a methodology established by the National Wilderness Inventory. It is interesting to note that those areas are well inside the existing boundaries, particularly along the eastern boundaries that Senator Milne is talking about. In fact, when the estate was first listed, the buffer zones were put inside the boundaries. That is clearly demonstrated. Mr Acting Deputy President, I seek leave to table a map of what is genuine wilderness, as established by the Tasmanian government under the National Wilderness Inventory guidelines, so that it is actually on the record.

Senator Lines: There are many maps though, aren’t there?

Senator COLBECK: This is an official government map from an official report. If you are denying—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sterle): Order! Senator Colbeck, you are seeking leave to table a document?

Senator COLBECK: Yes.

Leave granted.

Senator COLBECK: I thank the chamber for that.
Senator Lines interjecting—

Senator COLBECK: I am happy to provide the report, Senator Lines, if that is what you would like to see. I am happy to provide the report to the chamber if that is what you want.

Senator Lines: Let's table the original submission to list, then.

Senator COLBECK: The original submission is actually a public document. What we should do is respect genuine wilderness. We should not be using this process, as the previous Labor government and Senator Milne and her colleagues have done, to destroy an industry.

The special species sector is under particular threat from this listing. We know that there have been existing forestry activities. The Greens pretend 90 per cent of this area is old-growth pristine forest. That is not the case. According to the figures that have been provided to us by Forestry Tasmania, only 28,530 hectares of the 74,000 hectares are actually old-growth forest. It is not 90 per cent as the environmental groups would have you believe. In fact, 9,580 hectares of it is not even forest at all. So when the green groups put out photographs of nice forests with a bit of cloud over them they are, as they quite often do, really misrepresenting what is in those forests. We know that, post 1960, 10 per cent has been harvested. But we also know that some of these areas have been harvested back into the 1900s. So we are taking this action for one good reason: to respect the real values of genuine wilderness, which should be respected. We do not believe, as the Greens do, that we should destroy the forest industry in Tasmania.

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (16:36): The government continues the rhetoric of no facts, no figures, just a narrative based on the construction of misinformation and half-truths. It pervades the whole of the government's agenda. It does not matter what the sector is: the mistruths, the construction of a new narrative based on nothing, continues. I want to talk about this matter of public importance and focus on the Abbott government's failure to protect World Heritage listed sites. In doing that, I want to talk about the government's application to the World Heritage Commission to delist a section of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area.

As I said at the outset, we have come to expect from the Abbott government that a decision to delist—such as the one they have got before the World Heritage Committee at the moment—is not based on fact. It is not based on science, research or evidence. It is a party political decision designed to win votes, as there is again no evidence of any economic or social gain, despite their application saying there is. I had a look at their application to delist today. It is just eight pages long and it is full of absolutely nothing. There is no evidence, no rigour, no science—nothing.

In agreeing to list the extension of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area by 170,000 hectares, under the Gillard government, the World Heritage Commission had to satisfy themselves on a number of rigorous areas and they had to be convinced that that area was of outstanding universal value. When you look at the Gillard government's submission—some 28 pages long with facts, figures, photographs and absolute justification as to why that area should be listed—you just wonder what the government is up to. In making the decision to list this particular area, the committee acknowledged that the area included rare and largely intact ecosystems.
Peter Hitchcock—referred to by Senator Milne earlier—a prominent expert on World Heritage areas, states that the great majority of the forest proposed by the Abbott government for excision, about 90 per cent of it, has not been disturbed—we did not hear that today from the government—and that a small area, between five and six per cent, has been logged. That is not a statistic that you hear from the government. They try to convince the public that large tracts have been logged—and indeed we heard that from the government today—that the land is somehow worthless and we have all been duped.

The Prime Minister told a timber industry function in Canberra on 4 March—and I heard this myself—that he wanted to delist this area of country in Tasmania:

… because the area is not pristine forest. It is forest which has been logged. It is forest which has been degraded. In some cases, it is plantation timber that was actually planted to be logged.

Listening to that, you could believe that the Prime Minister was, in fact, referring to that whole area. But, of course, what we see again on display from the Abbott government—and, indeed, the Prime Minister himself—are the mistruths, the half-truths and the outright lies about what is really going on here.

Senator Brandis: Mr Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. That is unparliamentary. She cannot accuse another member of parliament of outright lies. It should be withdrawn.

Senator LINES: I do not believe that I described the Prime Minister as lying but, if you take offence, I withdraw. One of the environmental consultants to the Senate inquiry described the government's claim that delisting will deliver additional economic and social outcomes and that the area was disturbed as whimsical and not based on any rigorous science, research or evidence. The government's submission to the Senate inquiry lacks any credibility. It is quite embarrassing, actually, and when I read it I could only assume the department were embarrassed. It lacks any credibility. There is no science, there is no rigour and there is no evidence to support the delisting. Again, in the Senate inquiry, the government tried to point out that it was agricultural land. I put it to the Senate today that this is nothing but a political grab to try to get votes for the Abbott government, and I would urge the World Heritage Committee not to agree. (Time expired)

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (16:41): I rise to speak about the Abbott government's assault on our World Heritage areas, and, in particular, the Great Barrier Reef in my home state of Queensland. As we speak, the World Heritage Committee is debating this matter overnight to determine the future of the Great Barrier Reef and to decide whether or not to give this government a further extension until February to try to avert a World Heritage in Danger listing for the reef.

We all know that a World Heritage in Danger listing would be an absolute atrocity. It would, unfortunately, completely destroy the Great Barrier Reef tourism industry, threaten those 63,000 people who rely on a healthy reef for their livelihood and send a message that Australia simply does not care about its World Heritage obligations. It would be an international list of shame that Australia would be included on, joining war-torn nations like Afghanistan, the Congo and Yemen as one of the only developed nations with a site on that list.
It is not like we have not had any warning. For the last two years, the World Heritage Committee has been issuing stronger and stronger warnings and urging and pleading with both the federal and the Queensland governments to change direction and stop this mass industrialisation of the reef and avert that World Heritage in Danger listing. Just last month, the draft decision of the World Heritage Committee made some very, very clear recommendations, which we are anticipating will be adopted tonight.

They made special mention of the approval of the Abbott Point coal port—what would become the world's largest coal port, that so happens to be located in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. They begged the Australian government to hurry up and deliver a long-term sustainable plan for the future of the reef. They urged the Australian government to not ditch its powers to protect matters of national environmental significance and just palm them off to states or local governments, to postpone that and to reconsider it. The draft decision urged the government not to cut reef water quality programs, which, sadly, this government has done. And they urged the Australian government to lock in limits on damaging new and expanded ports into law.

But what does this government do? Instead of actually listening to those recommendations, acting upon them and putting them into law, they mounted a lobbying effort to try and water down that decision. We have had folk from the Australian government over there for several days now trying to have that strong draft decision watered down so that it is less embarrassing for Australia. It would be less embarrassing for Australia if you fix the problem rather than lobbying to change the criticism. We will find out tonight how that lobbying effort went.

Last week Minister Hunt and the Queensland environment minister, Andrew Powell, released the annual reef water quality report. They tried to spin this as good news by saying that the reef's water quality had improved. It had gone from 'very poor' to 'poor'. I am afraid there is no way you can spin that. The inshore reef's water quality remains poor. Instead of actually backing in the reef rescue plan, the program which had helped start the trajectory of improvement by working with farmers to try to reduce run-off, the Abbott government has instead taken out 20 per cent of the funding for that program. Forty million dollars has been slashed from that program to go into some as-yet unidentified program, Reef Trust. In budget estimates they could not even tell me who was going to administer that program and what the parameters would be.

Instead of heeding the warnings that we have had for the last two years, we have seen this government approve Abbot Point coal terminal. We have seen them approve yet another liquefied natural gas facility in the World Heritage area on Curtis Island in Gladstone. This is despite input from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's own internal scientific advice on Abbot Point which says that the offsets were unrealistic and urges rejection of the offshore dumping of five million cubic metres of sludge to be dredged from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. GBRMPA were ready to reject it; they said it had the potential to cause long-term irreversible harm to areas of the marine park.

It is not just the internal science that GBRMPA tried to tell the minister about. The industry actually knows that this is bad news. We have already had Rio Tinto, BHP, Anglo American coal and Lend Lease pull out of Abbot Point. They do not want the bad PR. They have heard the science, they have heard the community, and they have also cited the fact that there is excess port capacity and they actually do not need these extra ports, because the coal price is
dropping, the world is embracing renewables, and they simply do not have enough to justify the need for new ports. We have just got Adani and GVK Hancock left at Abbot Point—Adani who are mortgaged to the hilt and who have been sued in own home country for breaching environmental conditions about port developments. These are the guys that this government has let loose on the Great Barrier Reef.

We know that, further south in the reef, Mitchell Group and Xstrata have also pulled out of their plans to put ports in the Fitzroy delta—that beautiful, pristine region that the World Heritage committee has singled out and said should be protected and should be off limits for ports. We saw some wonderful news in recent weeks. International banks are now saying they do not want anything to do with Abbot Point either. They will not put their money and the money of their investors into these damaging developments. I would like to praise Deutsch Bank, HSBC and, today, the Royal Bank of Scotland, who have ruled out using their money to fund this destruction. This comes off the back of other superannuation funds who are also divesting from fossil fuels that damage the reef and our climate.

We saw yesterday a pretty sneaky attempt by this government to try to fool the World Heritage Committee by deferring the decision on the Southern Hemisphere's biggest coalmine proposal, the Carmichael mine, proposed by Adani—that same mob that clearly have no respect for environmental rules. This is a 60-megatonne coalmine that would operate for 60 years. Minister Hunt has all the information he needs to reject that climate atrocity that would also damage the reef and have a terrible effect on groundwater. Instead, he sought to put it off until after the decision of the World Heritage Committee tonight. But the committee will not be fooled. They know what is going on, and we are anticipating a recommendation from the World Heritage Committee that we have until February to do better. Sadly, the approval of the Carmichael mine, which I expect this government to issue, will be forthcoming in a matter of weeks.

I have a bill before this place to implement the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee to try to save the reef and keep it off the list of sites in danger. It is a very simple bill, because they were very simple recommendations. They simply say: no new ports, no damaging port expansions. Just press 'pause' on development until you finish doing your long-term plan for the reef, and any development that is approved should have a net benefit. That is what the World Heritage Committee recommended to this government last year. I anticipate that they will repeat those very simple and very reasonable recommendations tonight. When will this government clean out its ears and start to listen?

Unfortunately, it seems that the government is continuing to favour the big mining companies and their overseas shareholders, the interests of those private profiteers, ahead of the interests of the Great Barrier Reef and of the 63,000 people who need the reef healthy for their livelihoods. This is, sadly, a theme that we see repeated on Cape York, in another attack on World Heritage value land. We see, sadly, that the Abbott government has reduced the staff working on that potential nomination from 5.8 down to 1.5. There is no commitment to World Heritage listing on Cape York by this government, despite the clear wishes of the traditional owners, who were so close to agreeing on a nomination and the boundaries and the lines on the maps before this government pulled the rug out from underneath them by ceasing and failing to continue the funding for that consultation.
There is no hiding from it. This government is launching an all-out assault on Australia's environment, and world heritage is at the top of its list. Tonight I fear that we will once again have a strong warning from the World Heritage Committee, and I fear that this will be the last warning that we will get. Three strikes and I think we are going to be out for the reef. We have until February. Please, this government needs to start listening to the hundreds of scientists, the internal advice of their own marine park authority, and the thousands of Australians who are concerned about the future of the Great Barrier Reef. Do what is necessary. Implement the World Heritage Committee recommendations, and start realising that Australians can be proud of their government again because it is looking after the environment rather than simply assaulting it from every angle.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (16:51): The motion brought to this chamber today by the Greens is just another act of self-serving, promotion-seeking, attention-seeking, publicity from the Australian Greens that seeks to harm our economy and our tourism industries. If you listened to the contributions from Senator Milne and Senator Waters, you would be of the opinion that we are on the cusp of losing all of Tasmania's native forests and that the reef is going to be gone instantly almost. This seems to be the type of hysteria that they are trying to whip up, and of course it is all about creating this 'the end is nigh' type approach. They say the end is nigh so they can try to claim the supreme moral ground, which is what we get from the Greens all the time. In doing so, they can try to block any type of economic activity from any of the regions that might be in question. What the Greens are telling the chamber today does not reflect the reality. The reality is that there is enormous work being undertaken to protect Tasmanian forests and the Great Barrier Reef, and to ensure that their World Heritage status—which we as a government support and value—is protected for the future. We will continue to make sure we do that.

My colleague Senator Colbeck has touched significantly on the Tasmanian forests issue. In relation to the Great Barrier Reef, the management system put in place to protect the outstanding universal value and integrity of the Great Barrier Reef is one of the most rigorous and modern systems in the world. The 2014 State Party Report on the state of the conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area demonstrates that Australia is on track to meet all of the committee's recommendations within the requested time frame of June 2015. So—despite the fear we hear from Senator Waters—the work of the Australian government, the Queensland government and all relevant parties has us on track to meet recommendations to make sure we continue to protect the Great Barrier Reef. The draft decision on the Great Barrier Reef is currently being considered by the World Heritage Committee in Qatar, Doha. It welcomes Australia's progress in protecting the Great Barrier Reef, especially with regard to the improvements in water quality, focusing on port development in priority port development areas, and protecting greenfield areas from the impacts of port development. Good, positive steps are being taken, and reforms are being delivered by this government and by the Newman government in Queensland.

Just last week we had further commitments of work and effort to support the Great Barrier Reef. The Commonwealth and Queensland governments committed sums of money towards a whole range of initiatives for its long-term protection. There were investments from the new Reef Trust: a $5 million dugong and turtle protection plan; $2 million for crown-of-thorns
starfish control; $5 million to improve water quality from run-off in the wet tropics region, in particular of nitrogen; and $3 million to improve grazing management practices in the Burdekin and Fitzroy regions to reduce sediment run-off. The Queensland government in their recent state budget committed another $35 million a year to reduce run-off and improve water quality. That is significant investment and action from our government and the Queensland government, because we put the Great Barrier Reef at the top of our list to make sure it is protected. We want to make sure we deliver the necessary protections to preserve this iconic tourism destination for all Australians and for all visitors to Australia to enjoy well into the future.

The Greens are not alone in trying to run fear campaigns when it comes to the Great Barrier Reef. They agitate as part of a global movement that seeks to ensure they get the maximum publicity, whether it is out of motions like this or out of the deliberations in Doha that Senator Waters alluded to. The Greens make sure they seize every possible opportunity to be on the front pages. They rope in world stars to join in this cause. Today we see publicity of what is happening in Doha, from that renowned marine scientist and marine biologist Leonardo DiCaprio. Leonardo DiCaprio has come out in relation to his concerns about the Great Barrier Reef. He is there in Doha. He, of course, obviously, will make sure that the World Heritage Committee is well informed, I am sure, when his considered opinions are taken into account.

Seeing the stance taken by Mr DiCaprio really made me think and took me back to that classic 2004 movie Team America and the way it portrayed how actors like to put themselves at the front of such causes and influence what is happening in the world. Janeane Garofulo was portrayed in Team America saying:

As actors, it is our responsibility to read the newspapers, and then say what we read on television like it's our own opinion.

That does seem to be the Hollywood way. The Greens are very adept—I congratulate them on this—at dragging their Hollywood stars in to make sure that they can get extra publicity for their fearmongering and their scare campaigns in relation to things like the Great Barrier Reef. The classic line from that Team America movie in relation to how actors are used in this regard was the Alec Baldwin parody:

By following the rules of the Film Actors Guild, the world can become a better place that handles dangerous people with talk and reasoning. That is the FAG way. One day you will all look at the world us actors create and say, 'Wow, good going, FAG. You really made the world a better place, didn't you, FAG.'

It is not about what the Film Actors Guild thinks. It is not about what the Greens think. It is of course about what the science shows and what the evidence shows, and we have faith in the work we are doing as a government, in the advice we are taking from scientists, in the work the Queensland government are doing, in the advice they are taking from their scientists and in all of those different agencies—that that will make sure that we protect the Great Barrier Reef, that we deliver for the Great Barrier Reef the type of policy framework and protections that will preserve its World Heritage status, that will preserve the iconic status it deserves as a unique, precious and valuable site in Australia and a location of great biodiversity and environmental significance as well as great tourism significance and great value to our economy.
What we do not need are people like the Greens coming in here, going out there in public or being joined by their Film Actors Guild colleagues like Leonardo DiCaprio whipping up some hysteria or some frenzy that only serves to damage Australia's reputation and only serves to hurt the tourism industry in Queensland. Senator Waters, as a Queensland senator, should be hanging her head in shame at the fact that she is harming the Queensland tourism industry by creating this scare campaign and suggesting the Great Barrier Reef is a lesser place to visit. It is not, and we will make sure it continues to be a great place to visit.

Debate interrupted.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (17:00): by leave—I give notice that, on the next day of sitting, I shall move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes the division and dysfunction in the Coalition Government over the Prime Minister's unaffordable and unfair Paid Parental Leave Scheme.

(b) calls on the Government to release the details of the Prime Minister's scheme, including its costs and modelling that quantifies productivity and distributional impacts.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

President

The PRESIDENT (17:01): I understand that there will be some senators making valedictory speeches this evening, but I assure you that I will not. I am making a final statement because I do not believe that making a valedictory speech is appropriate for me, no matter what my circumstances might be. I thought it was appropriate for me to make a final statement to the chamber, seeing as I have had the opportunity to be the President of the Senate for the last six years. I hope I do not take too long, because the people who need to make their valedictory speeches need to have an opportunity to do so as soon as possible.

Firstly, I was elected on 1 July 1996 as a senator for Queensland. I was the Deputy President from 19 August 2002 till 25 August 2008. On 26 August 2008 I became the President of the Senate because of the confidence that was placed in me by honourable senators gathered in this chamber and by my honourable colleagues in my own party. For that I am eternally grateful and I have always acknowledged that it was a great honour that was not only bestowed upon me but bestowed upon my wife, Sue, and our family.

During my period as President I have had three Governor-Generals; three Prime Ministers—one was a repeat offender; four Speakers of the House of Representatives—it seems that the turnover has been fairly high; three Clerks of the House of Representatives; two Clerks of the Senate; and, by the time I finish on 6 July, I will have seen four Ushers of the Black Rod. Those with a longer history here will claim much better statistics than those, but for a person serving as a presiding officer it is a high turnover rate indeed. I am very fortunate—as others say in this place—that I am going of my own choice. I think it is a wonderful way in which to leave politics and the political arena. Not only that, in any form of life, if you can go at your own choosing, I think it is a wonderful way to go.
When I took office as the President of the Senate I said in effect that I hoped I would be fair and honest. I believe that I have been that, but in the end history will be my judge and that is all I want.

In terms of my life as a senator, there were some highlights, and they are not going to occupy a long period of time. The highlight for me was the work that I did under the Building the Education Revolution program to meet the financial crisis. During that time I opened 247 projects at different schools across the state of Queensland. The total value of the projects I opened was $389,460,352. There was a huge number of projects and a huge value of projects. It was to my utmost pleasure that I travelled the length and breadth of Queensland to take part with my constituents in those wonderful openings. I met the teachers, the children and the parents in the very smallest and the very largest schools in the state. Some schools had as few as six students. In those schools and even the largest of schools I sat down on the floor with the children and engaged with them to show that we are not remote from them but are real, sensitive human beings.

The schools included—and this sounds like 'I've Been Everywhere, Man', and that is what it is meant to be: Bamaga; Winton; Longreach; Jundah; Stonehenge; Stanthorpe; Bundaberg; Maryborough; Hervey Bay; Gladstone; Tresswell, which is an interesting place; Eromanga; Thargomindah; Allora; Comet; Dingo; Noosa; Gympie; Wallangarra; Yowah; and Woorabinda. Some of those places have never been heard of and, if you try to find them on the map, you will find that they are a placename only. But I had no trouble visiting schools regardless of their size and regardless of whether they were private or public schools to open these facilities that I believed were second to none.

I believe the BER changed the way schools went about the job of educating our children and in some cases the culture of the school was changed totally forever for the benefit of the children, their parents, the teachers and the school community. That was not just my judgement; I actually visited two schools that really stick in my mind where the principal went to great pains to point out how a culture of violence and lack of attention to education were completely overturned by the provision of decent facilities to the students, to the teachers and to the community. So the children, the teachers and the parents in those communities grew in their own pride, their sense of self-worth and their sense of dignity.

But I also enjoyed my time in the community with the community infrastructure projects that I opened over that period of time as well, totalling $53,772,674. They included sporting facility upgrades in Biggenden, Eidsvold, Gladstone and Rainbow Beach and improved community and cultural facilities in Hervey Bay, Gin Gin, Stanthorpe, Dalby, Tara, Miles, Periegian Beach, Surat, Injune, Bundaberg and Maryborough. You can see that none of this was Brisbane based. None of it was Brisbane centric. It was out in the rural and regional areas. And I got great delight in meeting the people, the communities, and seeing the benefit that had been passed on to those communities.

My office also was very active in dealing with constituent complaints. They were really too numerous over that long period of time to keep track of, but I think our office had a good reputation, through my staff, for handling the difficult problems which generally—when the constituents have run out of patience trying to get their local MHR to fix them—come along and front up to a senator's office as the port of last resort. It is good to see a number of heads
nodding around this chamber, but I can see some dissent in the far back corner and moving around the chamber in this place.

Also, one of the other initiatives that I, along with other senators, did, which I found particularly rewarding, was the issuing of pensioner kits and the like to many people who are the most vulnerable in our community who want to know their entitlements. The degree of support and thanks that I have received from those people has been terribly rewarding indeed.

So that is a bit of my constituent work, and that is as far as I wish to talk on that.

I now want to turn to the major focus for me, which was my role in the office of President. The first thing that I am going to address is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. This was an organisation that had suffered badly over a number of years. My predecessors, both Alan Ferguson and Paul Calvert, had, in a very bipartisan way, tried to engender appropriate reform in this organisation to get away from some of the mischievous activities that were taking place. I, with the help of my colleagues, tried to bring about meaningful reform, but of course there was no interest in that, and it failed. There was a complete failure to adopt proper transparency and accountability procedures, which really was the living end as far as many of us in this parliament were concerned. Of course, very evident in that organisation were the unrealistic demands that were being placed for a residence of diplomatic status in London and the other trappings of office for a very senior officer of the organisation, which were totally unwarranted and totally unnecessary. As far as I know, that demand still remains through to today.

For me, it was an organisation that had lost its way. It had lost sight of its charter to promote and deliver programs building capacity in the Westminster system. And that is really what this parliament is about: not just our own narrow policies and issues that we will debate in this chamber and the other chamber but ensuring the spreading of democracy, democratic values and the rule of law. Of course, I and a number of others saw that organisation as failing.

In terms of the parliament, I am just going to make a very brief comment, not my words but someone else's, and I think they are very appropriate. It is a challenge for all of us in both houses that we have a model of a parliament that is a 19th-century model working in a 21st-century world. That is not a criticism of any of the people who work here. It is the fact that we as parliamentarians need to have a vision as to how this parliament will unfold into the future to meet the demands of an ever-changing democracy out there and to meet the change that is coming about as youth moves through this parliament.

I make a brief comment about ICT. We have a need for a real vision in terms of our ICT. We have brought about some reform, but I think it is not adequate. We have legacy equipment, legacy systems, and so long as they work people seem to want to hold on to them, but we need to be on the front foot. Having said that, as with the parliament, we need proper funding; otherwise, this will not be achieved.

I move, then, briefly to the funding. The funding in this place and the parliament in general concerns me gravely. We are seeing efficiency dividends placed on the various agencies and departments that are the responsibility of the Presiding Officers. These efficiency dividends are not something that has just happened under one government or the other. They have happened under both. I have real concerns about the adequacy of the funding of this
parliament not only now but in the past and into the future—in particular, the funding for the Department of Parliamentary Services. There was an inquiry into the operation of the Department of Parliamentary Services, and rightfully so, and that inquiry found a number of things lacking in that department. But having said that, I do not believe the department has been properly funded by any government since its inception. If it is the department that is going to look after the shared services of this place and to develop a future which will cope with the demands of senators, members and of the chambers in particular, then proper funding is necessary.

One of the things that always amuses me around this place is that there is always a demand for savings; however, when change is mooted or brought about, everyone seems to be opposed to it. We have got to change our approach and the way in which we think of change. I am not for change for the sake of change; I am about proper change that is considered. I know there are problems when change is mooted around here sometimes, and it has not been handled well. One of the things that I have tried to do in my role as the president is to set up consultative mechanisms that will overcome that difficulty. Again, even getting that achieved can be a little bit difficult to say the least.

I believe at the end of the day in terms of funding we must give our senators and members and those supporting them the best facilities to pursue their work. The current funding model as far as I am concerned will not stand up for the future and will not set us up in the way in which we can do our work properly.

I am particularly concerned also in that sense for the Senate in the out years. The Senate and its staff work diligently, tirelessly, for us as senators and for the community but I do not think we should be placing them under the financial stress into the future that we are. As I say, this is not the province or the responsibility of a single government so it is a matter of looking at a model that works.

Last but not least, the thing that occupied my time the most in the job has been the parliament-to-parliament relationships with, obviously, other parliaments. The focus of those meetings with other parliaments both here and overseas has been very much on building and developing the relationship between our parliamentary democracies and, in some cases, giving assistance to those who are seeking to become democratic.

With those parliaments when I have met, whether it be here or overseas, I have repeatedly stressed to them that it is a different relationship than the relationship that exists between government to government. It is totally different indeed—and that is not being critical again of the executive government of any government whether it is now or its predecessors. It is a fact of life that we must foster and build a different relationship. We need to explore more meaningful ways of working with other parliaments, to share matters of common interest and work together to solve common challenges, because my experience has been that, where these parliaments are doing things, we are trying to reinvent the wheel here. Where we are not feeding off each other and cooperating with each other, we are wasting our resources.

In those parliament-to-parliament relationships, I must pay tribute to the diplomatic corps here in Canberra and also to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They have been excellent in supporting the work of the parliament as have ICRO—or PRO, whichever name you wish to call them—and I will mention them in a moment.
So that is the end of most of what I need to say. I want to single out the Senate. The strength of Senate is in the committee system as we hear all the time. The work of these committees though needs to be reported to the community so that the community know of their fine work. I have languished at seeing the effort that has gone into some committee reports by senators of all political persuasions and yet, because it is not sexy or controversial, it does not get the spread of publicity that it deserves to let the people know what this parliament does and what it achieves.

I think the current media will never report the heart and soul of committee work, and one of the things that I have championed for a while but got nowhere with is that I believe there needs to be a specially funded media unit in the Department of the Senate.

Last, I want to make one comment about the difficult issues that I have had to deal with in this parliament. The difficult issues go to the issue of conscience. The hardest thing that I believe we all as members of parliament deal with is our conscience. We get some major challenges indeed. I look back on some of the issues that I have been asked to think about, vote about and speak about: euthanasia; stem cell research; cloning; RU486; same-sex marriage. My views are not necessarily shared on those issues by every other senator in this place or even some but, having a diversity of views is healthy. When those issues and their like are part of your DNA, you cannot expect people to walk away from their conscience. People—and I do not care what side of politics they are on—who have a view different to me are entitled to it. That is a fundamental of our system.

Now I get to the pleasant things—if you ever thought there were going to be any. Firstly, my thanks: my thanks go, firstly, to my party. I am grateful for the trust that they have placed in me. The Queensland branch on three occasions selected me to be a candidate in a winnable position for the Senate. That was also supported by the branch members who had patiently listened to my reports on many occasions and who supported me. I really thank them for their confidence in me. I also thank my caucus colleagues, because my caucus colleagues showed the confidence in me to enable me to become the President of the Senate. Then, not surprisingly, I turn to my union, the SDA, and my other colleagues in the AWU who have supported me without hesitation over such a long period of time as well as, of course, the electors of Queensland.

I then move to the hub of my life in politics, my staff. In my electorate office Hazel Hubbard and Julie Christensen have been rock-solid and the main support of my political life in the EO over a long period of time. The only thing that they had to do was have a photograph of me so that they could remember, in the 33 weeks that I was absent from the Queensland EO, what I looked like. For 18 years they have been the rock-solid support that made my office work and tick well. Darryl Main, Michelle Curran and Josef Chick bring up the residue of the staff there, and there are others who have worked for me that I will not mention.

In the office in Canberra, the President's office, I have been well served by Quinton Clements, who is my current senior adviser, by Gerard Martin, who was my first senior adviser when I took the office, and by Chris Reid. I am grateful to them for the eye they placed on the detail of managing the office and for the knowledge that they brought to me because without that experience I would not have been a success, if I have been. I also thank Julia Clifford and Meredith Horne, both of whom were with me from my first day as the
Deputy President of the Senate, and have lasted for that long period, enduring some bad jokes from time to time but also enduring my attention for justice for this parliament, justice for the senators and ensuring that we made this place work in the nuts and bolts way as best we could. Hazel Hubbard, who I have already mentioned at the EO, has been the connection between the EO and my work as President, and she has worked in my President's office as well with Kate Ward, Matthew Tredwell and June Nelson, and a number of other people.

I want to express my thanks to Sue West, who some might remember. She is a former senator for New South Wales, and former Deputy President, who I could claim was probably my mentor in this place when I first arrived. Sue encouraged me to become a temporary chair of committees and encouraged me with my work on the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, so I thank her for her guidance in that very formative period.

I want to thank the Senate clerks, Harry Evans and Rosemary Laing, and their staff. They have been absolutely marvellous. We have always had a professional relationship, as I have had with many others. I want to thank the deputy clerks, Richard Pye and the late Anne Lynch. She was a stalwart in giving support to the democratic values that come out of this place. I want to thank the clerk assistants and staff. In particular I want to thank the attendants, John, Robin, Adrienne, Rebecca, Bryan and Wally. There is one thing you should never do. You should never ask them the winner of the Melbourne Cup or anything else, because, every day, they are waiting with the folder that I use during question time and I ask, 'How is question time going to go today?' They look very reassuringly at me and say, 'It's going to be good. They're going to be quiet.' Unfortunately, I think they have been wrong on every occasion. So, if you are looking to them for a tip on the weather, or if you looking to them to give you the drill for the Melbourne Cup, don't.

I want to thank the ushers of the Black Rod, Andrea Griffiths, Brian Hallett and Bronwyn Notzyn and the Office of the Black Rod, John Baczynski, Glenn Krause and Nick Tate, who was a former deputy usher of the Black Rod. In the Tables Office I could thank a whole lot of people, but I want to thank Peter Verdon, who I have known over a long period of time, and a person who was always serving up out-of-session reports for me to sign off on, Angie Lilley.

I want to thank, briefly, the committees. I want to thank the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade legislation and references committees and their staff, in particular Paul Barsdell, Brenton Holmes and Kathleen Dermody. I want to thank the Transport Office, Ian Miller and Peter Monck; the DPS, Carol Mills, and Russell Grove in particular, who filled in for a short period of time, and their staff. I thank the gardeners, art services, the gym staff, the security guards—internal and external, AUSPIC photographers Howard Moffat and David Foote. Howard is in the gallery tonight, most appropriately, because when I retire on the 30th so does Howard. Howard has given a long service to this parliament and I am sure will be sadly missed indeed. I want to thank Phil Bowen. Whilst the PBO is a new innovation around here, Phil has taken up the challenge very well. I want to thank ICRO and the PRO, Andres Lomp, Geoff Barnett, Colin Christian, Onu Palm, Andrew Templeton, Raymond Knight and Paul Jeanroy. They have done, and continue to do, a marvellous job for us.

I thank the Comcar drivers and those at the reservations call desk, the cleaners, the IHG staff, the FCM staff for helping with travel arrangements, 2020 and the IT people. Reyhan Waterford, Josh Cunningham and Michael York in particular have done exceptionally well. Then there is a person who was mentioned in someone else's speech. I want to extend my
thanks to Reverend Peter Rose, who again is in the gallery. Peter walks the corridors here not seeking business but being available for those who might be troubled or who might want someone to extend the hand of friendship to them when they might think that all is lost. I think that is a wonderful characteristic: taking other people's burdens and shouldering them to assist them. Peter, I take my hat off to you.

In the chamber, I want to thank Senator Wong and a number of other people who I have had close association with. I wish Senator Wong all the best into the future with the business of being Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. It can be very frustrating and it can be unrewarding sometimes, but it is an important role and I believe you are up to the challenge. I wish you and the team all the best. I want to thank Anne McEwen, as the whip—and I have not forgotten the other whips; I will come to them—because we developed a very good working relationship. I believe in working the chamber rather than being some sort of dictatorial figure, trying to yell and scream from up here. Unless you have that close cooperation with the whips, it does not work.

Other people who have had senior positions when I have been in the presidency include Joe Ludwig, Claire Moore, Jacinta Collins, Chris Evans and Stephen Conroy. I also want to thank Senator Abetz and his team and Helen Kroger and her staff. Again, it comes down to the relationship that we have been able to build to run this chamber. I want to thank George Brandis and Mitch Fifield, whom I have had a good working relationship with, as well as Christine Milne and her team, and Rachel Siewert. Rachel has only ever done one thing wrong in this chamber. Rachel turned up one day with a different hairstyle and I did not know it was Rachel. I wondered who the stranger in the chamber was and I had to apologise to Rachel profusely about that. I also want to thank Nick Xenophon and John Madigan for their cooperation. I acknowledge former Senators Calvert and Ferguson, as Presidents, and the work of Stephen Parry as the Deputy President over the last six years. In my role as Deputy President to those two former Presidents and in my role as the President with Stephen Parry, political boundaries did not count. It was ultimately the business of the chamber that mattered.

I want to thank my friends and colleagues in the House of Representatives. I am very pleased to see them up in the gallery. It is interesting that I have them across the political boundaries. I do not know what that really means to me, but you are welcome, because I welcome your support. I think I spot a ring-in up there, but I am sure that your support has been most welcomed by me in the carriage of my duties. I want to thank senators and especially those who are moving on to another life from here. As I said, I do not believe in the valedictory speech for myself, but I trust that you people will have a good life after politics. I trust that those who remain will have an interesting and challenging time as of 7 July. I will not be thinking about you. I will be relaxing.

There are two other groups I have to thank. I know I have gone on for a while. I want to thank Michael Zavros. Michael Zavros has painted my portrait. That in itself is a challenge. Michael is a great artist. He is a Queenslander. He just happens to live no more than about three kilometres, as the crow flies, from me and he has done a great portrait indeed. I am proud of the work that he has done. I must say, though, that there will be no public hanging of the portrait because of constraints arising from the budget and other considerations. However, you are invited at your own discretion to come and view the portrait, which is currently being privately hung in my suite.
I turn to my family. I turn to Stephen and Sophie first. Stephen is my eldest son. They have missed out on me for a long period of time. As we all know here, family pay the biggest price, so I thank Stephen as the eldest—and I will thank the others in turn—and his wife, Sophie. They have given us something that we are looking forward to, our second grandchild. We have not even got the first yet, but we will come to that in a moment. It will alter our life in retirement, so thank you, Stephen, and to your beautiful wife, Sophie, thank you for your love too.

I turn to Elizabeth and Joshua. You will find that when I come to the girls I will refer to them by their correct names, not Liz and Lou; they are Elizabeth and Louise. I will first deal with Elizabeth, the second eldest and eldest girl, and her husband, Josh. Thank you for all the patience you have exhibited with a father who has not always been around, and thank you for the love that you have both given to me. They are providing grandchild No. 1. That will be on 16 September. The point that I am trying to make is that we have had to change our plans. Last but not least, I want to thank the youngest child, Louise. She has brought with her tonight her good friend Brenden Eames. Louise has been a child we love dearly and we will continue, as with all our children, to give her unconditional love.

I have saved the best till last: my wife. She is a beautiful woman. She, like many spouses and partners in this place, has put up with a great deal. But I think, Sue, you are not going to necessarily relish retirement because you are going to see me more often than you have ever dreamt of. I can say that; she can only think it. I really think, though, you have done a marvellous job with a husband who was away, on average, somewhere between 30 and 33 weeks a year. You coped with the stresses; you coped with all the challenges without me, other than sometimes at the end of the phone. My love for you is great, as I said previously, and I am forever and eternally grateful for what you have done for me in my career and for us as a couple.

Last but not least—Hogg's gone long enough; he just wants to say where he started—in my first speech I said:

When I sought preselection in my party, I made it clear that my interests were one, a preferential option for the poor; two, solidarity with the poor; three, seeing that the common wealth was shared; and, four, seeing that things should be done for the common good.

Then I went on to say:

Those who are well-heeled, in positions of power or otherwise advantaged have little or nothing to worry about. Those people can take care of themselves. The people that I am concerned about are those who are poor, who do not have any power or are otherwise disadvantaged.

And I say in conclusion:

I shall work through the avenues of my party and through this Senate to focus on the right of the individual to their dignity by being given meaningful work and meaningful pay. I hope I am able to raise the status of people above that of some mere pawn in a production line or something as disposable as a tissue. I will fight for dignity in youth, in work and in retirement.

I trust that I have done that. Thank you very much.
The PRESIDENT (17:40): Pursuant to order, the Senate will now move to valedictory statements. Senator Boyce, my apologies. Senator Hogg did ramble on; I tried to keep him quiet, but—!

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (17:40): I was thinking perhaps I could simply say 'ditto' to 80 per cent, at least, of that and sit down—but I am not going to. I want to thank all the members of the then Queensland Liberal Party who gave me the extraordinary opportunity and the great honour of being a Queensland Senator for the past seven years. I regret that many of those people are no longer involved in party politics, but I want to sincerely acknowledge those who were there at the beginning and who are with me again tonight at the end. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge the members of my new party, the LNP. It is a matter of record that I was opposed to the merger of the Nationals and the Liberals in Queensland in 2008, but our stunning victory in the Queensland state election of 2012, after spending most of the previous 23 years in opposition, as well as our contribution to the Abbott government victory last year, demonstrates that I was wrong.

In the past few months I have been asked numerous times if, as a moderate and a feminist, I am concerned about our party's perceived move to the right. Yes, I am concerned—but I am also hopeful. I am hopeful that debates about important issues such as same-sex marriage and responses to climate change will continue to be conducted robustly, but respectfully, within our party. I also expect that pragmatism will ultimately triumph. Australians will continue to elect governments of the centre right—and, hopefully less often, of the centre left—so any general move too far to the right would make us unelectable.

Recently I came across a letter from the former Howard government minister and Senator John Herron AO, congratulating me on being preselected to the 2004 Senate ticket. He ends the letter by saying:

I wish you well in your political career. It is worth pursuing and the only advice I can give you is that you should enjoy every moment of it. It will be exhilarating, frustrating and exhausting but well worthwhile.

He was absolutely right.

I still remember the sense of honour and grave responsibility I felt when I learnt that I was being sworn in as Australia's 515th senator ever; that is over the past 106 years. I still feel that sense of responsibility and honour. I am an accidental politician. When I stood in 2004 and was preselected to the 'unwinnable' fourth spot on the Senate ticket, I was president of the Liberal Women's Council. I perceived my role as a flag-bearer for women of the Queensland Liberal Party. I thought I was mentoring other, younger women to have the opportunity to be Queensland Liberal senators in the medium-term future—certainly not before 2010 or 2013. But when then Senator Santo Santoro resigned suddenly, I was put in the position of putting up or shutting up—and I decided to put up. I won a long preselection from nine other candidates, all male. I want to acknowledge my Queensland senatorial colleagues and running mates over two elections, Senators Ian Macdonald, George Brandis and Brett Mason, for the huge amount of support and advice they gave me during that campaign.
I am only the fourth woman senator from Queensland on our side of politics, ever, but the company is august. It includes the late Dame Annabelle Rankin, Mrs Kathy Martin Sullivan AM and Lady Flo Bjelke-Petersen.

Backbench senators have an enormous amount of freedom as to where they concentrate their policy energies. It is possible to develop expertise and credibility, to influence policy and to support and promote recognition on almost any issue on the national agenda—and I have absolutely revelled in that freedom. Over the last past seven years I have used my maiden speech as though it were a set of key performance indicators to guide and to assess my work as a senator. In that first speech I raised issues about small and family businesses and red tape, about the changing face of Australian manufacturing, about private enterprise, about outdated attitudes to people with a disability, about the need for more women in politics and about modernising our parliamentary practices—I just have to say ditto pretty much to everything you said on that topic, Mr President.

With the advent of the Abbott government we are now beginning to see the development of a grown-up Australia: a country where the government provides a functional, operating environment for families and for businesses, with a support net for individuals who may need it, and then gets out of the way so people can develop and build their lives as they see fit.

So I move on to my self-assessed KPI scores. On family and small business, I am awarding a score of eight out of 10. As Deputy Chair of the Corporations and Financial Services Committee I instigated an inquiry into family business in Australia, its needs and the impediments to its growth and succession planning. Family business is a massive and critical sector of our economy, but the lack of focus on the sector by Treasury and other government departments was frightening. Now we have, for the first time, a Minister for Small Business as part of cabinet, the development of a Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, the inclusion of family business on the ministerial advisory council and a government that will promptly pay bills under $200,000 to small businesses by credit or debit card.

On red tape reduction, I gave a score of five out of 10. The government has already held the first of two annual repeal days in parliament and put through an omnibus bill designed to repeal almost 10,000 pieces of legislation and regulations. Unfortunately, that has only so far passed through the House of Representatives. The objective is to save Australian business, including not-for-profits, $1 billion a year. I would have given a higher score than the five out of 10 if that bill had gone through the Senate by now.

On disability, I scored six out of 10. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a fantastic start. It was unthinkable even seven years ago. But there is more—much, much more—to do. It needs to be happening in inclusive education, in improving the appalling employment statistics for people with a disability and in innovative housing for people with a disability. We have moved a long way from seeing people with a disability as objects of charity to now just seeing them as another subset of the community. We have a bit further to go before the economic benefits of a sensibly resourced NDIS are properly appreciated. The Productivity Commission estimated that the NDIS, by enabling many people with a disability and their paid and unpaid carers to join the workforce, would add one per cent to GDP. In my first speech to the Senate in 2007, I said in relation to disability that any time we send 'special' people to 'special' places to do 'special' things we make vulnerable people more vulnerable. Not everyone has understood that message yet, in my view. Through my involvement with
disability I have also become involved with many other marginalised groups, and I have spoken about some of those in this chamber and tried to support them outside this chamber. I am thinking particularly of two that I will mention today: the Tamil and Hazara communities in Queensland who desperately need our support and help.

Women in politics—now, that is where I scored one out of 10. There is only, as we know, one woman in the Abbott government: the wonderful Minister Julie Bishop. There are only four LNP women in the House of Representatives, and two of them are over here today—thank you for being here. Once I leave on 30 June there will be no LNP women in the Senate. So I figure I have failed. But so, I think, has our party at both the state and the federal level. It is obvious that if we want more women in cabinet we need more women in parliament. The current 22 per cent figure is just not good enough. Improving this pathetic figure must be the job of every party member and every party employee.

On modernising parliament, Mr President, I awarded a score of three out of 10—and you said so much more eloquently some of the things that I was intending to say. There has been a small increase since I have been here in the use of videoconferencing and the like. But, in my experience, the technology that we use here is not as reliable as that used by business 20 years ago. There have been changes to some of the arcane practices of the Senate, but sitting hours still seem to be predicated on MPs having a support person—read 'spouse'—to do washing and shopping and the like and on having very, very flexible child care. Not all of us have that. On the plus side, we do not have—and I hope, Mr President, that you and your successors will agree with this—and hopefully we never will have, PowerPoint presentations in the chamber!

Much of my satisfaction in the Senate has come from the work of the Community Affairs Committee, which I now chair. The committee oversees the departments of health, social services and human services—an enormous chunk of government spending. I would especially like to acknowledge my fellow committee members Senator Claire Moore and Senator Rachel Siewert, who were there before I arrived and will be there after I leave. I would also like to acknowledge former senator Gary Humphries, a former chair of the committee, who is in the gallery today, and the late Senator Judith Adams, whose background as a rural midwife made her an indefatigable fighter for the health needs of rural Australia.

Inquiries I have instigated or supported through the Community Affairs Committee have fed into improvements or new policy on palliative care, disability in general and the NDIS and special disability trusts in particular, mental health and suicide, the coerced sterilisation of people with a disability and of young intersex people, the treatment of people with dementia, paid parental leave, hearing health, the supply of health professionals and medical services into rural Australia, and PATS, the patient assisted travel schemes—a great favourite of Judith Adams. The committee has been told that our inquiry into the sterilisation of young intersex people in fact is a world first and is being used globally as a model.

Party solidarity is an interesting beast. I really do not have much time for those MPs on all sides who support the party—read 'leader's'—line no matter what in the hope of a promotion. I have the utmost respect for those who thoughtfully put their own views in the party room and shut up outside the party room. I have been one of those on most occasions. I have occasionally been one of those who speaks and acts outside the party room when I cannot in good conscience support it. I have crossed the floor only three times, although it does seem like more. I crossed once on the CPRS emissions trading scheme along with former Senator—
and someone I regard as a mentor—Judith Troeth and crossed the floor twice on marriage equality bills. I was not prepared for how I felt when it came to actually physically crossing the floor. It is lonely; and, no matter how strong your conviction in the correctness of your stance, there is a small part of you that feels disloyal to your colleagues, to your party and to the fragile fabric that unites us.

One thing that I learnt very early in my parliamentary career is that Hansard does not record sarcasm. It is still something I have to remind myself about a lot; so, just for the record: every time it appears from my comments that I really did think that a Labor government proposal was fantastic or wonderful, I was being sarcastic!

I also learnt very early that the media—and I am a former journalist—do not acknowledge sarcasm when it suits them. Very early in my career here I was asked at the doors what I would do with a pay rise that MPs were to receive. I did not even know we were getting a pay rise nor its quantum, and I responded that I would use the increase 'to buy pearls to cast before the deserving poor.' This was actually meant to be translated as, 'Bugger off, it's none of your business,' but it was not, and I spent a lot of time explaining, apologising and copping my own share of sarcastic comments as a result.

The topics of some Senate inquiries can seem very arcane, and an inquiry in 2010 revisiting the Torres Strait Treaty between PNG and Australia may seem like one of those, but I have always had an affinity with the Torres Strait since hearing stories as a child of my great-grandfather Alfred Morey, who owned pearling luggers based out of Thursday Island before World War II. Most Australians—even most Queenslanders—seem to forget that Cape York may be the top of the mainland but it is definitely not the northernmost part of Australia. Boigu, our northernmost island, is another 140 kays or so north and it is less than six kilometres from PNG.

I have tried to visit the Torres Strait most years that I have been a senator and I will certainly be returning as a civilian, but that 2010 Torres Strait Treaty inquiry came up again just a few weeks ago in Port Hedland of all places during another inquiry by the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia. Our guide from the Port Hedland Harbour Authority commented that he had met me during the Torres Strait inquiry when he worked for Customs. 'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'That's how I met my wife. I was looking after the visit for Customs, and she'd been hired by the Torres Strait Regional Authority to look after their side of it. We had to spend a lot of time together, and it just went on from there.' I was just thinking, 'What a lovely story,' when Senator Ian Macdonald chimed in, 'Most productive thing I've ever heard come out of a Senate inquiry.' I think he was joking!

Thank you to those who have worked for me over the past seven years, especially my current staff, who are all here tonight: Mark Yore, Cathy Martin, Jacqui Donegan, Simone Stark, Harrison Smith, Martine Whitton, Mikayla Martin and Peter von Einem. I'd like to single out two particular people from my staff: Cathy Martin and Mark Yore. I have just offered Cathy her third job working with me—firstly at the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland, currently as my PA and in the future as my part-time PA whilst she expands her own business. Cathy keeps me sane. She does an extraordinary job of making me appear to be organised and offering intelligent wisdom when I really need it.

And then, of course, for those from Queensland we have Mark Yore, who has been on my staff since 2007—electoral statistician extraordinaire, feedback king and a ferocious and
intelligent campaigner. I joked that Mark and the Queensland Electoral Commissioner, Ms Anne Bright, probably had each other's home phone numbers—to subsequently discover that that actually was not a joke. They do have each other's home phone numbers!

Apart from my staff, I would also like to thank all the many, many other people who have kept me functioning in the past seven years. Mr President, you gave us a comprehensive list of those. From Dr Rosemary Laing and her staff to Mr Jiri Martinek in Brisbane and his staff through to Peter and Ian and the Comcar drivers: thank you very much.

Bizarrely, one of the things I may be remembered for in this place is bringing my handbag into the chamber. I have it with me now. I must admit it never occurred to me not to bring my handbag into this chamber; and, trained observer that I am, I did not notice that I was the only person who did until someone pointed it out to me. I had reasoned that I wanted to have my phone, my pager, some cash, a pen, my reading glasses and, for five of the seven years that I was here, my cigarettes and lighter with me.

Given that I did not wear suits with many pockets—are we getting some sort of an echo of some of the issues that perhaps need modernising around here?—I thought a handbag was an excellent receptacle for said items, and I still do. But it was so unusual. The reports of my first crossing of the floor, in support of the CPRS, included the fact that Senator Boyce was 'carrying her handbag' as she crossed the floor—an absolutely fascinating addition to the sum total of human knowledge, I would have thought.

The mention of my smoking brings me to a matter that I have thought long and hard about including. When I have been asked why I did not stand for a second term, I have responded in terms of my age: 'I'll be 69 in another six years and I want to spend time with my family.' Both are absolutely true. But my decision not to renominate in November 2012 was greatly influenced by being diagnosed, in July 2012, with emphysema. It is absolutely true that I want to spend more time with my family, but I want to do it now whilst I am still an active and relatively fit mother and grandmother and not wait till I am 'granny with the oxygen cyclinder'.

And for those here, who, out of a sense of caring, have nagged me ceaselessly and futilely about smoking: you are absolutely right. I know all the dangers and the stupidity of smoking. I recently fell off the non-smoking wagon after 11 months, but I will jump back on it just as soon as I get away from the stress of all that nagging!

I am retiring from the Senate but not retiring. I am returning to my role as chair of our family manufacturing company in Brisbane, Everhard Industries. I have also accepted Minister Kevin Andrews' invitation to remain involved in the working group overseeing the implementation of policies and programs to support people affected by forced adoptions.

I will be working on access to justice issues for people with a cognitive impairment, both perpetrators and victims; on the oft-ignored issue of the extraordinary level of violence experienced by women with a disability; and on further raising the profile of family business, including agribusiness, and strengthening their voice, our voice, my voice to policymakers.

Women's representation in politics and women's financial literacy continue to be very important to me and I am planning some practical measures—I hope—to assist with both.
I am intending to continue the three annual postsecondary scholarships that I have developed—one for an Aboriginal woman, one for a Torres Strait Islander woman and one for a woman with a disability.

But, most importantly, I will be spending time with my family, my children Bede, Gina and Joanna and their families, who really do know just how exhausting and frustrating I have sometimes found my political career but also how exhilarating and satisfying I have found it. Thank you very much to Bede and Joanna, who are with us tonight. My middle child, Gina, is extremely round at the moment and not really up to flying.

Bede and Gina have both married and had children whilst I have been a senator. So I am the proud grandmother of three extraordinarily beautiful and clever little girls, Chloe and Claudia Rowe and Piper Boyce, with another equally beautiful and clever grandchild expected in August. We will have to compare dates later, Mr President!

Recently, Joanna said to me, 'I can't wait till you retire, Mum, and we can do fun things.' It has been a frustrating, exhausting, exhilarating, satisfying seven years. But I also cannot wait, Jo, until we can do fun things. Thank you.

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (18:08): It is hard to believe that it is 18 years since I entered the Senate. The time has passed so quickly because the journey has been so interesting. While I had been a member of the Liberal Party since my days at UWA, where I was president of the university Liberal Club and supported Liberal Party philosophies and policies in general, my immediate motivation for seeking endorsement as a senator was to give the people and industries of the north-west a voice in the federal parliament.

During the time I have been in Canberra my judgement has always been, as it was then and still is, that the importance of the north-west to the Australian economy is enormous. In 1986 in my maiden speech I said that the Pilbara mining industry contributed some 10 per cent of Australia's export income in merchandise exports. That percentage has grown enormously, with record tonnages of iron ore being exported to China, not to mention great volumes of LNG, salt and other products being exported to other destinations, meaning the Pilbara now accounts for a much greater percentage of Australia's export mining income—in fact, something like 36 per cent of it. There is in fact no other manufacturing complex in Australia to equal the Pilbara but, like much of northern Australia, there is a need for improved development to achieve its full potential, including, I believe, secondary processing.

As I said in my maiden speech, concern was being expressed at the time—this was back in 1996—even by Sir Charles Court, the father of the Pilbara, that Australia was becoming no more than a quarry for the steel mills of Asia. He had a great vision—he once told me off for saying it was a dream—that there should be a jumbo steel mill in the Pilbara. Various factors mitigated against that at the time, such as poor industrial relations, the cost of labour and the cost of power, but not so long ago I visited the port of Pohang in South Korea, where a U-shaped port is to be found. The ships from the Pilbara come into one side, where the iron ore is taken to a blast furnace at the bottom of the harbour and converted to steel, which is then put through a rolling mill on the other side of the harbour before being taken to ships and exported to the world. Why, I ask, couldn't that be done in the Pilbara?

At the last federal election, the strongly supported coalition policy promises for the north included a commitment to produce a coordinated plan for the development of the area north
of the 26th parallel—or roughly an area one-third the size of Australia. Following the 2013 election a joint select committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate was established to produce a white paper for northern development. I was very pleased to be made a member of that select committee, along with my colleague Ian Macdonald, who is here tonight and has come to the meetings. We have had many hearings across the north of Australia.

In the 1980s the governments of WA under Sir Charles Court, Queensland under Joh Bjelke-Petersen, and the Northern Territory set up an organisation called the North Australia Development Council, or NADC, which held conferences annually in a different city in Queensland, WA and the Northern Territory. While there were many innovative plans presented for the development of the north to these conferences, regrettably, few were implemented. However, I believe that under the Abbott government there is a commitment to implement the development of the north, which will see the recommendations of the final white paper put into reality over 15 years as Tony Abbott has promised.

The committee is planning ways to improve infrastructure in northern Australia, with a particular focus on improving roads and communications both north-south and, more importantly, east-west. It is also focussing on promoting the concept of irrigated agriculture so that the north of Australia can become a food bowl for Asia, with a specific focus on the ASEAN group of countries to the south of China.

There is, I have to say, also a need for increased defence presence in the north to protect, particularly, the Pilbara and Kimberley coasts given the enormous level of investment in oil and gas along those coastlines. This is because of the closeness of Asia, where terrorist threats may arise, and the north-west coast, as I have said, has literally billions of dollars invested in ports and facilities for the iron ore and oil and gas industries. In the recent past an Asian fishing board came and tied up under an oil rig, which might well have been a very sad example of what we are talking about in terms of ease of access for terrorists had it contained explosives. But, of course, it did not. I am hopeful that the defence needs of the north will be given greater attention, and I am sure Ian Macdonald will continue to push that issue, as he does and many others to do with the north.

The Senate, as has been said, is a house of review—a function it carries out through its eight committees. During my time in the Senate, I have been chair of three of these committees; namely, the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Legislation Committee, the Senate Economics Committee, and more recently the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee. The ECITA committee dealt with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the sale of Telstra, the cross-media ownership pact and many other pieces of legislation.

All of these committees were very busy during my tenure on them, with the Economics Committee producing some 98 reports during the first year I was the chair. This worked out at almost two reports a week. When I look back on it, it seems incredible that that level of work occurred. In fact, I think Doug Cameron was a member of that committee during that time. This was during the years of 2007 to 2010, when there was much discussion about climate change and the need for a carbon tax and an emissions trading scheme. Later, the same committee dealt with the ALP’s mining tax proposal as well as the carbon tax, all of which took a lot of time and effort.
As has been said, in some ways, committees are the backbone of the work of the Senate. The secretaries of these committees and their staff carry an enormous workload, with the skills and knowledge they bring adding enormously to the roles we play. I particularly wish to pay thanks to the secretaries of the three committees I have chaired: Jacqui Dewar, Ian Holland, John Hawkins, Kathleen Dermody and David Sullivan. I must say, I really enjoyed the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, as I have a long interest in Australia's relationship with Asia—as well as a degree from Murdoch University in politics and international studies, which was largely focused on Asia. I have been offered a post at Murdoch post-Senate—so, naturally, I have to give them some mention.

Estimates are one of the burdens in the life of senators. When I came into the Senate in 1996, there was no specified adjournment time for estimates, which therefore meant that it went into the wee, small hours of the morning. In my first estimates, the hearings dragged on to 5 am and I fell asleep, gently snoring into the microphone. Alan Ramsey, who Laura Tingle would know quite closely, wrote this up in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald saying how preposterous such late sittings were—and, after that, estimates finished at the more civilised time of 11 pm.

As a member of several Asia related business organisations for a long time, I have been a strong supporter of developing stronger links between WA, Australia and the Asian countries directly to our north. The growing middle-class population in these countries provides a huge market for Australian businesses, and I think that, if we do not exploit the advantages that closeness gives us, others will. When I first came to Canberra, I was struck by the absence of such Asia awareness among my colleagues. Of course, this has now changed with the growth of our trade with Asia and with free trade agreements with Japan, China and Korea as well as strong trading relationships with countries such as Indonesia, which is predicted to be one of the boom economies of the coming decades. I think it is a very healthy thing that members of the federal parliament are showing an increased interest in Asia. After all, this is the region that we live in and it is the region we have to interact with.

The Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee recently conducted an 18-month inquiry into the potential benefits to Australia from developing closer ties with the 35 countries which compose the Indian Ocean Rim and which have a growing middle-class population from East Africa to India. I believe the potential economic and other benefits from developing closer ties across the Indian Ocean are enormous. That whole concept is somewhere where our relationship with Asia used to be about 20 years ago. As some may be aware, there is an Indian Ocean Rim Association, with headquarters in Mauritius. Australia will be the chair of this association for the coming two years. I am certain this will lead to great opportunities in the future, as I am convinced that, in time, the Indian Ocean Rim will provide an important addition and benefit to the Australian economy, especially through trade and service opportunities with India and East Africa as well as the Gulf States.

Having been a medical practitioner in Port Hedland for some 22 years, regional health services has been an important interest of mine. This includes improving health services to Indigenous people. I have greatly admired the commitment of the minerals industry to train young Aboriginals in apprenticeships and other job skills. I congratulate the Minerals Council of Australia for promoting this concept, as I believe the key to the door to the world for Aboriginal people lies in education and job skill training.
Before I went to the Pilbara, I had never had any contact with Aboriginal people. But, working in the Port Hedland hospital, I did inevitably interact with Aboriginal people and was invited to one of their quarterly bush meetings. This one was held on the banks of the Coongan River, near Marble Bar. There were about 1,000 Aborigines at the meeting, which was held in a glade under the trees. The head Aboriginal of the Pilbara, an imposing figure with a stetson over his long flowing white hair, was seated at a table in the centre with his advisers from Canberra and Perth on either side. There was no formal agenda. Anyone could speak, and it became apparent that the issues concerning these people were the needs for better housing, better health services, job skill education and having something done about, as they called it, the grog problem. There was not a mention of land rights, which was then what the political activists of the day told us was the burning issue. There is a message in that.

That bush meeting was in 1974 and, in many ways, the needs of remote Aboriginals in remote communities remain the same today. Australia must, in my view, commit itself to overcoming Aboriginal poverty and disadvantage so that our Indigenous people can be part of the mainstream Australian family. Jobs not welfare are the solution to the social and economic problems of Aboriginal people.

While in the Senate I have had the privilege of representing Australia at various international conferences, particularly in the Asian region, and in 2010 was attached to the Australian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly for three months, which was a very rewarding experience. My greatest political concern in recent years has been the trend towards centralisation in government, undermining the federalist concepts which are the basis of our Constitution. I support federalism because it provides for a balance and diffusion of power between the Commonwealth government and the state governments, which I believe is important in a country as large and diverse as Australia. I do not subscribe to the view that Canberra knows best and believe that, while there may be a need for some more uniformity across our country in some matters, such changes should be achieved by cooperative negotiation, not imposed by a federal government misusing its power over funding to compel the states to comply with Canberra's dictates.

While as senators we all come here with views consistent with our political philosophies, one organisation I have always taken inspiration from is the Institute of Public Affairs. I have a very high regard for the IPA, as it is known, and over the years have used their publications as the basis for speeches I have given. I can see Doug Cameron shaking his head. In fact, those comments were perhaps a little directed at you, Doughie. I acknowledge former Senator Rod Kemp, director of the IPA, and believe he is doing a very good job. He was going to be here tonight but rang me this afternoon and said he could not make it, unfortunately. No doubt I will see him the weekend after next in Melbourne.

While the Senate is a fairly serious place at times, at other times there are increments of humour. One such humorous event occurred after I had been in the Senate for a couple of months and a spill-over sitting was arranged for a Friday morning when a bill for the sale of Telstra was to be discussed. At that time votes were finely balanced and one vote would have made the difference to the outcome. I was not aware that the Senate would begin sitting at 9 am that Friday morning, not at the usual 9.30 am start on sitting days. I had a hire car and got rather lost in the roads around Parliament House, so I arrived late, after the sitting had begun. As I drove into the car park, one of the whip's staff ordered me to stop and stood in the middle
of the road with his hands up. 'Get out of the car and run to the lift!' I was told. The lift was being held for me. This I did. When I reached the entrance to the Senate, the chamber door was gently closed in my face by the attendant concerned so that I could not vote. I sat in the alcove watching the Senate on television and, surprisingly, the government won the vote although I was absent.

The whip, then WA Senator John Panizza, appeared and told me he had got a pair for me at the last moment, so there was no need for me to have voted and then, like an angry headmaster, ordered me into his office to have a talk. Once inside the office, Senator Panizza said, 'We have to make this look good. You have to stay here for half an hour.' Then he asked me, 'What should we talk about?' I replied that whatever subject he wanted to talk about was fine with me. So he said, 'Well, I understand the Chicken World franchise in South Hedland is up for sale. Do you think I should buy it?' Not being an expert in such things I said I would prefer to leave it to him.

I must say the members of the federal parliament are a mixed group of people with varied backgrounds. In my experience, those who enter parliament and the profession of politics do so with a genuine commitment to making Australia a better place and, while there are many people I have greatly admired in the parliament and in politics, I would like to make mention of the following; firstly, John Howard, OM, AC, who had a very good instinctive feel for the opinions of the average Australian; secondly, the Hon. Peter Costello, AC, who did a brilliant job as Treasurer in eliminating the debt left by the Keating government. Costello also showed great vision in setting up the Future Fund and in understanding that the so-called 'greying of Australia' was a real phenomenon which would mean the demands of the increasingly large population over 65 would require Australia to improve funding for retirees and to provide many more services. I thought that showed great insight at the time. Today we have a situation where something like 25 per cent of our population is aged over 65 and, as in Japan and in other countries, it is steadily rising, so that indeed Peter Costello was quite correct in his assessment.

Another person I greatly admired was Senator the Hon. Robert Hill who, I thought, constantly demonstrated a very quick and insightful political mind in leading the Senate, as well as wry sense of humour. He also demonstrated the love of a good red, which is shared, I believe, by Senator Ian Macdonald, a fellow northerner, whose contributions on the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia and in general I greatly respect.

Another person I greatly admired and admire still is, of course, Senator the Hon. Ron Boswell, who has been one of the great characters of the Senate in my time here and always kept the interests of people living in regional Australia before the government and the Senate. Senator Boswell's office was next to mine and he often dropped in for a chat.

I was the only Liberal invited to the Nationals' Christmas seafood barbecue in the courtyard outside our offices, and, while Boswell assured me that it was an indication of the high esteem in which I was held by the National Party, I rather suspected somehow it had something to do with using my fridge to preserve the seafood. Boz has always made a point of respectfully calling me 'Doctor', and telling me that if I would just join the National Party he would make me their health spokesman, and he often seemed quite puzzled as to why I didn't accept this offer. But of course the National Party vote in WA is not as large as it is in Queensland, and I was very comfortably housed in the Liberal Party. Boz would often also drop in for various
medical prescriptions and tell anyone within hearing range that I was a price gouger, although I have to say on the record that he was never charged once, in 18 years. Ron is a lovely man, and I wish him well in the future, but he will have to get accustomed to actually paying his doctor.

Other people I have admired in the Senate were the late Senator Brian Harradine of Tasmania, who made sure that Tasmania benefited from him holding the balance of power, and amused me by his habit of not revealing which way he would vote on an issue until the last 20 seconds or 30 seconds of his speech, so the whips and everybody else waited in suspense to see which way Harradine would vote because that would determine the outcome.

Senator the Hon. Rod Kemp, who I have mentioned already, was another person who I greatly respected. Senator Kemp was proud to have never given straight answers to any questions in question time—

A government senator: Only on GST questions.

Senator EGGLESTON: on the GST, in case he was caught out as John Hewson was in the birthday cake episode in Sydney. He rang me tonight, and he said that I should remind both Senator Wong and Senator Conroy that he showed them the pathway in the correct conduct of question time, and that was always to be vague.

Another person I greatly admired was the Hon. Alexander Downer, who I admired for his great knowledge of foreign affairs and commitment to his principles.

Senator Fred Chaney, who actually signed me up into the Liberal Party on Orientation Day at UWA when I was a freshman, is also a person who I have greatly admired over the years, and I was very pleased to see that he was made the Senior Australian of the Year 2014. Even as a student, Fred Chaney sought to improve the lot of Indigenous people and thought that the way to make Indigenous people and their problems important to politicians was to give them voting rights—a quite radical thought at that time. Through his efforts in the UWA Liberal Club in 1962, the Western Australian coalition government, after a series of seminars that were held at UWA, agreed to legislate to give Indigenous people in Western Australia the option to enrol to vote, some five years ahead of the 1967 federal referendum—a rather little-known snippet of history, I think, and a very interesting one.

Sir Charles Court was someone I greatly admired and respected when I was a student. Sir Charles would regularly speak to the university's Liberal Club lunchtime meetings about his vision for the Pilbara. He predicted that, within a decade, the Pilbara would have huge mines, some of the world's biggest railways, and huge new ports on the coast to export iron ore, all of which of course has come to pass. One of Sir Charles Court's favourite words was 'mighty', and I thought it applied most appropriately to him, because, without his mighty vision, the Pilbara and the north would not be what they are today.

I would like to record my appreciation to those people who were my colleagues in the Liberal Party in the north of Western Australia during the time I was involved in what was known as the Kalgoorlie North Division, particularly Greg Kneale, who was an outstanding president of the 'powerful Kalgoorlie North Division', as he liked to call it, having cobbled together a coalition of country divisions which had great influence, shall we say, at state conferences in Western Australia; Robin Vandenberg and Bob Brooks, then from the inland Pilbara; Peter Murray from Broome; Elsia Archer from Derby; Peter Kneebone, also from...
Derby; Jamie Savage from Halls Creek; and Keith Wright and Alma Pethwick from Kununurra, as well as Maxine Middap from Wyndham and also Gordon Thomson, who is the current president of the Durack division. In what is now called the Durack division, I thank all the members, in particular Jenny Bloom and Tony Proctor in Broome. In general terms, most of the people in that division are long-term north-westerners and in local government, and, accordingly, have a very practical perspective on north-west issues and a great belief in the future of the north, which has certainly been vindicated.

Having been a whip, I also want to express my appreciation of the work that the Clerk of the Senate, Rosemary Laing, and her staff do every day to make this house run smoothly as it does. So I thank you. And I echo the President’s comments on the legendary Anne Lynch, who I will long remember rushing down the corridors; she used to always wear a black academic gown, and it would billow behind her like a set of wings or sails, and it was very memorable.

To my nephews Seth and Toby, who are in the audience tonight, thank you very much. And to my extended family in general: I thank you for your great support.

To my staff over the years—some of whom are in the gallery—in particular—though these people are not necessarily in the gallery—Joy West, Michelle Phillips, Bob Wallace, Rosetta and Deanne Ford, and to my current staff, I extend my sincere thanks for their hard work and dedication. I thank Lara Swift, who joined my office last year, and Danny Pagoda, my research officer, who oversaw some 10 estimates for the two committees I chaired during his time with us, and I must say that his professionalism and attention to detail has been much appreciated. Finally, I thank Michelle Lewis, my PA for the last nine years, who has managed my diary, my office and, to an alarming extent, my life, and I thank her very much for all she has done.

During the time I have been in the Senate I have always sought to promote the interests of Western Australia in the federal parliament and I am very proud of having been able to ensure that WA has had a voice on issues of great importance to our state. While I chose not to recontest the last Senate preselection, nevertheless it is with some regret that I am leaving, because of course the federal parliament is the heart of Australian politics and an individual can make a difference in contributing ideas to the formulation of policy. I suppose one must ask am I satisfied with what I have done here, and I must say that, while it has always been enjoyable and interesting, and I do feel that I have been fulfilled in many ways, I would have liked to have perhaps had a little more direct influence on the way policy is developed.

The Senate, if I might say so, does play a vital role as a house of review in the democratic process in Australia, which is carried out largely through the Senate committee system. I believe that role should never be underestimated and I hope it will be continued and respected long into the future.

In conclusion, I consider it to have been a great honour and privilege to have represented Western Australia in the federal parliament and to have been one of the surprisingly small number of people in the Australian population who have had this great honour of serving in the Senate. I thank the West Australian Liberal Party for giving me this privilege.

**Honourable senators:** Hear, hear!
Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (18:43): Mr Deputy President, today we are farewelling three senators who are actually leaving of their own volition. Not many of us get that luxury.

First to our President. He has served his party, his state and the Senate with absolute distinction. He is a person who is highly regarded on all sides of this chamber and in this building and he is especially regarded as a man of integrity. It is a mark of Mr President's style that his demeanour in the chair on the last day of the previous parliament was exactly the same as it was on the first day of the new parliament. He has treated all senators fairly. On those rare occasions when, especially in opposition, I was not always fully attuned to the methodology of his rulings, I nevertheless always knew and understood that his rulings, even if I disagreed with them, were never based on any malice or any partisanship but because he believed that that ruling was right. He had a great professional relationship and indeed friendship with former Presidents Calvert and Ferguson and, if I might say, with all colleagues. The President made a very notable contribution to the smooth running of the Senate and Parliament House more generally and especially in his involvement with the setting up of the Parliamentary Budget Office.

When Mr President was re-elected three or so years ago, I indicated to him on behalf of the coalition—and we were still in opposition at that stage—that he had had our support previously, he had it in the ballot on that day and he would continue to have it into the future. I am pleased to say that is one promise I have been able to live up to, with my colleagues. The reason Mr President has continued to enjoy that support is that he is a person of quality and fairness.

On a personal note, I appreciated his basic world view. But, for someone charged with keeping order and decorum in this place, I did find it passing strange that he should script a report, indeed a tome, entitled 'The F-word is not a dirty word in politics'. It was a report that he outlined in a supporting speech to the Senate on 10 May 2006; and, of course, the 'F-word' refers to the role of 'faith' in politics. I commend the report to colleagues, especially the conclusions that he drew. On behalf of the government, and personally, I wish the President, his wife and family all the very best for the future. In conclusion, I thought it was a big call for him to assert that he was making not a valedictory but, in fact, a final statement. I defy anybody to raise a point of order or refer anything for privilege over the next few days—because that might require him to break his promise that it was his final statement to the Senate!

Senator Sue Boyce was appointed to the Senate in April 2007 and elected that same year. Sue came to the Senate with a wealth of experience and a varied background, including as a journalist and as an advocate for vulnerable children and adults—built from personal experience—with a family business background and a party organisational background. She represented the people of Queensland, and issues nationally, in a very forthright manner. That has been a hallmark of her many contributions. Her strong voice for those who cannot always speak up for themselves has been very important, especially through the Standing Committee on Community Affairs. She has promised us that she will continue to be a strong advocate for family businesses—and they are a vital part not only of our economy but also of our society and have a very important role to play. Sue will continue to be a very strong advocate for
people with disabilities. The experience and wealth of knowledge you have brought to the party room has been of great benefit to all of your colleagues.

Sue was formerly a journalist, but I have not heard that she will be going back to that profession. If she were to apply for a job with the ABC or Fairfax, I think she would get a reference from all of us on this side—and that would be the kiss of death for her! When Senator Boyce has on rare occasion found herself at variance with her colleagues, she has always spoken passionately and her advocacy has been powerful; but it has always been done in a very respectful manner to her colleagues, myself included, who have often found themselves on the other side of the debate. The way you presented yourself and your arguments on those occasions added to your advocacy and also gained you the deserved respect of your colleagues, even if we did not necessarily agree on the issues. I think Senator Boyce is a very hard marker. Her KPIs, and then the marks she allocated herself, were not the results that I think an objective observer would have given her. Your contribution has been outstanding in all fields, and even in some of those areas where you have quite rightly said we have not achieved as we should have—for example, female representation on our side of politics and in the ministry. You should not mark yourself down in relation to that. You have helped as a trailblazer in that area—regrettably, others have let the side down—and I am sure that you will continue to be a very strong advocate. As you leave this place, Senator Boyce, you can feel very satisfied with the considerable role you have played, with your colleagues and in this chamber, in a relatively short period of time. We wish you well in the future and look forward to ongoing interaction with you.

Senator Eggleston has been a valued colleague and I have known him for many years. He has been here some 18 years. He particularly endeared himself to me when, in his first speech, he happened to mention me when referring to a forebear of his who came from King Island, in my home state of Tasmania. I always knew there was something good about him: it was that Tasmanian Heritage—a maternal grandmother if I recall correctly. Senator Eggleston had a distinguished career before entering the Senate. He qualified as a medical practitioner and undertook further studies in obstetrics. He practised at Port Hedland and immersed himself in community life. He served as a councillor and a mayor, and then on the Pilbara Development Corporation. It was appropriate that you should be so passionate, in your first speech and in your last speech, about the Pilbara and the north of Western Australia. You did train in obstetrics, and I remember that, on one tour, you took me around and everyone said that you had delivered them as a baby. You said to me that that was not quite correct—but we have always accepted that it was the case! Senator Eggleston was well known, well loved and highly regarded in the area that he served, especially in the northern part of Australia.

I will briefly turn to what I consider was a very important speech, delivered in this place on 14 May 2013. I know you ulcerated about giving this speech for quite some time, Senator Eggleston, but might I say, in your very understated yet highly powerful contribution, you will have been an inspiration to many. Senator Eggleston spoke about a condition that I will not even try to pronounce. But, with his medical training, Senator Eggleston was able to tell us about his cartilaginous condition, which causes short stature. Can I say, Eggy: you might have been short on stature, but you were not short on character, on integrity, on advocacy or on commitment.
In that speech, what you told us was that, no matter what the barriers were in your life, you simply got on with it. Even when you confronted that situation at the university and questioned whether or not you should tell your parents, you decided not to and just got on with life. Indeed, that speech that you gave on 14 May 2013 concluded with these words:

I thought I should record this story—which was Senator Eggleston’s experience—because, as some people have said, it might provide some inspiration to somebody who feels that, because of some physical abnormality, they are being held back. I think the answer is just to keep on going, and you will succeed in the long run.

Senator Eggleston, your life is a testament to the fact of what can happen if you keep on going, and there is no doubt that, as you leave this place, people can and will say of you that your life has been a great success in the long run.

Your medical career, your local government career and your Senate career speak volumes and are a great inspiration for many more people with issues of short stature to make the sort of full contribution you have made to your community and to public life in this country. I am sure that that will be one of the stand-out speeches—and it should be one of the stand-out speeches—that has been delivered in this Senate. Senator Eggleston, on behalf of all of your colleagues, we wish you very well and look forward to your academic career. All the best.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (18:55): I rise tonight to speak on behalf of the Labor opposition on the retirement of three very different senators who represent some of the diversity of political views and backgrounds that are represented here in this Senate.

I will start first with my colleague from Queensland, the President of the Senate. Like Senator Bishop, who we farewelled last night, he was elected to this place in 1996—not the best election result for Labor at that time, nor possibly the 11½ years that followed. Senator Hogg not only made the best of a period in opposition and contributed to the good functioning of the Senate but also secured the confidence of his colleagues to become Deputy President of the Senate and Chair of Committees from the first sitting of the Senate after the changeover in August 2002. He continued to serve in this role until after Labor won government in 2007. Then, in keeping with the practice of this chamber, after the changeover, he assumed the role of President. In doing so, Senator Hogg became the first President of the Senate from the Australian Labor Party since former senator Michael Beahan left the role in 1996.

I was elected to this place in 2001, so I have actually only known Senator Hogg to be either Deputy President or President. I would say that taking on leadership in politics in any form is significant but, to be the deputy or presiding officer of a chamber of parliament for nearly 12 years, is a very high honour indeed. Senator Hogg has promoted the norms of his office in his time as President, demonstrating decency and even-handedness in his conduct. As President since 2008, he has undertaken a role that requires rulings that must be recognised as fair, the exercise of office in an impartial manner, the exercise of patience—and I personally thank him for his patience on those rare occasions where I might have been overly energetic in question time—and the management and responsibilities of the role relating to both the Senate and to the parliament. Above all, of course, senators must be able to trust the President in his stewardship of the office. That Senator Hogg has met these standards is a reflection of his personal qualities as a humble man, generous in spirit.
There are many senators in this place, particularly those who have served as a temporary chair of committee, who have benefited from his guidance. I was reminded of one occasion during the term of the last government when there was a division in the chamber and some debate preceded the ringing of the bells. One of our colleagues, Senator McKenzie, was in the chair—and I make no criticism of her abilities in what was a difficult and confused situation—but she was heard on the radio as saying, 'Oh, Hoggie; thank goodness you're here!' when the President arrived in the chamber. I think we can all recall the times when we have benefited from the President's wisdom and experience. He sets a strong example to those who follow him as presiding officers of this chamber.

As Labor Senate leader, I pay tribute also to Senator Hogg's long service to our party and to the trade union movement over some four decades. He has been an advocate for his home state of Queensland and shares a particular affinity for its rural and regional areas. He made note of this in his statement, when he announced that he would not seek the endorsement of our party for a further term and highlighted his satisfaction at having been involved in a number of projects associated with Labor's initiatives in government to protect, in his words, 'jobs and the dignity and self-worth of those who faced unemployment during the global financial crisis.'

There is a great consistency between his final statement to the chamber and his first speech, which he quoted tonight, where he spoke of his solidarity with and compassion for those who have less and his deep commitment to upholding the dignity of working people. He has held one of the highest offices in this parliament. I thank him on behalf of the Labor senators, and I wish him, his wife, Sue, and his family well in his retirement from the office of President and from the Australian Senate.

I also recognise Senator Eggleston, who has spoken tonight. I learned a number of things— one learns a number of things listening to valedictories. I learned he was the only Liberal invited to the Nationals' seafood barbecue—as a result, primarily, of the use of his fridge. I also learned of the extent of his fealty to the IPA. He will forgive me for being less impressed by the latter. I acknowledge that Senator Eggleston came to this place after a career as a medical practitioner for a substantial period of time. I also observe that he arrived following the election of the Howard government and I am sure he is content that, as he leaves, his party is back in government again.

Senator Eggleston is a passionate Western Australian and is particularly knowledgeable and passionate about the northern part of his state. He demonstrated that again tonight in the speech that he gave, reflecting his strong connection with community and his role in local government in Port Hedland and the Pilbara. I wish Senator Eggleston well in his retirement and I trust that he might reconsider his fealty to the IPA—but perhaps not.

I also want to make some brief comments on the valedictory for Senator Sue Boyce of Queensland. Senator Boyce has been in this place for only one term, but her contribution has been noteworthy. Perhaps that was best demonstrated in the opening paragraphs of her speech night, when she acknowledged on the one hand that she was wrong about her previous position in relation to the bringing together of the two parties, and she also described herself as a moderate and a feminist. In an article today she was described as a gutsy and thoughtful senator, and I think that was opposite. She has brought a distinctive voice to the chamber,
particularly on issues relating to the environment, marriage equality, the rights of women and, most particularly, the rights and experience of people with disability.

As she spoke of tonight, Senator Boyce and another senator for whom I had great regard, Senator Judith Troeth, made what was a brave decision to support the Labor government’s carbon pollution reduction scheme legislation. As I was the minister for climate change at the time and negotiated that legislation with Mr Turnbull and Mr Macfarlane, I recall that acutely. I reflected in my speech at the time that we should leave this place being able to look Australians in the eye and to say, ‘We acted and we took responsibility.’ Senator Boyce certainly took responsibility and I acknowledge particularly that it is difficult to vote against your party at any time, even if your conviction is firm. I recall in great detail Senator Boyce joining with Senator Troeth and crossing the floor in this chamber and voting in support of the legislation. I acknowledge her for taking what was a courageous and principled position. My view is that if other senators in this place had the courage of Senator Boyce and Senator Troeth—and I refer not just to those in the Liberal and National parties but also those in the Australian Greens—Australia would have taken action on climate change much sooner and would now have an emissions trading scheme with a flexible price.

In June last year, Senator Boyce crossed the floor a second time to support the marriage equality legislation. Again it was a principled stand against the view of many in her party at a particularly sensitive time in an election year. On this occasion she was the only member of her party to take a different view. She said in her speech in this chamber, which followed my own:

Surely in 2013 we are past the homophobic, scared-of-difference, scared-of-diversity view that would be implied by any sort of attempt to put into the Constitution the idea that marriage is between a man and a woman only. My only hope is that the appalling record of referenda in Australia—their complete lack of success—means that that would go down. But it would not go down just because we are not very good at passing referenda; it would go down because in 2013 it is a disgusting and immoral idea to want to take that point.

I do not know what we can do, other than something like this, to try to persuade others that same-sex marriage is not going to be the end of the world for anybody, especially not for children or couples in Australia.

She went on to say:

A marriage is a special commitment. A marriage provides more security for those in it, including the children who would be in it. There is no reason not to allow same-sex marriage in Australia.

I also note the regard and deep respect with which Senator Boyce is held for her role in the community affairs committee and for her service on other committees during her time in this place. Through her committee work and other fora, Senator Boyce has distinguished herself by articulating arguments in favour of increased participation of women in politics—and she did so again tonight—and the rights of people with disability.

I close by making this observation. The political tradition with which Senator Boyce associates herself, that of Liberal moderates, is an extraordinarily important thing in Australian political history and in Australian political life. Australia’s tolerant, diverse multicultural society would not be what it is today without the contribution of Liberal moderates. Equality of opportunity for women will not be achieved without the contribution
of Liberal feminists, and respect for all relationships will not be achieved without the political support of those across the political divide. Senator Boyce deserves our thanks and respect for holding to her political principles even when it has not been fashionable within her own party. I wish her all the very best for the future.

**Senator SCULLION** (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (19:06): Given the time and the need for some of my colleagues to make a contribution, I seek leave to incorporate three valedictory speeches.

Leave granted.

*The incorporated speeches read as follows—*

**SENATOR ALAN EGGLESTON**

' Eggs' as you are affectionately known to all of us who have had the pleasure of working with you, it is difficult to know where to start in terms of the enormous contribution you have made in Parliament.

In your own words you sought election to give people in the North West of Western Australia a voice in Federal Parliament – and that you did and more – much more.

Senator Eggleston was elected for his first six-year term in 1996 and re-elected in the 2001 and 2007 elections. In all we have had the benefit of a wonderful human being in the Senate for 17 years.

I think we should reflect with gratitude that someone of Senator Eggleston's background chose to pursue public life.

Senator Eggleston studied medicine at University of Western Australia and spent four years working in the UK hospital system and 18 months as a GP in Perth and then followed a long held wish to spend time in the north of WA.

He then joined the North West Medical Service of the WA Health Department and was based at the Port Hedland Regional Hospital for 18 months.

This work involved flying clinics with the Royal Flying Doctor Service to the Pilbara mining towns and escorting patients to metropolitan hospitals as well as working the in the Port Hedland Regional Hospital.

It was always open to Senator Eggleston to continue pursuing a career in medicine exclusively after 22 years as a doctor and to further this career as a private citizen – an honourable pursuit as he engendered much admiration and respect in the communities he worked in.

And I know Senator Eggleston will not mind me saying that in the north Indigenous people affectionately referred to him as "The Little Doctor".

But Senator Eggleston sought to challenge himself in the political sphere, initially as mayor of Port Hedland, before being elected to the Senate.

He also managed to complete a Bachelor of Arts in Politics and International Studies as an external student to broaden his knowledge of Australian and Asian politics.

This is a man who has continued to want to scale new horizons and not restrict himself to one field of endeavour.

My abiding affection for Senator Eggleston arises from our shared experience of having lived among Indigenous people.

Senator Eggleston came into contact with the Aboriginal community when he went to the Pilbara in 1974 when he used to see patients at the Port Hedland Hospital outpatient department while he worked there.

It is a great sign of the respect with which he was held when in 1975 he was invited to an Aboriginal bush meeting on the banks of the Coongan River near Marble Bar.
These quarterly meetings involved Indigenous people coming from all over the Pilbara – including from the Western Desert and as far west as Onslow and the area around it.

In other words, while Senator Eggleston may have been too modest to admit, he was held in such high regard that he was welcomed into the inner sanctum of the business of the Aboriginal community.

The symbolism of this gesture cannot be underestimated.

But I would like here to highlight my personal admiration for Senator Eggleston and the meaningful contribution to an issue central to this Government's focus - Constitutional Recognition of our First Australians.

In a speech in respect of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill Senator Eggleston stated:

*I think it is now very appropriate that we do recognise that the Indigenous people were here first and that that fact is acknowledged in our Constitution...This Bill is not a token gesture. It is an important building block of unity and of recognition of the long history of Aboriginal people in Australia and will carry a message of all of our community. Indigenous and non-Indigenous, migrants from all over the world as well as those Australians whose history goes back 40,000 years, that we are moving forward as one people in one country.*

This speech so eloquently sums up the Government's view on the importance of Constitutional Recognition of our First Australians and I thank you Senator for giving this issue prominence in public debate.

Senator Eggleston's compassion was evident in a wide range of areas. Mental health was another matter close to his heart.

He also has been a strong supporter of developing a future for Northern Australia, believing that it could become a food bowl to double Australia's food output; increase tourism; and build an energy and export industry. In this regard we also share many views.

Senator Eggleston has also poured much energy into his Committee work involving a diverse range of issues, including Defence, Foreign Affairs, migration, finance and public administration, to name a few.

I have to say that I was saddened to read that in his early career in Federal politics he thought his medical condition might have been an issue in Canberra. I was sad because to all of us you are a giant of a human being and you walk tall.

As you leave this place I hope you know that many lives have been changed because of who you are, and particularly the most vulnerable.

You have every reason to be proud.

I wish you all the very best and you will always have friends here from all sides of politics.

You will always be a part of this big and often dysfunctional, but admiring family.

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**SENATOR SUE BOYCE**

I rise to farewell from the Senate, Senator the Hon Sue Boyce, and to pay homage to a career that has reflected integrity and sense of purpose. We would all in this place agree that Senator Boyce has come into politics to make a difference and to stand up for what she believes.

It is true that we all here because fundamentally, whatever side of politics, we all want to make society a better place for us and future generations – even if we don't always agree about how we might do so. And we can also be forgiven if at times we question whether it is all worth it. It would be all too easy to succumb to the lure of the path of least resistance and pursue a quiet life.

But Senator Boyce certainly did not come into Parliament to have a quiet life. Nor did she ever lose her passion and sense of purpose. And most admirably she has always remained true to herself. It must
be tremendously rewarding to leave knowing that she followed what she always thought was the right thing to do.

Senator Boyce was elected by the Queensland Parliament on 19 April 2007 to fill a casual Senate vacancy; the first Queensland Liberal female Senator in 60 years.

She was later elected in her own right at the Federal election on 24 November 2007. And while Senator Boyce may have come into Parliament to fill a casual vacancy, her contribution to public life has been anything but casual at any time.

The Senate was fortunate to have had the benefit of her varied and rich past work experience which includes Company director, former journalist and public relations practitioner with international experience. Her work in her family's manufacturing business has assisted her relate well to the issues faced by Australian manufacturers and especially family businesses.

But like me, many will remember Sue Boyce's parliamentary career for her tireless work as an advocate for the rights of people with a disability, having been a past president of the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland.

She has also taken on other important health sector issues and has been a strong advocate for women's voices to be heard in Parliament.

Senator Boyce has been well placed to advocate on behalf of Down Syndrome as she herself, as well as being a successful professional and business woman, has raised her daughter, Joanna, who has Down Syndrome - one of three children Senator Boyce has raised.

Senator Boyce's compassion and empathy for people with all levels of ability is well-known in this place - but it is a true test of her character that she was able to achieve so much for others, when it would have been easy for her to focus on her own sphere.

And even if some disagree with her views, many have admired her strong stance on marriage equality. It would have been an agonising and lonely decision to make to break away from her colleagues and to do what she thought was the only thing she could do.

It is only a party such as the Liberal Party that would accommodate a broad range of views because Senator Boyce always sees herself as a true Liberal, first and foremost.

But I also want to acknowledge the foresight Senator Boyce reflected in a speech she gave to the Senate on 20 June 2007 on Indigenous Issues. In that speech Senator Boyce commented on the Wild-Anderson reports that looked into Indigenous disadvantage and the need to rethink unconditional welfare.

Senator Boyce expressed her dismay in terms of the findings regarding lack of meaningful work, substance abuse and life expectancy. But she was also concerned that reports would come and go and nothing would happen.

As she stated in her speech in June 2007, "As everyone present would know, none of this is new, unfortunately. In fact, there has been a long-standing tradition of state government reports – very good reports...As governments, we talk wisely about them, and then nothing; nothing really changes".

How prophetic her words turned out to be in the past 6 years of the Rudd/Gillard governments in terms of Closing the Gap targets; on many indicators life for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those living in remote Australia, has not improved.

Senator Boyce will be very much missed. She has made a tremendous contribution in her work on Committees; always with an eye to ensuring that real results ensue.

She has taken up the difficult causes and has bravely pursued these regardless of the personal consequences she may have had to bear.

I wish you Senator Boyce, on the part of the National Party, all the very best in your future endeavours as it has been a pleasure to work with someone of your calibre and passion.
SENATOR JOHN HOGG

I rise to farewell Senator John Hogg who has served in this place with dignity and fairness. And yes you have had the patience of a Saint to deal with us all.

As you stated in your Maiden speech to Federal Parliament in September 1996:

"Democracy is founded on the principle of mutual respect and on the expectation of reciprocal dignity. This building and this chamber are designed and built to enhance the dignity of parliament and to express respect for the institutions and processes of our democracy".

And you have indeed have treated this place with respect.

Queensland is today losing a tremendous Senator, even if he is leaving of his own accord. The labour movement will also lose a thoughtful and decent son.

Your constituents will also miss the passion and engagement with which you have undertaken your responsibilities.

He has been proud to open over 229 Building the Education Revolution projects worth over $367million in his State and projects under the Labor Government's Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program worth over $31million over 10 Regional Councils.

The records indicate that he has spoken in numerous debates in this place – well above average amongst Senators.

The Senate will miss you and I wish you and your spouse and family all the very best.

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (19:06): I want to associate myself with the remarks of my leader, Senator Abetz, in relation to Senator Hogg, Senator Eggleston and Senator Boyce. I will keep my remarks as short as I can.

May I speak particularly about my two Liberal colleagues, Senator Eggleston and Senator Boyce. Mr Deputy President, I cannot tell you how proud I am tonight—and I am sure that this is a pride that you share—to have been a member of a party room that contains two Australians as fine as Alan Eggleston and Sue Boyce.

I had not met many Western Australians when I came to the Senate, but I discovered that Western Australians are not long in telling you that their state is the economic powerhouse of the nation, and they are not long in telling you that not all wisdom resides in Canberra. In that sense, Senator Eggleston is absolutely cut from the mother lode of Western Australian senators. Eggy, you have been a good friend. You have been a great Western Australian senator. You have and are a great Australian. It has been such a privilege to know you and to serve with you.

Senator Boyce I have known for somewhat longer. I was one of those who very strongly supported Sue Boyce's preselection in 2007. She has been a very good friend. Because time is very brief I just want to dwell on one episode in Senator Boyce's parliamentary career, because in a sense it is the episode that reveals her real character. That was the debate that others have mentioned tonight about the ETS. As we all know, the then opposition, the
Liberal Party, was deeply and bitterly divided over that issue in the closing months of 2009. I remember in particular the meeting of the LNP State Council in Caloundra in November of that year, when the issue was coming to a crescendo. The feeling of the LNP members was, almost to a person, opposed to the policy of the then opposition frontbench led by Mr Turnbull. It was a tense weekend, and the anger in the room at the way in which the then opposition was dealing with the issue was palpable.

The easiest thing in the world for a senator to have done would have been to play to the crowd on that issue. A week or so later, when the issue did reach a climax on the floor of this chamber—after the dramatic party meeting at which famously Mr Abbott was elected in place of Mr Turnbull as the leader, and the party's policy was changed—the bills were put to a vote. Notwithstanding her knowledge of the strength of feeling of those who held her political fate in their hands, Senator Boyce actually crossed the floor, as we have heard before, to vote for the pre-existing policy, the policy that was so unpopular among the rank and file. She did that for one reason: she conscientiously and profoundly believed it to be right for Australia. For Senator Boyce to cross the floor on that famous day, in those circumstances, was the most significant act of political courage that I have seen in my time in the Senate. I never expect to see an act of greater political courage.

Sue, you have been a marvellous colleague. You have been courageous, you have been loyal and you have been good fun, as we have seen during your valedictory remarks tonight. It has been a pleasure to know you. It has been a pleasure to come to know your family, particularly Jo, who is so popular and beloved among the members of the LNP back home. I am sorry you are leaving. You, like Senator Eggleston, have left upon this place an imperishable record of honourable, good and decent behaviour for which we will always cherish you both.

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (19:12): To President Hogg and Senator Sue Boyce, thank you for a wonderful contribution. Forgive me if I spend the very few moments that I have tonight talking about my good friend the boy from Busselton Alan Eggleston. I am very proud to call him my friend. He has served Western Australia and particularly the north-west of my state in so many ways and so very well. I might start with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and I might also add as a GP and obstetrician in the Pilbara, as Mayor of Port Hedland, as President of the Kalgoorlie North Division of my Liberal Party in Western Australia—where he travelled as a volunteer month in, month out some 2,000 kilometres to attend meetings—and as a senator for the past 18 years. What a fabulous contribution.

He and I fought together in the 1987 campaign. I was a candidate for the federal seat of Kalgoorlie and he was a Senate candidate. We had the tall and short of every political argument across the north-west. I of course provided the brawn; he provided the intellect and, may I say, the heart.

Alan, your contribution to the Senate over the past 18 years has been thoughtful, insightful and outstanding, particularly on the communications committee, on the environment committee and in getting SBS into regional Western Australia. That is something not many people know and understand. In recent times, in the last several years as chairman of the foreign affairs, defence and trade committee you have done a wonderful job. I thank you for your strong advocacy for Western Australia and particularly for the north-west. There will
never be a better advocate for the north-west of Western Australia in the Australian parliament. I thank you for your friendship, your intelligence and for being the kind of decent work colleague who we are all going to miss from this chamber. Your fellow senators, members and all of the staff that have known you over the years share with me an enormous admiration. I congratulate you on a stellar career and I wish you all the very best in your retirement.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (19:14): I want to associate myself with the very fine words of all of those who have spoken previously about my friends Alan Eggleston and Sue Boyce. It is a happy occasion today, with several parties going on which we are holding our toastees from. But for me it is a very sad day. You do not come to this parliament looking for friends. With only a few exceptions, I never find any. But today I farewell two people who I can genuinely say have been real friends. Both are terribly genuine people with a commitment that you would not find in too many others.

I have been here more than anyone else with Senator Eggleston—‘Eggy’, as I call him. We go back a very long while. I have always had an enormous admiration for a guy who, without complaint, has gone through life and achieved so much. I still cannot believe that, as a well-known Liberal, he ever got to be Mayor of Port Hedland but he did it. He went through medical school to become an enormously successful and compassionate medical practitioner. He had a couple of attempts at getting here to this place that we often laugh about. Here he has done everything that he wanted to do, everything that his constituents expected of him. With perhaps more reason not to be happy than many of us, Alan has done everything in such a magnificent way. I have the most enormous amount of respect for Alan. Time does not allow me to say all of the things I would like to say but, Alan, well done and we will keep in touch.

Sue Boyce has been a very good friend of mine. Leslie and I have almost become part of Sue and Joe's family. Sue and I share a lot of things. We argue a lot about most things, I might say, but we are good friends. Her interest in the north and in many parts of regional Australia is something I very much share. She is a wonderful person. Her career in public life, I know, will continue. She will continue to make a great contribution to our society. I wish her and Joe all the very best into the future.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (19:17): I associate myself indeed with all the wise words and wonderful things said about my dear friend and colleague Senator Eggleston.

Tonight I want to make some remarks about Sue Boyce. As Sue was the 515th senator in this place, I was the 516th. We, on 8 May 2007, stood just there on the chamber floor and took the affirmation of office together. We have been great friends every day since. We have shared many a view together in this place. I will deeply miss Sue from this place. I know that her contribution to public life though will not be gone.

I have particularly enjoyed working with Sue on a number of issues. I am very proud to have co-authored with Sue a report on marriage equality. It was a report that outlined why we should have a conscience vote on this side of the chamber and a report that I hope will hold true in the long term. I know that Sue's work will go on, as she said today. Her voice may be gone from this chamber but her influence and, I am sure, her voice will continue to be heard in this building for long to come.
SENATOR BACK (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (19:18): I associate myself with the comments to the President and to my colleague Senator Sue Boyce. It is about Senator Alan Eggleston that I would like to use my minute and seven seconds. Alan and David Johnston conveyed me into this place in early 2009. The point I would like to make strongly is that Alan may be a man of small stature but he will cast an enormous shadow. He did over the Pilbara as a medical doctor and he has over this place. I stand very closely associated with his value that has been expressed in Western Australia. People do not understand that Alan was badly discriminated against in medical school in Perth. But there is a silver lining on every cloud and that took him to England where he completed his medical degree. At the same time he developed a wonderful network for young doctors who actually came to Port Hedland. I think that tradition continues to this day.

Very briefly, we got off a plane from Barrow Island on one occasion and got on the bus. One person on the bus—a fly-in fly-out worker—made a disparaging comment about Alan. Three other people shut him up with the words 'He probably delivered you when he was an obstetrician.' I join with my colleagues in congratulating all three of them on a fine career.

ADJOURNMENT

Middle East

SENATOR SMITH (Western Australia) (19:20): I rise this evening to note that it is precisely two years today since I made my first speech in this chamber. Much has changed in that time. The nation now has its third Prime Minister in two years. Last year the people of Australia voted to change the government. That, in itself, is a significant thing. In the 69 years that have elapsed since the end of the Second World War, Australians have voted to change their government on just seven occasions. Yet more remarkable than the decision to transfer power from one party to another in our country is the way in which we do so.

Since Federation, Australia has conducted 44 federal elections. While it is common to think that every campaign is more partisan and more divisive than the last, the reality is that each of those elections was fought on issues that at the time aroused passionate debate on both sides. Yet for all the passion and even anger that election campaigns can arouse, Australia's elections have been conducted with a truly remarkable degree of nonviolence. The attempted assassination of the Labor leader Arthur Calwell in 1966 is really the only serious instance we have had of a national political figure being harmed. Even then, Mr Calwell's injuries were, fortunately, relatively minor. That incident aside, the odd water balloon, egg or sandwich being hurled at a political leader is about the extent of it in Australia, and I hope—as I am sure all of the senators do—that this will forever remain the case.

This remarkable record is no doubt in large measure due to the stellar efforts of our domestic security services in protecting our leaders in their efficient and professional manner. But I think it also goes to our political culture. In this country, we are free to express our support for or opposition to a candidate or a policy. We can walk into a polling place on election day—something we are very accustomed to in Western Australia of late—and cast our vote, secure in the knowledge that, when we watch the election coverage that night, the numbers being reported will be vote counts, not body counts. Regrettably, citizens of many other nations around the globe cannot share this confidence.
I was given a stark reminder of this last month when I travelled to Afghanistan and the Middle East as part of the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program along with the members for Petrie, Rankin and Boothby, from the other place. As well as it being a privilege to witness the critical and professional job that Australia's Defence Force personnel are still doing in this incredibly unstable region, the visit was also a sobering reminder that, although much progress has been made since 2001, there is still a very long way to go.

Not long after the change of the government here in Australia last year, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition travelled to Afghanistan together to give due recognition to the significant contribution to the conflict in Afghanistan that our country has made. That ceremony at Tarin Kot base stands as a powerful symbol of the bipartisan support that our parliament gives to the men and women of Australia's Defence Force personnel serving overseas. Yet, despite that, the perception that we have withdrawn from Afghanistan still persists—despite the fact that there are still around 450 Australian Defence Force personnel in that country and almost 1,000 in the Middle East area of operations.

Those I met with during my visit were very keen for Australians at home to understand that our contribution continues. Many of these predominantly young Australians are continuing to operate in parts of the region that remain inherently unstable. They provide training and protection to civilian populations in that country, which does not have the long and stable history of democratic freedoms that we enjoy here in Australia. Amongst other tasks, our ADF personnel continue to do Australia proud, providing security and intelligence services, helping to train both the Afghan military and police force, defusing bombs and ballistics and providing a range of security services.

Additionally, our forces are at the forefront of two activities of the utmost importance, given Afghanistan's continuing instability: patrolling the seas and intercepting shipments of illegal narcotics and, vitally, providing first-class medical services, including for those injured in the violence that, regretfully, is still all too common throughout the region and in Afghanistan. The link between these narcotics and the ongoing violence cannot be overstated, and all Australians should be proud that we are continuing to play a role in combating both.

During my own visit, I was confronted with a stark reminder of the dangers still present in these operations when our delegation attended a memorial service in Kandahar for five British personnel killed in a helicopter crash: Captain Thomas Clarke, Flight Lieutenant Rakesh Chauhan, Warrant Officer Class 2 Spencer Faulkner, Corporal James Walters and Lance Corporal Oliver Thomas, of the British Armed Forces.

Australia too has paid a high price in Afghanistan. Our nation's military commitment has come at a high cost to the families and friends of the 261 Australian servicemen who have been wounded in action there and the 40 who have lost their lives in service to our country and the pursuit of freedom for others.

We also had the chance to visit other centres contained within the ADF’s Middle East area of operations, including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain, to learn more about the ADF’s operations in those locations and discuss Australia’s commitment with those serving on the ground. In Bahrain, it was a particular privilege to meet with Vice Admiral John Miller, Commander of the US Naval Forces Central Command of the United States 5th Fleet, who took the time out of a very busy and important schedule to outline to us the crucial, critical...
role that Australia is playing as part of the Combined Maritime Forces in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean.

This force combines maritime resources from more than a dozen nations to patrol these critical and crucial sea lines, combating piracy, terrorism and the scourge of illegal drug trafficking. As we know, terrorist groups rely on funds from trade in illegal narcotics. The work that Australian personnel are doing in this operation is helping to deprive extremist groups of income and hence reducing their ability to commit violent acts around the globe.

Along with my other parliamentary colleagues, I am indebted to the Commander Joint Task Force 633, Major General Craig Orme, and his deputies, Commodore Phil Spedding and Air Commodore Noel Derwort, for the time and effort they took to explain all aspects of Australia's Middle East engagement during our visit. Special mention must go to Major Will Orgill, who was responsible for looking after our group and making sure at all times that we were where we needed to be, safely.

As a Western Australian senator, I was particularly pleased and very, very proud to come across some Western Australians on my visit in Afghanistan. They are doing our state great credit as they go about their tasks in Australia's Defence Force. Interestingly, I met two from the northern Perth suburb of Dianella, a suburb adjacent to the very suburb that I grew up in in Western Australia. It goes to show that the world is a small place in many respects. I pay tribute to the efforts of Captain Nick Wells, as well as Sally-Anne Vincent from our embassy in Kabul. All Western Australians should be proud of the contribution to security that they, along with many others, are making to this important region in the world. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Major Scott Holmes and Sergeant Grant Creswell, who shared their friendship and experiences with me during my brief visit to the Middle East.

Of course, the Middle East is again top of mind in the news this week, as the appalling behaviour of violent extremists in Iraq is on full, sickening display. As the Prime Minister noted over the weekend, these are people who were too extreme for an extremist group like al-Qaeda. Without wishing to replay historical debates over Iraq, I think all of us in this place are appalled by what we have seen over the last few days. It is clear that some form of involvement by Australia may well be needed. Whatever form that may ultimately take is a decision for others.

However, to close, I think it is worth reflecting on some wise words from two former Australian Prime Ministers that will no doubt have a bearing on this issue. In the past day, former Prime Minister John Howard has spoken to The Telegraph newspaper in the United Kingdom and has reminded us:

It's not "triumphalism" or "bigoted" to assert Western values … it's just "asserting what you believe in … Freedom and a belief that until a tried way is found wanting, you should continue doing it."

That is the key point: freedom and democracy are the best alternatives on offer, and we should not be shy about saying so or acting to protect those values.

I close with the words of a former Labor Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, speaking in this parliament at the time of the 1991 Iraq war:

We all of us wish for peace. But we cannot have peace just by wishing for it or just by talking about it; we have to work for it, and sometimes, tragically, we have to fight for it. The great lesson of this Century is that peace is bought at too high a price, if that price is the appeasement of aggression.
Homelessness

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (19:30): I rise tonight to speak about homelessness and affordable housing in Australia. In the lead-up to the election the coalition put out a statement on housing affordability and homelessness. Let us be clear here: it was not a policy, merely a statement from Liberal Party headquarters in response to questions being asked from community and business as to what the policy was. The coalition let down the people of Australia then and it continues to let down those most in need today.

Despite trying to trash Labor's record of rental affordability, affordable housing, a homeless strategy and a peak council on homelessness, the Abbott government has not lifted one finger to help those most in need—not one finger—and not one extra new dollar. The only thing it has done is to sack the peak council on homelessness, so now it does not even have an advisory body. This government shows its complete lack of care for some of those most in need in our community. And, to add insult to injury, it does not even have a housing minister.

Last year I attended the peak affordable housing conference, which was held in Adelaide. Minister Andrews was one of the keynote speakers. The sector were waiting for the minister to give them an outline of the coalition's plans. They were, sadly, let down. There was no announcement from the new minister, other than a vague threat to the sector to use their funding or lose their funding. There has been nothing since—not a word from Minister Andrews. Absolutely nothing—no speeches in the parliament on homelessness, just silence.

The only time homelessness and affordable housing has been raised is by the sector, as the funding on the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, one of Labor's policies and programs, was due to expire in June this year. The sector wanted early assurances that the funding was secure beyond 30 June. That is fair enough. Non-government organisations have commitments, staff to pay and ongoing projects.

Finally, after a lot of lobbying and media, they were given a funding commitment for just one more year. This slap in the face, from a government which has tried to trash Labor's record and has no record, no policy of its own, and this silence from the government on homelessness, against a rising tide of homelessness in this country, is utter hypocrisy.

Let me turn to Western Australia. I recently attended the WACOSS conference, which had a focus on affordable housing and homelessness. Shelter WA gave a presentation and played a video, with a message from a gentleman called Jonathan. It was a brief clip. Jonathan explained he was homeless, living in his car with his adult son. Jonathan and his son call Kwinana and Rockingham beaches, in the southern suburbs of Perth, their home. Jonathan, along with about 50 others—families, couples and singles—camp in their cars at the beaches each night. They camp there because there are, at least, toilets and cold showers. I recently contacted Jonathan and he told me his story. He said that he, along with others who found themselves homeless, sleeping in their cars, had co-ordinated a submission to the Senate Economics References Committee inquiry into affordable housing. The submission is No. 214, titled 'South West Australia Homeless People.' I would urge everyone to read it. Let me quote the introductory statement from Jonathan:
Kwinana Jetty once proudly serviced a community for ships and the peacefulness of residents fishing from its structure. With one swift blow, a single incident, it sustained severe storm damage on 10th June 2012. It was then locked and deemed an "unsafe, dangerous structure" with no financial assistance available for restoration. Now, it stands as a tribute to that one incident in life that occurs to many of us. We stand alone suffering the indignation of waiting for the opportunity to rebuild our lives, struggling with all that is decaying around us.

Jonathan and his son had been homeless for 15 months at the time of writing their submission, back in March this year. They spent a period in Darwin where Jonathan had been working as an IT professional and the remainder in Perth where he moved, hoping to find cheaper housing and employment. Anglicare, another submitter to the affordable housing inquiry, is a WA-based NGO delivering a broad range of services. Its vision is: 'We live in a just and fair society in which all people thrive.' Unfortunately, we are a far cry from that vision, more so since the election of the Abbott government.

To understand Jonathan's plight and the plight of thousands and thousands of other Western Australians without a home, Anglicare provided a snapshot of planning and housing in Western Australia. The Western Australian Department of Planning estimates that the building industry in Western Australia has the capacity to construct up to 24,000 new properties each year. That sounds impressive, but that figure represents growth at slightly below 2½ per cent. Last year, the population of Western Australia grew by 3.3 per cent. These two figures show that the current deficit in housing supply is likely to worsen, without significant additional investment. According to the Western Australian Department of Housing there were around 43,025 public and community housing properties in Western Australia. At the moment there are 20,000 applications for this housing. This represents around 43,000 men, women and children on a waiting list for these properties. The average waiting time is 2½ years. Then there are almost 3,000 applications on the priority list. This means around 6,500 mainly women and children, but men as well, are in desperate need of housing.

If you are on the priority list, the wait is 12 months. To get onto the priority list you are regarded as having an 'extreme need'; generally issues such as domestic violence, extreme health issues or child protection issues. Strangely, being in crisis and having no accommodation does not automatically get you onto the priority list in Western Australia.

Since 2010, about 2,800 tenancies have been left. These figures tell us there is a massive problem in Western Australia, but it is not a unique Western Australian issue. These figures are replicated right across the country. As the sector agitated over the future funding of NPAH, the first response from the Prime Minister on Fairfax radio was, 'Come budget night, all will be revealed and I think people will be happy'. Here we are, almost at the end of June, and we do not have those NPAH contracts signed. Interestingly, we need to listen very carefully when the Abbott government says something, because on 30 March Minister Andrews announced there would be a rollover of those contracts. To me, a rollover just means the money continues. A couple of hours later at a public event, the language had changed; now there would be some sort of 'renegotiation'. And guess what? We have a number of states very unhappy with the new contracts, and that tells me something is up and the government is not being honest about its commitment.

What are organisations supposed to do? Put up a 'closed for business' sign? Use their non-existent credit card to have their funds extended? Borrow from the banks? If we do not get
those contracts signed in the next day or two, we as a community are turning our backs on those that need the most support in our community. This is a disgrace, and I feel for Jonathan and his son and thousands of others who will continue to wait.

Coal Seam Gas

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (19:40): Over the past six months, a widespread and committed movement has grown throughout Victoria. It is a movement driven by concerned landowners, farmers, families, vignerons, environmentalists and concerned community members—ordinary people banding together to protect themselves from the threat of coal and coal seam gas.

Victoria is currently experiencing a rush of exploration for unconventional gas, and huge swathes of the state are under coal, coal seam gas, shale gas, or tight gas exploration licenses. Unconventional gas extraction, through techniques such as fracking, pose long-term risks to our climate, to underground and surface water resources and to food and agricultural production. Both the CSIRO and the National Water Commission, the federal government's own independent expert adviser on water, have stated that fracking's impacts on underground water levels, the amount of emissions and the long-term impacts on local environments and farmland are poorly understood.

Common sense would assume that governments would protect communities against experimental mining projects until they were proven safe for people, land and water. Instead, there is a relentless push to set out on this path across Victoria without a full examination of the facts. The good news is that, faced with the imminent threat of large-scale mining, Victorian communities are coming together to declare their towns 'coal and CSG free' in what is an extraordinary example of community organising right across Australia. By knocking on close to 4,000 doors across regional Victoria, having conversations and providing people with up to date information, communities are uniting to fight for an end to unconventional gas approvals and to ensure the protection of their health, land and water.

This approach to community organising is modelled on the Lock the Gate work done in the northern states, where coal seam gas has already devastated communities. It is basic grassroots organising: town hall meetings, stalls and door-to-door surveys of entire neighbourhoods. In all surveys so far, well over 90 per cent of residents have opposed unconventional gas exploration. We have seen 11 communities declare themselves coal and coal seam gas free and there are at least another 10 in the process of declaring. Whilst the declaration is not legally binding, it sends a powerful message that gas and oil companies no longer have a social licence to operate in the area. It is a declaration that the community will defend themselves from the invasive, rampant and reckless coal seam gas industry.

In Victoria, the anti coal seam gas movement has spread far and wide. From Gippsland to the Otways, as far west as Portland and right into coalition heartland. In these communities people are asking: where are our representatives? Where are the Nationals? Where is the Victorian Farmers Federation? They appear to be missing in action.

The Victorian government recognises that mounting numbers of farmers, rural residents and community groups are opposed to fracking. Fearing a political backlash at the upcoming state election, they have extended a moratorium on fracking until July 2015. A moratorium is welcome, but beyond this date landowners are left in the dark about their rights to refuse
mining companies access to explore and mine their land. Landowners have been sharing their stories with my office, and they are moving stories. They are urging us to help to protect their properties so that they may hand them down to their kids and their grandkids. Take Helen Henry, for example, who grew up on a farm in Gympie and who now resides in Hamilton. She describes the complete lack of information from the industry about onshore gas. She says:

If we put forward a new drug, we had to prove its safety—but not here. Despite the risks to farming, to our health and to local economies they are excused from having to prove that it is safe.

We have heard from a meat and wool farmer and mother who lives in a town near Port Napier. She says:

If it happens and we didn't have any say in it and they started drilling, we'd have to take the kids and leave the family farm. It's the last thing we'd want to do but we don't see how agriculture and mining can coexist in this way. We know it impacts on groundwater and we rely on a bore and a spring fed dam. If it becomes contaminated, how will it affect our meat? There are so many unknowns.

We heard from Michael Green who lives in a small Victorian country town that is prone to drought. He says:

Our area is renowned for its tourist attractions. It relies on the tourism industry and eco-tourism, on its vineyards and its gourmet value-added food production. All this is threatened by fracking. Fracking is incredibly short-term and short-sighted, and considering our wealth of sunlight, wind and waves, we should be looking at these sustainable non-polluting alternatives and not destroying our ecology.

Mike Scott, whose mother grew up working the family's dairy farm in a little place called Old Bar near Taree and who now lives in Melbourne, says:

As a young kid I visited my Grandmother there for school holidays and she would share stories with me about the farm. You may know that this industry has devastated farmland in the Pilliga and the Northern Rivers, close to where my family still lives today. It has expanded unconfined into Queensland and the Northern Territory, and it continues its spread throughout Australia. The mining company, Lakes Oil, which is owned by Gina Rinehart, is trying to expand into Gippsland, the Otways and the surf coast of Victoria.

He goes on to say:

I now live in Melbourne and about three years ago, I had to choose whether to become more active and participate as best I could in stopping this ferocious industry, or turn a blind eye and switch off. I chose to fight.

There are many, many more stories but, in summary, they say this: 'We do not need this industry.'

We do not need this industry. Australia’s energy use has declined each year since 2010. We have seen the rapid uptake of rooftop solar. We are seeing other resources like wind energy expand at a rapid rate. Short-term profits rather than necessity are driving the proliferation of the unconventional gas industry which threatens the long-term viability of Victoria’s farmlands.

I know that some people in the chamber will argue that this is a state responsibility, not a federal government responsibility. That is cowardice. The threats posed by coal and coal seam gas extraction are not confined to state boundaries and there are a number of things that the federal parliament can do to prevent this long-term harm. The Greens are trying to do those things. We just need the political will.
Recently my home town of Deans Marsh declared that the overwhelming majority of residents wish to keep Deans Marsh and Bambra gas-field free. Residents there have chosen an ecologically sustainable future underpinned by food production, agriculture and tourism over the short-term economic promises and long-term environmental harm caused by unconventional gas. The Greens have been a strong and consistent voice against the unconventional gas industries and we intend to continue to campaign alongside inspirational community movements like Lock the Gate Alliance, Gasfield Free Deans Marsh, Frack Free Grovedale and the many other organisations that are springing up right across Victoria. The Greens will fight for an end to unconventional gas approvals in Victoria. We will fight for the right for farmers and other landholders to say, 'No, this is my land. You're not welcome here,' and for stronger environmental laws to better protect our natural environment.

When I attend community meetings near my home in places such as Winchelsea—where many people packed the local hall recently—I see farmers, teachers, families and business owners united in their opposition to fracking. I thank each and every one of them for the vigour with which they are defending the environment and agricultural land and assure them that, when it comes to opposing unconventional gas mining in Victoria, the Greens will stand with you.

Senate adjourned at 19:50

DOCUMENTS
Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:


- **Civil Aviation Act 1988**—Civil Aviation Order 82.6—Exemption — initial NVG pilot flight training prerequisites—CASA EX37/14 [F2014L00737].

- **Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 and Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998**—Civil Aviation Order 95.10 Instrument 2014 [F2014L00732].


- **Crimes (Overseas) Act 1964**—Crimes (Overseas) (Declared Foreign Countries) Amendment Regulation 2014—Select Legislative Instrument 2014 No. 87 [F2014L00718].

- **Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment Act 2014**—Education for Overseas Students Amendment Commencement Proclamation 2014 [F2014L00709].


Determination of the Initial Payment Ceiling Amount for Grant Year 2013-14.


Private Health Insurance Act 2007—Private Health Insurance (Prostheses) Amendment Rules 2014 (No. 2) [F2014L00733].


Superannuation Act 1976—Superannuation (CSS) (Eligible Employees — Exclusion) Amendment Declaration 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00729].

Superannuation Act 1990—Superannuation (PSS) Membership Inclusion Amendment Declaration 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00727].

The following documents were tabled:

Defence Abuse Response Taskforce—
Sixth interim report to the Attorney-General and Minister for Defence, dated June 2014.

Migration Act 1958—Section 486O—Assessment of detention arrangements—Personal identifiers 1001420, 1001079, 1001075, 1001254, 1001333, 1001335, 1001369, 1001429, 1001428, 1001352, 1001423, 1001084, 1001418, 1001044, 1001285, 1001159, 1001283, 1001122, 1001375, 1001347, 1001365, 1001432, 1001188, 1001468, 1001319, 1001424, 1001439, 1001158, 1001385, 1001154, 1001155, 1001256, 1001454, 1001362, 1001458, 1001016, 1001085, 1000936, 1001004, 1001341, 1001321, 1001310, 1001425—
Commonwealth Ombudsman’s reports, dated 18 June 2014.
Government response to Ombudsman’s reports, dated 5 June 2014.
National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)—NHMRC Licensing Committee—
Report on the operation of the Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002 for the period 1
September 2013 to 28 February 2014.