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SITTING DAYS—2014

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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
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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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(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
# ABBOTT MINISTRY

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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment (Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Employment (Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>The Hon Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<td>Acting Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Services</td>
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<td>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Health</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.

<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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CHAMBER
Thursday, 15 May 2014

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. John Hogg) took the chair at 09:30, read prayers and made an acknowledgement of country.

BILLS

National Integrity Commission Bill 2013

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 very hopeful that both the government and the Labor Party will support the Greens in introducing a new National Integrity Commission into the federal government arena. The first anticorruption commission around Australia was established as the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales in 1989—25 years ago. Now every state in Australia has an anticorruption commission of some kind. The federal government is the only jurisdiction without the infrastructure to confront corruption. Every time wrongdoing is exposed, one-off reviews or ad hoc investigations are launched.

We are shocked continually by the revelations that come out from the state independent commissions against corruption, namely the one in New South Wales at the moment. And I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the people blockading at Bentley against Metgasco because today the New South Wales government has suspended the licence that was granted because there was no consultation with local people and because, through the Independent Commission Against Corruption investigations, it is pretty obvious that the licences were given wrongly. The question is: who facilitated those licences and were there kickbacks paid? No doubt ICAC will be investigating that. But what we should have is those licences in New South Wales cancelled. If they were granted as a result of corrupt practices, they should be cancelled. And I do congratulate the community for standing up as part of the Bentley blockade. But it should not take ordinary citizens taking the action that they have paid behind the scenes or undue influence or favours in any other way.

And now for the third time the Greens have National Integrity Commission Bill 2013 before the parliament to create this office to crack down on public sector corruption and promote integrity in our public institutions. In fact I cannot see why anybody would oppose setting up a national ICAC, and I will be very interested to hear what excuses are offered. It is pretty obvious that corruption does not end at the border of New South Wales; it does not end at any other state border. When you consider the likelihood of corruption in the federal arena, it is pretty overwhelming. So many major projects are dependent on some federal licence being given, some engagement with a federal agency. Therefore, there is a huge temptation for people, both at the political level and in the bureaucracy, to engage in talking with lobbyists—and who knows where it will end up?

I want to give an example that is on the go right now. You have the financial services industry, which did not like one little bit the fact that in the last government Labor and the Greens moved to change the law to require those people in the financial services industry to
act in the best interests of their client. Now, what is wrong with someone being required to act in the best interests of their client? You would expect that to be the case. But what has been revealed is that in a whole lot of the managed investment schemes, for example, the financial advisers were not telling the people they were selling the products to of the massive kickbacks that they, the financial advisers, were getting as a result of recommending that product. So what happened? The financial advisers became rich, but the people who bought the product lost and lost out badly.

When I think of the tragedy of the people who were sucked into buying from Great Southern Plantations, Gunns and the rest, you have to ask the question: how on earth did the financial services industry get to the point where it was able to con the parliament into agreeing that it could sell a product without having to act in the communities' or its clients' best interest?

Now we have a situation where the financial services industry has persuaded Prime Minister Tony Abbott's government to change the act back to remove the need for financial advisers to act in the best interests of the client. And what do we find? We find that the financial services industry is part of the North Sydney Forum, which is a fundraiser for the federal Liberal Party—in particular, Treasurer Joe Hockey. What does that tell you about the influence of lobbyists—the way that lobbying groups get involved in private fundraising engagement with political parties? The delivery is given here in parliament in terms of outcomes. And it is entirely secret. Until this was forced out recently, nobody would have known about that backroom dealing that was going on.

That is why it is critical. The same thing goes with novated leasing and a whole range of things, including the salary-packaging industry. That industry is in there with the car industry to set up a situation where you can minimise your taxable income by going through this lurk of novated leases. We got rid of it in the last period of government, and I see that the current Liberal Party is about to restore the rort.

That is the kind of thing that goes on, and that is why the community is getting increasingly frustrated and wants to have some reassurance that there is some way of investigating what they can clearly see is on the verge of corruption, if not corruption.

In this Greens legislation, the national office of Integrity Commissioner is modelled on the successful New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption. It is based on provisions in the Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Act 2006. The first part of it is about the National Integrity Commissioner, and that is concerned with corruption in relation to public officials and Commonwealth agencies and has full investigative powers, including holding public and private hearings and summoning any person or agency to produce documents and appear before the commissioner.

I think that is fair enough. Why shouldn't public officials, Commonwealth agencies and parliamentarians be subject to that kind of oversight in the federal parliament? I will give you an example—it happened recently—which many people will have read about. Just in this last month we saw two men—one from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and another working with the National Australia Bank—using unpublished unemployment, retail and trade data at the Bureau of Statistics to trade in foreign exchange derivatives. Somebody working in a government agency was working with someone in the private sector and using that information. That insider trading brought in millions of dollars to the two men, but in this case
it has been picked up by our criminal justice system. I am glad it has been picked up by our criminal justice system, but it may not have been. What pathways do members of the community have to put forward matters and have them investigated?

I want to go to another example—the issue of Securency, a subsidiary of the Reserve Bank. Mr Warburton has been appointed by Prime Minister Abbott to review Australia’s renewable energy target. We know that he has been the subject of a secret internal investigation into his role as a former director of a firm involved in Australia’s worst foreign bribery scandal. That investigation and those findings by KPMG were sent, in February, to the Reserve Bank Board. They not only deal with Mr Warburton and his fellow former Note Printing Australia directors but go to the knowledge of, and handling by, Note Printing Australia’s sanctions-busting trip to Iraq in 1998. Yet yesterday, when I sought the parliament’s approval to put that document on the table of the parliament so that we can know what exactly went on and what KPMG found out about those directors—in particular, Mr Warburton—the government and the opposition voted together to prevent the Senate order that would have required that report to be tabled in the parliament. I put the question: why shouldn’t the parliament have access to that KPMG report on what has gone on?

I want to give another example. One of my constituents, who I will not name, is a fisherman in Tasmania. He was approached by two Austrade officials in Japan. He was asked to provide fish to this supposedly Japanese businessman who they vouched for. They said he was a credible person and that they had done the due diligence. They said that the government wanted this trade in order to develop the relationship with Japan in high-quality seafood. So this fisherman went ahead and did it, at the request of Austrade. He was quite happy with his own business. He did not need this business, but he went ahead with it because they asked him to.

The long and the short of it is that he provided the fish to this place in Japan—to the businessman whose bona fides Austrade had vouched for. After a while the fish were collected, but no payment was made. Later it was revealed that there was no such businessman. The person that Austrade had vouched for did not exist. Austrade had invited my constituent to get involved with a shonk. Why? In order to justify the Austrade office in Nagoya, they had to show that they were turning over a certain amount of business. So they set up this whole thing. The result of it is that my constituent went broke, and the department backed their two officers to the hilt.

There was no natural justice in this. As far as I know, those two officials remain employed in Austrade. I think it is totally wrong. I have pursued it every which way, seeking natural justice for this person. But the bigger question here is: how many other Austrade officials around the world are setting up similar kinds of scams and presenting figures to the federal government on the extent of the business that they are engaged in when, in fact, it has all been set up to secure their postings rather than the business that was supposedly there to be delivered?

I will give you another example from the Green Loans scheme in the last period of government. It was riddled with incidents of inappropriate behaviour from some public servants, who favoured particular suppliers. They split contracts so that they did not have to go to competitive tender. The audit reports into the scheme make for deeply troubling reading, with systematic breaches of procurement policies and basic financial management
regulations. The question is: was it just maladministration or sloppiness? Were they under pressure to get these Green Loans and audits out the door? Did they do this in order to facilitate a government policy, to get it out the door? Or were any kickbacks paid? What actually was done when the audit reports came in and showed there were serious questions to be answered?

The public does not know, and neither does this parliament. Those of us who have constituents who bring these things to us have no mechanism to have them investigated. And, if we cannot actually give enough evidence for a breach of a criminal kind, it goes nowhere. Well, I think that, if it is good enough for the states to recognise that there is a high risk of corruption and they want to actually try to eradicate corruption, at the very least the federal parliament should go there as well.

It also goes to our international standing. We are a signatory to two important anticorruption conventions: the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, which entered into force in December 2005, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Convention on Combating the Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions. This is another one where Transparency International has previously criticised Australian law for its low and ineffective penalties for corruption. It found, in its 2009 report, that Australia made little or no effort to enforce the OECD Convention on Combating the Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions.

I will give you another example: in Zambia, as I stand here, there is an Australian mining company trying to get a licence to put a mine in one of their biggest national parks. It was refused by the environment agency in Zambia, but then that was overturned by a minister in that country. International NGOs have alleged clearly that money changed hands. And yet you have an Australian state government backing this company to the hilt. What is the arrangement? Who is involved in this?

The United States is currently investigating BHP in China in relation to corruption. This was one of the things referred to the Australian Federal Police. It was not taken up by the Federal Police, but I raised it at the last estimates and they now have.

Equally, in Macau, the Chinese took action against a citizen for bribery in relation to casino developments—in particular, Crown casino developments. The Chinese citizen was jailed there for taking a bribe of $100 million to free up the land for the casinos and provide the licences. And yet, when that was referred to the Federal Police to look at from our end, what was done? Zilch, zero—nothing! Now, why? Why are we allowing this to happen? I would like to have a very considered explanation from my parliamentary colleagues in other political parties here as to what they could possibly have against setting up a national integrity commission—a commission against corruption.

The other thing we need to do is to reassure the public that the entitlements we get are appropriately accessed and spent. That is why, as part of this National Integrity Commission, the Greens are saying that we want a new Office of the Independent Parliamentary Adviser to advise MPs and ministers on entitlement claims and the ethical running of their offices that the public rightly expects. That adviser would be tasked with developing a legally binding code of conduct for MPs for the parliament to adopt.
Of course, this goes to the heart of the recent wedding scandal, where people had claimed expenses to go to various weddings, functions and so on, and the question was really: were those really for parliamentary business or were they using an entitlement just because they could get access to it? There was the famous case here, many years ago, of an MP who flew to Perth and back and who did not leave the airport lounge, simply to get the entitlement in relation to frequent flyer points. This was using a public, taxpayer funded fare to fly from the eastern states to Perth, sit in a lounge, have lunch and come back in order to get the frequent flyer points. This is why we have had the awful scandal in the last parliament with the former Speaker, Peter Slipper, and allegations made about him and his use of entitlements. But he is not the only one by any means. There have been a lot of allegations. That is why it is actually to the benefit of parliamentarians that we get this, because it enables people to go and ask the question, 'Is this an appropriate use of my entitlements or not?' and actually to have that sorted by someone who is overseeing it.

So I implore the parliament. Corruption is serious. It distorts our democracy and it hurts communities, communities who end up like those in the Bentley blockade, having to take action because governments have colluded with business against the community to get the outcomes that business wants. So, come on: let’s get a national ICAC for Australia and let’s do it in this parliament to restore and maintain our reputation and to help build trust in the parliament rather than the level of cynicism about the revolving door between big business and politics.

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (09:51): I rise this morning to also speak on the National Integrity Commission Bill 2013. I would hope that we would all take it as read that, as senators in this place, we believe we should take a zero-tolerance approach to the issue of corruption. Certainly those of us on this side of the chamber believe we should be doing everything in our power to stamp out corruption in all its forms, and we should use the most effective means available to us in order to do so.

The bill which Senator Milne has brought to the Senate calls for the establishment of a National Integrity Commission to investigate and prevent misconduct and corruption in all Commonwealth departments and agencies, as well as federal parliamentarians and their staff, and investigate and prevent corruption across law enforcement agencies. The bill also proposes establishing an independent parliamentary adviser as a component of the National Integrity Commission to provide advice to parliamentarians on ethics, conduct and issues of propriety, although it is not proposed that this adviser have any investigative powers.

My own starting point when I hear about any proposal to establish a new body like this is to ask why we need to do it. Is there clear public demand? Does the creation of the new body fulfil a function that is currently being overlooked? Will the creation of the new body lead to different and better outcomes? It seems to me that the bill is going about things in very much the wrong way. It is looking to establish a new body, the National Integrity Commission, without really being clear about what we hope to achieve by doing so, because it is not clear, based on the evidence that I have seen, that doing this will result in better outcomes—in this case, reduced instances of corruption.

In some important respects, this bill strikes me as being very reminiscent of the modus operandi applied by the former Labor government—that is, it is creating a new, government funded body without really thinking about whether we need it. If there were some compelling
evidence that our federal agencies were awash with corruption, then the case, of course, would be very, very different, but I do not think anyone is suggesting that. Accordingly, I do not think we need to be setting a precedent where we simply create a body for the sake of appearances and then only afterwards worry about whether there is any work for it to do.

As I said a moment ago, the federal government already has a very effective, well-established, multiagency approach to dealing with misconduct and corruption in Commonwealth agencies and departments. For instance, the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity is already responsible for detecting, preventing and investigating serious issues of corruption in federal law enforcement agencies. And of course we already have a parliamentary committee that is overseeing the work of that commission. Likewise, the Commonwealth Ombudsman performs an important function in investigating and auditing various agencies and functions, and the Australian Federal Police are playing their role in investigating and dealing with instances of corruption across Commonwealth agencies. Presumably the Greens, as the authors and sponsors of the bill, are not suggesting that these bodies are in any way deficient in fulfilling these functions.

Of course, I am not suggesting that the present arrangements have always been perfect. We can always do better in this area, and that is why the coalition government has taken a number of important decisions in this area since coming to office in September last year. That is why, in addition to the existing measure, the government has recently announced Task Force Pharos, which is designed to root out any corruption in the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. As we have seen in recent days, there is also the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption, which was announced by the Prime Minister in February and is now underway.

It is curious that the Greens have come into the Senate with this bill on repeated occasions over the years and spoken about their deep concern about corruption. Would they not be publicly supportive, therefore, of a royal commission designed to deal with corruption in trade unions? It makes sense. If you keep coming to this parliament talking about corruption, why wouldn't you also come to this parliament and talk about corruption in our trade union movement?

The Abbott government, consistent with the commitment we made to the Australian people, decide to hold a royal commission into union corruption to deal with the numerous instances and concrete examples we have of the money of union members being misused by those in positions of authority, and what do the Australian Greens do? What do the Australian Greens say? The response of Senator Milne, the Leader of the Australian Greens in the Senate, is that the royal commission is 'an ideological witch-hunt'. The evidence is there for the world to see of corruption in some pockets of the Australian trade union movement, but the Australian Greens call a royal commission that is set up to expose that corruption 'an ideological witch-hunt'.

There are no expressions of concern from Senator Milne and her colleagues about the fact that people like the former member for Dobell and others in the Health Services Union were spending the union dues paid by low-paid health workers to fund their own nocturnal entertainment activities. There have been reports of thuggish behaviour, of kickbacks, of bribes—of what we would normally call corruption. But, bizarrely, the Australian Greens do not want to highlight any of this type or style of corruption. They do not want to hold these
people to account. Investigating and exposing this sort of corruption is apparently 'a
distraction', as Senator Milne has already said of the royal commission. Yet now the Greens
come into this place, the Senate chamber, and try to pose as the heroes of an anticorruption
movement.

I have read Senator Milne's second reading speech on the bill, and I could not find any
clear evidence—allegations, of course, are not evidence—offered that our existing
mechanisms for investigating and dealing with corruption are in any way inadequate. Because
an inquiry does not get the response you wanted does not necessarily mean that the
mechanism has failed.

The crux of Senator Milne's case seems to be that most states have dedicated anticorruption
bodies; therefore, there should also be a federal one. Well, no. I think the bar needs to be set a
little higher than that, especially in an environment where the government is committed to
going to rid of duplication between the Commonwealth and the states. I know there is a long
history to this bill. It goes back a couple of parliaments, when it was first pursued by former
senator Bob Brown, the former Leader of the Australian Greens. But I do not think this is an
area where a one-size-fits-all approach is going to bring about better outcomes.

Yes, the states have now established various forms of anticorruption commissions. Those
states have made a decision, as individual jurisdictions, to deal with corruption as they see fit
and in a manner that works best for them. That is federalism working at its finest. But no
evidence has been offered by the proponents of this bill that changing our robust, multiagency
approach at the federal level is going to achieve a better result. It is not enough to merely
assert it; you actually need to provide the evidence. Being shocked about hearings at the New
South Wales ICAC is not the same as having evidence about corruption across the
Commonwealth.

As I have said, Australia should be proud of its record in dealing with corruption at a
national level. We should also be proud of Australia's position and reputation. We are
consistently ranked by Transparency International as one of the least corrupt countries in the
world. It is interesting to note that many countries identified as some of the least corrupt in the
world do not have national anticorruption commissions—including Canada and the United
States. While it is true that, internationally, some countries have established national
anticorruption commissions, many of those countries are developing or emerging economies
fighting against endemic corruption. Established liberal democracies like Australia, Canada
and the United States typically adopt a multiagency approach to the issue of erasing
corruption.

We on the government side are committed to taking a zero-tolerance approach to
corruption and will continue to consider options for strengthening our nation's anticorruption
framework, where it can be demonstrated that additional measures will lead to improved
outcomes. However, just assuming that merely establishing a new national body is the best
way to proceed, absent any real evidence of that, is an unwise basis on which to formulate
public policy in this critical area.

It goes without saying that establishing a new body like this would also be a very
expensive exercise. During the 2012-13 financial year, the cost of running Queensland's
anticorruption body reached the $50 million mark. We on this side of the chamber accept that
Australia is in a very difficult financial situation. It does not mean that we compromise issues
of good governance, but it does mean we have to take a careful approach to building new agencies when there is no demonstrated evidence of a need. Senators from other parties are apparently unwilling to accept this important reality, but that is the fact of the matter at this point in time.

Given that, I am not sure taxpayers would thank us if we rushed to set up a new national anticorruption body, given that those who are seeking to do it have continued to fail, over many occasions now, to demonstrate that corruption is rife across our federal agencies. Nor have they explained how it is that a new anticorruption body will reduce corruption beyond what is already being achieved in the existing framework. This is a time for careful, prudent, evidence based decision making. It is not clear to me and it will not be clear to others what it is in this proposed legislation that will deliver a better outcome for our nation when it comes to erasing corruption.

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (10:03): We have seen over the last few years that the performance of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales has had many beneficial outcomes for the good governance of New South Wales. More recently, however, we have seen that the ICAC has touched on federal political figures, and yet there is no federal body to which the wrongdoing can be put to be further investigated. That is really what lies at the heart of what is before us here today, the National Integrity Commission Bill 2013.

Labor has always had the view that we would support a broad approach to anticorruption consistent with our longstanding Labor policy. I agree with Senator Milne that corruption does hurt communities and that we do need to build trust in our communities. An independent anticorruption body can provide a mechanism to ensure that we have the best governance processes and that people are acting at all times in line with the trust that they have been endowed with in their positions. Senator Smith talked of royal commissions as being the best way forward to look at some of the issues to do with governance and trust. But an independent anticorruption body could be a much more effective body to deal with such issues facing society than the ad hoc and very costly approach of royal commissions, which the current government seems to have a fetish for.

Given the present scandal infecting the federal branch of the Liberal Party, I think there is a clear need for a focus on campaign finance. If we are looking at an anticorruption body, I think that we should have a broader debate about our donation laws, their enforcement and their oversight. This is where such a body could play an effective role. Such a body could even look at the administering of our electoral-funding system. This should be given serious consideration.

We must review the operation of the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption and consider whether there are ways in which it could be improved upon. We must review its procedures. We should make sure that any federal anticorruption body is capable of protecting the innocent and securing not just embarrassment but convictions for the guilty.

Labor has never objected to a federal independent anticorruption body in principle. We have had concern that there was in the past perhaps no clear case for the necessity of such a body. In the last Labor government we were very serious about tackling corruption at the federal level. There was not during our time in government any clear evidence of the nature,
extent and sources of corruption at a Commonwealth level. We supported improving Commonwealth anticorruption efforts which would make it easier to prevent, detect and respond to corruption. We strongly supported existing anticorruption agencies, the Australian Crime Commission being one of those along with the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity. We took a national anticorruption plan to the last election—a plan on which the Abbott government has taken absolutely no action. But, in the light of the recent revelations, Labor is open to considering a federal anticorruption body. If there is any serious question of significant corruption in the federal sphere, we are of course open to the full suite of measures which might be necessary to restore public trust.

Indeed, a standing federal anticorruption body deserves consideration as one such measure. But, in looking at the Greens’ National Integrity Commission Bill 2013, a private senator’s bill, before us, we see that it is similar to others that the Greens have introduced. I think the National Integrity Commissioner Bill was introduced by Senator Bob Brown in June 2010 and reintroduced when parliament reconvened after the August 2010 election. Then I think there was the National Integrity Commissioner Bill 2012, introduced by Adam Bandt MP. So those bills lapsed without having been debated when the 43rd Parliament was prorogued. But I understand none of the bills have been considered in substance by a committee. The House of Representatives Selection Committee concluded that the 2012 bill was an appropriation bill and could not proceed in its current form. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs recommended that the 2012 bill not proceed prior to the establishment of a joint select committee to investigate the feasibility and the cost of a national integrity commission, considering amongst other things the threshold issue of whether such a body was needed.

I think that particular House committee's recommendation was a very good point to refer back to. That is where the establishment of a joint select committee could be one of the ways forward to actually consider further the need for and structure and idea of a federal independent anticorruption body. I actually think there is quite a lot of merit in that way to proceed.

But we know that, for the first time, this current National Integrity Commission Bill has now come on for debate. It has not gone to any committee. There has been no serious consultation out in the community about this bill and its substance or even any kind of discussion. So, though Labor is very much open to the principle of looking at a federal independent commission against corruption body, this particular bill, I believe, is slightly premature in that sense.

But I do want to make it very clear that, in the light of these recent revelations that we have been made aware of in the federal Liberal Party, there certainly is a need to have that debate and discussion. And why is that? Because there is new cause for concern about corruption in Australian politics. I think there is something very sick and rotten going on in the New South Wales branch of the Liberal Party, the home branch of both the Prime Minister and the Treasurer. The New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption has heard allegations that illegal political donations have been made to the New South Wales Liberal Party via various slush funds. A longstanding Liberal staffer has confessed to ICAC that enormous sums of money, including from property developers banned from making political donations under New South Wales law, were laundered through sham organisations Eight by
Five and the Free Enterprise Foundation before being passed on to the New South Wales Liberal Party. ICAC in just a few months forced the resignations of former New South Wales Liberal Premier Barry O'Farrell and two New South Wales Liberal cabinet ministers. New South Wales Liberal police minister Mike Gallacher, the senior law minister in the government of Australia's biggest state—New South Wales—and the man tasked with fighting corruption and crime, was forced to resign due to revelations made through the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Most damningly, it has caused federal Liberal senator and former Assistant Treasurer Arthur Sinodinos to be stood aside by the Prime Minister. Evidence given in ICAC has now indicated Australian Water Holdings made donations to Eight by Five while Senator Sinodinos served as the company's chairman or deputy chairman. As Neil Chenoweth wrote in the Financial Review on 7 May:

Any investigation of NSW state finances inevitably involves some scrutiny of federal fund-raising. It's done by the same people, the same structures, there are constant crossovers. That in itself reveals that this has now become a federal issue, and that is why we do need to have a broader debate and discussion to consider whether we need a federal independent anticorruption body in this country.

These current scandals necessarily call into question the integrity of federal Liberal politicians in this country. They call into question the integrity of our political finance laws. As I said at the outset, that is where I believe that any consideration regarding a federal independent anticorruption body needs to include the idea of looking at our federal electoral-funding system. At the moment, we know that the Australian Electoral Commission certainly does not have those investigative powers, but it is something that a national independent anticorruption body could have. It is something that could be investigated, and it is something that I believe should be considered if we are going to talk about a national integrity commission.

This bill, however, does have three components that need to be addressed: a federal body based on the New South Wales ICAC model; the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity, in its present form, which, I might say, works very effectively; and an independent parliamentary adviser to advise MPs on ethics and entitlements and develop a parliamentary code of conduct. I think the creation of an independent parliamentary adviser is not necessarily good policy in general. In any case, whether such an office should be housed within a watchdog body is open to question. That is something that I think needs broader discussion and consideration. I am not sure if Senator Milne and the Greens party have considered that. There are also open questions about how a number of federal integrity bodies, including ACLEI, ought to be integrated with this particular body in this bill or situated alongside any kind of federal ICAC body.

These are some of the issues that I think need to be considered when we look at the bill before us. As I said at the outset, Labor is very much in support of a broad approach to anticorruption. That has been a longstanding Labor policy position. Given the recent scandals in the New South Wales Liberal Party that have now affected some federal Liberal parliamentarians, we need to consider how we move forward and ensure that we do have the best independent bodies available to us, be it at the state level or the federal level, that can deal with this sort of thing. We want to hold our heads up high as a nation, knowing that we
have some of the best laws in place to ensure good governance, good ethics and integrity. That is something I am sure we can all agree on in this place.

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (10:18): I rise to support the National Integrity Commission Bill 2013 and congratulate the Leader of the Australian Greens, Christine Milne, on her comprehensive speech, in which she detailed not just what this bill will do but why it is needed. There are so many examples that reinforce every day why a national corruption watchdog is so urgently needed. I believe that every politician in this parliament would know that there is deep cynicism among the public about the state of politics, about how politics work, about how decisions are made. Setting up a national ICAC would be a step towards restoring confidence in how politics works in this country and the standing of our democratic institutions.

Often in this debate the example is given of the New South Wales ICAC, a body that has certainly earned its stripes. Time and time again the New South Wales ICAC has shone a light on the relationships between politicians, lobbyists and corporate backers—how that whole network of making decisions actually plays out. When you are on our side of politics it is something you do not often see, and certainly the public rarely see it. Because of the revolving door—somebody is a politician, or has been an adviser, or may be sitting on a board or even be a CEO—they are moving from one position to another, and that can often mean that there is a financial benefit.

We are seeing a response from politicians that something needs to be done about this, but my concern remains that a lot of that is just words to try and deflect the growing public concern. We have recently heard the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, promise that he will fight influence peddling and that he is going to crack down on lobbyists. But what does that really mean? We are yet to see the detail. But clearly so many measures need to be brought in, and it needs to sit under a national ICAC.

The Greens proposals call for three new integrity officers—a National Integrity Commissioner, a Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner and an Independent Parliamentary Adviser. The process that we need to develop does need to be very broad. Any commission will need to be empowered to investigate and expose allegations of corruption in the public sector. I emphasise that that should not just be among members of parliament; we need to include public agencies and departments, courts, public officials and all MPs. I note the speech that we have just heard from Senator Singh. I also note that the union leader Tony Sheldon recently called for a national ICAC and gave great emphasis to the need for there to be greater transparency, particularly with regard to financial donations. It is good news to see that there is a shift going on here because having a national ICAC is certainly overdue.

I have listened to the debate, and it is an area I have followed for a long time. In recent times I cannot help thinking whether, if there were a national ICAC, Senator Arthur Sinodinos would have the problems that he presently has. If this body were in place, as set out in the bill before us, the senator could have gained some advice and maybe he would not have made the mistake that came out on 23 February—he called it an innocent oversight that he failed to declare his directorship of various companies. But, when you look at how issues are playing out in New South Wales with the evidence coming up before that state's ICAC with regard to other issues to do with Senator Sinodinos's work, again there is a national flavour here. It certainly reminds us why we need to have a body to be able to look into how decisions are
made, where the influence is coming from, whether money has exchanged hands, and whether it has been done in a proper way.

One of the decisions I have been asked about and which has been written about is the decision of the former Assistant Treasurer, Senator Sinodinos, with regard to the Future of Financial Advice. This was a set of reforms that Labor put in. It was limited, but it was an important set of reforms essentially designed to prevent financial planners from hitting clients with commissions that the planners did not deserve. This Future of Financial Advice was also designed to reduce the risk of disasters like the one we saw with Storm Financial. When Senator Sinodinos held that position of the Assistant Treasurer, he effectively got rid of and moved to wind back the Future of Financial Advice. This is something that now warrants being very closely looked at because in the context of the current inquiry it starts to look like a pattern of rewarding those who would benefit at the expense of the public, the taxpayers and the consumers. This is a pattern we saw in New South Wales when the Greens were doing a lot of work exposing developer donations that were coming in in millions of dollars over the years to the Labor Party. People would often say to us, 'Give us an example of where that actually influenced some project being granted.' There were a couple of them, but I acknowledge there was not a huge number. But what we did see was a change in legislation, in this case the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, a fine piece of legislation once upon a time. Through the 2000s it was gradually weakened by the Labor government and then the coalition government in New South Wales to the great benefit of the coalition. This is the sort of thing that is so hard for the public, even investigative journalists, to be able to penetrate because of the limited reporting requirements currently. But we do not want it to happen; we want to change the culture, and having a national ICAC is an important step towards achieving that.

Another issue that is relevant to this is with regard to the Prime Minister himself. We are seeing that more questions are emerging about Mr Abbott's role in selecting Karen McNamara. She was the Liberal candidate and is now the Liberal MP for the seat of Dobell. It was reported that Mr Abbott was quite angry after the 2010 election because of the failure of the New South Wales Liberals to win a number of seats on the Central Coast, where there are marginal seats, and it was identified that that was one aspect of the coalition losing the 2010 election. So coming up to the 2013 election the pressure was on to find candidates, and Mr Abbott favoured Ms McNamara. What is interesting here is that it is reported that the Prime Minister was behind the decision of the New South Wales state executive on 20 April 2012 to appoint Ms McNamara. However, three months before that, senior Liberals had received complaints of an unreported donation on the Central Coast that is implicated with Ms McNamara. Many of you would have heard all the details of this at ICAC. Here we have again national issues involving national political parties, possibly reaching to the higher levels of one of our major parties. Again it underlines why a national ICAC is needed.

What we are seeing here is a very murky way that money moves around Labor and the coalition. Much of the evidence that is coming before the state ICAC involves these associated entities, bodies associated with political parties, and so often the money is not properly reported. It is a reminder not only with regard to the issue we are immediately dealing with here about consistency of corruption watchdogs between the state and federal level but also that we need consistency in the laws governing political donations, because
these two issues are very much coming together at the state ICAC. So much of the evidence is now on the aspect where we have laws in New South Wales that limit the donations that can be given by corporations, and we know that federally we do not have those laws in place. It looks like so much of how the donations coming to the Liberal Party were working is that they would be ostensibly coming to the federal body, which is legal, but then being funnelled to the state Liberal body because that was the way they could get money in there. It is illegal for a New South Wales political party to take money from developers and various other corporations and there are certainly limits in place. So we are getting into a very murky world there.

To give you some examples of that, property developers like Harry Triguboff and Westfield donated to the Free Enterprise Foundation, and they said the funds were for the federal Liberal Party. But counsel assisting ICAC, Geoffrey Watson, has said that the Millennium Forum executive director, Paul Nicolaou, told the Free Enterprise Foundation that many of these donors wished their funds to go to the state party. Again it is a reminder of why we need consistent laws with regard to political donations. We need the bans and the caps in place on election expenditure, we need much greater transparency in disclosure of those political donations and we need the national ICAC. Bringing those reforms in would be an important step to bringing greater confidence back to our democratic process.

Clearly corruption is not isolated to New South Wales. I can understand why people laugh about the situation going on with some of the extraordinary evidence, but we are hearing that because we have a corruption watchdog that is able to undertake investigations and is able to expose these crimes. Obviously that is the first stage in restoring confidence in the democratic process. The public interest is best served by the clear separation between politics and business—and, to achieve that, we need a national ICAC. I certainly commend this piece of legislation. It is long overdue.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (10:30): My apologies to the Senate and to you, Mr Acting Deputy President. I was talking on the phone to the most important people—and, of course, that is the media—about some good things coming out of the budget. I am very pleased to enter into this debate on the National Integrity Commission Bill 2013. It is a debate on a motion moved by the Greens political party. Before I get into the matters that I want to address, I will just address some of the issues that have been raised by other speakers.

I heard Senator Singh listing some activities happening before ICAC. They are serious matters. They relate to donations to political parties. But what about when these 'donations' go not to political parties but to politicians themselves? If Senator Singh wants to come in here and start sling mud, perhaps we should ask her about Labor minister Gordon Nuttall from Queensland, who was not taking money for the Labor Party for elections; he was putting it in his pocket. Similarly, although there have been no convictions yet, my namesake in New South Wales, New South Wales Labor member Ian Macdonald, is accused of taking money himself and giving money to his friends in the union movement—not for the benefit of the Labor Party but as personal payments to them.

If you need an integrity commission to stop federal parliamentarians doing that, then I rue the day that I ever came to this chamber. I would have hoped that people who sit in this parliament have a greater sense of propriety and credibility than the likes of Gordon Nuttall,
Keith Wright, Brian Burke, Milton Orkopoulos and Mr Eddie Obeid—a former Labor minister.

Senator Brandis: Rex Jackson.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Yes, Rex Jackson—and the list goes on and on and on. I would just say to Senator Singh that, if she wants to make accusations about suggestions of money going for political campaigning to political parties, she should have a look at her own party and see some of the absolute crooks and shonks that have been elected by the union movement to the Labor Party and, from the Labor Party, to various parliaments around the country.

We are talking about a possibility of a similar activity in this parliament. I wonder if such an organisation would have a look at the current Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. I suspect Senator Conroy did nothing wrong, but there were some suggestions that he had received a benefit from Mr Eddie Obeid.

Senator Cameron: Mr Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. Senator Macdonald has been in the Senate long enough to know that it is improper to make accusations against a senator and he should withdraw that.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I am happy to withdraw, if I made any accusations. I think if you have a look at the record of Hansard you will see that I said that I do not think Senator Conroy did anything wrong. I think you will find that I said that. I said that some would say that his acceptance of a chalet up in the Snowy Mountains from Mr Eddie Obeid would need to be investigated. I heard Senator Milne listing examples from one side of the political spectrum, but I did not hear her mention that and I did not hear her talk about whether Mr Brian Burke's acceptance of accommodation from Mr Obeid needed investigation. Again, I am not suggesting there was anything wrong, but I do get a bit tired in this chamber when the Greens and the Labor Party, in particular, rise to their feet and make these accusations—never about themselves; always about the Liberal and National parties.

I repeat again: have we heard a squeak from the Greens about Bob Brown's ship dumping oil into the Barrier Reef? Have we heard a thing about that from the Greens? No. But they talk about a project that will create thousands of jobs for workers in Australia, that will create wealth for Australia, that will improve our standard of living because of that wealth and that will enable Australia to be a country that can be very generous to those less fortunate in our society—and the Greens are opposed to that. And haven't we heard them go on and on to try to shut down the coalmining industry that supports so many of the people who allegedly support the Labor Party—the unionists the CFMEU are supposed to be looking after? Where were the CFMEU when we needed them to stand up for the workers in the coalmining industry? But, no, the Labor Party have this cosy deal with the Greens and, if the Greens say it, they just roll over.

I do want to speak on the bill before the chamber, and it is actually a very interesting comment. If an establishment like this were set up, I wonder if perhaps the first thing the federal ICAC, if I could call it that, would investigate would be the actions of the Greens political party when it received Australia's biggest ever single donation from an individual. Senators will recall that, a couple of years ago, a Mr Graeme Wood, who was the Wotif man I think, made a donation of $1.7 million to the Greens political party.
We hear the Greens screaming about corporate donations to the Liberal Party; we never hear them talking about union donations to the Labor Party, but that is an aside. We hear the Greens carrying on and on about corporate donations to the Liberal Party. What about biggest ever political donation in Australia's history of $1.7 million to the Greens political party? Well, that is okay; I guess people choose to support various political parties with donations. But you would have to look at that particular one, because I was in the Senate at the time and I remember how the then leader of the Greens in the Senate, Dr Bob Brown, asked a series of questions, in this chamber and publicly, about a number of issues. Then Senator Bob Brown said, after Mr Wood's donation to the Greens political party, that he would be 'forever grateful' to Mr Wood. And Mr Wood said he was helping the Greens with the balance of power in the Senate, and he said it was 'probably a good return on investment'.

I want you to think about those words from Mr Wood, and I will repeat them. He said, when he gave $1.7 million to the Greens, that it was 'probably a good return on investment'. That might lead you to then look to see if Mr Wood did get a return on his investment. Those of us who were in the Senate at the time would remember that Senator Milne and then Senator Bob Brown asked a series of questions—somewhat contradictorily, I might say, depending on where Mr Wood's investment and interest in the Triabunna mill site of Gunns was at that particular time. You might recall that Senator Brown and the Greens went to extraordinary lengths to sabotage Gunns' sale of its Triabunna woodchip mill to the Aprin consortium, which wanted to continue milling there, and the Greens were trying to force the then Labor government into not supporting Gunns so that Gunns would have to sell the Triabunna site to the other bidder in the market, who just happened to be Triabunna Investments—run by who? Mr Graeme Wood, the donor of the $1.7 million to the Greens.

You might recall, Mr Acting Deputy President Sterle, as I do, because I sat through it all, that they were asking questions in the Senate, taking points of order, making numerous statements to the media and personally lobbying the then government over these issues. Their votes on notices of motion in the Senate were also exercised in Mr Wood's interests. And the seriousness of the matter is evidenced by the fact that the actions of the then Greens deputy leader, Senator Milne, and other Greens senators, were caught up in the sleaze, particularly in the Senate, where, over a period of weeks, questions were asked, points of order were taken, and votes were cast—all favouring Mr Wood's interests. I could go through, chapter and verse, that sorry, sad tale—that almost sleazy, I would say, tale—of the 'investment' and the 'return' on the investment that Mr Wood might have received. That is the sort of thing that, if this bill were successful, perhaps this organisation could have a look at.

It was quite remarkable because, in the early stage, the Greens were trying to oppose the sale by Gunns to another timber industry so that Mr Wood's alternative bid could get the property at much less than its real value. Then, when the then Labor government in Tasmania did a deal with Gunns which reversed the situation, but Gunns had to keep the mill, the Greens started changing their position entirely. So that led many of us to believe that Mr Wood was certainly getting a 'return' on his 'investment'.

You only have to remember, as I do, the debates on tax deductibility for citizens' journalistic enterprises. That came around as one of the Labor government's early silly ideas. It, fortunately, disappeared without trace once Labor senators and members realised just how stupid the idea was. But those of us in this chamber remember that there was this push by the
Greens to get tax deductibility for any person who might be investing in community journalism. Curiously, at the same time, this same Mr Wood, as I recall, was sponsoring an organisation called the Global Mail, which was to be a citizens' journalistic enterprise—non-profit, supposedly. Well, there must have been some profit in it because the Greens were quite insistent at the time that there should be tax deductibility for any investment in those sorts of things. Again, I am not saying that there is anything wrong with that, but those are the sorts of things that perhaps should have had greater investigation.

The other issue I talked about did go before the Privileges Committee, and the Privileges Committee, in its inimitable way, found that, on the direct questions asked of it, no breach of privilege was determined. But this whole episode involving Australia's largest ever donation to any political party still has a lingering smell about it. If this bill did get up, then that matter would certainly need to be addressed.

I turn, again, to the bill, which proposes establishing a National Integrity Commission, comprising three officers with oversight functions: a National Integrity Commissioner, a Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner and an Independent Parliamentary Adviser. Insofar as individual members of parliament are concerned, there are certainly procedures in place, the disclosure of interests et cetera. I would hope that federal parliamentarians have the ability and the integrity to do the right thing. But if you are talking about this group looking at agencies of the Commonwealth government then I wonder whether this measure is necessary, because there are already a number of bodies in place to prevent corruption.

Just very recently there was, clearly, corruption involving some Customs officers. It was the subject of some lengthy questioning at the last estimates hearings. Perhaps it was not so much questioning but more listening to the head of Customs telling us right at the beginning of estimates about these inquiries that had been conducted by the Federal Police and by Customs itself which resulted in legal prosecutions, dismissals and a new process put in place to prevent that sort of corruption in the future. So, in that instance, I was very proud of and impressed by the way Customs had addressed that issue with the Australian Federal Police themselves. I am not sure that any new body proposed by the Greens would have got a better result.

It is very clear that this government—and I think the previous government as well—has a zero-tolerance approach to corruption. I would think any government would be committed to stamping out corruption in all of its forms. This government's approach to combating corruption is based on a multiagency model which vests specialised functions and responsibilities in a number of agencies.

I listened to Senator Milne running off a list of complaints she has had and different incidents which, I guess, she thought might get a headline in some paper somewhere. But can I say to Senator Milne and any other senator—not that they need my advice on this—that if you or your constituents have evidence of illegal activity then it should be immediately reported to the Federal Police, the state police, the Commonwealth Ombudsman or the Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity. These bodies are already in operation.

The Greens are, unashamedly, a genuine socialist party, unlike the Labor Party these days, which cannot work out whether or not they are a socialist party. I note the recent debate about removing the socialist objectives from the constitution of the Labor Party; however, I think the Greens, at least in that area, are absolutely frank. They are of that socialist party intent,
but, again, that worries me with this proposal. It would mean, as with most good socialist ideas, huge bureaucracies, more red tape and more regulation, and perhaps that is part of the Greens' overall proposal or aim, as I see it, to try to shut down Australia at some time in the future.

Certain processes are underway. As senators in this chamber well know, there is currently a Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption, which is dealing with allegations of impropriety in the trade union movement. So there are bodies around. In fact, I am very proud of Australia's position and reputation. We are consistently ranked by Transparency International as one of the least corrupt countries in the world. As I say, we have a multiagency approach to combating corruption. We are always looking at ways of strengthening these current arrangements rather than throwing out the whole system, based on a presumption that a National Integrity Commission would be more effective. I must say that I am not convinced of that. (Time expired)

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales) (10:51): No-one ever argues that governments should have less integrity, that elected officials should not be accountable or that public servants should behave unethically. Broad statements of the value of integrity, transparency, accountability and ethics gain general agreement from all sides of politics and from all participants in public debate. Integrity and trust are critical not only to good government; they are critical to the public's faith in government.

However, it is now obvious that words and good intentions are not enough. Evidence to the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption has been devastating for public confidence and trust in government, whether Labor or Liberal, and it has been devastating in terms of that confidence in the political process more generally.

I have said before and I will say it again: I was utterly disgusted by the behaviour of some former New South Wales Labor ministers. I have never minced my words about the actions of Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald. I said in a speech about political integrity at the University of Melbourne law school in December 2012 that it was time then for the Labor Party to publicly acknowledge that there were some within its ranks who had neither political principles to defend or moral convictions to uphold. Of course I was referring to Obeid and Macdonald, whose behaviour has been exposed at the New South Wales ICAC as obscenely corrupt. They disgraced themselves, but, so much worse, they disgraced the Australian Labor Party.

For the record, I also acknowledge the corruption and misdeeds of Mr Michael Williamson, a former long-serving vice president of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party and, shamefully, former National President of the Labor Party, and Mr Craig Thomson, a former Labor member of the House of Representatives. But I am equally disgusted by the recent evidence at ICAC of systematic corruption within the New South Wales division of the Liberal Party. Two New South Wales ICAC inquiries, Operation Credo and Operation Spicer, have already had extraordinary repercussions.

The New South Wales Premier, Mr Barry O'Farrell, has resigned. Mr Michael Gallacher, the New South Wales police minister, has resigned. Mr Chris Hartcher resigned as Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State and Minister for the Central Coast and was suspended from the Liberal Party. Liberal MLC Marie Ficarra lost her position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and withdrew from the Liberal Party. Mr Chris
Spence—the member for the Entrance—has been stood down from the Liberal Party. The same is true of Mr Darren Webber MP, the member for Wyong; and Mr Tim Owen MP, the member for Newcastle, has announced he will not contest the next state election as he has indicated it is likely he received prohibited donations in the last election.

In this chamber, the Assistant Treasurer, Senator Sinodinos, announced in March that he would stand aside from his ministerial responsibilities while ICAC investigates the dealings of a company he was involved with before entering parliament.

We have also seen numerous ministerial staffers and Liberal Party officials, including very senior Liberal Party officials, either resign their positions or stand aside, pending the outcome of the ICAC inquiries. These revelations have raised serious concerns about corruption on both sides of Australian politics, and they raise the question of how effectively we deal with those allegations.

There remain many questions to be answered, some of which I suspect are beyond the jurisdiction of the New South Wales ICAC, about how laws in relation to political donations may have been circumvented; how illegal donations have been hidden from New South Wales authorities; and how slush funds or sham organisations may have been used at the federal level for the laundering of donations, some of which may have been returned to New South Wales.

I also remain perplexed and intrigued, as I have been for many years, about the role of the Free Enterprise Foundation, so I intend to ask at Senate estimates in a fortnight's time what role, if any, the Australian Electoral Commission has had in investigating these and related matters at the federal level. I would be very concerned—and I hope this is a concern that would be shared around the chamber—if there is a legislative or communications fault line between state and federal electoral authorities, and if such a disconnect has resulted in any unethical or illegal behaviour perhaps going unchecked.

I have, as I think you would know, Mr Acting Deputy President Sterle, argued long and hard about the need for reform of our electoral funding laws at the federal level. Unfortunately, I was not persuasive enough, particularly when I was the Special Minister of State, to convince this Senate in 2008 and 2009 that reform was desperately needed. My attempts to make our system more transparent and freer from corruption and improper influence failed. They were blocked by the then coalition in opposition with the assistance of then Senator Fielding.

The reforms I proposed as the Special Minister of State included significant measures to reduce the donations disclosure threshold to $1,000 and remove indexation, and that level is currently $12,400; prohibit foreign and anonymous donations; limit the potential for 'donation splitting' across branches, divisions or different units of parties; require faster and more regular disclosure of donations; and introduce new offences and significantly increase penalties for offences for the breach of electoral law.

These reforms would have enhanced the transparency and accountability of political donations, and I would like to think they would have had at least some dampening effect on the behaviour that is being exposed at the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption. It is quite clear that much more needs to be done in this area. I really do hope that the recent events in New South Wales will motivate all Australian political parties
to work together for far-reaching and long-overdue reform of our electoral donations, funding and expenditure laws. This will be a real challenge for our current political leaders.

I commend the New South Wales ICAC. I think its work is critically important. I for one do look forward to its findings and recommendations in relation to its current inquiries. But, with the almost daily revelations of political corruption coming from the New South Wales ICAC, and with the suggestion of federal links, it is timely that the Commonwealth parliament considers this National Integrity Commission Bill 2013 that we have before us today. The parliament needs to ensure the events in New South Wales cannot be repeated in Canberra or anywhere else in Australia. In my view, the sorts of issues being raised at the New South Wales ICAC do not miraculously stop at state or territory borders, and it is reasonable that this parliament consider how we can strengthen the Commonwealth government's integrity and its resistance to corruption.

In my view, this bill that we are debating today has merit. I am supportive of its intent. I acknowledge, of course, that at this stage this bill has not been considered by the federal parliamentary Labor Party, so there is no Labor caucus decision about whether it will be supported, amended or opposed. I also acknowledge that perhaps some of the sentiments that I have expressed in this contribution might not be shared by all my colleagues, but my personal view is that this bill is heading in the right direction.

I also believe, and I do know this perspective is shared by shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus, that it would be appropriate for a substantive parliamentary committee examination to be undertaken of the provisions of this bill, including, of course, the proposal for a federal independent commission against corruption based on the New South Wales model and the proposal to establish an Independent Parliamentary Adviser, something of which I have spoken about in this chamber for the best part of two decades. Any such committee consideration, though—and I want to be clear about this—must ensure that a new federal anticorruption commission must fully respect the rights of citizens. In particular, we must ensure that those who appear before such a commission only as witnesses do not have their reputations damaged or sullied because of such an appearance.

I am pleased that we are now debating the issue of integrity in our political system. I have said before that human nature is variable and fallible—that individuals do from time to time succumb to temptation or fall into error. We are not miraculously immune from wrongdoing, malfeasance and corruption just because we serve in Australia's federal parliament and not at the state or territory level. There is no doubt in my mind that we must do all we can as federal parliamentarians to ensure the integrity of the political process, the parliament, the government and all our institutions at the federal level.

No-one is ever opposed to integrity. No-one ever argues that our political system needs less integrity. But support for integrity in the abstract all too often fractures in the face of specific measures. We need strong, substantive measures to enhance the integrity of our political system in Australia. I conclude my speech by reminding the Senate, as I have previously, of the words of Alan K Simpson, Republican Senator for Wyoming, who said in a slightly different context:

If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters.

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (11:06): I move:
That the question be now put.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the question be put.

The Senate divided. [11:11]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ................. 9
Noes .................. 43
Majority .............. 34

AYES

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

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

NOES

Back, CJ
Bilyk, CL
Boyce, SK
Cameron, DN
Collins, JMA
Edwards, S
Faulkner, J
Fifield, MP
Gallacher, AM
Lines, S
Lundy, KA
Marshall, GM
McKenzie, B
Moore, CM
Parry, S
Peris, N
Pratt, LC
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Williams, JR

Bernardi, C
Bushby, DC
Colbeck, R
Dustyari, S
Farrell, D
Fawcett, DJ
Furner, ML
Hogg, JJ
Ludwig, JW
Macdonald, ID
McEwen, A
McLucas, J
O’Sullivan, B
Payne, MA
Polley, H
Ruston, A
Singh, LM
Stephens, U
Thorpe, LE
Urquhart, AE (teller)

Question negatived.

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (11:15): I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate—a debate that I think is really important. When you are talking about establishing a federal corruption commission, you have to take this debate extremely seriously.

I think there are only two senators in this chamber who have experience at ICAC. I am one of them; Senator Sinodinos is the other. My personal experience as a witness was in the investigation into the conduct of Ian Macdonald, John Maitland and others by ICAC. These are two people whom I have known for between 25 and 30 years. I was advised by the
commission that I was not under any investigation and that I was not a person of interest. The commission simply wanted my assistance to establish factual issues, and I provided a statement to the commission and I was examined on that statement in both public and private hearings. As a politician, providing evidence to ICAC in public hearings presents significant personal and political challenges—let me tell you that.

My involvement with ICAC was simply to assist the corruption inquiry. Despite this, I was faced with significant attempts by the media to portray me as being involved in some unacceptable behaviour. On the day of my appearance before ICAC, I was confronted with News Ltd posters from Penrith to the CBD of Sydney linking me to Ian Macdonald, who was under serious investigation by ICAC. I was confronted by the media when I left the inquiry and was prominently featured in the Murdoch press on both the Saturday and Sunday following my appearance, in an attempt to find me guilty by association. This was not a pleasant experience. Nevertheless, like the late, great Neville Wran, who said, 'Balmain boys don't cry,' Bellshill boys don't cry either. I copped it. I copped all of the media attention. I didn't whinge about it; I didn't cry about it; I got on with my life in the full understanding that I had done nothing wrong and that I was simply being asked to assist the commission. What did gall me was the involvement of my family by the media. But that is what happens in political life; it is a tough gig sometimes. You have got to take the ups with the downs; you can't whinge about it; you've got to get on with it. But I was a bit peeved, let me tell you—to use the best word I can think to use in here; there would probably be a stronger word—when Senator Sinodinos became the focus of the ICAC inquiry when he was the shadow Assistant Treasurer and he stood up and said, without any need to do this, that if he needed any advice on appearing before ICAC then he would ask Senator Cameron. Again this was simply to try to smear me in a hearing that I think has exposed significant corruption, subject to those matters being dealt with by the appropriate courts.

What I said to Senator Sinodinos the first chance I got, and what I said to the press, was that Senator Sinodinos had not asked me for my advice, even though he said he would ask me if he needed any help. I am not sure that that is quite the case, after watching his appearance. But what I did say to him was: 'You do two things at ICAC. You tell the truth and you don't take a section 38.' I was one of the only witnesses in the inquiry I was in who did not take a section 38. Section 38 provides you with immunity from prosecution against the evidence you give in ICAC. I had nothing to fear. I had no problem, so I went in, and when I was asked whether I wanted immunity for my evidence to ICAC I said no—unlike every other witness who appeared. I said no because I had nothing to worry about. I had nothing to hide, and if my evidence meant that I had to appear again in another court I was very comfortable with that. So I did not take a section 38, and I told Senator Sinodinos to tell the truth and not to take a section 38. I can only comment on one part of that: he did take a section 38, and it is entirely his right to do that. But, contrary to the impression that the media were trying to create, Commissioner Ipp, the Commissioner of ICAC, described me in the final ICAC report on that issue as 'an impressive and honest witness'. Let me tell you, any politician who appears before ICAC is doing okay, I think, if they can get that kind of character reference from ICAC—'impressive and honest'. That is why, when I get media copies waved at me from across the chamber from the other side about my appearance at ICAC, I have nothing to fear; I have nothing to worry about. I was honest. I assisted the commission and I will continue to assist the commission if they need any further
assistance. I will assist the courts if they need any assistance with prosecutions arising from ICAC. These are serious issues for politicians. Given my experience, I can understand how Senator Sinodinos feels and I can understand how his family feel because I was not engaged in any problems and it was a really tough time for me and my family with the Murdoch press trying to square up with me. When you say things about the Murdoch press, it is very tough. But you have to be big enough and your shoulders have to be broad enough to take that.

Given my experience, you might believe that my default position on this would be to oppose the bill. On the contrary, I believe that corruption in all spheres of public life must be exposed and, on that basis, with proper checks and balances, I support the establishment of a federal corruption commission. I just think there was an arrogance in Senator Macdonald's contribution today, along the lines that if he felt that he had to be overviewed by some corruption commission then he probably would not have come here. I have absolutely no doubt that Senator Macdonald is not corrupt. But I do not think you can argue that, simply because you come to the Senate, you are not open to some business trying to get you involved in corrupt activities. We just cannot run the argument that senators are above corruption and MPs are above corruption. That has been proved not to be the case over many, many years.

Senator Smith's contribution was very interesting. I think that will be the standard contribution that we will get from the coalition on this bill. The problem is not with the coalition, regardless of what is happening at ICAC; the problem is with these corrupt unions, these corrupt Labor Party people who are engaged in activity that is reprehensible. I, like Senator Faulkner, have got absolutely no time for anyone who engages in corrupt activity. In all my public life, and that goes for some years, my track record is out there as fighting corruption, fighting any violence and fighting any intimidation anywhere I find it. So I think that after appearing at ICAC I was lucky enough—not lucky; it was because of what I had done in the past and because of how I behaved at ICAC that I received that glowing position from ICAC. That is not going to be the position for many who go there, even in a federal ICAC.

One of my heroes, I must say, is former senator and former Justice Lionel Murphy. Lionel Murphy describes the features that distinguish royal commissions from the normal course of criminal justice in his judgement in Victoria v ABCE BLF. If you establish a federal ICAC, that federal ICAC will be a standing royal commission. I think you have to take on board some of the issues that could arise, and my personal experience is one of them. If you go along to ICAC even as a witness, there will be those in the media who will be political opponents who will try to smear and have guilt by association. In my view, I accept what Senator Faulkner has said and I accept what the Greens are trying to do, but I think we have to make sure there are proper checks and balances. I was in ICAC and watched how ICAC operates. It does not operate according to the rule of law. So there could be checks and balances that we would need to implement in any federal ICAC that give everybody who appears a fair go. This is what Justice Murphy said:
The Royal Commission is a non-judicial body authorised to conduct some sort of investigation and to find persons guilty of serious offences without the protection afforded them in the regular exercise of judicial power. The persons are deprived of trial by jury. Their reputations may be destroyed, their chances of acquittal in any subsequent judicial proceedings hopelessly prejudiced by an adverse finding and these days, she—

can institute to establish his—
or her—
innocence.

So there are problems with royal commissions. One of the biggest problems with royal commissions is when governments use royal commissions to attempt to attack their political opponents. We have seen two examples of that recently. We have seen the example of the royal commission into the trade union movement and the royal commission into pink batts.

Again I emphasise that royal commissions are not independent bodies. They are set up using the executive powers of government, and the government establishes the parameters within which the royal commission will work. If you are like the Liberal Party and you want to use royal commissions as a political weapon against your political opponents—which is not how Labor uses royal commissions—then you set them up they way they have set them up.

There are two things that the Liberal and National parties do repeatedly when they come to power—and this government has gone down the same path. First they establish a commission of audit to identify false problems with Labor’s economic management. They then use that to create fear in the population that there are economic problems that are going to destroy the country. That, in turn, is used as a pretext to attack the most vulnerable in the community: pensioners, young people and the like. That is one tool they use—commissions of audit. The other tool they use is royal commissions.

I support the proposition argued by Senator Faulkner that no-one is above the law and that we should treat this very seriously. In contrast, Senator Macdonald seemed to be saying, ‘We are above the law.’ Senator Smith, on the other hand, argued that there are already a lot of established bodies to look at such matters and that we do not need any more—that there is already enough oversight. He used the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity, ACLEI, as an example. ACLEI oversees a number of bodies under federal jurisdiction—the Crime Commission, customs and border operations, the Federal Police, AUSTRAC, CrimTrac and aspects of the Department of Agriculture. It oversees all of those areas.

But ACLEI does not oversee senators or members. In fact, senators and members oversee ACLEI. So it is not right to say that ACLEI can do the job. I was on the ACLEI committee when I first came to parliament, as was the now Deputy President, Senator Parry. ACLEI had been set up by the Howard government, but, when I first came along, it had fewer employees and officers than the oversight committee and its secretariat. We had more people overseeing
ACLEI than ACLEI had itself. Senator Parry played a big role, working on a bipartisan basis with the rest of the committee, to make sure ACLEI was given enough resources. It has done a great job since then.

The other argument you hear is that there is no evidence of corruption. But there was very little evidence of corruption in the bodies ACLEI oversees before ACLEI came into being. Since then, ACLEI has carried out a range of investigations—in one case leading to an officer of the Australian Federal Police being sentenced to seven years jail with a four-year non-parole period.

So ACLEI is not the answer. A parliamentary ombudsman is not the answer either. Given what we have seen in New South Wales, it just beggars belief to have members of the coalition stand here and try to avoid scrutiny by saying that all the problems are in the trade union movement and the Labor Party. I cannot believe we have a government in power that says that pensioners should have their pension cut while at the same time we have Senator Sinodinos trying to justify $4,000 an hour to drive from the CBD of Sydney to Castle Hill as the chair of Australian Water Holdings—a company that was operating, in my view, while bankrupt and a company that was, despite not being able to pay its employees' superannuation entitlements, handing over tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, of dollars to the Liberal Party and the National Party in donations.

These are big issues and Senator Sinodinos's role in that is still being looked at. We will wait to see what the outcome of that is. But, in my view, any senator that stands up here and says that there are no problems, that we in this Senate or we in this parliament are above scrutiny, that we are above the law, that we should not be scrutinised by an independent body—I think that beggars belief given what is happening in New South Wales and given the evidence that is coming through about payment for influence with the Liberal Party at both the state and federal level. We have heard about bodies like the Free Enterprise Foundation, a slush fund that is laundering money for the Liberal Party. If there is a standing commission needed, or if there is a royal commission needed, it is to look into the slush funds of the Liberal Party. That is where the corruption in government is—and that should be dealt with. (Time expired)

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (11:35): I would have thought that the case for a National Integrity Commission makes itself. That there is a need for MPs and the Public Service to be investigated by an independent commission is so obvious, really, that I cannot understand why we are having to argue the case for it. I would have thought that the facts and the situation make the case themselves.

Every state now has an anticorruption commission. The first to be established, in 1989, was the Independent Commission Against Corruption. That was 25 years ago. The federal government is now the only jurisdiction without this infrastructure to confront corruption. Every time wrongdoing is exposed, the public has to lobby—and members of parliament get involved in that lobbying too—for that wrongdoing to be investigated. When the lobbying is successful, we see one-off reviews or ad hoc investigations launched.

I heard Senator Macdonald say, 'Well, Senator Milne, you could just report it and you can take it to the authorities.' Senator Milne clearly articulated an example where she has been pursuing what she strongly suspects is corruption but has been unable to get anywhere with it. If we had this body in place, she would have been able to go to that body to get them to have a look at it. If there was nothing there, that could have been identified, but, if there was
something there, that could actually have been dealt with. Senator Milne was clearly articulating the case in the Commonwealth Public Service. It is not good enough for MPs and senators who get involved to have to keep lobbying to get something that stinks dealt with. That is not effective, it is not transparent and it is not holding the federal government accountable. We need a permanent commission set up so that we do not have to continually lobby to get something investigated, to get a review set up, or to get a royal commission set up.

I think back to when we had to keep pushing for the wheat scandal, in 2006, to be investigated. The amount of lobbying and work that we had to do across Australia to get the government to finally look into that was enormous. If we had had this commission in place, we would not have had to do that lobbying. It was clearly an issue, as the royal commission found, that needed to be investigated.

As I said, we need this permanent commission to prevent corruption occurring and to investigate claims as they arise. For the third time in three consecutive parliaments the Greens have a bill before the parliament to create this office, to crack down on public sector corruption and to promote integrity in our public institutions. It is clear that we need to have this body in place, and also it is very important that we have public confidence in our public institutions. It is absolutely critical.

Our bill sets up the National Office of Integrity Commissioner, and it is modelled largely on the successful New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption. It is based on provisions in the Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Act 2006. The bill would establish a National Integrity Commissioner. It would be concerned with corruption in relation to public officials and Commonwealth agencies. It would have full investigative powers including conducting public and private hearings, which of course are very important, and it would have the ability to summon any person or agency to produce documents and to appear before the commission. Again, that is a very important function. The new office of Independent Parliamentary Adviser, which is contained in the bill, would be established to advise MPs and ministers on entitlement claims and on the ethical running of their offices, which of course the public totally expect from their representatives in both houses of parliament. The adviser would also be tasked to develop a legally binding code of conduct for MPs and senators for the parliament to adopt. Of course the very important word there is 'legally'.

We believe that integrity, accountability and openness in politics are vital and critical to a healthy democracy. To have an engaged public, voters need to trust what the politicians are saying. I understand that the public are very cynical at the moment because of all the things they are seeing in the media around the country, but I also understand their cynicism. I am sure that there are a lot of other senators and MPs in this place who are getting bombarded with emails about the trust with the community having been broken, yet again, because of the government going back on its commitments to not change the pension, to not cut funding on health, and to not cut funding of education. Of course all those commitments have been broken. This government's actions have undermined the trust of the community and their willingness to believe that the politicians are doing the things in their best interests. Of course that is a slightly different matter, but it does all add to the mix of the community needing to have trust in their politicians, to have trust that the institutions are not corrupt and to
understand that there is an institution that can look into those issues as they arise and provide a check at the national level.

I just do not get it. I do not get why it is not obvious to some that we need this commission. It is obvious that we needed it in the states, and they now have various forms of commissions in place. Why would anyone rationally think that we do not need it at a national level? We need to have trust throughout our political system, and that includes throughout the institutions at the federal level. We want to see an end to deals for mates which clearly permeate a lot of decision making. We need to ensure that empowered citizens keep an eye on their government and on government institutions instead of the government keeping a secret eye on them. Only when we have this in place, I believe, will the community have a sense that they have a body that they can go to and a body that they can trust that does keep an eye on corruption and deal making with our politicians and in our institutions.

As I said, we believe the case for this commission is very clear. Senator Macdonald did his usual thing again. Instead of arguing the issue he tried to smear the Greens in particular. He never misses an opportunity for that. He brought up the donation issue yet again. When the current government were in opposition, they did everything they could to attack us about that. They sent it to the Privileges Committee. Of course that trick failed completely when the Privileges Committee found that there was absolutely nothing wrong. So, instead of addressing the issue, Senator Macdonald tried to smear the people proposing the bill. You have to wonder why the government do not embrace this bill. They can see what has happened in New South Wales. They can see what has happened elsewhere. Why don't the government embrace this? They have not taken it on, and the previous government did not take it on. Senators Faulkner and Cameron have argued articulately why we need this form of commission in place. Embrace this; we need this. We need to build the confidence of the community in this political body and in our public institutions at the federal level. No-one can argue that, just because it is the Commonwealth, everything is squeaky clean. They cannot argue that. We believe it is time that we put this commission in place. Of course I commend the bill to the house and urge senators to rethink their support for this bill.

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Queensland) (11:44): I am speaking today in response to the Greens party's private senator's bill, the National Integrity Commission Bill 2013. The bill proposes establishing a permanent National Integrity Commission that would oversee the investigation and prevention of misconduct and corruption in all Commonwealth departments and agencies and among federal parliamentarians and their staff. The bill advocates the appointment of two commissioners and one adviser who would head up a staffed and resourced support commission to undertake the intended functions and activities: a National Integrity Commissioner to oversee the investigation and prevention of misconduct and corruption in all departments and agencies and among federal parliamentarians and their staff; a Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner to oversee the investigation and prevention of corruption across law enforcement agencies, absorbing the functions of the existing Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity; and an Independent Parliamentary Adviser to, purportedly, provide independent advice to ministers and parliamentarians on conduct, ethics and matters of propriety but with no investigative function.

In September 2012 the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs noted that the Senate Scrutiny of Bills Committee had examined the bill and had expressed
concerns about possible undue trespass on personal rights and liberties. These related to the right to a fair hearing and representation; the revocation of legal professional privilege; protection against self-incrimination; the broad definition of ‘authorised officer’ in the proposed bill; and concerns about the inadequate explanation of the need for the increase in search powers. I would respectfully submit that any one of those issues, standing alone, would present as a fatal flaw in any proposed legislation that respected the rights of its citizens and recognised the fundamentals underpinning the principles of natural justice.

The House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs recommended that the bill not proceed until a joint select committee is established to investigate the feasibility and costs of a National Integrity Commission. This has not occurred, and the Senate should not be persuaded to consider this legislation, or like legislation, until that has happened as a matter of course. Proposed legislation of this nature needs to expose itself to the most stringent examination and review measures that this place has to offer.

In support of Senator Cameron's comments—although directed at the coalition—in 2002 a paper submitted to the World Bank's investigation into anticorruption bodies stated that adding additional levels of bureaucracy does not in and of itself indicate that there will be any reduction in corrupt activities. It has been suggested that the establishment of such an anticorruption body would be a political response to scandal and provide a mechanism for political leaders to reassure voters and reformists that action is being taken to bring corruption under control. The extent to which the objectives of a new agency reflect a desire for systemic change, as opposed to scoring political points, is rarely clear and is rarely intended to be clear.

This government is proud of Australia's position and reputation. Australia is consistently ranked by Transparency International as one of the least corrupt countries in the world. This is a recognition of the net measure of respective coalition governments in this place and in states right across this country. As a political movement, we have a sub-zero tolerance to corruption. Accordingly, I would urge the Senate to reject this legislation not because it is not honourable in its intent but because there are many better and effective ways to strengthen the already developed capacities to ensure that Australia continues to be one of the most democratic and corruption-free nations in the world.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator O'Sullivan. Senator Marshall, you have one minute and 15 seconds.

Senator MARSHALL (Victoria) (11:49): Yes. Unfortunately, that hardly gives me enough time to develop the argument that I was intending to develop. I did want to speak in some detail on the National Integrity Commission Bill 2013. Fundamentally, I support the motives behind this bill. It is important that the public have trust not only in their Public Service and their parliament but in the institutions that we rely on to implement our laws, especially in the criminal areas. Recently in Victoria we have seen the UN shine a light on some of the inherent problems of investigation with the Victoria Police Force. We know that, while all agencies have different cultures, simply relying on agencies to investigate themselves, in the hope that that would lead to the finding and prosecution of corruption, is a forlorn hope. The UN shine a light on what happened in Victoria, and we need to shine a light on what happens everywhere else. Regrettably, I think my time has now expired.

The PRESIDENT: The time for the debate has expired at this stage, not your time, Senator Marshall. You will be in continuation if the bill comes on again before the Senate.
Debate adjourned.

PETITIONS

The Clerk: A petition has been lodged for presentation as follows:

National Integrity Commission

To the Honourable President and members of the Senate in Parliament assembled:
The petition of the undersigned shows:

Politicians of all persuasions should recognise that the public interest is best served by a clear separation between business and politics.

The Australian public expects their elected representatives to act ethically and in the public's best interest.

A National Integrity Commissioner would help ensure that this is the case. Your petitioners ask that the Senate:

Urgently support legislation for a National Integrity Commissioner to oversee and implement anti-corruption measures at a federal level.

by Senator Milne (from 5,962 citizens).

Petition received.

NOTICES

Withdrawal

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (11:51): At the request of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Wong, I withdraw general business notice of motion No. 245 standing in the name of Senator Wong for today.

Presentation

Senator McEwen to move:

That the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade be authorised to hold public meetings during the sittings of the Senate, as follows:

(a) on Monday, 16 June and Monday, 23 June 2014, from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm, to take evidence for the committee's inquiry into the role of the private sector in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in the Indo-Pacific region; and

(b) on Tuesday, 17 June and Tuesday, 24 June 2014, from 12.45 pm to 2 pm, to take evidence for the committee's inquiry into the human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific region.

Senator Eggleston to move:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee on its inquiry into the Trade and Foreign Investment (Protecting the Public Interest) Bill 2014 be extended to 27 August 2014.

Senator Stephens to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations was commemorated in Rome on Monday, 28 April 2014, together with the 100th anniversary of an Apostolic Delegation presence in Australia;

(b) congratulates renowned artist Jiawei Shen on the first official portrait of Pope Francis which was presented to Pope Francis in a private audience to commemorate the 40th anniversary;
(c) acknowledges the spirit of co-operation developed through the Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr John McCarthy, and the Hazelhurst Gallery chairman, Mr Byron Hurst, together with the sponsorship of the portrait project by the Australian Catholic University, represented by Professor Wayne McKenna, to enable the portrait to be done at no expense to the Australian taxpayer; and

(d) thanks Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, for concelebrating a mass to commemorate the importance of the long and significant diplomatic relationship.

Senator Milne to move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Treasurer (Senator Cormann), no later than 5 pm on 7 July 2014, only those sections related to former board member Mr Dick Warburton in the report prepared by KPMG for the Reserve Bank of Australia, that inquired into his conduct as a board member of Note Printing Australia in relation to allegations of foreign bribery.

Senator Hanson-Young to move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Migration Act 1958, and for related purposes. Migration Amendment (Protecting Babies Born in Australia) Bill 2014.

Senator Wright to move:

That the Bankruptcy Amendment (2014 Measures No. 1) Regulation 2014, as contained in Select Legislative Instrument 2014 No. 36 and made under the Bankruptcy Act 1966, be disallowed.

Senator Wright to move:

That Division 2.11 of the Bankruptcy (Fees and Remuneration) Determination 2014, made under subsection 316(1) of the Bankruptcy Act 1966, be disallowed.

Senator Waters to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the World Heritage Committee's request that Australia ensure the Fitzroy Delta, Keppel Bay, north Curtis Island and the northern section of the reef are all protected from port development and industrialisation,

(ii) the withdrawal of Xstrata Glencore and the recent lapsing of the Mitchell Group's plans for proposed export facilities within the Fitzroy Delta means there are currently no major projects on foot in this pristine region,

(iii) that under current Queensland and federal laws these precious areas are still at risk from future port and industrial developments, and

(iv) that the World Heritage Committee will be considering the Australian and Queensland governments' management of the reef at its annual meeting in Qatar from 15 June to 25 June 2014;

(b) welcomes the World Heritage Committee's latest draft decision that notes Australia has advised the World Heritage Committee secretariat that it intends to protect the Fitzroy Delta, Keppel Bay, and north Curtis Island from port developments; and

(c) calls on the Australian Government to permanently protect the Fitzroy Delta, Keppel Bay, north Curtis Island and the northern section of the reef from ports and industrial developments, including trans-shipping, under Australia's national laws.

Senator Madigan to move (contingent on the President presenting a report of the Auditor-General on any day or notifying the Senate that such a report had been presented under standing order 166):
That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the senator moving a motion to take note of the report and any senator speaking to it for not more than 10 minutes, with the total time for the debate not to exceed 60 minutes.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on the Senate on any day concluding its consideration of any item of business and prior to the Senate proceeding to the consideration of another item of business):

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the senator moving a motion relating to the conduct of the business of the Senate or to provide for the consideration of any matter.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on the Senate proceeding to the consideration of government documents):

That so much of the standing orders relating to the consideration of government documents be suspended as would prevent the senator moving a motion relating to the order in which the documents are called on by the President.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on a minister moving a motion that a bill be considered an urgent bill):

That so much of standing order 142 be suspended as would prevent debate taking place on the motion.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on a minister moving a motion to specify time to be allotted to the consideration of a bill, or any stage of a bill):

That so much of standing order 142 be suspended as would prevent the motion being debated without limitation of time and each senator speaking for the time allotted by standing orders.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on the chair declaring that the time allotted for the consideration of a bill, or any stage of a bill, has expired):

That so much of standing order 142 be suspended as would prevent further consideration of the bill, or the stage of the bill, without limitation of time or for a specified period.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on the moving of a motion to debate a matter of urgency under standing order 75):

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent a senator moving an amendment to the motion.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on the President proceeding to the placing of business on any day):

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the senator moving a motion relating to the order of business on the *Notice Paper*.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on a minister at question time on any day asking that further questions be placed on notice):

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the senator moving a motion that, at question time on any day, questions may be put to ministers until 28 questions, including supplementary questions, have been asked and answered.

**Senator Madigan** to move (contingent on any senator being refused leave to make a statement to the Senate):

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent that senator making that statement.
Senator Madigan to move (contingent on any senator being refused leave to table a document in the Senate):
That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the senator moving that the document be tabled.

COMMITTEES
Selection of Bills Committee
Report
Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (11:52): I present the 5th report of 2014 of the Selection of Bills Committee and seek leave to have the report incorporated in Hansard.
Leave granted.
The report read as follows—
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
REPORT NO. 5 OF 2014
1. The committee met in private session on Wednesday, 14 May 2014 at 7.20 pm.
2. The committee resolved to recommend—That—
   (a) contingent upon its introduction in the House of Representatives, the provisions of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014 be referred immediately to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 14 July 2014 (see appendix 1 for a statement of reasons for referral);
   (b) contingent upon its introduction in the House of Representatives, the provisions of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014 be referred immediately to the Economics Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 14 July 2014 (see appendix 2 for a statement of reasons for referral);
   (c) the provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014 be referred immediately to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 23 June 2014 (see appendices 3, 4 and 5 for statements of reasons for referral);
   (d) contingent upon its introduction in the House of Representatives, the provisions of the Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014 be referred immediately to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 14 July 2014 (see appendix 6 for a statement of reasons for referral);
   (e) contingent upon its introduction in the Senate, the Recognition of Foreign Marriages Bill 2014 be referred immediately to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 3 September 2014 (see appendix 7 for a statement of reasons for referral);
   (f) the provisions of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 be referred immediately to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 8 July 2014 (see appendix 8 for a statement of reasons for referral); and

3. The committee resolved to recommend—That the following bills not be referred to committees:
   Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2014
   Export Legislation Amendment Bill 2014
   Export Inspection (Quantity Charge) Amendment Bill 2014
   Export Inspection (Service Charge) Amendment Bill 2014
   Export Inspection (Establishment Registration Charges) Amendment Bill 2014
   Railway Agreement (Western Australia) Amendment Bill 2014
   Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Health Card and Other Measures) Bill 2014
   Student Identifiers Bill 2014
   Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Mental Health and Other Measures) Bill 2014.

The committee recommends accordingly.

4. The committee deferred consideration of the following bills to its next meeting:
   Corporations Amendment (Simple Corporate Bonds and Other Measures) Bill 2014
   Private Health Insurance Amendment (GP Services) Bill 2014
   Save Our Sharks Bill 2014.

Helen Kroger
Chair
15 May 2014.

APPENDIX 1

SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE

Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:

Name of bill:
   Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014

Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
   To allow for full investigation of the impact on preventive health activity and health outcomes due to the abolition of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency.
Possible submissions or evidence from:
Public Health Association of Australia, National Heart Foundation of Australia, Professor Rob Moodie, Cancer Council of Australia, National Alliance for Action on Alcohol, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Professor Paul Zimmet, Consumers Health Forum of Australia, Obesity Policy Coalition.

Committee to which bill is to be referred:
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Possible hearing date(s):
To be determined by the Committee

Possible reporting date:
14 July 2014
(signed)
Senator McEwen
Whip/Selection of Bills Committee Member

APPENDIX 2
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:

Name of bill:
Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014

Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
To scrutinise the impact of the abolition of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities (EEO) Program on stakeholders including representatives of the industries with obligations under the program; with particular reference to the educative function the EEO has played in helping them reduce energy consumption.

To provide the Department of Industry the opportunity to present evidence of the success of the EEO program in driving down both the energy costs of Australian Industry and carbon emissions that are harmful to the environment.

To scrutinise the impact of the abolition of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities (EEO) Program on the Government’s commitment to a 5 per cent emission reduction target by 2020.

Possible submissions or evidence from:
The Department of Industry, Representatives of the industries with obligations under the program, Non-Government organisations involved in the campaign to reduce carbon emissions.

Committee to which bill is to be referred:
Senate Economics Legislation Committee

Possible hearing date(s):
14 July 2014
(signed)
Senator McEwen
APPENDIX 3
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:
Name of bill:
   Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014
   Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014
Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
The Coalition Government is committed to establishing a One-Stop Shop for environmental approvals. It will for the first time, streamline environmental assessments and approvals by removing duplication between the Australian Government and States and Territories.
The Committee will review the Bills and report to the Senate on:
   • Maintaining high environmental standards; and
   • Benefits of streamlining and reducing red tape
Possible submissions or evidence from:
The Department of Industry, Representatives of the industries with obligations under the program, Non-Government organisations involved in the campaign to reduce carbon emissions.
Committee to which bill is to be referred:
   Minerals Council of Australia
   Business Council of Australia
   Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association
   Association of Mining and Exploration Companies
   Planning Institute of Australia
   Indigenous Advisory Council Department of the Environment
   Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand
Possible hearing date(s):
   To be determined by the Committee
Possible reporting date:
   23 June 2014
   (signed)
   Senator Fifield

APPENDIX 4
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:
Name of bill:
   Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014
Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
To gather evidence on the likely or potential impacts of delegating environmental approval powers to state and territory governments.

Possible submissions or evidence from:
- Environmental NGOs
- CSIRO
- Geoscience Australia
- Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development
- Department of the Environment

Committee to which bill is to be referred:
- Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Possible hearing date(s):
To be determined by the Committee

Possible reporting date:
23 June 2014
(signed)
Senator McEwen
Whip/Selection of Bills Committee Member

APPENDIX 5
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:
Name of bill:
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014

Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
To gather evidence on the potential impacts of a cost-recovery model on environmental assessment and approval processes, including: budgetary impact; cost impacts for proponents; and impacts on process timing.

Possible submissions or evidence from:
- Environmental NGOs
- Business Groups
- Department of the Environment

Committee to which bill is to be referred:
- Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Possible hearing date(s):
To be determined by the Committee

Possible reporting date:
23 June 2014
(signed)
Senator McEwen
Whip/Selection of Bills Committee Member
APPENDIX 6
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:
Name of bill:
    Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014
Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
    • To ensure adequate assessment of the impact of the bill and the abolition of Health Workforce Australia.
    • To gather evidence and provide scrutiny of the impacts of the bill and the abolition of Health Workforce Australia.
Possible submissions or evidence from:
    Health Workforce Australia
    Department of Health
    Australian Medical Association
    Australian Medical Council
    National Rural Health Alliance Inc
    Australian Medicare Local Alliance
Committee to which bill is to be referred:
    Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Possible reporting date:
    14 July 2014
    (signed)
    Senator McEwen
    Whip/Selection of Bills Committee Member

APPENDIX 7
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:
Name of bill:
    Recognition of Foreign Marriages Bill 2014
Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
    The benefits of recognising the legal foreign marriages of same-sex couples and the impact of marriage equality in other countries, with particular reference to:
    (a) the social and economic benefits of recognising foreign same-sex marriages,
    (b) the social, cultural and economic impact of marriage equality in foreign countries,
    (c) the impact on religious communities and religious freedoms of marriage equality in foreign countries.
Possible submissions or evidence from:
    Australian Human Rights Commission
    Australian Marriage Equality
    Williams Institute
Committee to which bill is to be referred:
   Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee
Possible hearing date(s):
   To be determined by the Committee
Possible reporting date:
   03 September 2014
   (signed)
   Senator Hanson-Young

APPENDIX 8
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:
Name of bill:
   Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014
Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
   To ensure a thorough and complete assessment of its potential impact on occupational health and safety coverage for workers.
Possible submissions or evidence from:
   Employers and employees covered by the Comcare scheme, employee representative organisations and other bodies associated with the operation of the Comcare scheme.
Committee to which bill is to be referred:
   Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Possible reporting date:
   08 July 2014
   (signed)
   Senator McEwen
   Whip/Selection of Bills Committee Member

APPENDIX 9
SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE
Proposal to refer a bill to a committee:
Name of bill:
   Tax Laws Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
   Income Tax Rates Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
   Family Trust Distribution Tax (Primary Liability) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
   Fringe Benefits Tax Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
   Income Tax (Bearer Debentures) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
   Income Tax (First Home Saver Accounts Misuse Tax) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
   Income Tax (TFN Withholding Tax (ESS)) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Superannuation (Departing Australia Superannuation Payments Tax) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Superannuation (Excess Non-concessional Contributions Tax) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Superannuation (Excess Untaxed Roll-over Amounts Tax) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Taxation (Trustee Beneficiary Non-disclosure Tax) (No. 1) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Taxation (Trustee Beneficiary Non-disclosure Tax) (No. 2) Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Tax Laws Amendment (Interest on Non-Resident Trust Distributions) (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Tax Laws Amendment (Untainting Tax) (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014
Trust Recoupment Tax Amendment (Temporary Budget Repair Levy) Bill 2014

Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:
• Scrutiny of tax design and integrity issues

Possible submissions or evidence from:
• Tax practitioner bodies (e.g. Tax Institute, KPMG)
• Academics
• Other stakeholders

Committee to which bill is to be referred:
Senate Economics Legislation Committee

Possible reporting date:
16 June 2014
(signed)
Senator McEwen
Whip/Selection of Bills Committee Member
Ordered that the report be adopted.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (11:52): I move:

That—
(a) the following government business orders of the day be considered from 12:45 pm today:
No. 3 Governor-General’s opening speech—Address-in-reply
No. 4 Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill 2014
No. 5 Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 1) 2014
No. 6 Tax Bonus for Working Australians Repeal Bill 2013
No. 7 Tax Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 1) Bill 2014
No. 8 Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Submarine Cable Protection) Bill 2013

CHAMBER
No. 9 Major Sporting Events (Indicia and Images) Protection Bill 2014; and
(b) government business be called on after consideration of the orders of the day listed in paragraph (a)
and considered not later than 2 pm today.
Question agreed to.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and
Assistant Minister for Social Services) (11:53): I move:

That the order of general business for consideration today be as follows:

(a) general business notice of motion No. 241 standing in the name of Senator Moore relating to the
2014-15 Budget; and

(b) orders of the day relating to government documents.
Question agreed to.

NOTICES
Postponement

The following item of business was postponed:
General business notice of motion no. 238 standing in the name of Senator Rhiannon for today, relating
to public education funding, postponed till 16 June 2014.

COMMITTEES
Reference

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and
Assistant Minister for Social Services) (11:53): I move:

That—

(1) To ensure appropriate consideration of time critical bills by Senate committees, the provisions of all
bills introduced into the House of Representatives after 15 May 2014 and up to and including 5 June
2014 that contain substantive provisions commencing on or before 1 July 2014 (together with the
provisions of any related bill) are referred to committees for inquiry and report by 16 June 2014.

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

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

(4) This order does not apply in relation to bills which contain:

(a) no provisions other than provisions appropriating revenue or moneys (appropriation bills); and
(b) commencement clauses providing only for the legislation to commence on Royal Assent.

Question agreed to.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH
Address-in-Reply

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and
Assistant Minister for Social Services) (11:54): I move:

That—

(a) the address-in-reply be presented to His Excellency the Governor-General by the President and such
senators as may desire to accompany him; and
(b) on Monday, 16 June 2014, the Senate suspend at 3.30 pm till 5.30 pm, for the purpose of presenting the address-in-reply to the Governor-General. 

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (11:54): I move:

That—

(1) On Tuesday, 17 June 2014:
   (a) the routine of business from 5 pm shall be valedictory statements; and
   (b) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 7.20 pm.

(2) On Tuesday, 24 June 2014:
   (a) the routine of business from 4.30 pm shall be valedictory statements; and
   (b) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 7.20 pm.

(3) On Wednesday, 18 June and 25 June 2014:
   (a) the routine of business from 5 pm shall be valedictory statements; and
   (b) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 7.20 pm.

(4) On Tuesday, 24 June 2014, any proposal pursuant to standing order 75 shall not be proceeded with.

(5) In making valedictory statements, a senator shall not speak for more than 20 minutes.

(6) If on any of these days the valedictory statements conclude before the time for the adjournment is proposed the Senate shall return to its routine of business.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Recognition of Foreign Marriages Bill 2014

First Reading

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (11:55): I move:
That the following bill be introduced:
A Bill for an Act to amend the Marriage Act 1961 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.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (11:55): 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 an explanatory memorandum and seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN MARRIAGES BILL 2014

This Bill amends the Marriage Act 1961 so that same-sex marriages that were validly entered into in foreign countries can be recognised in Australia.

Currently international marriages that are entered into by different-sex couples are legally recognised under Australian law. However marriages entered into by same-sex couples are barred from recognition through an explicit prohibition in the Marriage Act. This Bill removes this prohibition and affords full recognition of overseas marriage to couples when they return to Australia, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

The introduction of this Bill comes at a time when likeminded countries around the world are embracing equality. Britain recently celebrated their first same-sex marriages with couples from all corners of the world travelling great lengths to be the first to marry on British soil. Rainbow flags were hung all over the country to celebrate the occasion and people rejoiced when the first couples said “I do”.

On the other side of the world the rainbow of equality has stretched across the Tasman Sea to join two neighbouring countries, Australia and New Zealand. Since New Zealand legislated for marriage equality last year, over 300 Australians have made the journey to have their love and commitment for one another legally recognised.

Those couples will now join the many Australians who have been travelling the world over the past decade to get married, only to come back home to the country that they love to find that their marriage is not recognised. Despite being legally married in the foreign country, in their homeland they step off the plane and have to leave their marriage at the customs gate.

This is not in the Australian spirit, particularly when public support for marriage equality is at an all-time high. Over 65 per cent of Australians want to see marriage equality happen. However, as we wait for others to accept the inevitable, we should at least recognise the marriages of all couples—lesbian, gay and straight—who have legally married overseas.

This Bill offers a modest and practical step forward to marriage equality and it is consistent with the foundational Australian ideal of equality before the law.

The marriages that are the subject of this Bill have been entered into by the parties with sincerity and commitment and are valid marriages under the law of the country where they were solemnised. The couples have gone to the effort and emotional investment of organising a wedding in a foreign country, often at great expense and involving family and friends from Australia, and they have made vows that would be life-long if they were to remain in the country where the wedding was held. The solemnity of the vows that these couples made overseas should be recognised by Australia’s Parliament and people.

By recognising same-sex marriages from overseas, as we do with all other marriages, this Bill will help gay and lesbian Australians who are in loving relationships get the recognition that they deserve.

Australia will not be alone in recognising international same-sex marriages. Israel, Slovenia and Japan are just some of the countries which recognise the marriages entered into in foreign countries by same-sex couples without having domestic laws to perform same-sex marriage. Couples from those countries can marry in one of the fourteen countries which have marriage equality, such as Argentina, Britain, France or New Zealand, and then return to have their marriage recognised under the laws of their homeland.
This Bill is the first step for Australia along the road to marriage equality and an important one at that. Most Australians understand that the time for marriage equality came long ago and it's the Australian Parliament's duty to catch up.

I commend this Bill to the Senate.

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

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Reporting Date

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (11:56): At the request of the Chair of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, Senator Sterle, I move:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee on its inquiry into grass-fed cattle levies be extended to 16 July 2014.

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS

Homelessness

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (11:59): I, and also on behalf of Senators McLucas, Xenophon and Madigan, move:

That—

(a) the Senate notes that:

(i) the Government's 2014-15 budget will have severe impacts on those Australians most at risk of becoming homeless,

(ii) the consequences of this budget will be an increase in the number of homeless people, and

(iii) the Government has already cut more than $40 million from the capital budget of homeless service providers for shelters and housing for the homeless; and

(b) there be laid on the table, by the Minister representing the Minister for Social Services, no later than noon on Monday, 16 June 2014:

(i) an estimate of the number of additional Australians who will be forced into homelessness as a result of measures taken in the 2014-15 budget, and

(ii) measures that the Government proposes to take to provide adequate emergency accommodation and services, and adequate and affordable housing for people made homeless by measures in the Government's 2014-15 budget in addition to those 100 000 already experiencing homelessness in Australia.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator LUDLAM: I thank my Senate colleagues from the Labor Party and the crossbenches for their support for this motion. This motion effectively will deal with the cumulative impacts of this government's extraordinarily cruel budget on homeless people and people at risk of homelessness. There is no question at all that many more people will be
made homeless as a cumulative result of this government’s extraordinary attack on the Australian community. This government needs to provide us with the models that it has done, the estimates that it has for the numbers of homeless people, the increased numbers of homeless people as a result of this budget—and if you do not know how many more people will be made homeless you should. We will be back here on 16 June to find out whether the government actually cares or knows how many more people will be made homeless, because this budget is a disgrace.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Access to Justice

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (11:59): I move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
   (i) it is Law Week, which runs from 12 May to 18 May 2014 to promote community awareness about the legal system and access to justice, and
   (ii) the Productivity Commission’s draft report into access to justice states advocacy should be a core activity of the legal assistance sector;
(b) recognises that legal aid commissions and community legal centres are uniquely placed to advocate for law reform, and that to do so is an efficient use of their resources; and
(c) calls on the Government to fund the legal assistance sector adequately to ensure it can fulfil its important advocacy role.

Question agreed to.

Family Payments

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (11:59): I move:
That the Senate—
(a) supports the 20th anniversary of the International Day of the Family, today 15 May 2014;
(b) recognises families as the foundation of our society through which our society thrives and flourishes;
(c) acknowledges families are entitled to receive tax benefits to compensate for the cost of raising children including the recognition of the need for horizontal tax equity for all families; and
(d) calls on the Government to:
   (i) ensure that families with dependent children receive adequate financial recognition for the cost of raising children, and
   (ii) provide equal childcare funding for all children whether they are cared for by a parent in their home or through childcare places for parents who choose to return to work.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (11:59): by leave—I move:
Omit subparagraph (d)(ii).

I seek leave to make a short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.
Senator XENOPHON: I support what Senator Madigan is attempting to do here with this motion. I think it is a very worthy motion. I am concerned about subparagraph (d)(ii) as to the implications of equal childcare funding for all children, whether they are cared for by a parent in their home or through childcare places for parents who choose to return to work. I think that the concerns of Senator Madigan are expressed in particularly (c) and (d)(i) of the motion. I have some concerns—and it is not a criticism of Senator Madigan at all—as to what the implications would be of equal childcare funding and how that would work. But I think what Senator Madigan is trying to do is very important in acknowledging the role of families and their being entitled to receive tax benefits to compensate for the cost of raising children.

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

Question agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:01): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator FIFIELD: The government wishes to record its support for the 20th anniversary of the International Day of the Family. Families are the foundation of our society and its future. The contribution they make socially and economically cannot be understated. However, the government will not be supporting this motion. We believe, contrary to the sentiments of part (c) of this motion, and as reflected in the budget, that family benefits should be targeted to those who need them most. Low-income families are supported through a range of specific payments to give them the resources they need to support young children.

The government also supports measures to recognise and increase female workforce participation. These include our plan for a genuine paid parental leave scheme with replacement wage plus super and changes to family tax benefit B proposed in the budget. These changes reflect the reality that many mothers choose to return to work once their youngest child is at school. While we do endorse some of the sentiments in this motion, and certainly do support families, the government will not be supporting this motion.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (12:03): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator MOORE: The Labor Party strongly support the International Day of the Family, and we support the continuing discussion of the issues that are raised by this motion by Senator Madigan. But, in terms of the process, particularly around the issues of taxation, we think there needs to be a wider discussion in this area. We are happy to have that discussion, Senator Madigan, but, in terms of the motion before us, we are not able to support it in those words.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.
The Senate divided. [12:08]
(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes .....................11
Noes .....................41
Majority .................30

AYES
Di Natale, R
Ludlam, S
Milne, C
Siewert, R (teller)
Whish-Wilson, PS
Xenophon, N

Hanson-Young, SC
Madigan, JJ
Rhiannon, L
Waters, LJ
Wright, PL

NOES
Back, CJ
Bilyk, CL
Bishop, TM
Brown, CL
Dastyari, S
Faulkner, J
Fifield, MP
Gallacher, AM
Johnston, D
Lines, S
Lundy, KA
McEwen, A (teller)
Moore, CM
Parry, S
Polley, H
Ruston, A
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Williams, JR

Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Cameron, DN
Edwards, S
Fawcett, DJ
Furner, ML
Hogg, JJ
Kroger, H
Ludwig, JW
Marshall, GM
McKenzie, B
McKenna, A (teller)
Peris, N
Pratt, LC
Ryan, SM
Singh, LM
Stephens, U
Thorpe, LE
Urquhart, AE

Question negatived.

**Tight Gas**

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (12:10): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the huge community opposition to Metgasco’s plans to drill for tight gas near Bentley in New South Wales,

(ii) that tight gas extraction involves hydraulic fracking which risks precious water resources, and

(iii) that 84.5 per cent of Bentley locals want their lands and road gas-field free;
(b) congratulates the Bentley blockaders for their commitment to protecting their land, water, the climate and regional communities from big gas; and

(c) calls on:

(i) the New South Wales Government to respect the rights of protesters to peacefully protest, and to respond to the community's valid concerns by revoking Metgasco's gas exploration permit, and

(ii) the Australian Government to extend the current protections for water resources under our national environment laws to all unconventional gas, to give landholders the right to say no to gas mining on their land, and to not hand responsibility for protecting land and water from big gas to state governments.

I seek leave to make a very short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator WATERS: I just wish to place on record my congratulations to everyone who has been to the Bentley blockade on a success this morning, in that the exploration has been suspended and the company has been referred to ICAC, as have so many other companies in New South Wales. So I congratulate the blockaders for their persistence and courage and for standing up to protect New South Wales's land and water, and all of our climate. The suspension should, of course, now be a revocation. It is just not safe to jeopardise our land and water with this risky new industry.

The motion calls upon the federal government to do more to protect water, not less—sadly, the minister, Minister Hunt, is now planning to give away the federal water protections to those very same cowboy states—and it also calls upon the federal government to give landholders the right to say no to this dangerous industry. Senators Ludlam and Rhiannon and I are very much looking forward to joining the folk at the blockade this weekend. (Time expired)


The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator FIFIELD: We acknowledge that this issue has progressed overnight. However, the government does not support this motion. This government supports the responsible development of resources based on scientific evidence with the involvement of local communities and appropriate environmental safeguards. We have long held the view that the development of resources should occur under three coexistence principles: that there is no long-term damage to the underground water supply, that agricultural production is not permanently impaired, and that access to prime agricultural land should only occur with the farmer's agreement. Landholders' rights should be respected if they do not wish for their land to be used for exploration or production of gas. Equal respect should be given to those landholders who do choose to allow their land to be used for exploration or production of gas, and they should have the right to say yes without their privacy and their safety being impacted. We support the right of people to peacefully protest; however, in relation to the situation on the Kyogle-Bentley road near Lismore, New South Wales, the rights of the landowner have not been respected.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion moved by Senator Waters be agreed to.
The Senate divided. [12:14]
(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ...................... 10
Noes ...................... 37
Majority ............... 27

AYES

Di Natale, R
Ludlam, S
Milne, C
Siewert, R (teller)
Whish-Wilson, PS

Hanson-Young, SC
Madigan, JJ
Rhiannon, L
Waters, LJ
Wright, PL

NOES

Back, CJ
Bilyk, CL
Bishop, TM
Brown, CL
Dastyari, S
Faulkner, J
Fifield, MP
Gallacher, AM
Kroger, H
Ludwig, JW
Marshall, GM
Moore, CM
Peris, N
Pratt, LC
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Williams, JR

Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Cameron, DN
Edwards, S
Fawcett, DJ
Furner, ML
Hogg, JJ
Lines, S
Lundy, KA
McEwen, A (teller)
Parry, S
Polley, H
Ruston, A
Singh, LM
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE

Question negatived.

CONDOLENCES

Jones, Mr Henry

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:17): by leave—I, and also on behalf of Senators Birmingham, McEwen and Hanson-Young, move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the passing of Murray River campaigner Mr Henry Jones on 15 April 2014 and extends its condolences to his wife Gloria, daughters Christine, Julie and Susan, his granddaughters and grandson, and to his extended family and friends,

(ii) Mr Jones’ tireless advocacy and his love for the Murray River, its communities and its unique environment,
(iii) Mr Jones' many and significant achievements in this area, which include working with all sides of politics to shape sustainability plans for the Basin, including the Murray Darling Basin Plan, which led to Mr Jones being awarded the first River Murray Medal by the Murray Darling Basin Authority in 2013, and

(iv) that Mr Jones was highly respected by all sides of Parliament and will be sorely missed as an inspiring campaigner and passionate voice on water management reform and the River Murray, Lower Lakes and Coorong; and

(b) requests that the President convey the Senate's condolences to Mr Jones' family.

Question agreed to.

BUDGET
Consideration by Estimates Committees

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (12:17): At the request of the chairs of the respective committees, I present additional information received by committees relating to estimates.

COMMITTEES
Publications Committee
Report

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (12:18): At the request of the Chair of the Standing Committee on Publications, Senator McKenzie, I present the fifth report of the Publications Committee.

Ordered that the report be adopted.

BILLS
G20 (Safety and Security) Complementary Bill 2014
First Reading
Bill received from the House of Representatives.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:18): I move:
That this bill may proceed without formalities and be now read a first time.
Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:19): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—
G20 (SAFETY AND SECURITY) COMPLEMENTARY BILL 2014

The G20 (Safety and Security) Complementary Bill 2014 will contribute to the success of the G20 later this year.

It will do this by ensuring the powers that can be exercised by police and other authorised persons are clear and unambiguous. These powers are designed to provide for the safety and security of people and property at the Brisbane Airport during the Leaders' Summit in November are clear and unambiguous.

The G20 is an important global forum.

It brings together the leaders of the world's biggest economies to play a leadership role in addressing economic issues that matter to all countries, members and non-members alike.

Collectively, G20 member countries represent around 85 per cent of global GDP, over 75 per cent of global trade and two thirds of the world's population. Australia assumed the G20 Presidency in December last year. To be able to host the next round of G20 events this year is a great privilege.

These events will bring national leaders and a range of other influential international figures to our shores.

This presents an opportunity for Australia to demonstrate its leadership both regionally and globally on economic issues in a tough economic climate.

As Chair, the Prime Minister has structured this year's events around the key themes of:

- Promoting stronger economic growth and employment outcomes
- Making the global economy more resilient to deal with future challenges

Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors had a successful meeting in February and will meet again in September.

Trade Ministers will meet in July and Employment Ministers will meet in September.

These meetings will culminate in the Leaders' Summit in Brisbane in November which will build on the work of earlier meetings.

The Prime Minister has labelled the Leaders' Summit the most important meeting of world leaders Australia has ever hosted.

It is easy to see why.

But along with this important opportunity comes great responsibility.

Appropriate security arrangements and effective collaboration between law enforcement and other agencies will be paramount to ensuring these G20 events proceed smoothly.

I am confident our nation's first-rate law enforcement and security agencies possess the personnel, organisational capacity, skills and experience to meet this challenge.

It is our responsibility to ensure that the appropriate settings are in place for our agencies to do their job.

Queensland has enacted legislation to give police and other authorised persons the powers they will need to ensure the safety of our high profile guests and the public during the G20.

Specifically, the Queensland G20 (Safety and Security) Act will ensure police have the powers they need to:

- protect the safety of persons attending G20 meetings
- protect the public from civil disobedience during the time of the G20
- protect property from damage during the G20 meetings
- prevent acts of terrorism, and
regulate movement to ensure the passage of motorcades related to the G20 are not impeded. The Queensland legislation also provides for 'security areas' in which closer security arrangements can be implemented.

This Bill is necessary to ensure the powers conferred by the Queensland legislation can be exercised within the Brisbane Airport during the Leaders' Summit.

It will do this by clarifying the relationship between the Queensland legislation and existing Commonwealth aviation and airports legislation at the Brisbane Airport for the purposes of the G20 Summit.

Importantly, it will address any unintended overlap between Commonwealth aviation and airports legislation and Queensland legislation to ensure the safety of this event is not affected by any ambiguity.

The Bill will sunset the day after the Leaders' Summit ends. This will avoid the need to repeal the legislation after it has ceased to be necessary.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Environment and Communications References Committee

Report

Senator THORP (Tasmania) (12:20): I present the report of the Environment and Communications References Committee on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, together with the Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Senator THORP: by leave—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I am pleased to speak today on the findings of the inquiry into the Abbott government's plan to delist 74,000 hectares of wilderness forest from the World Heritage area in my home state of Tasmania. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to make a submission, especially those who appeared before the committee. I would also like to thank the secretariat for their time, effort and wise advice, especially environment and communications committee secretary Christine McDonald and research officer Sophie Power.

My home state of Tasmania has been dogged by deep divisions over seemingly irreconcilable aims of protecting the environment and supporting forestry for decades. But 2012 saw an important and very welcome change in the landscape. The timber processors agreed, the environmental groups agreed, the unions agreed, the forest contractors agreed, the community agreed and the industry agreed: the division simply could not continue.

With the unflagging brokerage of members of both state and federal Labor governments, an agreement was designed and all parties finally agreed to work together in good faith on a long-lasting plan to heal the generations-old rifts over logging in our forests.

In November 2012, these divisions came to an end with the historic signing of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement by 11 key stakeholder group representatives. This agreement laid out the path for a sustainable industry—one that could co-exist in harmony with greater protection for significant areas of native forest. It is hard to overstate what a significant event
this was for Tasmania. Finally, there was peace. The protests stopped. The 'forest wars', as we all came to know them, were over.

Since then Tasmanian timber businesses have been reporting that certainty is returning, confidence is growing and business is looking good. But, in September last year, that certainty was destroyed when the Abbott government announced its plan to excise 75,000 hectares of Tasmanian World Heritage listed forests which had only been added the previous year as a key part of the forest peace deal.

Importantly, the 2013 World Heritage area increase was also supported by the World Heritage Committee, which had repeatedly requested heritage protection for more of Tasmania's native forests. The Abbott government relied on three justifications for their action—all of which were found by the inquiry to be short-sighted, if not blatantly untrue. Firstly, they assert the area they want to delist is degraded and not worthy of protection.

During hearings, witnesses described these claims as 'incorrect', 'grossly overstated' and 'blatantly misleading, if not downright dishonest'. Again and again, witnesses asserted the vast majority of the 74,000 hectares is in no way degraded. Many argue that more than 90 per cent of the excision area has high conservation values and has not been logged.

We also heard the amount of plantation is negligible or around eight to 10 hectares of the 74,000 hectares proposed for excision. Tellingly, Department of the Environment representatives agreed when questioned that only four per cent of the area could be described as heavily disturbed.

In this context, it is not surprising that the government did not include specific information in their submission to the World Heritage Committee as there is simply no evidence that they could call on to back up their claims. It is true: small pockets of this type were included in the initial World Heritage area but for very sensible reasons of ecological connectivity and contiguous boundaries which are entirely consistent with World Heritage practice.

The second reason put forward by the Abbott government to remove areas from the World Heritage area was to 'deliver economic and social outcomes and invigorate the forestry industry'. Sadly, and more than a little ironically, it is this government's cavalier excision plan that is likely to do more damage to the forestry industry than they can possibly imagine.

We have heard in media reports comments from timber businesses, industry groups, unions and workers that they wanted the peace deal retained and that to rip it up could plunge Tasmania back into the dark old days of the so-called forest wars. Not only that but this would place a pall over the entire Tasmanian timber industry by threatening vital certification from the Forest Stewardship Council.

During the inquiry the committee heard again and again that customers simply will not buy wood that comes with such a bitter legacy. As one witness pointed out:

… there is nothing more certain to scare customers away from Tasmanian forest products than the delisting of areas that are currently in the Tasmanian wilderness World Heritage area and the starting up of logging there. That is going to send an appalling message internationally to the markets who are looking for ... controversy-free timber.

The government also mentioned the specialty timbers industry, which is concerned the forest peace deal unfairly affected them. And of course, nobody wants to see specialty timbers lose out. However, the committee heard evidence from one of the key signatories that there are
ways for this industry to be accommodated without placing the peace deal in jeopardy. As a result, the committee recommends the government undertake the specialty timbers management plan to determine the best way of meeting the needs of this very important industry without delisting tens of thousands of hectares of pristine wilderness.

The final main reason the government had used to justify the excision was an allegation that the 2013 extension was rushed and its outcome invalid. And, yet again, the government do not have facts on their side. Under questioning from the committee, the environment department itself described the 2013 independent verification process as 'extremely detailed' and 'thorough'. The committee also heard from many witnesses that the five months process included input from multiple independent experts and included detailed mapping and peer review.

One member of the Independent Verification Group, Professor Brendan Mackey, told the committee that the IVG undertook 'the most comprehensive, regional-scaled environment and heritage forest evaluation ever undertaken in Australia'. This stands in stark contrast to the process undertaken for the 2014 delisting, where the environment department were given only a few weeks to prepare the dossier for the World Heritage Committee.

Many submitters and submissions expressed shock at the scant nature of the Abbott government's submission. Witnesses pointed out that: 'No statistics or maps pertaining to the "logged/degraded areas" are provided. No arguments of substance are advanced. Key issues are ignored. No back-up materials in the form of references, illustrations or appendices are provided.' When questioned, departmental representatives admitted that not only had they not undertaken independent scientific or heritage expert peer review as they had in 2013 but they had not even visited the site to determine the truth of the government's claim.

Similarly, there was no community consultation and the department did not even have access to Forestry Tasmania's maps. In fact, they were relying, ironically, on exactly the same data that convinced the World Heritage Committee of the outstanding universal value of the land in 2013. This makes it awkward and highly embarrassing for the government to ask the World Heritage Committee to use exactly the same data to come to exactly the opposite conclusion in 2014.

So not only is the Abbott government's plan completely devoid of substantial justification, not only does it threaten Tasmania's economic future, not only does it cast a dark shadow over our tourism industry but it also threatens Australia's international reputation. In hearings a witness voiced his concerns that:

... a proposal as threadbare and lacking in factual information and as oblivious to World Heritage values as the proposal before it this time will bring Australia into disrepute at that international level.

Similarly, the Australian Network of Environmental Defenders Offices submitted that the 2014 proposal 'may be construed as insulting' because 'the clear implication would be that the Australian government believes the committee got it wrong in 2013'. Others pointed to the excision as a breach of Australia's international treaty obligations, especially the World Heritage Convention, which requires Australia to protect the cultural and natural heritage within its territory.

In light of all this evidence the committee had little choice but to recommend that the government immediately withdraw its application to the World Heritage Committee. The
2013 process was a thorough and important process to provide World Heritage listing to an area that not only possesses—\(\textit{Time expired}\)

**Senator MILNE** (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (12:31): I rise today to support the recommendations that the environment committee of the Australian Senate has made—namely, that the government withdraw its proposal to excise 74,000 hectares from the Tasmanian World Heritage Wilderness Area and withdraw that submission from consideration by the World Heritage Committee; and, secondly, that the Australian government act in accordance with what the World Heritage Committee has previously asked, and that is that the money and the work be undertaken to assess the cultural values of the area that was extended in 2013.

I wholeheartedly endorse those and I thank the 114 people who made submissions to the inquiry and the 9,000 people who sent emails in support of a position that said they supported the World Heritage Committee's decision to expand the boundary in 2013 and rejected any idea that it would be excised. I stand here today to also thank the chair of the committee, Senator Lin Thorp, and also the secretariat, who did an outstanding job in assessing the submissions and working on the report.

What came out of this report was what we already knew, and that is after many years of the World Heritage Committee asking the Australian government as a state party to the World Heritage Convention to include the forests of Tasmania—the outstanding universal values provided by those forests, the glacial history of Tasmania, the cultural history of Tasmania, the karst systems—in the World Heritage area. The reason they were never put in in the first place was purely because the logging industry wanted to log those high-conservation-value forests. I can tell you that, Acting Deputy President Bernardi, because I was in the Tasmanian parliament at the time. It was 1989 when the expanded World Heritage area was being negotiated. It was the then Labor Premier, Michael Field, and the then member for Lyons, David Llewellyn, who intervened to prevent the forests being included. The then federal minister, Graham Richardson, would have included them at the time, but the state Labor Party refused. What they did was draw the most ridiculous boundary, the eastern boundary, that looked like dogs' teeth. They drew the boundary to make sure that they excluded the brilliant and beautiful forested valleys of the rivers as they went along the eastern boundary and across the Great Western Tiers. That is why the forests were excluded in the first place—not because of any doubt about their World Heritage values but because the logging industry wanted to log them.

So this has been a campaign to have these forests listed as World Heritage for more than the last 25 years. I can tell you that there was widespread celebration when the World Heritage Committee in 2013 accepted the boundary extension that included the forests, the karst systems but also actually made the boundary a sensible, rational boundary for management of the World Heritage area. The World Heritage Committee knew when it accepted the boundary that there were some areas of degraded forest within it—but a very small area—and asked that the Australian government restore those areas, as is the obligation of a state party under the World Heritage Convention.

The point is that the extended area did not just include outstanding forests but indeed the values of those forests. As Dr Peter Hitchcock explained to the committee, the tall eucalypt forests in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area should not be seen as simply
patches of different pieces of forest disjunct; they are in fact part of a continuum up the eastern boundary which takes in the full altitudinal range from near sea level at the bay to more than 1,000 metres in the Upper Derwent. It is a corridor of forest, and you simply cannot take out pieces without having a serious impact on the integrity of those values. And that is what was being proposed by the Abbott government.

Furthermore, the submissions also indicated—and one in particular from Dr Kevin Kiernan—that the areas proposed for delisting contained numerous important attributes and values that make important contributions to the integrity of the outstanding universal values which make up the World Heritage area. It is not just the very important tall eucalypt forests, because they have been front and centre of the whole exercise, but a range of other important features such as karst, caves, glacial features, threatened species and threatened communities.

So what the committee established is that the evidence is overwhelming. There was an independent verification group who recommended to the Australian government areas to be included—that was peer-reviewed. Compare that with the decision of the Australian government to excise the 74,000 hectares. And what I can tell you about that was that the area to be excised is based on no consultation outside the department and no peer review. It is based on saying that the degraded areas actually detract from the outstanding universal values. The World Heritage Committee knew that they were there. In fact, taking out these areas will compromise some of the outstanding universal values of the area—not just forested but also karst systems, for example.

As to the objections from the adjoining landholders and communities, that is ridiculous. For the overwhelmingly large area of boundary, the neighbour is Forestry Tasmania, and it supported the expanded boundary. On several occasions, the department was asked to identify these adjoining owners, and it has been unable to do so to date. So the objections from adjoining landholders seem to be an interesting assertion without evidence.

On social and economic reasons, you do not destroy areas of outstanding universal value because you want to log the areas. That is now the blatant and obvious conclusion to make. The department gave evidence to say that, following the election, they got a directive from cabinet to deliver a political outcome, a political promise in an election campaign. It has nothing to do with the World Heritage values of the area. It was a total con that was put forward by the federal government. The reason for doing so was to try to win seats in the federal election and the Tasmanian state election. It was all about domestic politics and nothing to do with outstanding universal values, as was concluded by this report. There was virtually no evidence provided. Most of the protagonists did not appear before the Senate committee, because they do not have the evidence. The department actually gave that evidence itself by saying that the assertion that the 74,000 hectares was degraded is wrong. In fact, only four per cent of the 74,000 hectares would come into that category. The department gave that evidence and what it shows is that the whole proposition is highly political.

My final point in regard to this is to urge the World Heritage Committee to understand that the Senate committee charged with investigating this has found that the government has no case for excision and has asked the government to withdraw it, recognising that what the government has done is purely political, came from political operatives and has no support in terms of science or World Heritage.
Finally, this cannot be allowed to proceed because it will set a precedent globally at the World Heritage Committee level. This precedent would suggest that any country, at a change of government, can seek to destroy a World Heritage area in order to log it, mine it, put a resort on it or do whatever they want to do—and that is unacceptable. I urge the World Heritage Committee to see this for what it is. As we have demonstrated with this report, it is political and it should be thrown out and not even given further consideration.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (12:41): I would like to make a contribution to the report presented by the Environment and Communications References Committee. My first point is to refute what Senator Milne has just put before the chamber. It needs to be remembered that the Greens are an anti-forest industry party. Their primary objective is to destroy the forest industry in Tasmania. That has been proven by their actions over a long period of time. It surprises me that the Labor Party have not learnt their lesson and continue to align themselves with the Greens political party in this report.

Despite the accusations of Senator Milne, we know that this whole process was a political process. This whole extension was a political process put in place by former minister Tony Burke, who walked into the Tasmanian Legislative Council and said, 'I don't know whether I will actually go ahead with an application for an extension', and walked out the door to a press conference where he announced it. This was one of the most dishonest acts of this whole dishonest process, this whole sham forest deal process that was inflicted on the people of Tasmania by the Greens and the Labor Party. This was the politicisation of a corporate deal that was done behind the doors between the Greens and Gunns, and then put into a political process and imposed on the people of Tasmania. It is an absolute disgrace.

Senator Milne talks about the lack of science around this process. But let us remember that the Greens are an anti-science party; they are an anti-industry party; they are an anti-people party. So let us remember those things to start with. Let us look at the real science around this. The wilderness report done in Tasmania by the Tasmanian government in 2003 does not include these areas. In 2008, the World Heritage Commission came out here on a special mission in response to allegations by the Greens that forest activities outside the then wilderness World Heritage boundaries were diminishing that wilderness. They said that these areas did not need to be included and that the forestry activities were not diminishing the values.

Now the Greens say that those areas that they were then claiming had been destroyed by forestry activities should now be included because they have wilderness World Heritage values. They cannot have it both ways. They always try to have it both ways. They said when the forests were being logged that they were being destroyed forever. Now they are saying that they can be repaired. How are they going to repair them? Using exactly the same methods that the forest industry would have used to regenerate them. The hypocrisy that we see in the arguments is quite astounding.

The World Heritage Commission should take note of the reasonable submission that has been put in by the Australian government. It should take note of the dissenting report in respect of this submission, because it is well founded. It is well founded on their own facts and information.

Debate interrupted.
GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed on the motion:
That the following address-in-reply be agreed to:

To Her Excellency the Governor-General

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY—

We, the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia in Parliament assembled, desire to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (12:45): I rise to speak to the Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill 2014. This bill repeals the 1,120 acts from 1901 to 1969 which amended or repealed other legislation. As these amendments or repeals have already taken place, these acts are no longer required.

We do not argue though—and have never argued and never will argue—against getting rid of regulations that are redundant, no longer enforced and not relevant. It is an attitude we have always had that we take a look at our record when we are in government. But over nearly six years in office we repealed 16,794 spent and redundant acts, regulations and legislative instruments from the statute books. The Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill 2014 repeals just 1,120 acts spanning from 1901 to 1969, which is much less than the number of repealed acts, regulations and legislative instruments that we went through in nearly six years. As these amendments or repeals have already occurred there is no need, I think, for these pieces of legislation.

It is interesting to note that the explanatory memorandum to this bill claims that repeal of these 1,120 acts is desirable because 'it will reduce the regulatory burden'. That is a fine principle and it is one that the opposition strongly supports. However, when you have a look through the list of the acts, you begin to realise what sort of regulatory burden these acts could possibly have. After all, the explanatory memorandum itself says:

… the repeal of the Acts will not substantially alter existing arrangements or make any change to the substance of the law.

And:

This Bill will have no financial impact.

So there is no change to the law and there is no financial impact. So let us not pretend that the regulatory burden will be reduced by these acts being repealed.

Without going through every single item, there are a few examples here which will illustrate the point that these acts have had no effect for some years—no effect to business, to
government or to ordinary Australians—and yet the government want to make a political point that they have caused some kind of regulatory burden. So let us have a look. There is the Spirits Act 1915, which amended the Spirits Act 1906—an act that ceased to have effect on 1 July 2006. There is the Judiciary Act 1914, which made the High Court of Australia a colonial court of admiralty. The Admiralty Act 1988 repealed this imperial act.

Then there is the Passport Act 1948, which redefined the meaning of an Australian citizen for the purposes of obtaining a passport as per the Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948, an act that was repealed in 2007. Then there is the Flags Act 1954, which redefined the outer diameter of the Commonwealth star on the Australian flag, from three-eighths of the width of the flag to three-tenths of the width of the flag.

There are countless more examples, so aside from the fact that these actions occurred in the first half of the last century, they changed acts which are all no longer in force and have not been in force for a number of years. So quite simply they would have had no effect at all on the everyday lives of Australians. That is in complete contrast to the budget that has been handed down this week by the Treasurer, which will have an incredible, terrible effect on the lives of ordinary Australians. So you do have to wonder what regulatory burden all of these could possibly have had. As I said before, we never stand in the way of removing redundant, expired and irrelevant legislation from the statute books. In fact, our record of our time in office shows that we did remove some 16,000 acts, regulations and legislative instruments.

The Prime Minister spoke last week about saving the Australian people money, time and trusting their common-sense to make more choices about their lives. He also spoke about how this ‘bonfire’—I think he called it—of regulations would save individuals and organisations more than $70 million every year. We have always believed in the importance of increasing productivity. However, it is difficult to see how the repeal of over 1,000 pieces of legislation that have not affected Australians for many years would do anything to save anybody any money anytime or allow them to make more choices about their lives let alone save more than $70 million a year. I raise this because I believe that the government are trying to create a political point with this piece of legislation. They are trying to say that there is some regulatory burden out there that they have inherited when in fact that is far from the case. What is clear is the due diligence that was carried out by the former Labor government, where we actually did look at the regulatory burden and we actually did remove many acts, regulations and legislative instruments.

Rather than allowing Australians to focus on the very essence of the issues that are going to affect them from this week’s budget, the government would prefer that they focused on a furphy, that they got off the political agenda the effects of the budget—the effects of a fuel increase on everyday Australian families, the effects of dismantling Medicare and the effects of the co-payment when visiting the GP and the impact of that on the bottom line for families. They certainly do not want to have the focus on the number of older Australians who will be affected by the increase in the pension age to 70. Instead, they want people to focus on this furphy about regulatory burden. As I have highlighted through some of the examples I have given, some of the regulation is already not in place or has not been a part of any kind of regulation for some time. I want to make it clear that we have a number of issues that are important at the moment to the people of Australia and this is simply not one of them. Not
one of the items is important. In fact, the items in this legislation are probably something you would laugh about if it was not so sad.

However, what we do want to focus on is what is very sad and worrying to the Australian people, and they are the things that are in Mr Hockey's budget. They are the things that really do matter to the Australian people. That is what they want debated and discussed in this place. They want to ensure that we are doing our job as their representatives to ensure that ordinary Australians have the opportunity to live a decent life. There is little decency in this budget. There is little decency when we look at, for example, the legal assistance cuts that will strip away the protections for a number of vulnerable Australians—which do represent, I think, the sum total of the Attorney-General's first months in his job: cuts to legal assistance, cuts to access to justice and cuts to environmental defenders' offices, to community legal centres and to Aboriginal legal services. These are real concerns to ordinary Australians who will need that access to justice as they face the cuts that have been put forward, firstly through MYEFO and then through this budget.

We know that bills that correct punctuation, spelling and grammar mistakes are just a distraction from the real issues that Australians today are despairing over, following the cuts that have been put forward in the budget. We know also where we sit as an OECD country. We know that the countries of Europe are looking at us and asking, 'What is your problem? You are not in a budget crisis.' Australia has performed so well. Australia has a AAA credit rating—the envy of so many Western countries. That is the legacy of former Treasurer Wayne Swan, who made sure that Australia was protected throughout the global financial crisis that did affect so much of the Northern Hemisphere and that Australian jobs were protected.

This current budget does little for Australian jobs. In fact, it penalises people who may end up out of work. Instead of looking at how we can encourage and create investment in jobs, especially for our young people, this budget says, 'If you're under the age of 30, you will have to wait six months before you can apply for any welfare support through the Newstart allowance.' That is so punitive. What kind of message does that put out to young people, the future generation of this country? It says: 'We don't trust you. We think that you do not want to work, so we are going to make sure we push you into work, even if you lose your job and even if there is no job for you right there and then.' Then what? They will be without any income and potentially homeless, creating more of a downward spiral to other issues that affect those young people who have just lost their job. That is an appalling way to treat the young people of this nation. That is not giving them any incentive to be a part of the job market again. It is treating them with contempt. I would have hoped that, despite the ideological differences between the government and those on this side of the chamber, they would see the common decency and need to have a safety net through a welfare system that did support all the people in need. Through this budget, they have actually punished young people under the age of 30 and that is a very shameful thing.

On top of that, we are here debating the Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill. Most people who may be tuned in and listening right now to the Senate might think: 'What is all this? Is this really the most important issue facing our nation today?' Why is the Senate spending all this time debating these bills?
Why are they not getting on with the things that really matter to the Australian people? Why are they not getting on with looking at the detrimental effects this week's budget is going to have on so many people?

Every single family that has a car is going to be affected. Every single family or individual that goes to a GP is going to be affected, especially those on low incomes. This Medicare co-payment will particularly hurt those with a disability, those who need to attend a GP more than once because they have complex health needs and those with chronic disease. Medicare is a hallmark of our nation. It is the envy of other nations. Yet this government wants to dismantle Medicare and ruin Australia's long legacy of universal health care. These are the things that matter.

We have an ageing population. I come from Tasmania, the state with, I think, Australia's oldest population—I think it overtook South Australia in that regard not that long ago. To raise the pension age and to effectively cut into the pension through changes to indexation arrangements is simply shameful. It will hurt elderly people who have worked most of their life. They should not be penalised in this way. We should show them much more respect than that.

The government wants to create a big medical research fund. That is fantastic. Medical research is really important. But to fund it off the back of sick Australians going to the doctor, off the back of elderly people wanting to access the age pension—is that really the right way? Is it really fair and just to fund medical research that way?

Everyone gets sick; let's face it—I have a cold at the moment myself. Everyone gets sick. But there are a number of people in our nation who have more complex health needs than others. They will need to pay that co-payment more often than others and many of them are on low incomes. The government is deliberately punishing those people so that it can pay for its medical research fund. There are other ways to fund medical research—it should not be done off the back of sick Australians. That is a shameful thing to do, just as it is a shameful thing to dismantle our Medicare—and it is 'our' Medicare. Everyone feels some ownership of Medicare. We pay a Medicare levy. It is a hallmark of our health system and it is absolutely shameful that this government is starting to dismantle it.

We know that this attack on Medicare is all based on ideology. Ever since John Howard was Prime Minister there have been attempts to dismantle Medicare. We know that there are a number of more conservative members of the government who simply do not believe in Medicare. They want more of a US-style health system. The irony is that the President of the United States has held up the Australian health system as a model towards which he would like to move the US system—to make it fairer. Yet here we have our own government trying to make our system more like that of the US, trying to make it more of a user-pays system.

If you cannot afford to go to the doctor, it should not matter—because your visit should be bulk-billed. That is what Medicare was all about. I am proud that Medicare is a Labor legacy and I will stand with my colleagues in this place to defend Medicare as long as we are here. That is what the Australian people expect of us. That is what they expect us to stand in this place and do. They do not expect us to prattle on about the repeal of some 1,120 irrelevant acts from 1904 to 1969.
As I said, the opposition does support ensuring that Australian law is straightforward and transparent and we support reducing regulatory burdens. When we were in government, we pursued this in a serious way—without grandstanding and carrying on about it the way this government has, as though that is what is important to the Australian people. I think the government needs to wake up and recognise that this is not important to the Australian people. What is important to the Australian people is their everyday cost of living, their health and the education system. I think the government needs to recognise that they are wasting time trying to highlight furphies rather than highlighting the things that are important to Australians.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:05): Senator Singh alluded to 'people listening to this debate'. I venture to say that if there were people listening at the start there are probably fewer now. Senator Singh mentioned this bill on—I think I counted—seven or eight occasions during that 20-minute speech on the budget. I am not going to address any of the budgetary issues that Senator Singh raised. This is, after all, the time for noncontroversial legislation, as agreed by people in this chamber. There will be plenty of other opportunities for the Labor Party, at the appropriate time, to put forward its views on the budget—and the government will not shy away from that debate. On three occasions Senator Singh asked why the Senate was wasting its time on this bill. Senator Singh's has been the only speech on this bill—and it went for 20 minutes and only mentioned the bill before the chamber on seven occasions.

Senator Singh alluded to the previous government's record on regulation, but she did not tell the full story. When I was a shadow spokesperson for small business we asked the Parliamentary Library to count up the number of legislative instruments that had been introduced and repealed by the previous government. There were over 200 new ones for every single one that had been repealed. In addition, large pieces of legislation, with huge and complex regulations, were given the Prime Minister's exemption so that they did not even have to go through the regulatory impact statement process. This bill is the first step towards this government delivering on the commitments it made to reduce the burden of red tape on business.

I will add one final example where the previous Labor government's lack of commitment to this matter was illustrated time and time again. Despite pleas from small business people around Australia, when the Labor government introduced its PPL scheme it ensured that small businesses had to do a pointless amount of paperwork. While the payment was made by Centrelink, the small business person had to fill out the paperwork for their employee, had to fill out the paperwork for Centrelink and then had to actually make the payment. This was rather than doing what the then opposition requested, and what small businesses around Australia requested, which was to take small businesses out of the loop. In fact the number of problems created for small businesses illustrates the lack of understanding in the Labor Party of what it is like to run a small business. Most of the payroll systems that small businesses use, which are approved and work with the GST and the tax office, could not cope with the Labor government's PPL policy, because they did not include superannuation and payroll tax. So, a whole separate payment mechanism had to be set up by every small business so that they could balance their books. This is the first step in the government's commitment to delivering on its promise to the Australian people to reduce the burden of red tape.
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I will conclude my remarks there, and state again that the government will have plenty of opportunities to defend itself from the accusations levelled by Senator Singh, which have no basis in fact. I thank honourable senators for their contribution to the debate on the bill.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (13:09): As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:09):

I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 1) 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:09):

I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (13:09): As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:10):

I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Tax Bonus for Working Australians Repeal Bill 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:10):

I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

**Third Reading**

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (13:10):** As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

**Senator RYAN** (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:10):

I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Tax Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 1) Bill 2014**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Senator RYAN** (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:11):

I have some brief comments to make regarding this bill. Schedule 1 contains three amendments to the operation of the Farm Management Deposit Scheme that aim to enhance its ability to help farmers cope with the difficulties inherent in primary production. These amendments are made through the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 and the Banking Act 1959. The first amendment is to facilitate the consolidation of farm management deposits across different financial institutions. The second is to raise the non-primary production income threshold. The third is to exempt farm management deposits from the unclaimed moneys provisions. These amendments will help increase the financial viability of Australian farms, increase the number of farmers who can make use of the scheme and enhance its scope for those who already use it as an important tool in their farm finances.

Schedule 2 amends the GST law to allow taxpayers to self-assess whether they are entitled to a refund by reference to ascertainable and objective criteria rather than by having to rely on the Commissioner of Taxation to exercise the discretion to refund an excess amount of GST. Schedule 2 to this bill also amends the GST law to address the gap in the existing law relating to refunds associated with the calculations of GST payable on a supply.

These amendments provide that refund provisions apply to overpayments of GST irrespective of whether the overpayment arises as a result of mischaracterisation or miscalculation of the GST payable. These amendments only apply on a prospective basis from the date of commencement in order to minimise the uncertainty and compliance costs involved in the application of amendments on a retrospective basis. These provisions are intended to prevent taxpayers from receiving a windfall gain of overpaid GST and to encourage suppliers to refund their customers for overpaid GST.

Schedule 2 also amends the Taxation Administration Act 1953 to restore taxpayers review rights under existing refund provisions following a recent decision of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

I commend the bill to the Senate.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (13:13): As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:13):
I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Submarine Cable Protection) Bill 2013
Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:14):
I have some brief comments on this bill. The bill will improve the operation of the submarine cable protection regime and ensure Australia's regime continues to be a best practice regime. The bill will ensure consistency with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, will enable domestic submarine cables to be protected, will streamline the submarine cable installation permit process and will otherwise enhance the operation of the regime through administrative and technical amendments.

In recognition of the significance of submarine cables as critical infrastructure for Australia, the bill requires the ACMA to consult the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department on submarine cable installation permit applications. This already takes place on an informal basis and the bill seeks to improve certainty and transparency for all stakeholders by formalising these arrangements.

Items 2, 3, 51, 54, 85, 86, 87 and 88 in the current explanatory memorandum cover the issue of merits review under the bill. The Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills has asked for more information about the proposed merits review procedures. The government thanks the committee for its response. These additional points now follow. This ensures the key information is recorded in Hansard.

During the consultation period, the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department may make a submission on an application, which the ACMA must consider. The submission could include a recommendation that security-related permit conditions be imposed.

Where the Attorney-General's portfolio identifies significant security risks or concerns which cannot be mitigated through the imposition by the ACMA of security-related conditions on a proposed permit, the Attorney-General would need to form a view as to whether issuing the proposed permit would be prejudicial to one or more of the grounds of 'security' described in the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979, or the
ASIO Act. If so, the Attorney-General could, in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Communications, direct the ACMA not to issue a permit.

Generally, a decision by the ACMA to refuse an application or to impose conditions on a permit is open to reconsideration by the ACMA and merits review by the AAT. This is because a decision to grant a permit or impose conditions on a permit is a decision for the ACMA.

However, the ACMA’s powers and functions do not extend to dealing with or considering security matters. Matters of national security fall within the Attorney-General’s portfolio. Thus, a decision by the ACMA to refuse a permit on a security ground or to specify or vary a permit condition relating to security would not be open to reconsideration by the ACMA or merits review. This is because the ACMA’s decision would be made in reliance on the advice of the Attorney-General and the Attorney-General’s Department. It would not be practical for the ACMA to review the merits of the advice it is given.

Accordingly, where the ACMA refuses a permit on a security ground, merits review would be available, but under the ASIO Act. An ASIO assessment would form the basis of the Attorney-General’s consideration about whether or not to exercise the relevant power. The Attorney-General would only exercise the power to direct the ACMA to not grant a permit where an adverse or qualified security assessment is issued by ASIO. An applicant who is the subject of an adverse or qualified security assessment would have a right to apply for merits review of that assessment from the AAT under the ASIO Act.

I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (13:17): As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Senator Ryan (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:17): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Major Sporting Events (Indicia and Images) Protection Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator Lundy (Australian Capital Territory) (13:17): The opposition will be supporting the Major Sporting Events (Indicia and Images) Protection Bill 2014. The intent of this bill is to protect major sporting event sponsorship and licensing revenue from being undermined by unauthorised commercial use of the event indicia and images—that is, the logos for the sporting events. This bill is entirely consistent with previous approaches taken
by the Commonwealth government. When we legislated to protect this IP for both the Sydney Olympics and the Melbourne Commonwealth Games, there were separate acts in advance of those events. Probably the one difference is that we are seeking to protect three events through this bill: the Asian Football Confederation's Asian Cup, which is due to commence early in 2015; the International Cricket Council's Cricket World Cup, also to be held in 2015; and the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

These are all incredibly significant sporting events for Australia. The Cricket World Cup is in partnership with New Zealand, so the matches will be held both here and in New Zealand. The Asian Football Confederation's Asian Cup is a partnership across the three eastern states and the ACT. It is not a whole-of-nation event but will no doubt preoccupy many a community—and I will come back to that. The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, will be a fantastic opportunity for both Queensland and the Gold Coast to showcase not only the beautiful environment up there—the beaches—but also their facilities.

As a former sports minister, I know there has been very intense lobbying from the Queensland government seeking support from the Commonwealth government for some of their facilities. The facilities are very important for these major events. In fact, I want to take this opportunity to lament the one facility the Queensland government did not support, and that was the practice ramp for our aerial skiers. We did fund this in the previous government but the funding for that was overruled by the newly elected Newman government in Queensland. That is unfortunate because such a facility, though not a competition facility, would have contributed to a very innovative approach to our Winter Olympics effort in another sphere.

Australia has a fantastic reputation internationally for being able to host international events. The Sydney Olympics set a major benchmark in quality sporting events. I had the immense privilege to attend the London Olympic Games, as the then sports minister, where I saw in full force the legacy of what we were able to establish through our performance and the organisation of the Sydney Olympics. The then UK sports minister, Sir Hugh Robertson, took every available opportunity to acknowledge the inspiration and leadership that Australia had provided in its organisation and approach to the Sydney Olympic Games. Sir Sebastian Coe, the lead organiser for the London Olympics, reflected on being inspired by not just the Sydney Olympics but also the Sydney Paralympics. Both in Sydney and in London the Paralympics assumed an enormous level of prominence. I acknowledge, particularly following the experience in London, the way in which the community responded to the opportunity to be a part of that event, to fill the stadia for the Paralympic events. Whereas the practice in the past had been that it would be the second event that followed the Olympics, the feeling in London, inspired by the Sydney Olympics, was that they were partnership events, equally important and certainly equally prominent in the minds of the community.

All of these events are supported by an enormous army of volunteers. These three events, the Asian Cup, the Cricket World Cup and the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, will be supported by a veritable army of dedicated volunteers. Australians usually involved in their own sport in some shape or form, although not necessarily so, take annual leave and devote their time to making sure these sporting events go off without a hitch. The esprit de corps that exists within the volunteer workforces of major sporting events like this is part of what we celebrate most with our credentials in hosting major sporting events.
It is worth taking the time to reflect on why these sensible protections are required. For the major sponsors and the commercial entities that support such events, there is a business case and an economy sitting around that. Being able to recoup and commercialise the formal merchandise, for example, and promotion of these events becomes a critical part of the business case. We would be fools to think that these business cases would stand up without this protection. Whilst quite often I find myself in the area of public debate arguing against some of the more draconian applications of IP law, in this case I certainly stand proudly to support this application of protection of intellectual property in the form of the images and indicia that surround these major events. Restrictions will apply only to unlicensed commercial use of the protected material and images. The aim of this test is to prevent unauthorised users from applying the protected indicia and images to suggest a formal association with the events. In this way it is about preventing exploitation or abuse of it. The events themselves will be very popular and will be highly promoted, but only through that formal relationship with the entities will those things be able to be used.

We also support the exceptions that are noted in the bill that will, for example, recognise existing commercial arrangements and allow the use of those images for criticism and review and allow an athlete to make factual statements about their own achievements. So it is not a total bedding down of it but it is right in the middle of what constitutes reasonable use.

All in all, I think we are in a really exciting place for a big year in sport next year. To dwell a little on the World Cup cricket and the Asian Cup, both of these events occur very early in the year and not too far apart. I know there is an enormous amount of work being done by the Football Federation of Australia and the organising committee that has been established for the Asian Cup. I commend all of that work and the contribution that many sportspeople and volunteers are making to that effort. With regard to the Cricket World Cup, there is a joint organising committee involving both New Zealand and Australia. There has been an enormous amount of work behind the scenes between Commonwealth bodies and their sister or brother entities in New Zealand to make sure that the event is not only successful but logistically is run as smoothly as can possibly be achieved. In this way Australians will have the opportunity to see some of the best football, or soccer, in the world here on our shores in our stadiums and, indeed, some of the best cricket in the world. I know that Senator Moore for one will be very interested in what is going on. She likes her cricket.

Finally a word on the Commonwealth Games. Australia has a fantastic reputation in world sport. We take pride in being a clean sporting country. We take pride in being the best. We always strive to be the best and I have been guilty of late to put on some bets which I did not win but I have also made more bets with the best of intentions with my political counterparts in other countries, particularly the UK, backing in Australian talent. I hope to get the opportunity to do that again soon. Most of all I commend this bill to the Senate and in doing so acknowledge the enormous amount of work that has gone on both within the bureaucracy in the lead-up to these events and within the sporting organisations and the organising committees that are contributing to them. To be quite opportunistic, I say to the Australian teams participating in these events: good luck.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:28): I thank Senator Lundy for her contribution to this bill. The purpose of the bill is to protect major sporting event sponsorship and licensing revenue from being undermined by
unauthorised commercial use of event indicia and images for the following events: Asian Football Confederation Asian Cup 2015, International Cricket Council Cricket World Cup 2015 and Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Major events have long been targets of those who would seek to create an impression of association with the event in order to achieve commercial gain without having purchased the rights to claim that association. This bill protects against such activities and is consistent with the legislative approach taken for previous major events including the Sydney Olympics and Melbourne Commonwealth Games in the protection of indicia and images. The bill will protect the use of a range of words and expressions associated with each event from ambush marketing and unlicensed commercial use in the lead-up to and during each major sporting event. The proposed legislation is also intended to be complementary to existing or proposed legislation in states and territories that may be put in place in relation to these events.

While it is important to protect sponsors from ambush marketing, the right of the community to freedom of expression and for businesses to use their own intellectual property rights must also be respected. The bill contains a number of pragmatic exceptions and fully protects the rights of the existing holders to use indicia to carry out their business functions. Each schedule of the bill will cease to have effect within one year after the completion of each major sporting event, as prescribed in the bill. I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

**Third Reading**

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Ruston)** (13:30): As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

**Senator RYAN** (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:30): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

**Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

**Senator MOORE** (Queensland) (13:31): I need to start by congratulating Senator Ryan for that new Olympic event, which is speed legislation reading. Congratulations, Senator Ryan!

The bill before us is the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014. As people know, this particular bill is focused quite clearly on young people and ensuring that people stay in work, have opportunities to take up work with the intention that retaining work is a good thing, and also have the opportunity to, if there is work
available in an area where they are not currently living, get some support for them and their family to be able to move to that area. On that basis, the intent of this bill is really very valuable. We support fully the intent and we also support fully any action that is going to be implemented in our country to look at the worrisome issue of youth unemployment.

We all know that there are particular issues around youth unemployment, and the statistics over the years have continued to show that this is not limited to one particular geographic location. When we have a look at the stats, they show that young people—no matter whether they live in the capital cities, the suburbs, regional Australia or remote Australia—are going to face special issues around actual job opportunities, skills opportunities and staying in work so that you can build up work experience and get career experience.

What brought a lot of focus onto this issue, even though it has been a topic of conversation for many years, was the very valuable work of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. They released a quite confronting document that showed, without doubt, that the issue of youth unemployment was something that every person in this nation should feel concern about and which we, as parliamentarians, no matter on which side of the parliament we sit, must acknowledge. We must also develop a strategic and co-operative way of working together to ensure that we do provide young people in particular with respect and also with the opportunities to find their own places in the workforce.

This is not a contest. I always worry when we focus on one group, one demographic, in our community. I was very pleased to be able to attend an international conference recently on what was happening across our world on a whole range of issues. We talked at that conference specifically about the issues of young people and their opportunities for education and employment. But when we were in that discussion, what tended to happen was that other groups with needs felt that we were disrespecting their needs by focusing so clearly on areas of youth. So while I really think it is important that we do take forward measures to look at this particular group, we must always do that within a context of understanding that the value of work, the right to work, is there for all of us no matter what our age, our gender or our abilities. We need to be able to link that together.

I wanted to put that on record because sometimes we are so busy compartmentalising these issues that we forget that we need to be engaging and inclusive in the discussions. So the processes we have here can relate to all ages. This particular legislation is limited to young people, but it is important that we talk about the kinds of issues that we can implement solutions for to ensure that everybody has an effective option for work. I am not going to use this opportunity to look at the areas around job creation; we can do that in many places.

The first thing you need if you are looking for work is a job. We can put in all the effort we can around issues of training and skills development—and we do. We can introduce things like this legislation, which is an incentive payment for people who stay in work over a long period of time and for people who relocate. We can put all of that into our ideas box and work through effective processes of promotion around this, but if there is no work available, if you do not have jobs or job creation in the overall scheme, then this kind of work is useless. Within that context we must remember that we have to create attractive jobs that are able to include people from all backgrounds and give them an opportunity to get into worthwhile work. That worthwhile work must always ensure that we have effective wages and conditions. One thing we do not need in this nation is any kind of creation of a double level of
employment processes so that we have special jobs that are not that well paid so that we can churn people through into that area of employment rather than looking at what this legislation is about, which is people being able to seek work and obtain work and keep their jobs.

As a party, we support the concept of this legislation. We see that it is really important that people understand that it is more than just attaining employment; the whole idea is that you retain employment. For every job opportunity, there needs to be an expectation that that is going to be a long-term employment opportunity.

Too often, in the past—this goes back a long time to when I worked in the Commonwealth Public Service—there seemed to be a result focused basis for the program. So getting a job, in itself, finished the exercise. All our programs were focused around people obtaining work. As soon as the jobseeker found work the file was closed. There was no longer any kind of interaction between the jobseeker—the person who had now obtained a job—and the range of supports that were available for them. Way too often we were, in that context, seeing what we called the 'job churn'. People would get a job, work for a while and then, for whatever reason, the job would end.

People would be in and out of employment without establishing that security—the relationship with the workplace—so that they could see that work is valuable in itself and they could think about their own self development. People can look at completing a task but also at the development of a career. And that means that we have worthwhile work.

In this legislation the job commitment bonus is designed, I believe, to ensure that we do not have that churn and that we have opportunities for people to find work and then be rewarded not just by their employer—which would be the natural process—but by the system. The system has talked about the fact that we want people in work. The system itself provides a reward at the end of a 12-month period, if people have retained their employment, and then again at the end of a 24-month period.

I think the concept of having that interaction over the extended 24 months is a very positive aspect of this legislation. It is an incentive. The incentive gives the person who is in the workplace the sense that they have achieved. I would imagine that the expectation and the hope of the people who have drawn this policy together is that if you have retained work for a period of 24 months you have then established a work pattern in your own life. You will have established that part of your life involves regular work. You will accept the rules and responsibilities of attendance and working with a team—all those elements that sometimes we think people just know naturally. But knowing how to operate within a workplace is not an innate skill. You need to achieve that through effective skills, by working within a team and by seeing effective role models who have already been in that situation. So work becomes a natural expectation of your life.

The retention bonus is something that we support strongly. I have no idea where the figures came from. Certainly I have not found, from what I have read in the background to the legislation, where the figures of $2,500 and $4,000 have come from. I do not know whether there is any particular link to that. They are reasonable amounts of money, particularly as they are tax free—which is an advantage, I would imagine! I am not sure whether there has been any particular modelling around those amounts of money. But I do think that a young person would find that that was something that was valuable. They would be able to see that the bonus is a worthwhile reward. We certainly respect that.
The relocation assistance is something that various governments over many years have talked about. We know that work is not available at an equal rate across the whole of the nation. I cannot say that that goes without saying, because I have already just said it! But in terms of the process, across the nation different enterprises start in different ways. There need to be some supports for people to make the very strong decision to move, because it is a big decision to change your life completely and make a move. I note that the relocation assistance varies depending on whether you are going between capital cities or between metropolitan areas and regional areas. That is perfectly reasonable.

Again, I do not know where the figures come from or the background to those amounts. Perhaps, if there is a rationale behind the figures in this bill the minister, in future discussions on this bill, could let us know, because there are always arguments about the quantum. But we strongly support the concept of a relocation allowance.

The issue about which our side of politics is concerned is the bite in that area—that if people receiving income support leave work for any reason they will lose their payments for 26 weeks if they have to go back into the system. That is a very long time and it seems, from what I have read in the background to this bill, that there is no appeal rights within that process. So if you leave work in a way that is unacceptable to the decision-maker you have a penalty of 26 weeks, rather than the 12-week penalties that were in previous programs.

We are willing to hear the rationale behind that, and to have some discussion about it, but it seems that 26 weeks is a long period of time to be without payment. That fits into a whole lot of the discussion that we will be having over this week's budget in terms of the punitive elements that are going to be introduced into the system about access to welfare payments and general payments across the board.

I know that this bill was introduced before the budget, before we had changes to people's access to unemployment payments and how long you have to wait—the six months and so on—but I think we need to have a look at that whole system. It has always been a concern of mine that too often policy decisions and programs do not interact with the whole area as well as they could, and that you cannot make a decision about one payment—as this legislation does—without looking at what is going to happen with the whole system.

So in terms of an individual's responsibility and what is going to happen to them I am interested to know how this kind of penalty arrangement would interact with the budget proposal to have periods of long-term ineligibility for payments. I am interested in how those two things might interact.

The other area where there has been significant community feedback—and I know that the government has been getting the same communication as we have been getting—is around the issue of the exclusion from these payments for people who have a special category visa—an SCV holder. This will exclude New Zealanders, who are a particular quantum of people in our country, who have lived here for a certain period of time.

I have received a large amount of correspondence from many areas in Queensland where there is a very high population of people who fit into this SCV classification. There is a great deal of concern from these families and communities that they have been specifically excluded from these two payments. It is my understanding from the information that I have received that this is the first time that this particular group has been particularly excluded.
from payment. Not only are they concerned about this payment—and they have genuine reason to be concerned because there is quite a significant unemployment level amongst the young people of these communities; they are also concerned about whether this is a precedent for future policy developments. There is a real concern that, if the government decides to start excluding people who have not been excluded previously, this will be a follow-up and roll on for future policy. That is also an issue that we would like to hear back from the minister about in the summing up.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about something in this bill that gives me concern for another program which was a victim of the budget on Tuesday night. Again, I think it fits into the overall policy area, and it is a program called Youth Connections. It is a program which I have worked very closely with in communities in Queensland—particularly on the Sunshine Coast, an area which people may know. Not only is it extraordinarily beautiful but it also has very serious employment issues, particularly amongst young people. The program has been so successful in that region, and so positive, actually rebuilding the understanding amongst young people of their inclusion in society and the value of work and training for them.

We have fabulous statistics that talk about the number of people who have worked together in the community to look at the attraction of a work or study option, and also to understand what the links are—for yourself as an individual and also for your community—to gain the positive aspects of earning their own wage, building their own future and having study or work options.

It seems to me that this program, Youth Connections, is a valuable part of our response as a nation to the very issues of youth unemployment to which this bill we are discussing is another response. How can we have this segment of legislation, which is looking at incentive bonuses and support for moving, at the same time as we are cutting a program which is creating an awareness of the need for work and making people feel that they understand the importance of education that they, for whatever reason, have felt excluded from in their communities or families? All that valuable work links so well to the legislation which we are talking about now that it seems almost unbelievable that we are giving with one hand and pulling away with the other. Again, it is my concern that we are not looking across the board at a full and effective response to an issue about which we are all concerned.

There is no doubt that parliamentarians, leaders in the community, educators, our business community and enterprises are all concerned about the issues of unemployment in our nation and, in a very special way, about the loss of a whole generation. If we do not have people learning about the value of work and education when they are young and when they are making decisions themselves about school and further education—if we lose them then—the statistics show clearly that we could then lose them for life. The stats showed that if you do not actually engage in employment and see a future for yourself at that age then your prospects are going to be very bad. The prospects could well be intergenerational unemployment and intergenerational exclusion from our communities.

So we do have amendments that we will put forward and we will discuss further the concepts of the values of this program. But we cannot, and we must not, have this discussion without thinking in a more wide and engaging way about the full range of support we must give to young people to ensure that they have options for employment. There is no option for us; if we do not actually make effective legislation responses we are letting down the whole of
the community. We are letting down the people who put us here and we are making sure that we are setting ourselves up for the kind of community that none of us want.

I think that the government pointed out in its budget speech the other night that they wanted us to be a more productive country. The best way to do that is to work with the young people to see what they need to have the support. I congratulate the people from Youth Connections. I have enjoyed working with them. I have been inspired by the work that they do. And that is from me, who is not using their services, just going along to so many of the events they run!

If we do not get people engaged then it does not matter about the job commitment bonus or the relocation assistance, because they will not be encouraged and inspired to use it. So we need the whole range of support. I think we have the ability to do that; I would hope we will. But I think that for the process and this particular piece of legislation that we agree with the concepts, but we just need to make sure that the people who need it most get it. On that basis, I would not actually be fulfilling my job if I did not think about those young kids who come from a New Zealander background and who need this support. I would not be fulfilling the promise I made to them that I would continue to try to bring their issues to this place.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (13:54): I would like to thank senators who contributed to this bill. I acknowledge the support that all senators have given for action on employment, and youth unemployment in particular. Youth unemployment is an important issue which impacts on young people in all parts of the country.

This bill enables the job commitment bonus, which will provide an incentive for young long-term unemployed people to take a job and keep that job and, by doing so, escape the spiral of long-term unemployment. The job commitment bonus is an innovative policy that will provide a total bonus of $6,500 to young people who have kept a job and stayed off welfare for 24 months.

The bill also enables the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program, which will enable long-term unemployed people to gain assistance to move to take up a job. Assistance of up to $6,000 is available for job seekers to move to a regional area or, to move to a metropolitan area, up to $3,000. Families with dependent children will be provided with up to an extra $3,000.

The government notes the opposition's proposed amendments, which will maintain the status quo in relation to non-payment periods. The government will not oppose those amendments.

I will just address a couple of other issues that Senator Moore raised in her speech. With respect to the access of New Zealand citizens, this bonus is a targeted measure and not all Australian job seekers are eligible. We make no apology about encouraging young people to get and keep a job, especially when the youth unemployment rate is so high, but it is a targeted measure, and that partly explains that.

I will also address the issue of Youth Connections, which Senator Moore also referred to—and there will be a longer opportunity, I am sure, to discuss this. All the support programs in the world do not matter if the jobs are not there. I will not go into detail about the Youth...
Connections program—it varied dramatically across Australia—but some of the assertions about its effectiveness are not supported by facts.

Seventy-five per cent of the Youth Connections clients over the first four years of its operation were actually people 17 years of age and younger. That is the age for which all states and territories now have legislation—they have agreed with the Commonwealth that it is a compulsory school age and that, if you are not at school, you have to be in some other form of training. That is a responsibility of those who run the schools. We will hold the states and territories accountable for providing services and taking care of youth services in the area of their constitutional responsibility. The idea that we can keep writing blank cheques borrowed from these kids' future taxes, which the Labor Party and the Greens talk about as if it does not matter how much we spend—this idea that we spend as much money as we can and it does not matter how effective it is because it is all aimed at some good purpose—has not worked.

Can I also point out about the Youth Connections program that it was funded under the national partnership agreement for four years. There was an aspiration for the states and territories to take it over if it met certain performance targets. It did not meet those performance targets. So, last year, rather than make a difficult decision about how we should use limited taxpayers' resources, rather than make a difficult decision about whether to redesign, renew or cancel the program, the government at the time kicked the can down the road and left one of the many budgetary landmines that this government faced. This government does not apologise for making the difficult decisions necessary to make this budget sustainable, for the very people that Senator Moore was talking about.

And, if we want to talk about job opportunities, I look forward to the address of one of those opposite in this chamber which condemns the Shoppies union for their move last year and the year before in Victoria to prevent schoolkids in western Victoria going to work from 4 pm to 6 pm in jobs they already had but which the award system was going to stop them keeping. The Shoppies union came in and said, 'We don't want these kids to have a job, because we want a three-hour minimum.' The point was that the shop was not open. They wanted to work after school, and those opposite stood in lock step, shoulder to shoulder, with the Shoppies to prevent those young kids keeping their jobs.

So there is a lot to debate in this space. I look forward to doing so with Senator Moore. But I do understand and accept, as I said at the start, that we all care about youth unemployment and we all wish to address it. I accept that there are probably substantial differences in the means by which we go about doing so. I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (13:56): The Labor Party has two amendments to this bill, but, before I go to the detail of the amendments, let us deal with the ideology of the coalition in this bill and the ideology that has been espoused by Senator Ryan on behalf of the coalition. This is about penal provisions against young people in this country. When you add this bill to what we have seen announced in the budget, we have one of the most
draconian systems for young people anywhere in the world. I never thought we would see a position where an egalitarian society like Australia would walk away from some of the most vulnerable people in our country—that is, young people—but we are walking away from young people, imposing these draconian rules and regulations on young people and treating them as if they are lazy, treating them as if they are not prepared to actually get a job. It is the old dole bludger syndrome.

I have to say that, when you look at all of the welfare approach by the coalition, the coalition has more in common with Mississippi than Melbourne. It has more in common with Mississippi. It is down there with the worst aspects of social engineering. I am sure that the IPA is up to its neck in it. That is why Senator Scott Ryan is up there running all this right-wing agenda that says: 'If you can't get a job then you're a dole bludger. If you can't get a job, we're going to take penal provisions against you.' This is outrageous from the coalition. This is outrageous.

I would like to see some of the senators across there go out to Penrith and talk to the young people out there. Go to the real world and talk to their mothers and fathers. Talk to the young kids who cannot get a job. Go to Mount Druitt. Talk to the kids who cannot get a job out there. Tell them they have to live with nothing for six months. What is it with you guys? This is not an egalitarian society; it is Mississippi, or maybe it is even Tennessee. I do not know which one is the worst, but you guys will go for the worst aspect of both of them. You hammer the pensioners. You hammer young people. You are just unreasonable in your approach. The end of the egalitarian society is here with this budget.

Well, we are going to fight it. We will fight it. We are not going to allow you to destroy Medicare. We are not going to allow you to destroy a decent social system in this country because of your ideology. It is absolutely outrageous—on the beck and call of Gina Rinehart, on the beck and call of Twiggy Forrest, on the beck and call of the people who line your pockets. That is what it is. They want to bring the 457 visas in. They want to rip off the welfare system. They want to make sure that you guys pay for the money that goes into your pocket from Gina Rinehart. That is what it is all about.

Progress reported.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Abetz. I refer to the centrepiece of the budget, an $80 billion cut to hospitals and schools, and to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that there would be no cuts to health and no cuts to education. I also refer to New South Wales Premier Mike Baird, who said the funding cuts are 'a kick in the guts'. Is Premier Baird right?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:00): I am absolutely delighted to be able to talk about the centrepiece of the federal budget, because, unlike as Senator Wong would seek to portray it, the centrepiece of the federal budget is, as Senator Nash outlined in question time yesterday, the medical research foundation—a historic centrepiece position for this government. It is something that will look after future generations
for many, many years to come. This is the sort of future planning that the Australian people elected the coalition to undertake. I am delighted to talk about the centrepiece because part and parcel of that centrepiece—and it is emblematic of our budgeting—is that, with this centrepiece, we are looking to the future. We are looking to the future to ensure—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order to do with relevance. The specific question is about Mr Baird's comment. Is Mr Baird right? That is the specific question, and we have now gone through more than half of the response without getting there.

The President: I am listening to the minister's answer. The question was actually broader than that. The minister still has 57 seconds remaining to address the question. There is no point of order.

Senator ABETZ: I was asked about the centrepiece of the budget, and, as is the wont of the Labor opposition, they could not help themselves but misrepresent that which the centrepiece of the budget actually is. So I am correcting the Leader of the Opposition in this place and advising her as to what the actual centrepiece is. But I can understand the Premier of New South Wales being disappointed with a former dishonest government having predicated expenditure in health and education which was not underpinned with a funding source. That is why the Australian Labor Party is guilty of having undertaken a hoax on the Australian people—

Senator Wong interjecting—

Senator Cormann interjecting—

The President: Order! Senator Abetz, just resume your seat. Even though there are only six seconds remaining, Senator Cormann and Senator Wong, the two of you are debating the issue across the chamber, and I am trying to listen to Senator Abetz.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The President: Senator Cameron, Senator Abetz is entitled to be heard in silence. Senator Abetz, continue.

Senator ABETZ: The New South Wales Premier is entitled to be disappointed with the hoax perpetrated by the previous government. (Time expired)

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:04): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to comments by the Queensland Premier, Mr Campbell Newman, who said:

You can't just throw the health and education issues on the states and not give them the money to deal with the problem.

... ... ...

This whole thing seems like a wedge to get the states to ask for the GST to be raised.

Is Premier Campbell Newman right?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:04): I can indicate that I am not aware of what Premier Newman said, but what I do know is that Premier Newman faced a very similar situation to the situation that we now face in Canberra: a profligate Labor government that thought they could just borrow and borrow and borrow as though there were no tomorrow. Premier Newman in Queensland had to take very tough but
responsible decisions to get their budget back on track. Similarly, we are seeking to do so in Canberra, and it stands to reason that people that had been given promises that clearly could not be fulfilled will feel disappointed. We as a government understand that. We acknowledge that. But at the end of the day we have to ensure that our government and budgeting are on a sustainable basis. (Time expired)

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:05): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer to comments by former Prime Minister John Howard, who today said that the government's budget changes to family tax benefits were 'in effect a tax rise'. Is former Prime Minister John Howard right?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:05): I am not going to get into the semantics as to whether something is a tax rise, whether it is a levy. What I can accept and what I will accept it is that a greater burden will be placed on the Australian people to repay the damage occasioned by the Australian Labor Party and the Greens.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Resume your seat, Senator Abetz. Order! Senator Abetz, continue.

Senator ABETZ: I am in fact acknowledging that what Mr Howard said is very appropriate in the circumstances, because what I have said to those opposite is, 'I will not play the semantics.' I have been here 20 years. Some people say tax rise; some people say levy; some people say surcharge. I accept that there will be an extra burden on the Australian people. We regret that, but we have to do it to repay the debt from Labor. (Time expired)

Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013


Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator Wong interjecting—

Senator Cormann interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senators Cormann and Wong, I am waiting to hear the question.

Senator KROGER: Thank you. It is a shame when they clearly—

The PRESIDENT: Just ask the question, not debate.

Senator KROGER: Can the minister advise the Senate how honest union members have been deserted by the bloc king of this bill in this place?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:09): Labor's decision yesterday to oppose better governance arrangements for trade unions by voting down the Registered Organisations Commission sadly confirms what everyone already suspected: Labor is not the party of honest trade union members but the protector of dodgy union bosses.
Senators opposite need to explain why a union official should be liable for a fine of only $10,200 when, for the same corrupt behaviour by a company director, that director would be liable for five years imprisonment or fines of $320,000. But at least in this regard Labor is consistent, because Labor is the party of Craig Thomson and Michael Williamson, whose senators voted down motions condemning their actions. So it begs the question: if Labor cannot condemn corruption, why would they seek to stop it?

Mr Shorten talks about modernising the Australian Labor Party, and I simply say to him: You cannot modernise the Labor Party without modernising the trade union movement. And I have no doubt that tonight Mr Shorten will be exactly the same as he is on this matter. He will refuse to identify the problem. He will refuse to acknowledge that there is a problem. He will say one thing about economic responsibility but then keep voting in this place to deny economic responsibility being implemented. That is the stark contrast in what Mr Shorten says, be it on unionism and the Labor Party or on economic fiscal responsibility. He will say one thing for the interviews and then do the exact opposite in this parliament by voting down good policy for the future of our country.

Senator Lines interjecting—

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (14:11): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for that response. Can the minister advise the Senate what the obstacles have been to securing—

Senator Lines interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Kroger, continue.

Senator KROGER: I will actually restart. Can the minister advise the Senate what the obstacles have been to securing the better governance arrangements for trade unions contained in the registered organisations bill?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:12): Talk about self-identification: as soon as Senator Kroger asked that question, who came out right on cue? None other than Senator Lines, who you will recall boasted:

I am a trade union official; it runs through my blood. I am now a senator, but 'once a trade union official, always a trade union official'.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator ABETZ: And they are saying, 'Hear, hear!' I simply say to them that, once you enter this place, you have to set aside your sectional interests and put forward the national interests, and that is something that Mr Shorten and the Australian Labor Party have simply not been able to set aside.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator ABETZ: What I would invite Senator Lines and all her colleagues to do is, in fact, have a blood transfusion, get rid of the sectional interests and put the national interest into your heart and souls, because it will be surprising what a difference that will make for the benefit of our nation.

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator Cameron: Run that line by the pensioners!
The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Cameron, it will assist the chamber if you cease calling across the chamber.

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (14:14): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise whether the Senate will have another opportunity to consider this vital legislation after 1 July? If so, will the obstacles to better governance arrangements for trade unions have changed in any way?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:14): The government is committed to ensuring the clean-up of registered organisations. We went to the election with a very firm policy in this regard, and we have every intention of pursuing it. The simple fact is that after 1 July the DNA pool on that side will in fact become even more concentrated, with the percentage of ex-trade union officials sitting on that side being even greater—hitting about two-thirds. Two-thirds of all those Labor senators will be former trade union officials—who, as Senator Lines said so eloquently, put the union interest before the national interest. We invite the new Senate to see the benefit of the Registered Organisations Commission—something that Martin Ferguson and Simon Crean, both former ACTU presidents, have in fact endorsed.

Budget

Senator PERIS (Northern Territory) (14:15): My question is to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion. I refer to the minister's boast yesterday that a $409 million cut to Indigenous services in the Prime Minister's own department was a modest cut which will not have any impact on the ground to frontline services. Will the minister give the Senate an ironclad commitment that there will be no impact on frontline services and, if there is, will he resign?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (14:16): The actual funding cut, as I indicated yesterday, is $239 million. So, of my budget of $1,200 million a year, we are taking out $60 million a year. As I said, yes, I think it is a modest cut. Having had a very close look whilst I was in opposition at the delivery of those services and having seen that there is quite clearly such disorganisation, with the 1,300-odd providers and over 4,000 individual contracts, I am confident that we can find a 4.5 per cent efficiency dividend. I was confident about that yesterday and I am as confident today as I was yesterday.

Senator PERIS (Northern Territory) (14:17): I have a supplementary question. I refer to the minister's commitment that any of the savings that we have made across this budget are not going to have an impact on the ground. Of the $409 million cut to Indigenous services in the Prime Minister's own department, what cuts will be made to services delivered through the Indigenous Employment Program and the Indigenous Capability and Development Program and what will the impact of these cuts be?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:17): Again, just for clarity: the cuts across programs in my portfolio is in fact $239 million, not the $400-odd million the senator suggests. I reiterate that, across all of these programs, there is sufficient bureaucracy, red tape and mismanagement—
which we saw characterised in the period of time that those opposition were in government—
that I am very confident that the 4.5 per cent—

Senator Moore: Mr President, my point of order is on relevance. The particular question
was about the Indigenous Employment Program and the Indigenous Capability and
Development Program. I would ask you, Mr President, to draw the attention of the minister to
those programs.

The PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order at this stage. The minister has been going
for 29 seconds and has 31 seconds remaining.

Senator SCULLION: The two programs that were mentioned are of course part of my
programs, and my reference to those is included. They will be subject to more or less 4.5 per
cent savings. We believe those savings will be made in those programs. We are still waiting
on the Forrest report, which will deal substantively with Aboriginal and Islander employment
and engagement, and in the months coming we will have more to say on that. I would like to
commend Mr Forrest on his excellent work.

Senator PERIS (Northern Territory) (14:19): I have a further supplementary question.
Why won't the minister tell the truth and concede that cuts to services totalling more than half
a billion dollars across government will widen the gap rather than close it for Indigenous
Australians?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of
The Nationals in the Senate) (14:19): I think the real question is: why won't Senator Peris
stop misleading Australians by continuing to quote the $500 million across—

Senator Wong: It is in the budget papers—$534 million. Read your own budget paper.
Would you like me to photocopy it for you?

Senator SCULLION: The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate brilliantly points to—

Senator Wong: It is in your budget paper.

Senator SCULLION: Indeed, indeed. But they have to take into consideration that it
includes health. It also includes the fact that $115 million was taken across that budget. It
does not include $54-odd million in cuts to come from the department. It is okay for them to
try to lecture me about the frontline and the headline, but it is not reasonable to continue to
frighten the public and to frighten Aboriginal and Islander people about a disingenuous
approach. We know we can confidently make a modest contribution to repairing the terrible
budget left by those on the other side. I know that Aboriginal and Islander people are behind
us on those measures. (Time expired)

Budget

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (14:20): My question is to the Minister
representing the Minister for Education, Senator Payne. Senator, is it fair that many members
of the current cabinet, including the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education, received
their undergraduate university education for free, while your government is planning on
increasing student fees for nursing students by an estimated 18 per cent, fees for arts students
by 60 per cent and fees for engineering and science students by 55 per cent? Why should
registered nurses earning average salaries of $55,000 a year pay an extra $8,500 in interest
bills for their degrees?
Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:21): I thank Senator Rhiannon for the question. As I said to the Senate yesterday over a number of minutes in answer to a question from Senator McKenzie, what the Australian government is addressing in terms of our higher education system is a very, very important issue of competitiveness—making sure that we can be a world-class tertiary education nation that takes its rightful place, with its universities in their rightful place, internationally. What we have done in this budget is to look at key reform issues which have been ignored by those opposite—and ignored with aplomb, I might say—

Senator Brandis interjecting—

Senator PAYNE: or 'insouciance', perhaps, Senator Brandis; you might be right—for their entire period in government. And we have decided that, in terms of competitiveness, and in terms of the engagement of what will be 80,000 more students by 2018 in our tertiary system, these are very important steps to take.

What Senator Rhiannon’s question also does not address is the aspect of scholarships, which I did mention in brief yesterday—those scholarships which will be funded through the contribution of higher education institutions. The opening up of institutions which can participate in the tertiary spectrum, including those who offer diplomas and pre-bachelor degree courses, is going to make pathways so much easier for those who perhaps want an opportunity to see if they can do a Bachelor of Business or something like that.

Senator Cameron: That’s not what they’re saying at UWS.

Senator PAYNE: And the UWS College, Senator Cameron, as you would know, or should know—perhaps you do not; perhaps that is not something you have come across in your peregrinations through Western Sydney—is a very good example of exactly that sort of thing. It actually establishes an opportunity for students— (Time expired)

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (14:23): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Senator, does your government’s plan to charge interest at the higher rate of up to six per cent on all existing HECS debts constitute a broken contract with the 1.8 million Australians who are still repaying their student debt, many of whom have graduated and are in the workforce? This does not create the tertiary-educated nation you speak of.

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:24): I thank Senator Rhiannon for her supplementary question. It is actually interesting that HECS is raised in the chamber this afternoon. I do not know whether all the members here have read one of Dr Andrew Leigh's co-authored books, Imagining Australia, but there is this very, very interesting piece in Dr Leigh's book—and I believe that those opposite are very familiar with Dr Leigh:

... we propose that Australian universities be free to set ... fees according to the market value of their degrees. A deregulated or market-based—

Senator Rhiannon: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. I draw your attention to the issue of relevance. The senator is speaking on issues not linked with the question and reading out quotes about that issue. Could you draw her attention back to the question asked, please.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am listening to the minister's answer closely. There is no point of order at this stage. The minister still has 25 seconds remaining.
Senator PAYNE: Let me start again with Dr Leigh's words—he is, of course, the shadow Assistant Treasurer:

… we propose that Australian universities be free to set … fees according to the market value of their degrees. A deregulated or market-based HECS will make the student contribution system fairer, because the fees students pay will more closely approximate the value they receive through future earnings.

Let me also say that it is very important to note that current students will effectively be grandfathered. These new arrangements— (Time expired)

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (14:26): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Yesterday on Sky News, Minister Pyne stated that the coalition's university deregulation agenda would:

… drive the price down because competition always drives the price down.

But less than a minute later the minister stated that prices might go up or might go down, depending on competition. Senator, which of Minister Pyne's statements is true? And can you explain how prices go up if competition always drives prices down?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:26): I think that what is very important to note is that, in a competitive market, some prices go up and some prices go down. And we can be confident that some prices will go down because, for the first time ever, the Commonwealth will be supporting all students in all undergraduate courses, from higher education diplomas to bachelor degrees. With 80,000 more students funded for the first time, fees must go down. Competition between universities and colleges is also going to help to prevent fees from rising excessively. We will also, of course, as I mentioned earlier, have our universities and colleges being required to spend one dollar in every five dollars of additional revenue on Commonwealth scholarships which will provide support to disadvantaged students. This is a major equity program. The opportunities that will be available to disadvantaged students— (Time expired)

Senator Conroy interjecting—

Senator Brandis interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senators Brandis and Conroy, it would assist the conduct of business in the chamber if your discussion was held outside.

Budget

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for Defence, Senator Johnston. I refer the minister to the legacy left by Labor of a Defence Force that has been hollowed out by a defence budget that has been gutted to the tune of $16 billion. Can the minister inform the Senate of how the budget reaffirms the coalition government's commitment to defence?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:28): I thank the senator for his question and his longstanding interest in defence matters. The task to restore the defence budget is, as we all know on this side of the chamber, monumental. Those on the other side have been talking about deceit. Well, the architects of deceit—the people who wrote the book on it—are sitting over there when it comes to the defence budget. They had absolutely no qualms in ripping $16 billion out of the last four years of the defence budget. They told everybody they had a plan. They gave us a white paper in 2009. They had no plan
and they had an unfunded white paper. In terms of finance the defence portfolio was an unsustainable mess. The first thing I was told in coming to the portfolio by the department was that the Defence Capability Plan is in financial disarray and the 2009 white paper aspirations are unaffordable. There is deceit for you. There is a monumental lie perpetrated on the Australian people. Labor left this important—

Senator Conroy interjecting—

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On my left! Senator Johnston, continue.

Senator JOHNSTON: Labor left this important portfolio in what has been described, as I say, by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute as 'an unsustainable mess'. In fact, the previous government slashed 10.5 per cent from the 2012-13 budget, the biggest cut since the Korean War, taking us back to a share of GDP for defence to 1938 levels. They moved 119 programs—programs often relating to men and women in the field in Afghanistan and their protection—to the right, delayed another eight and cancelled another eight whilst we were fighting a war. *(Time expired)*

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (14:31): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister further advise the Senate how the budget honours the defence commitments made by the coalition at the last election?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:31): Can I quote the author of the words 'unsustainable mess', the most respected commentator on defence economics and policy resourcing, Mark Thomson, from *The Age*:

A very good budget for defence.

He went on to say:

I was on the record saying that the budget Labor gave [in 2012] left things in an unsustainable mess. What we're seeing here is the first stage of the repair job.

Tuesday night's budget delivered on some very important election commitments. We said we would start on the road to two per cent of GDP for defence. We commenced that and Thomson has acknowledged that this is a strong and positive first step.

Thank you, Prime Minister Abbott; thank you, Treasurer Hockey; and thank you—a real finance minister, may I say—Mathias Cormann. *(Time expired)*

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (14:32): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate how, under the coalition, defence funding as a percentage of GDP compares to Labor's record of mismanagement?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:32): As I have said, the defence budget delivered by Labor in 2012-13 had defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP at 1.6 per cent—not seen since 1938 levels. We took that figure on Tuesday night to 1.8 per cent of GDP, on the road to the two per cent that we promised. The numbers are there for all to see. We on this side of the chamber are dinkum about Australia's defence. We are serious about protecting the men and women and the vital energy industries that go to East Asia into the future, come what may.
This government, may I say, has taken responsibility that was abrogated for the last five years in terms of defence. No nonsense—we are getting on with the job. The adults are back in the room!

**Budget**

**Senator STERLE** (Western Australia) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion. I refer to the minister's answer in the Senate yesterday where he referred to Budget Paper No. 2, and I quote:

If you look carefully, the $409 million had a contribution of $355 million, of which $239 million was a save but the other $115 million came back into the budget in terms of our savings.

Given that the minister's own arithmetic yesterday in question time does not add up and Budget Paper No. 2 does not reflect the minister's numbers, does the minister maintain his answers contain accuracy, not just fantasy?

**Senator SCULLION** (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:34): Of course, I do stand by the numbers. The numbers do stand at both $239 million as a proportion of that and at $115 million. Many senators opposite would be interested to learn that $54.1 million of those funds were invested, as we promised before the election. That is what we on this side do; we make an election promise and we stick to it. There is $2.5 million for community engagement police officers, $3.8 million—

*Opposition senators interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! When there is silence on my left, we will proceed.

**Senator SCULLION:** There is $3.8 million for the Child Abuse Task Force and $13.4 million for Indigenous education engagement through the Sporting Chance Program. Of course, that would be very popular with those on the other side. They were the 3,000 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women, who were told: 'You're in the Clontarf Foundation, but we forgot to put anything in forward estimates.' Well done! It is all right; we have repaired the damage. We have provided $13.4 million, which was accidentally left off your forward estimates. So these people now actually have a future, as a part of what I think is one of the greatest engagement programs around, the Clontarf Foundation.

Of course, people working and living in very remote areas are very dependent on renewable energy and we have ensured that the Outback Power program of $10.6 million will in fact be maintained.

**Senator STERLE** (Western Australia) (14:37): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the portfolio budget statement of the Prime Minister's department which at page 48 shows a reduction in the funding to remote Australia' strategies, which includes support for remote housing. Is the minister prepared to repeat his guarantee to the Senate yesterday that there will be no cuts to remote housing? If not, can the minister outline what other programs for remote communities will be cut?

**Senator SCULLION** (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:37): I am prepared to repeat that guarantee. As you would be aware, Senator, we deliver that housing through NPARIH, and NPARIH, as I have said, is not subject to any savings. It is not a part of the savings regime.
I did say yesterday in relation to the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing that we will no longer be continuing the national partnership and we are now having negotiations through a bilateral round. What I intended to say was that we will be negotiating separate bilateral agreements under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. But the short answer to your question is: of course I stick with my words of yesterday.

Senator STERLE (Western Australia) (14:38): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question: I refer to the minister's assertion yesterday that 'It beggars belief to know that the Commonwealth is actually delivering municipal services.' Given municipal services include water, sewerage and rubbish collection, can the minister guarantee that no Indigenous community will lose their services under this government?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:38): When I said it beggars belief, I was indicating that just a perfunctory scrutiny of section 51 of the Constitution generally lays out in bicky blocky parts what is the responsibility of the states and territories and what is the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth government. In regard to municipal services, it has always been local government who have provided that.

Over some time in some jurisdictions, not all, you will not find any provision of municipal services through the Commonwealth government. Over some time, the municipal services have been provided by government. It is this government's intention that they go back to being the responsibilities of states and territories as it is, for example, in New South Wales and other jurisdictions. We are entering into negotiations in good faith with states and territories— (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: Before I call Senator Bernardi, I acknowledge the presence in the President's Gallery of the former President of the Senate, the former Senator Alan Ferguson.

Honourable senators: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson. Can the minister advise the Senate of the positive steps the government is taking in the budget to assist veterans and their families and the value of any recent commentary on these measures?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:40): I thank Senator Bernardi for his question and acknowledge his longstanding interest in veterans' affairs. I say it is nice to have a question about the budget—so far, no good from the Labor Party in relation to this. They have lost interest, and I wonder why. Zig and Zag aren't here. I was waiting for a question. I did not get one yesterday and I am pleased to have one today.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ronaldson, just answer the question.

Senator RONALDSON: The Abbott government is very proudly putting $12 billion into veterans' affairs in the 2014-15 budget—$6.5 billion in pensions and income support and $5.4
million in health services. This is $12 billion, and this figure is very important because, if you
look at the quantum of that figure, that is the same quantum of Labor's legacy of debt—
$12,000 million is the same amount we are spending on veterans' affairs. This is the
magnitude of the legacy that has been left those opposite.

I want to go through some of the budget commitments today for Senator Bernardi. We are
delivering of course on our DFRB/DFRDB indexation commitment opposed by those
opposite for three long years—delivered in full. We are putting $1 million back into advocacy
funding—again, ripped out from those advocacy services providing services to veterans all
over this nation, the length and breadth of this nation, by the former minister. We are
expanding mental health services for veterans. We are recognising— (Time expired)

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (14:43): Mr President, I ask a supplementary
question. Thank you for that answer, Minister. Can the minister further inform the Senate of
the specific measures in the budget to address the mental health challenges facing veterans
and their families?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the
Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:43): Thank
you very much—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator RONALDSON: I don't think it is very funny. If you want to laugh at it, that it
entirely up to you. If you think it is funny, that is a reflection on you. I am pleased to inform
the Senate this budget allows for greater access for eligible veterans for treatment for
diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression without the need to establish
that their mental health condition is related to service.

From 1 July this year, we will also pay for treatment for diagnosed alcohol and substance
abuse disorders. I can also inform the Senate that funding will be made available under
Medicare for a new physical and mental health assessment for ex-serving personnel to help
their GPs identify any health concerns early and to treat or refer appropriately to other
services. The government continues to support the Veterans and Veterans Family Counselling
Service, a free and confidential service which specialises in counselling for veterans. (Time
expired)

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (14:44): Mr President, I ask a further
supplementary question. Once again, I thank the minister and I ask if he could explain how
the government's budget announcements combined with other measures will achieve better
mental health outcomes for veterans now and into the future?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the
Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:44): I can,
and thank you Senator Bernardi. The new-look Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on mental
health issues, which I announced on 13 March, elevates and highlights the government's
commitment to treating the mental health conditions and needs of the veteran ex-service
community. We will consider, via PMAC, high level and strategic issues and provide advice
to the Prime Minister and myself about future directions for veterans mental health policy.
The PMAC will be chaired by former Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Russ Crane. Vice
Admiral Crane, who will be known to a lot of people in this chamber, like the government,
committed to ensuring that the mental health assistance to veterans and their families is relevant, forward-thinking and achieves the right outcomes. I am very pleased that Ben Roberts-Smith VC will be the deputy chair. He brings the perspective of a younger veteran. Ryan Stokes will also join PMAC and I want to acknowledge the long history of support of the Stokes family for the veteran and ex-service community. *(Time expired)*

**Budget**

**Senator XENOPHON** (South Australia) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Finance representing the Treasurer. The budget plans to terminate the Automotive Transformation Scheme by 1 January 2018, some three years earlier than planned. The budget papers specify cuts of $618.5 million over eight years from 2013-14. Given that the scheme has a critical role in the restructuring and diversifying of the automotive components industry once Ford, Holden and Toyota cease manufacturing in Australia, what consultation and economic modelling has the government done on the job losses, business closures and lost manufacturing output this budget measure will have on the 33,000 direct employees of the automotive components sector and its multiplier effect? How does this fit in with Minister Cormann's statement to the chamber yesterday that the government wants to fix the economy by 'creating a stronger environment in which all businesses large and small can prosper'?

**Senator CORMANN** (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:46): I thank Senator Xenophon for that question. He is quite right: this government does want to create an environment where all businesses, small and large, can prosper. We are doing that by implementing the strong agenda for a stronger, more prosperous economy that we took to the last election. Of course, the budget that was delivered by Joe Hockey on Tuesday night is an important next step as we implement that agenda.

In relation to subsidies for the car industry, what we have done in this budget is to face the facts, and the facts are that Holden and Toyota have followed others previously in saying that they will no longer manufacture cars in Australia. As such, it is entirely appropriate that from 1 January 2018 we will not continue to provide for subsidies towards manufacturers, given that at that point in time they will no longer be in Australia manufacturing cars.

Having said all that, we are very conscious of the fact that there is the need for an appropriate transition through the period between now and when Holden and Toyota stop manufacturing in Australia. The Abbott government is working very closely with relevant state governments and with Holden and Toyota to work through that transition. Indeed, we have made funding available to facilitate that transition. And we expect that Holden and Toyota also will provide appropriate support to their employees to assist them and their families through the transition of what has been caused by the decisions they have announced.

**Senator XENOPHON** (South Australia) (14:48): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. The question related to the component manufacturers, not to Holden and Toyota. How does the government respond to Richard Riley, the CEO of the Federation of Automotive Product Manufacturers who said yesterday that the cuts will severely impact on the ability of the sector to restructure and transition after the departure of the vehicle manufacturers? Does the government acknowledge Mr Riley's concern on behalf of his members that unless this move is reversed 'thousands of jobs could be lost in the sector within the next 18 months'?
Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:49): I thank Senator Xenophon for his supplementary. No, we don't agree with that proposition. What I would like to point out in this context is that, as part of our budget, the government has actually established the $476 million Industry Skills Fund to support businesses seeking to enter the export market diversify or improve competitiveness in the global market. This industry skills investment fund is a strategic vehicle for supporting businesses to be competitive in the global market and to grow the Australian economy. It will commence on 1 January 2015 and will deliver up to 200,000 targeted training places and support services over four years. It addresses key industry feedback provided in particular to the Vocational Education and Training Reform Task Force about the need for skills training to be responsive and relevant to business needs.

So this government is working through a series of practical initiatives— (Time expired)

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (14:50): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I will have another go. What does the government say to automotive product manufacturers' concerns that the slashing of the automotive transformation scheme will render it ineffective and will not only create huge investment uncertainty in the sector but could hasten the departure of vehicle manufacturers from Australia and in turn destroy any real chance of component manufacturers successfully restructuring?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:44): The one thing that has put irreversible pressure on manufacturing in Australia is the bad performance of the previous Labor government over the last six years. The previous government killed manufacturing in Australia over the last six years, pushing up the cost of doing business with the carbon tax and choking business with all of the additional red tape—in particular in the workplace relations area. If we want to be competitive internationally in manufacturing we have got to focus on—

Senator Xenophon: Mr President, on relevance: the question relates to the slashing of the Automotive Transformation Scheme. It is in relation to the impact of this particular scheme on the automotive components sector.

The PRESIDENT: I do draw the minister's attention to the question. Minister, you have 31 seconds remaining.

Senator CORMANN: But you cannot consider one without the other. Obviously, anything that pushes up the cost of doing business in Australia, which makes our manufacturing sector in Australia less competitive, is going to have implications on the sustainability of manufacturing into the future. The decisions made by the previous government did push up the cost of doing business recklessly and irresponsibly. What we are doing is facing the facts. You cannot continue to provide for subsidies to manufacturing that will no longer happen after a particular period. (Time expired)

Budget

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (14:52): My question is to Senator Brandis as Minister for the Arts. I refer to the minister's decision to abolish the $6.4 million Get Reading! program. I also refer to his well-known love of books, with the construction of not one but two taxpayer funded bookshelves to house his taxpayer funded book collection. Given the minister is happy
for taxpayers to fund his own reading, why is he cutting a program that encourages other Australians to read?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:52): I welcome the opportunity offered by Senator Singh's question to explain to the Senate some of the initiatives within the Arts portfolio which the government has announced in the budget, because—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am waiting to hear the answer.

Senator BRANDIS: Senator Singh, as you know as the shadow spokesman for the arts in this chamber, the arts budget covers a variety of different creative activities. Australia can be very, very proud indeed of its arts companies, its arts practitioners and its arts administrators.

Senator Wong interjecting—

Senator BRANDIS: And they do too, Senator Wong. I am delighted say they do. One of the initiatives that the government did announce as part of the budget—and this in a time of straitened financial circumstances, I might say, thanks to the legacy of Senator Wong and her colleagues on the opposition front bench—was an increase in funding to the Australian Ballet School to enable the Australian Ballet School—

Senator Singh: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The question was about the Get Reading! program. We know about Senator Brandis's bookshelves; we want to hear about why the government is cutting the reading program.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Brandis, you need to come to the question.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! You still have 51 seconds remaining.

Senator BRANDIS: I was just trying to put the question into context for the honourable senator, because the money that the Australian taxpayer invests in the arts, of course, is spread across a variety of genres. If I may, I did want to steal a little of the time to congratulate the Australian Ballet School on the additional $1 million—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on relevance. We do value the contribution to the ballet. The specific question is about the Get Reading! program. Now we have 28 seconds.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Brandis, at the 51-second mark—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator Conroy: We could buy every kid—you need to address the question, George.

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator Conroy! At the 51-second mark, Senator Brandis, I reminded you of the question. You need to address the question. You have 28 seconds remaining.

Senator BRANDIS: Thank you, Senator Singh for the opportunity. Now turning to the Get Reading! Program, Senator Singh, you should be aware from the questions you asked at estimates during the February estimates round that not all of the funds in the Get Reading!
program had been allocated. In fact, most of the funds in the Get Reading! program had not been allocated. So, in seeking economies within the arts budget so we could fund beneficial things like the residence of the Australian Ballet School, we looked elsewhere— (Time expired)

**Senator SINGH** (Tasmania) (14:56): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Let us see how we go with this one. I refer to the $9.5 million cut to the Indigenous Languages Support program. Given the Prime Minister has claimed he will be a Prime Minister for Aboriginal affairs, why are the government and this minister ripping funding from a program that preserves and revives Indigenous languages?

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:56): Once again, as I pointed out in relation to the Get Reading! program, it was also the case with the Indigenous Languages Support program: not all of the funding within that program had been allocated. So, when the government addressed the arts budget, economies were sought among other things from programs which had not been fully expensed. That enabled us to keep the economies within the arts budget very low—relatively low. The arts community did very well out of this budget. It also gave us the flexibility to introduce new measures. I mentioned the residence of the Australian Ballet School. Another is the allocation of additional funding to Creative Partnerships Australia within the arts budget so as to enable them to enhance their— (Time expired)

**Senator SINGH** (Tasmania) (14:58): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer the minister to his 2007 claim that the minister who had been most generous to the arts in terms of funding was ‘me’. Given the government has ripped more than $100 million from the arts funding across Australia, isn’t it now more accurate to say that he is the minister who has been the most destructive for the arts.

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:58): Thank you, Senator Singh. I am flattered that you read my 2007 speech to the National Press Club. Indeed, it was the case that in 2007 the Howard government, which that year brought back its 10th consecutive budget surplus, had a lot of extra money to spend on the arts, as it had a lot of extra money to spend on other beneficial social programs and a lot of extra money to spend on tax cuts. But you know what? After six years of Labor government there is not a lot of extra money. In fact, there is no money; there is $123 billion of accumulated budget deficits, and for that you need look no further than to your colleague Senator Wong, who was the finance minister who presided over those accumulated budget deficits. So look no further than Senator Wong for the answer to your question— (Time expired)

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

**Senator O'SULLIVAN** (Queensland) (14:59): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator Fifield. Can the minister inform the Senate how the coalition government will deliver the NDIS? Can the minister also advise what measures are in the budget for the National Disability Insurance Scheme?

**Senator FIFIELD** (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:59): I can advise the Senate that Labor's month-
long scare campaign leading up to the budget in relation to the NDIS came to what it always was going to, and that is a complete misrepresentation of this government's intentions. This government has always been committed to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This government is committed to delivering the National Disability Insurance Scheme in full. We are committed to delivering the National Disability Insurance Scheme within the agreed funding envelope.

There was another item in the budget in relation to the NDIS which you may not have picked up. That is that the previous government misapplied an efficiency dividend because they made it cover package costs for the NDIS. So in the budget this week we are returning an extra $44 million to the NDIS that the previous government wanted to take away. Far from seeking to wind back or cut the NDIS, it is this government that is actually returning to the NDIS funding that the previous government was intending to cut.

We are committed to the NDIS. We are committed to rolling it out in full, but we are equally committed to making sure that the NDIS has sound foundations. We know from work commissioned by the independent board of the NDIS—the board appointed under the previous government—that the decision of the previous government to bring forward the commencement of trial sites by a year has compromised some of the key capabilities of the agency. We are determined to address those capabilities so that the scheme is rolled out well and in full.

Senator O’SULLIVAN (Queensland) (15:02): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister further advise the Senate how the government is delivering on its commitment to implement the NDIS?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:02): Only a week or two ago the Prime Minister, the member for Corangamite, the Premier of Victoria and I opened the national headquarters of the NDIS in Geelong. It was a great day, and it was a great day for jobs for the Barwon region. Also within the last few weeks, the Prime Minister signed an agreement with the Northern Territory government for the commencement of trial sites on 1 July. The Prime Minister also, about a month ago, signed an agreement with the Premier of Western Australia for trial sites in Western Australia. Those actions, in combination with the budget announcement in relation to returning that efficiency dividend money to the scheme, are the actions of a government that is intent on delivering the NDIS in full.

Senator O’SULLIVAN (Queensland) (15:03): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate of any obstacles to the delivery of the NDIS?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:03): I can. The obstacle, and it is an unfortunate one, is the temptation which those opposite can never resist to seek to bring the NDIS into the mire of partisanship. I would hope, and I think all fair-minded colleagues would hope, that the NDIS is something that can be elevated beyond partisanship. As an example of the approach that should be taken, I cite the joint parliamentary committee for the NDIS, chaired by Mr Mal Brough. I must pay credit to the members of that committee—members and senators from all parties who are approaching their work in a very nonpartisan way and are simply seeking to make the NDIS the very best that it can be—which is the approach of this
government. To those opposite who are on occasion tempted to cause unnecessary concern amongst Australians with disability, I would say: stop, get on board and let's deliver the NDIS.  

(Time expired)

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Ministerial Staff: Code of Conduct

Senator Scullion (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:05): I have further information to provide to the Senate on a question asked by Senator Wong on Tuesday. As I said on Tuesday, I can assure the Senate that, like all members of this government, I take the Statement of Standards for Ministerial Staff seriously. This government recognises the importance of appropriate governance arrangements for staff. I remind the Labor Party that it was this government that strengthened ministerial staff standards when we were elected last year.

As I outlined to the Senate on Tuesday, Mr Johnstone came on board to assist me in the set-up of the Remote School Attendance Strategy in late 2013. As anyone who has met Mr Johnstone will attest, he is a strong and active community representative and someone who is highly regarded in the Aboriginal and Islander community. After joining my office late last year, Mr Johnstone completed his private interests disclosure, as all staff are required to do. After reviewing his disclosure, there were a couple of items that required follow-up. This process was underway when we received a media inquiry about Mr Johnstone's employment prior to joining my office.

Following the media inquiry I moved immediately to clarify and address the issues raised. My office indicated to Mr Johnstone that he would need to amend some of his personal affairs—but, as he never intended to stay in my office long term, he made the decision to resign. There was no intentional impropriety by my former staff member, and there was no conflict of interest between his role in my office and the Indigenous Development Corporation.

Mr Johnstone was focused on getting Indigenous children back to school. That was his role in my office. He is committed and passionate about advancing the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Islander Australians, and I am sure he will continue to make an invaluable contribution in this area.

Senator Wong (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:06): I seek leave to take note of the minister's statement.

Leave granted.

Senator Wong: We have just had a minister who without providing the usual courtesies, unless he rang my office and I was not advised, has come into the chamber to talk about another breach of ministerial standards under this government. He was asked questions on Tuesday and he said he would take them on notice. All of a sudden today, at the end of the sitting period, he comes in to deliver a pre-prepared statement to try to explain another breach of the Prime Minister's standards that are expected both of staff and ministers. I look forward to exploring this in more detail because I think the Australian people are entitled to know why not one but two ministers in this chamber happen to have staff who have interests in the
portfolios which they administer and refuse to comply with and refuse to apply the standards that the Prime Minister has provided for ministers and for their staff. I remind the minister, and perhaps he would like to prepare himself for questions on this, that the statement of standards for ministerial staff that the Prime Minister has issued says:

The staff should have no involvement in outside employment or in the daily work of any business or retain a directorship of a company without the written agreement of their minister and the Special Minister of State.

This chamber and the Australian people are entitled to know whether that was adhered to. Was there written agreement from Senator Ronaldson or not? When did you know about these interests? These questions have not been answered properly by this minister and what we have again is a government who treats with arrant disregard their own standards of behaviour as set out by the Prime Minister.

**BUDGET**

**Consideration by Estimates Committees**

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:09): Under standing order 74(5), I ask that Senator Fifield remain in the chamber given the notice I gave him earlier today. Pursuant to standing order 74(5)(a), I ask Senator Fifield, in his capacity as Minister representing the Minister for Communications, why, after more than 30 days, answers have not been provided by Minister Turnbull for the following questions on notice from the February 2014 environment and communications Senate estimates. Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 151, 200, 201, 202, 203, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 220, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327 and 328.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:11): I thank Senator Urquhart. I can inform the Senate that answers to those questions will be provided in the near future. The communications portfolio is working to ensure that senators are given the most accurate information possible. However, I do feel duty-bound to point out that I think Senator Urquhart may have a relatively short memory; I appreciate she has not been in this place for a very long time. Senator Conroy, as former minister for communications, often provided answers to questions from the previous communications estimates hearings well after the next round of estimates hearings had begun. I can assure Senator Urquhart that that sort of disrespect to the accountability mechanisms of this place will not be occurring.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:12): I move in accordance with standing order 74(5) (b):

That the Senate take note of the explanation.

In doing so, I note that not one of the 446 questions on notice from Senate estimates in the communications portfolio has been answered—not one from the portfolio area called communications, from Minister Turnbull, who speaks so much about transparency, so much about open government, so much about providing the facts to the community about this portfolio area, so much about better communication. Minister Turnbull needs to be judged by his own standards. Minister Turnbull has not run around saying his mission is payback for any tardiness shown by the former government in answering questions; he has instead clearly said
his mission is to be open. This is a minister who promised time and again for greater transparency, promised to open the books on the National Broadband Network, promised to be consultative and engage with stakeholders. Yet this parliament cannot even get answers to simple questions within a reasonable time frame. Mr Turnbull needs to decide, and indeed his colleagues need to decide, to what standard Minister Turnbull should be judged—the standard he set for himself or the standard of the Minister for the Environment, Minister Hunt, who despite destroying much of what is good in environmental policy has actually found the time to answer most of the questions on notice in the environment portfolio, the other area of responsibility for the relevant Senate committee.

I acknowledge that 446 questions is a lot for any department to handle, particularly a small department like the Department of Communications. I also acknowledge that there were a lot of corporate questions asked by the opposition as well. But the questions I placed on notice go to the heart of this government’s policy—or lack thereof—in communications. There is no need to hold all of the answers back.

Minister Hunt’s department, with the vast changes they were undergoing, were able, in dribs and drabs, to provide many answers. It is not ideal to receive answers to a few questions one day and a few the next, but it is much better than not receiving any at all. Why is Minister Turnbull’s department—which is not being made to go through changes as significant as those at the Department of the Environment—in capable of meeting the reporting date for even one question? It shows a contempt for the Senate estimates process and a contempt for this place—this from a minister who promised to be more open and accountable than previous ministers.

I will not use the Senate’s time to outline every one of the 55 questions on notice that have not been answered, but I will highlight a few, because it is important to put on record the importance of these questions for communications policy in this country—and it is important that Minister Turnbull provides answers to these questions before Senate estimates starts in just 10 days time. Question No. 80 goes to the very heart of Minister Turnbull’s claim that he would be more transparent. I asked for the monthly ready-for-service reports that used to be published on the NBN Co website. These are still collated by the department. They used to be made public. Why can they not be provided? It seems simple. I guess not.

I also asked why there is more information on Telstra’s website about plans to upgrade copper exchanges than there is on NBN Co’s website about its future plans. Again, it is a simple question: justify what is and what is not on NBN Co’s website. The government does not control Telstra, so the question is one of simple analysis—a simple comparison of transparency between NBN Co’s website and Telstra’s.

Question Nos 62 to 67 seek detail about the conduct of the independent cost-benefit analysis and review of regulation. This review is due to report by the middle of June and the Senate is entitled to answers to questions about what directions have been given to the panel of experts, what resources are available to them and how their recommendations will be used to shape the rollout of the Turnbull broadband network.

Question Nos 68 and 70 seek details on how much information the government has about current network coverage, which is important in assessing the funding in the budget for new communications infrastructure. Question Nos 71 to 95 seek further detail about the current state of the NBN and the strategic review, as well as statements made about both.
It is Minister Turnbull’s NBN now. It is up to Minister Turnbull to outline where it is at and what the plans are for the future. In my home state of Tasmania, people are getting frustrated about a range of NBN issues that have nothing to do with the former government and everything to do with this government. People need information to be able to make decisions—and the ‘Minister for Transparency’, as he was going to be, is doing a fantastic job of not giving it to them.

Question Nos 202 and 203 refer to progress with e-government, which has since been identified by the National Commission of Audit as a way to achieve genuine improvements in government efficiency but on which there appears to be no action. Probably the longest policy those opposite took to their three-word-slogan election was the one on e-government, yet they are unable to answer two simple questions about progress in making it happen. E-government will no doubt be a large part of the red tape reduction agenda, but this government is too caught up in itself to answer two small questions on progress in this area. I guess ‘red tape reduction’ is just another three-word slogan.

Then there is question No. 220. No wonder they did not want to answer this question before the budget was announced. The various parts of the question were introduced with the comment:

In relation to Australia Network, presumably the provision of Australia Network’s service is intertwined with Radio Australia and other parts of the ABC, that there are resources, including staff, which are shared.

The first component of the question, then, was:
What would the impact be on jobs and resources at the ABC if Australia Network was taken off the ABC or shut down?

The second part of the question was:
How many jobs only involved in Australia Network would be cut?

The third part of the question was:
What would be the impact on Radio Australia, and what would be the impact on all other parts of the ABC?

The final part of the question was:
What would be the impact of this on each state?

One wonders if we will ever get an answer to this question—much less in the next 10 days.

Their horror budget moved to strip our ABC of the Australia Network and give it, no doubt, to one of their mates in the corporate media—the corporate media that is well-known currently for the ridiculous street punch-up between Mr James Packer and Mr David Gyngell, the corporate media that is still on trial in England for phone tapping, and the corporate media part of which actually wrote about the huge impact on families and low-income earners of this government’s twisted priorities budget. It is no wonder that this question has not been answered.

This is a government that spoke ad nauseum about transparency before the election but is proving to be the most secretive and the most deceitful in living memory. It is not good enough that no questions on notice—not one—have been answered by Minister Turnbull. He should be ashamed of this fact and he should move to rectify the situation immediately.
Thursday, 15 May 2014

SENATE

2781

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Budget

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (15:20): I move:

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

Senator Brandis's answer confirmed that both Get Reading!—a $6.4 million program—and the $9.5 million Indigenous Languages Support program are to be abolished. He did not give any justification for cutting these programs nor did he give any justification for $100 million being cut out of the Arts portfolio—something the sector thinks is deplorable.

What we do know is that Senator Brandis's taxpayer funded bookshelves, which house his taxpayer funded book collection, will not be cut. His books will be there for him to read at his pleasure. But when it comes to encouraging other Australians to read, he has complete disregard and is quite happy to cut Get Reading! and its $6.4 million. No wonder Senator Brandis has been called, correctly, one of the meanest and least generous of all ministers for the arts in Australia, presiding over some $100 million in cuts that will have devastating impacts on the arts and cultural activities in this country.

Labor believes that the arts are a vital part of Australia as a nation. They are part of our identity. They are what make us who we are as Australians—arts and culture. That is why under our time in government we increased arts funding to ensure that Labor's Creative Australia policy would receive some $200 million in funding for the arts. This budget has taken most of that funding back.

How can Senator Brandis justify himself as an arts minister? In 2007 Senator Brandis said: 'The minister who had been most generous to the arts in terms of funding was me.' That is an outright lie. That is not correct because we know now, clearly, that he is one of the meanest. We need only look at what some of the key spokespeople in the arts have said about the arts funding in this budget. Matthew Deaner from Screen Producers Australia said that film makers are concerned at 'a disproportionate cut to Screen Australia' including to a key area of industry innovation and multiplatform games. The agency received some $100.8 million in funding in 2013-14, but it is now losing $25 million in government funding over that period plus the termination of the Australian Interactive Games Fund.

Further clarification of the meanness of this minister comes from Sue McCreadie, the Actors' Equity director, who says that the cuts threatened the recent 'renaissance of Australian drama' ignited by extra funding for drama production on the ABC. We know also that cuts have been made to the ABC as well. Ms McCreadie added:

Australians want to see local content on our screens, everyone loves it. But where's the future? Where is the future, Senator Brandis, when you are cutting some $100 million out of arts and culture in this country?

In Senator Brandis's answer he spoke of the ballet. I asked him specifically about the abolition of the $6.4 million Get Reading! program, and the only answer he could give was to talk about the funding to the ballet. Well, Senator Brandis, the arts are more than just the ballet. He acknowledges the diversity of the arts, but only wants to talk about the ballet. The
arts extend right across a range of arts and cultural platforms, all of which will suffer now under these cuts that this government has announced. There are cuts such as $38 million over four years to Screen Australia and $28.2 million to the Australia Council. That is something that is well beyond what Ms McCreadie thought to expect from an efficiency dividend. Of course, we also know of the cuts to the ABC and SBS.

This is an appalling budget when it comes to arts and culture. Something that was a Labor legacy, where the arts finally had a strong footing, has now been ripped from under just about every arts organisation in this country. Senator Brandis should be ashamed of that.

Senator BACK (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (15:26): I take note of the answers given by Senator Scullion to questions by Senators Peris and Sterle. I wish to place on record my appreciation and congratulations to this minister for the excellence of his role as the Minister for Indigenous Affairs in this particular government, and to compliment Senator Scullion on his deep engagement and his deep understanding of his portfolio.

He made mention this afternoon, when challenged, of the funding in his portfolio. He very, very expertly—and, I think, adroitly—outlined what a small proportion of his $1.2 billion budget was being reduced. Of course the proof is the fact that, when you get a person as competent as Senator Scullion is in handling the matters of his portfolio, when you get somebody from the Northern Territory who deeply understands the challenges, who deeply understands the solutions, who has the cooperation and support of those people to actually enact the policies he is implementing and so expertly addressing to this chamber, then I have every confidence that the very, very modest reduction about which he spoke will be as nothing in a $1.2 billion program.

He mentioned in his answer, as I recall, the $3.8 million in the Aboriginal child abuse program which deals with the terrible problem that we all know exists and has existed for so long in urban, regional, rural and remote Aboriginal communities. He spoke about the $13.4 million that the then Labor government, whilst they took all the media attention about its allocation to the Clontarf Foundation, conveniently forgot to actually put into their forward estimates. I speak with some pride about the Clontarf Foundation, named as it is from the original Clontarf College, which was a program established very much with the cooperation of Mr Harry Neesham. It was bad luck for me that he was the coach of the Dockers, but he then saw the light. I also draw attention to Mr David Wirrpanda, a great Eagles footballer, an Indigenous man, who is doing great work with young Indigenous boys and girls to try to encourage them into another of Senator Scullion’s great programs, the Back to School Program. Senator Scullion spoke eloquently in this place today about those programs, about his intentions and policies and about the implementation of them. Whenever I have travelled in rural and remote Western Australia in recent times I always seem to see Senator Scullion engaging with those communities.

In the few minutes left to me I wish to reflect on what would have to go down in history as one of the most scandalous failures and acts of bastardry of the Labor government in its time. That was the action taken on 8 June 2011 when the then Prime Minister, Ms Gillard, and the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Ludwig, completely and utterly cut the guts out of the live export trade in this country. They particularly decimated the industry associated with Aboriginal cattle stations across the north.
It is disappointing that Senator Sterle, who asked one of the questions, was himself a champion of the process which helped us all to reverse that disgusting and despicable decision that was taken. The impact that it had on Indigenous Aboriginal stations in the Kimberley and particularly in the Territory is still resonating today. It was a program run by Aboriginal people, an excellent program of cattle management, a program that was adding employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people and middle aged Aboriginal people as they worked on the stations, as they managed the stations, and as they properly got stock ready for export alongside the other pastoralists in Northern Australia. It gave them the opportunity to gain the self-respect that so many of us know was lacking among Aboriginal people. This action taken by the then government would stand them condemned when it comes to the aspirations of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in this country.

I speak with some pride, as I listened to the answers by Senator Scullion in outlining his policies, procedures, actions, challenges and solutions in the Indigenous affairs portfolio. I look forward to his success. (Time expired)

**Senator FURNER** (Queensland) (15:31): I too rise to take note of answers given in question time today. If there has ever been a greater example of what divides the Labor Party from the Liberal and National parties it is the budget that was delivered on Tuesday night—a budget delivered on deceit, a budget delivered on cruel cuts and unfair increases to everyone in this country. We need only look at the example delivered in that budget of $80 billion in savage cuts to schools and hospitals. I will give an example of what an LNP government is doing in my home state of Queensland. They are actually selling schools in Queensland. That is the extent they go to. That is how LNP governments treat education. Other examples include the destruction of Medicare with the introduction of a $7 payment when you go to the GP. My office has been bombarded by people ringing and emailing, concerned about the horrendous budget that has been handed down by this government.

Before the election Mr Abbott promised there would be no cuts in these areas. He promised there would be no cuts in health or education. He promised there would be no cuts to the ABC and the SBS. He promised there would be no changes to pensions. We all know that that was a malicious lie. We need only look at today's papers. There is an article in *The Courier-Mail* with the headline 'Truss accuses seniors of using super on cruisy life'. That demonstrates how out of touch this government is in terms of what they have delivered in this budget. The article states:

Older Australians are relying on the age pension because they are blowing their super on cruises and luxury items, Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss has declared.

It continues:

"Increasingly, the lifestyle and the savings for superannuation are being seen as an opportunity to enjoy a few cruises and the luxuries of life for a few years until it runs out and then people wish to fall back on the age pension," the Nationals leader told the Conservative Breakfast Club in Brisbane.

How out of touch is this person! I will use my father's retirement as an example, Mr Deputy President. He was a police officer, just like you. He retired at 55 and he is still self-funding his retirement. And you know very well, Mr Deputy President, it is not a very generous pension that police officers receive, particularly at his age. My father has never been out of this country on a cruise. Every year, he looks forward to playing golf with other police officers around the country. That is his luxury—going round to capital cities playing golf on a
golf course! That is how out of touch this government and this Deputy Prime Minister are with the people out there who are trying to make ends meet. It really surprises me because the Deputy Prime Minister comes from Wide Bay, which has one of the largest populations of seniors of any electorate in the country.

That same article in *The Courier-Mail* quotes a retirees organisation that has come out attacking the Deputy Prime Minister:

"Retirees generally do not squander their money and it is nonsense to suggest they do," National Seniors Australia chief executive Michael O'Neill said. "People who save and accumulate money for their retirement do not then go out and throw it up against the wall just to get a pension."

Last Sunday I was out working on a stall in the seat of Ferny Grove, which fits into one of my duty seats—Dickson. People were coming up to me extremely concerned about this budget. No doubt, as a result of the feedback, the emails and the phone calls my office has been receiving, this will continue. People will remember the extent of this budget. They will remember the seat; they will remember the promises that were broken; they will remember the impact in areas such as education, health and pensions.

Lo and behold, rather than try and do something to alleviate the pressure on the budget from the gold-plated parental leave, they retain that, they clutch onto that, and make sure that $50,000 is still there and able to be provided to millionaires when they have their children. On top of that, the government is talking down the economy. This is probably one of the most alarming areas. We left the budget and the economy in good hands with a AAA rating. But now you have the government talking down the economy—*(Time expired)*

**Senator SESELJA** (Australian Capital Territory) (15:36): I will pick up where Senator Furner left off. He is claiming that the Labor Party left the budget in good circumstances. That is where I am going to start. The fundamental problem with the modern Labor Party, in opposition right now, is that they simply will not acknowledge the damage that they did to our budgetary situation and the mess that they left us to pick up. Martin Parkinson, the Treasury Secretary, eloquently outlined the challenge that we face and that Labor now seeks to deny. It is not credible to deny the budget problems and the budget mess that Labor has left us. Martin Parkinson said:

Without policy change, the budget is projected to be in an underlying cash deficit for the next 10 years.

If this situation came to pass, it would mean that the budget would be in deficit for 16 consecutive years, substantially longer than the 7 years of deficits in the early 1990s.

Martin Parkinson's warning needs to be taken seriously: 16 consecutive years of deficits, which would lead us to $667 billion in debt, is unsustainable. It is a budget emergency and it does need to be dealt with.

That is what this budget is about. It is about saying that we cannot keep doing things in the way the Labor Party was, that we have to make savings, that we have to change the way that we deliver our budgets, the way that we spend, so that we can get our finances on a sustainable footing. As we talk about all those important programs, as we talk about health and Medicare, as we talk about education, as we talk about pensions, all of these things are important, and that is why we need to keep them sustainable. If you look at nations when they lose control of their finances all of these things suffer. All of these things suffer when debt and deficit get out of control because the severe cuts have to happen. We have seen it in
Europe and we are not there and we do not want to be there. This is what this budget is about—stopping us from going down that road. The Labor Party well and truly had us on that road.

Let us look at some of the figures that they left us with, what they inherited and what they left. They inherited a $19.8 billion surplus and they left us with a $47 billion deficit. The average budget position under the Howard government was an $8.1 billion surplus; the average under Labor was a $39.7 billion deficit. Government debt was negative $44.8 billion when we left office and it was $191.5 billion in net debt when Labor left office. What has this left us with? It has left us with an interest bill of $12 billion per year. One billion dollars a month is what Australians are being asked just to service the interest on our debt. If we do not get it under control, this could rise to almost $3 billion per month, and that would be disastrous. If we allowed our nation's finances to get to a situation where we were paying almost $3 billion a month to service our debt, $3 billion a month in interest payments, we would see health suffer, we would see pensions suffer, we would see defence spending suffer, we would see our education system suffer. All of these services that need to be funded, all of the infrastructure that our nation needs would become less and less affordable if we allow debt and deficit to get out of control. So I say to senators opposite, I say to the Labor Party, stop living in denial. Martin Parkinson's warning is right: 16 years of deficits would take us down a very dangerous path, a path which would lead to severe cuts because eventually the money has to be paid back. So future generations would be asked to pay increasing amounts of tax and suffer under the burden of increasing amounts of debt, all the while seeing their services cut back. That is what the coalition is against, that is what this budget is about—fixing the mess we inherited from the Labor Party. (Time expired)

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (15:41): I take note of answers to questions from opposition senators today. I have to say with regard to this budget of broken promises that it is quite amazing the way that government senators are responding. I know that the Treasurer and the Prime Minister of this country are desperately out there on the airwaves and anywhere else they can go, quite frankly, to sell this budget, this harsh and cruel budget, this budget of broken promises. But here in the Senate it barely rates a mention, and that is because I think government senators opposite are truly embarrassed and are hanging their heads in shame about how bad this budget is. All they can do is either continue to carp about Labor, making up these ridiculous assertions about what we did and did not do in government. We hear that almost on a daily basis. If we are not hearing that, it is about avoiding answering the questions or it is sarcasm. Indeed, naming former Labor politicians is a great habit and seems to delight those opposite over and over again, because that is what they spend their time doing, despite the questions we ask them.

Today I think Senator Scullion takes the prize, if there were one, by inventing new language, 'blicky-blocky', in answer to serious questions about a budget of broken promises, about a budget which particularly for Aboriginal people really entrenches disadvantage. Despite the Prime Minister of this country before he became the Prime Minister championing the fact that he wanted to be the Prime Minister for Aboriginal affairs, this portfolio has received savage cuts and we have certainly seen money ripped out from all over services to Aboriginal people—$90 million out of health services just gone. We know that Aboriginal health in this country is a long way from where it should be. The average life expectancy is
shameful, yet we see that Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey just slash and burn $90 million out of health services. And it does not stop there: they have stolen money from preventive health. Aboriginal young people have some of the highest smoking rates in this country, an absolute tragedy, and what do we do? We do not leave that money in preventive health, no; we redirect that to our new centrepiece that Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey have gone on about but seem to be failing to get much traction on, their medical research future fund. Then there is the GP supertax. If that does not further disadvantage Aboriginal people I do not know what does.

But that is not the only area where there have been savage cuts. It goes on and on. We heard Senator Singh today talk about money that was to preserve Aboriginal language in this country. It was Labor who delivered the apology to the stolen generation—something many in the then opposition at that time could not even acknowledge. So, obviously, it is easy for the government to take millions out of the preservation of Aboriginal language—something which Labor would not have done.

But it does not stop there. Today we heard Senator Payne talk about universities. Universities have suddenly become markets. Instead of higher institutions of learning, they have become markets. So, apparently, we no longer pride ourselves on going to university to learn, to explore and to really challenge our thinking. No, we are going to a university market.

I heard the Vice-Chancellor of Charles Sturt University on radio this morning saying that 80 per cent of the courses that are offered will double in fees. Again, the Abbott government seems to think that everyone who graduates from a university starts to make $100,000 a year. Well, they do not. The vice-chancellor used the example of a course in agriculture, which he said will cost $100,000—and no-one will be able to take up that course, because when you graduate as an agriculture worker you are earning quite a small salary. So here we have our vice-chancellors telling the Abbott government, 'We think 80 per cent of our course fees will double.' How dare the Abbott government turn our universities into markets. They are just two examples of a disgusting budget of broken promises. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

Budget

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

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Human Services (Senator Payne) to a question without notice asked by Senator Rhiannon today relating to funding for public education.

The coalition government's ideological attack on public education has been laid bare by comments from Senator Payne and Minister Christopher Pyne. Despite promising in the 2013 election campaign that there would be no funding cuts to education, the government has in fact cut billions. Funding for public schools has been slashed and 3.6 million students as well as their parents and teachers will feel the impact. The sum of $5.8 billion has been ripped out of the public higher education system. This is clearly a massive assault on public education.

The coalition vision for higher education will cause student fees to skyrocket. Under a system of deregulation, students will pay higher interest rates on the HECS debt and pay it back at income levels lower than those that currently apply. 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.
The government's plans will force students to pay an additional $3.2 billion for university education through a lower HECS repayment threshold and the charging of real interest rates of up to six per cent on their debt. The latter change is perhaps the most insidious. Charging real interest rates means an individual's debt will continue to grow over the course of their working life at a rate higher than wage increases. Yes, the debt will increase over the working life of many graduates. The most perverse element of the change is that graduates on lower incomes who take longer to pay back their debt will end up paying more than those on higher incomes. Clearly, this is a regressive user-pays model for funding public education and the antithesis of what a fair, just and accessible system should look like.

Minister Pyne's entire justification for these changes is the argument that, because graduates earn more money when they enter the workforce, they should pay back more money for their degrees. Under his system, it is the lower paid graduates that pay more for their education, compared to those on higher incomes. Mr Pyne is forgetting that these people pay taxes—taxes that fund our education. Under Minister Pyne's new system, graduates on lower starting salaries will take twice as long to pay back their HECS debt and pay more than twice as much in interest bills as compared to those on higher starting salaries. The government's budget papers show that almost one-quarter of new HECS debt will not be repaid. It is clear that it will be lower income earners who will be saddled with increased debt for the rest of their working lives.

Minister Pyne's vision for Australian higher education is one that mimics that the United States, where the wealthiest can access a high-quality education and the disadvantaged are locked out. Studies in the US have shown that the dual effect of large amounts of debt combined with real interest is a barrier to participation for disadvantaged students.

It is just extraordinary that this government, made up of many members who went to university when it was free—including the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education—are planning to increase fees. Fees for nursing students will increase by an estimated 18 per cent, for arts students by 60 per cent and for engineering and science students by 55 per cent. The coalition's only response when asked about these enormous fee increases is to run the line, as we heard today, that competition fixes everything. During question time, Senator Payne acknowledged that competition would push prices up. This directly contradicts an earlier statement from the minister who yesterday said that the coalition's university deregulation agenda would 'drive the price down, because competition always drives the price down'.

The coalition's free market fundamentalism is not what Australia's higher education sector needs. Australia should be aspiring to a public higher education system that is equitable, well resourced and accessible—not a system that hits low-income graduates the hardest. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.
the government's response to the report of the Community Affairs Legislation Committee on its examination of annual reports (No. 2 of 2012). I seek leave to incorporate the document in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The document read as follows—

Australian Government response to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee report:
Annual reports (No.2 of 2012)
May 2014
Response to the second Community Affairs Legislation Committee report on Annual Reports for 2012

On 12 September 2012 the Community Affairs Legislation Committee tabled report titled Annual reports (No. 2 of 2012). The Committee made the following statement and recommendation:

"Bodies not presenting annual reports to the Senate

1.43 In accordance with Standing Order 25(21)(h), the committee is required to report to the Senate on whether there are any bodies which do not present annual reports to the Senate and which should present such reports.

1.44 The committee notes that the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) has been invited to several estimates hearings and has received a significant number of questions on notice arising from those hearings, including questions around the issues of funding, expenditure and governance. The committee notes that NEHTA is not required to present an annual report to Parliament.

1.45 Given NEHTA's significant public funding and responsibilities that go to Commonwealth policy and funding, the committee asks the government to consider whether, as a principal shareholder in NEHTA, it should make arrangements for the report to be presented to Parliament.

Recommendation 1

1.46 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government review whether an annual report of NEHTA should be presented to Parliament."

Government Response

The Commonwealth has reviewed the Senate's recommendation and has concluded that NEHTA is not bound by the provisions of the Public Service Act 1999 to provide an annual report to the Parliament.

NEHTA, jointly funded by all states and territories and the Commonwealth Government, is registered with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) as an Australian Public Company, Limited by Guarantee (not for profit) and is required to prepare and have audited an annual report in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001.

Since commencement of funding in 2005, NEHTA has provided an annual report to the Department of Health at the end of each financial year. A copy of the report is forwarded to the Minister for Health and is publicly available on the NEHTA website.

The review took the following factors into consideration:
Policy and Legislation

- The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) Guidelines for the presentation of documents to Parliament (including Annual Reports) dated June 2012 states that the requirement to provide an Annual Report to Parliament refers to an Executive Agency.

- Section 65(2) of the Public Service Act 1999 states that for the purposes of this Act, an Executive Agency consists of the Head of the Agency, together with the Australian Public Service (APS) employees assisting the Head.

- Under the Public Service Act 1999, NEHTA is not considered an Executive Agency and is therefore not bound to provide an Annual Report under these provisions.

Privileges Committee Report

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (Victoria) (15:52): I present the 156th report of the Committee of Privileges, entitled Person referred to in the Senate—Mr Bernard Collaery. This report is the 66th in a series of reports recommending that a right of reply be afforded to persons who claim to have been adversely affected by being referred to in the Senate either by name or in such a way as to be readily identified. On 7 April this year, the President received a submission from Mr Bernard Collaery related to a speech made by Senator the Hon. George Brandis in the Senate on 4 December 2013. The President referred the submission to the committee under Privilege Resolution No. 5. The committee considered the submission at the meeting on 15 May and recommends that the proposed response be incorporated in Hansard. The committee reminds the Senate that, in matters of this nature, it does not judge the truth or otherwise of statements made by honourable senators or persons referred to; rather, it ensures that the person’s submissions and, ultimately, the responses it recommends accord with the criteria set out in Privilege Resolution No. 5. I commend the motion to the Senate.

Ordered that the report be printed.
Ordered that the report be adopted.

Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee Report

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (15:54): On behalf of Senator Wright, the Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, I present the report of the committee on the Australian Federal Police, together with the Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Senator WATERS: I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Waters, do you wish to speak to the motion?

Senator WATERS: I would prefer it if the chair of the committee was able to speak, so I would like to reserve her right to do so.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: That is fine. I am aware there are other speakers.

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (15:54): Thank you, Mr Deputy President, and perhaps by the time I am finished speaking Senator Wright will have come down and we can hear from the chair. The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 provides a scheme to
trace Australian confiscated proceeds and benefits gained from Commonwealth indictable offences, foreign indictable offences and certain offences against state and territory law. Under the Proceeds of Crime Act any financial benefit that a criminal derives from publishing or otherwise selling the story of his or her criminal exploits can be confiscated. Literary proceeds orders do not prevent a person from telling his or her story to the media. These provisions do not interfere with freedom of speech—only with deriving financial benefit from criminal activity.

Literary proceeds action under this act had previously been taken against Schapelle Corby in March 2009. The AFP had been investigating whether Schapelle Corby could be pursued under the literary provisions of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. To assist in determining whether there was action to be taken, the AFP required Channel 7 to provide material to them within the agreed time frame of Friday, 14 February 2014. The material provided revealed that there were further relevant documents which had not been provided. The AFP then wrote to Channel 7 seeking full compliance with their request, and Channel 7 provided some further material but not necessarily all of the relevant documents. It was at this point that the AFP obtained a search warrant for multiple premises to search for the relevant documents. Although the AFP discontinued this investigation when the circumstances of the matter changed, this does not mean necessarily that the original concerns which initiated the investigation were not well founded—though that is one of the things that is disputed.

I will go back to the start of this inquiry. The coalition opposed this inquiry. We believe that existing oversight ensures that appropriate thresholds for production orders and search warrants are met. Oversight is provided by internal AFP governance documents and independently by the judiciary. Internal AFP governance instruments provide guidance on the appropriate stage to seek search warrants. The magistrate exercises judicial oversight by issuing production orders and search warrants under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

The parameters for issuing search warrants are strictly limited. The magistrate must be satisfied by information on oath that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that evidential material or tainted property would be on the premises within the next 72 hours. As of 6 March 2014, matters relating to the Seven West warrant and production orders were before the courts, so that litigation should have been allowed to run its course before considering referral. Likewise, the actions of some AFP officers were the subject of internal investigations and investigations by the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity, which should also have been allowed to run their course.

Subsequent to the referral of this matter to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee on 6 March 2014, relevant proceedings were heard by the Federal Court. On 7 March 2014, in the Federal Court, Her Honour Justice Jagot heard proceedings by Channel 7 and Mercedes Corby seeking a judicial review relating to the issuing of a search warrant. On 26 March 2014, the Federal Court found in favour of the applicants. Being operationally independent of the government, the AFP has stated that they will consider the judgement in full before making a decision on whether to appeal. On 22 February, the AFP confirmed there would be routine review of the actions taken during this matter, including consideration of the decisions of the Federal Court.

It is important that we do not unduly impede the operational capacity of the AFP. There is a fine balance between ensuring the AFP can carry out their duties and ensuring we do protect
the rights of individuals. Unfortunately, in this particular instance, it has to be acknowledged that the AFP did make mistakes in regard to the commissioning of a search warrant, and I do believe it is important that they look at ways to ensure their systems and protocols are robust to avoid similar mistakes being made in the future. However, the AFP undertakes important work. The officers of the Australian Federal Police put in tireless work to protect our community. While mistakes were made, I do not wish for this to unduly reflect upon the reputation of the AFP. I want to take this brief opportunity to reaffirm my support for the AFP and their dedication to our community.

Journalists and media organisations also play an important role in our society. Seven West Media in their submission raised a number of concerns and it should be acknowledged that it is important that, as a media organisation, they defend the needs of their journalists to protect their sources. It is important that search warrants are only issued in line with the law. Seven West Media made a number of reasonable points in their evidence to the committee. The execution of searches can be distressful to the people involved, so it is important that that is taken into account when search warrants are being issued. However, taking into consideration all of these factors, some of the recommendations provided in this report are not supported by coalition senators, as they may unduly impede the operational capacity of the AFP.

Coalition members of the committee voted against the inclusion of some of the recommendations, and I will provide some detail on those decisions. Coalition members do not support recommendation 5, which seeks to have amendments made to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that the police are asked to seek a production order before a search warrant is given. Unfortunately, investigations cannot always travel so slowly and the initial production order could not only slow down an important investigation but also unnecessarily alert a person to the existence of such an investigation. This is an area which relies heavily upon the operational expertise of the AFP. They are in the best position, in each individual case, to judge whether a production order or a search warrant is the best first step.

Also, coalition senators do not support recommendations 7, 8 and 9 because we do not believe that special provision should be created for a specific group. All of these recommendations seek to provide separate protocols or undertakings when the police are dealing with media organisations.

We believe that equality before the law is an important principle in our legal system and that we need to be very careful about creating special classes of people for separate treatment under the law. We do not believe that the threshold in this case has been met for making some of the changes that have been suggested by the committee.

As I discussed earlier, it is a balancing act between protecting the rights of individuals and ensuring that police have the operational capacity to carry out their duties. We believe that providing a separate spectrum of rights for media organisations could create an imbalance.

I will briefly touch on recommendation 6. This recommendation states:

The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government investigates options for introducing enforceable undertakings powers as an option available to law enforcement agencies during literary proceeds investigations.

Coalition senators did not oppose this recommendation. But we do believe that very careful consideration needs to be given before this recommendation is fully followed through.
I, together with my coalition senators, did support recommendation 4. It recommends that the Commonwealth government investigates options for distinguishing literary proceeds matters from other matters under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, with particular consideration given to retaining literary proceeds matters within the PoC Act and amending the act to clearly distinguish between literary proceeds matters and other proceeds of crime matters or removing literary proceeds matters from the PoC Act altogether and creating stand-alone legislation to deal with literary proceeds matters.

I think that this may well be an important part of the way forward. We are dealing here with a piece of legislation that brings a whole range of actors together. In this case, Seven West has raised, I believe, legitimate concerns about the way this matter was conducted. The courts have agreed with Seven West. I think the AFP have acknowledged that mistakes were made and it is important that they review their procedures. But as we look forward to what kind of legislative response we might have, I think it is important to get a balance and that is the balance that coalition senators have sought to do here.

Recommendation 4, in particular, may have some merit in extracting literary proceeds matters from the PoC Act altogether and creating stand-alone legislation, which could take account of the fact that it is a very different thing dealing with legitimate, well-regarded media organisations and, in some cases, criminal gangs and their associates. That is the balancing act that needs to be struck and it is the balance that coalition senators think needs to occur.

I would like to conclude by thanking the committee secretariat for their work on the inquiry, all of those who made submissions and also Sam Findlay for his work in putting some of these words together. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

DOCUMENTS
Tabling

The Clerk: Documents are tabled pursuant to statute. Details will be recorded in the Journals of the Senate and on the Dynamic Red.

Details of the documents also appear at the end of today's Hansard.

DOCUMENTS

Departmental and Agency Appointments and Vacancies, and Grants
Tabling

The Clerk: Documents are tabled pursuant to statute. Details will be recorded in the Journals of the Senate and on the Dynamic Red. Letters of advice are tabled in response to continuing orders on departmental and agency appointments, vacancies and grants.

Details of the documents also appear at the end of today's Hansard.
COMMITTEES
Economics Legislation Committee

Membership

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Furner) (16:05): The President has received a letter from a party leader seeking variations to the membership of a committee.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (16:05): by leave—I move:

That Senator Gallacher replace Senator Pratt on the Senate Economics Legislation Committee for the week beginning 2 June 2014.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Representatives.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (16:05): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (16:06): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

SOCIAL SECURITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (GREEN ARMY PROGRAMME) BILL 2014

Today is an important milestone in the delivery of the Coalition Government’s Green Army Programme.


The Green Army Programme

The Green Army is a key Coalition election commitment and will commence from July 2014.

The Green Army will become Australia’s largest-ever environmental workforce, building to 15,000 participants by 2018 - 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:
- propagation and planting of native seedlings;
- weed control;
- re-vegetation and regeneration of local parks;
- habitat protection and restoration;
- improving water quality by cleaning up waterways;
- re-vegetation 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.

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.

The Green Army will have significant benefits for young Australians. This voluntary initiative will recruit young people aged 17–24 years who are interested in protecting their local environment while gaining hands-on, practical skills and experience.

The Green Army is both an environment and training programme. It will help young people to increase their skills base, gain practical experience and enhance their job readiness.

The Programme will be delivered by a national Service Provider (or multiple Providers) that will be responsible for recruiting, establishing and managing Green Army Teams across Australia to engage in approved projects, in partnership with and driven by local communities.

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.

Project proposals will be submitted to the Australian Government by individuals and organisations, such as local community groups, councils and Natural Resource Management bodies for consideration.

The Green Army Programme will commence from July 2014 with the roll-out of 250 Projects in Round 1 and the participation of 2,500 young people in 2014-15.

A priority for investment through initial rounds of the Programme will be Green Army election commitments.

More than 150 projects were announced by the Government during the 2013 election. Some of these include:
- weed management and revegetation in degraded areas within the Cumberland Conservation Corridor in Sydney, New South Wales;
- planting riparian zones for native wildlife in the Kings Bridge to Duck Reach areas of the South Esk River in Tasmania;
- restoration of a degraded landscape, including coastal rehabilitation and foreshore stabilisation, at Cape Morton on Morton Island, in Queensland;
- enhancing the health of Victoria's Barham River system between Apollo Bay and the Marengo Flora Reserve through extensive weed removal; the revegetation of the banks of the River and the installation of pathways, viewing platforms and environment interpretive signage;
• weed removal, replanting of native vegetation, dune restoration and rehabilitation, as well as the recording and chronicling of native and invasive species in the Mettams Pool area in Stirling, Western Australia; and

• within the Mt Laura Conservation Park in South Australia protect the natural environment of the conservation reserve from soil erosion, stormwater damage, and unauthorised access from random 'off road' vehicles.

Green Army Projects will run for between 20 and 26 weeks. During this period Green Army Participants will have the opportunity to develop job-ready skills and undertake Training. The Service Provider will be responsible for developing Training plans for each of the Green Army participants.

The Bill

Up to nine eligible Participants and at least one Team Supervisor will constitute a Green Army Team.

Participants will receive a green army allowance while participating in the Programme and the Service Provider will be responsible for the disbursement of the allowance. Team Supervisors will be employed and paid a wage by the Service Provider.

The Bill ensures that people receiving a green army allowance under the Green Army Programme will not also receive a social security benefit or social security pension simultaneously.

The Green Army Programme will involve six monthly placements in Green Army Teams providing an alternative to income support for many young Australians interested in engaging in work-like experience and activities.

Similar to other programmes, such as Work for the Dole and previous Green Corps and Green Jobs Corps programmes, participants who are receiving a green army allowance, or a part-time participant who is not receiving green army allowance but meeting their mutual obligations, will not be considered workers or employees for the purposes of various Commonwealth laws.

However, a determination provision within the Bill will ensure that Green Army Team Supervisors will be considered workers or employees for the purposes of various Commonwealth laws.

The Bill also specifies income test arrangements for a person's social security pension if the green army allowance is payable to the person's partner.

Cleaner Environment Plan

The Green Army is a central component of the government's Cleaner Environment Plan focussed on Clean Air, Clean Land, Clean Water and Heritage.

The Coalition believes in encouraging hands-on, practical, grassroots environmental action as a means of fixing environmental problems, as well as tapping into the knowledge of local communities, encouraging them to identify and fix their own local problems.

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 also complements the government's 'Direct Action' approach to climate change.

Direct Action provides Australians with the opportunity for individuals, communities, organisations and companies to help address our environmental challenges.

Conclusion

The Green Army builds on the Howard Government's successful Green Corps programme established in 1996 to employ young people in environmental projects to preserve and restore our natural and cultural environment.
Our Green Army will deliver tangible benefits for the environment, skills development for thousands of young Australians and will strengthen local community involvement.

I commend the Bill.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

Budget

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland) (16:07): At the request of Senator Moore, I move:

That the Senate condemns the Abbott Government's budget of twisted priorities and broken promises.

I support Senator Moore's motion. It is a very good motion. The government has delivered a budget of broken promises and twisted priorities. The facts are as plain as day. The states know it. The public know it. The government backbenchers know it. I even think that the cabinet ministers know it and the Treasurer certainly knows it.

The extraordinary transformation of the Prime Minister from conviction politician to hollow man is now complete. You really only have to go as far as today to see that. Today the government's spokesman on economic affairs, their spokesman on the budget, the guy who smokes the big cigar—not a question. Instead, we got industrial relations from Senator Abetz—I do not blame Senator Abetz for this. I think that they are running away from their own budget. Quite frankly, I do not blame you from running away from your own budget, because it is a shocker.

Budgets are about choices and priorities. They show you the character of the government and tell you volumes about the people they care about and the people they do not. The budget handed out on Tuesday is heartless. It is economically irrational and it is not the budget of a responsible government. It is not even the budget this government promised before the election.

The budget delivers more money to well-off Australians and hits up lower- and middle-income families to foot the bill. For a government that promised to tackle costs of living, they have only worked to increase pressures on Australian families through a new GP tax and jacking up the price of petrol at the bowser.

It is a budget of broken promises. Let us look at the scoreboard: they said no cuts to health and no cuts to education—broken. The budget cuts $80 billion from schools and hospitals, and just listen to the state premiers yelling about this. 'No new taxes and tax cuts, not tax increases' was the their mantra before the election—broken. The budget will do both—targeting lower- and middle-income families—and Mr Joe Hockey has admitted this himself. If anyone wants to check on that, watch the 7.30 program.

They said no change to pensions—smashed, broken. The budget has cuts to pensions and changes to make Australians work longer. They said no increases to university fees—broken. The budget delivers higher university fees for students and their families.

The budget is simply bad economics. You can see that in the commentary from the economists themselves. Replacing efficient taxes such as the minerals resource rent tax and carbon tax with inefficient taxes is bad economics.
Reserve Bank governors can be subtle over time, but I think Governor Stevens was being very blunt in his last report on the economy when he listed subdued public spending as a risk to the economy. This is political language but it was a stark warning to the government to be careful. He sent a warning straight to the government about the damage they would do to the economy with misplaced austerity measures. Cuts to direct spending like the cuts to schools and health take money directly out of the economy. These schools and hospitals buy goods and services and, if you reduce the money going to education and health, then you will damage this economy. That is why the states are yelling so loudly. They know how the impacts will be fed through into their state systems.

This is not just an attack on schools and hospitals though; it is an attack on the whole economy. The cuts to pensioners, students and Newstart recipients are again misplaced. These groups spend most of their essential money on goods and services. Most of this money goes straight into the economy, straight to shopkeepers, small businesses. Taking from those who can least afford it means it will not then go back into economy through small business. So it is not an attack just simply on pensioners; again, it is an attack against the whole economy.

You wonder how much the government dislike pensioners, students, health and hospitals. But, again, they also were once champions, they said, of small business but they will rip small business apart because, where people spend in small business, it will not follow through in this economy.

In a similar way, the cuts to family benefits take money away from families—at the highest, the costs of shoes and clothing for kids. Again, for small businesses, the most affected are those from whom the money has disappeared, but where they then spend it will also have a downstream impact on people you once upon a time called your own.

It is not just simply an attack on families, though. As I have said, you are attacking the whole economy. The GP payment again is a cruel and twisted priority. A $7 payment may not seem a lot to members in this place but it hurts those who are most vulnerable. A $7 charge does not hurt the healthy; it hurts those with chronic health issues, those on low incomes and those people who work on hourly wages. These groups already pay dearly for medical care. Even if they can find a bulk-billing doctor, they bear the costs of taking time off work, the costs of transport and of the little hidden costs that add up associated with visiting a doctor. This government wants to whack them with another $7.

A RAND Corporation report showed that the result of cost sharing reduced the number of ‘medically effective’ visits to the doctor, and of course the most worrying statistics in this is that the decrease was especially true for children. The government is also cutting $338 million from preventative health, and $3 million will be cut from the anti-smoking campaigns. This government is also abolishing the National Preventive Health Agency.

In using this example of how short-sighted this government is, any budget savings from these health measures will be short term. That is typical of the short-sighted mess that this budget is. The long-term effects are more expensive. Care for chronic diseases and serious suffering of all Australians is where the long-term impact will hurt the economy even more. But, most importantly, it will hurt those people with those chronic diseases and those people suffering because they will be dissuaded from going to the doctor early and those opportunities to utilise preventative health will have been taken away. This government increases healthcare costs down the track. What it has done is deferred healthcare costs by
trying to be smart and take away essential work in preventative health. It does not work, will not work and it is short-sighted.

I would welcome increased spending on medical research, but it should not come at the expense of the most vulnerable in our community. Medical research is not an issue to be traded for health access for the most vulnerable. Mr Abbott wants to tax the sick through the GP tax to pay for the fund. But look at what the government have already done in this area. In MYEFO they ripped $74.9 million from the Australian Research Council. They took money from the independent body that determines what research is best for Australia to pursue and what will get the best outcomes.

The Treasurer said yesterday, 'We need well-funded universities that are attracting the best in the world.' I agree with that. It is probably the only thing I agree with in the Treasurer's statement. But Mr Hockey is undermining the ability of Australian universities to attract the best and brightest. How? Future Fellowships, started under Labor, attracts and retains the best and brightest midcareer researchers. This fellowship has been continued, which is a positive development, but they have changed it. They have sneakily change the eligibility so no bright foreign researchers can be attracted to Australia with the scheme. The Treasurer expressed an aspiration to have one Australian university in the top 20 in the world. But can I remind the Treasurer that he doesn't have to be parochial about it. You don't have to be parochial to attract the best and brightest.

We are now approaching the centenary of our first Nobel Prize winners, William Henry and William Lawrence Bragg. William Bragg was British and was attracted to Adelaide to be a professor and researcher. The work was crucial to understanding X-ray crystallography, an essential tool in the biology and physics of today. We were not being parochial when we attracted the William Henry Bragg to Adelaide. Imagine today. He would be turned away on the doorstep. He would not get a fellowship. The list goes on for our Nobel Prize winners: Bernard Katz, born in Germany; Brian Schmidt, born in America. I don't think we can afford to be parochial. Science doesn't have borders. Science stretches out across the world. What we have got is a narrow-minded, parochial government in place. The Medical Research Future Fund will be administered in the same way the Future Fund is managed. That is the claim.

Turning to other parts of how this budget has missed the mark, running through this budget are outdated ideas. It seems to suggest that the states should be set adrift. I thought we were a federation. When my home state of Queensland was hit by successive floods and cyclones, including Cyclone Yasi, in the summer of natural disasters in 2011, the Labor federal government did not throw its hands up and cast Queensland adrift. What it did to was look at how it could assist Queensland. We didn't do what education minister Christopher Pyne did last night and attack the Queensland government for not being adult enough. We recognised that we are a nation and that we have to work in partnership with state governments to deliver outcomes for all Australians. Floods and cyclones do not see state borders. Recovering and rebuilding is a shared responsibility and one that Labor happily took on in office. The then federal government invested over $8 billion in rebuilding Queensland after 2011. It has been money well and wisely spent. Labor put in place unprecedented checks and balances on the
expenditure of federal taxpayer funds in the reconstruction effort. We created the first ever Australian Government Reconstruction Inspectorate to apply a value-for-money test for rebuilding projects. Chaired by former New South Wales Liberal Premier and federal finance minister Mr John Fahey, the inspectorate has been working to extract value for money. I would ask senators to have a look at the report by the Reconstruction Inspectorate, where Mr Fahey writes in his letter to the now Prime Minister, Mr Abbott:

Processes developed by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments have resulted in $1.7 billion of ineligible costs or withdrawn claims being excluded from reconstruction projects to date. The inspectorate have saved the Commonwealth about $1.7 billion in what would have been wasted funds. That is good, diligent and careful work by the inspectorate. I congratulate them on the work that they have been tasked to do and have performed well.

Queensland has been no stranger to flooding since 2011. As many senators would know, the floods of 2013 hit South-East Queensland badly. Since January this year there have been an additional seven new natural disasters declared in Queensland alone. These new events will come with another need to fund the response under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. This is on top of the $4.8 billion still to be spent on the natural disasters. The budget papers show this is flowing through from 2015-16, because it does take time for repairs to be effected and for the money to be spent.

So it is disappointing to see the funding for the Reconstruction Inspectorate runs out in July next year, a full year before funding is due to be completed. This is assuming that the funding rolls out on time and no new natural disasters occur that will draw on Commonwealth funds. It seems a mismatch, quite a foolish prediction to have made. The inspectorate is driving value for money, yet this government is going to let it lapse and fall into disuse. On one hand, the inspectorate has continued to work diligently to save the Commonwealth money. But this government, showing the twisted priorities of Mr Tony Abbott’s budget, is going to cut it out. Where it saves money, it is going to remove it.

This comes on top of the Abbott government's broken promises to regional Australia. Only two weeks before the budget, Mr Warren Truss said, ‘To ignore regional Australia's need for investment and growth is to turn our backs on the opportunities for the future.’ Two weeks later, and the Abbott government has savaged local government by ripping $1 billion in funding from local government. By cutting into the financial assistance grants local governments rely on, the consequences are that there will be less money for roads and for services. It is a cruel hoax that Mr Warren Truss has played on regional Australia, and particularly on local councils. At the same time, the Commonwealth costs will increase by scrapping the Reconstruction Inspectorate—dumb move, can I say.

The government is cutting support to lower the cost-of-living pressures on households. Labor knows the acute pressures on households in flood-prone areas. They find it tough to get good insurance to cover them. In government, led by Mr Bill Shorten, we developed a standard definition of 'flood'. We rolled out a key fact sheet, a one-page plain English document for consumers, and a flood data portal. Crucially, we also established the first ever National Insurance Affordability Initiative, initially funded for up to $100 million. This was to invest in flood mitigation projects that would put downward pressure on insurance premiums, helping households with their cost of living. Mitigation works to reduce insurance premiums. Average insurance premiums in Roma at the time when we implemented the
system nearby were about $3,000. At Charleville, which has a flood levee now, the premiums are about one third of that amount because we acted to ensure that we could work with local government, drive down the cost of insurance and build levees to prevent flooding. In this budget, though, $83 million has been cut from flood mitigation projects, including the entirety of the offer to New South Wales—again, pretty dumb politics by this government.

They are cutting money. They could have saved some of the burden on households, but instead they drive the costs up. They let insurance premiums continue to rise where they could have used $83 million to drive insurance prices down to truly help householders. There are plenty of worthwhile projects ready to go. These include Rockhampton and initial projects in Ipswich and Goodna in my home state. I have no doubt there are some in New South Wales. There is now no new money allocated to Western Sydney. Shame on this government. Where they do have an opportunity, they miss it. The government's twisted priorities have meant that, instead of investing money that would help residents in those areas with the cost of living, there is now no relief for those high insurance claims. This is a government that is missing the point when it comes to how you help those people. You can actually do both. You can save money and help people. You can save money by investing in flood mitigation. You can save money by driving down insurance costs for households. (Time expired)

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (16:27): Following Senator Ludwig, I have to remark that I am in awe of his ability to fake sincerity. How can Senator Ludwig, as a minister in the former government, give a 20-minute speech about saving money? Let us remember that the previous government racked up hundreds of billions of dollars worth of debt. It inherited no debt and it left an inheritance, a terrible legacy that this government is trying to pay off. Let us not forget Senator Ludwig's own performance in his portfolios, where he decimated the cattle industry for the Northern Territory and northern Queensland by making ad hoc, poorly thought-out decisions.

For the Australian people, I will remark that we have the consequences of some of those decisions being investigated by a royal commission, in which a twice former Prime Minister of this country is appearing today. The evidence suggests to me the chaotic policy that we saw on the front line was also happening behind the scenes, and the buck-passing goes on and on and on.

The budget that was delivered two days ago was about yesterday and about what had happened in the previous six years, but it was also very much about the future. When Senator Ludwig in his contribution said it was dumb politics, I just cannot believe that we have an opposition member criticising a budget on a political basis. It is not about the policy. It has nothing to do with the policy. It is not about whether it is in the national interest or it is good for the country. Apparently, the politics are dumb.

Let me go on the record and say I think this budget is a politically risky budget. If someone wants to characterise that as dumb politics, so be it. Being in this place is not just about the politics. It is about getting effective outcomes and engineering positive things for the country. Sometimes you have to take political risks in order to do that.

We should be reminding every Australian that the smartest decision that has been made in this country in the last seven years was made at the last election, when Australians tipped the worst government in the history of this nation out and said, 'We want a fresh start. We want a
new approach. We want an opportunity to get our country back on the right track.' Let me also say: there is no perfect budget. Viewed through the prism of individuality or the particular circumstances applying to a person, a family or a community, there is always something to pick holes with in a budget. I do not like the fact that we are going to be putting up the marginal tax rate for those who are perhaps paying the most tax in our community. I do not like the fact that we are going to have to take away some benefits for families. I do not like the fact that we are going to have to freeze or change indexation going into the future. But we have to do this in the national interest. And overwhelmingly, when you discount the hyperbole, when you discount the partisan politics that are going on, when you discount the ALP members that are trotted out on their ABC to say how badly the government is affecting them, and you go out into the community, overwhelmingly people are saying, 'There are aspects of this that I do not really like, but I am prepared to do my bit for the country.' And what more should we ask for from the Australian people? Everyone needs to do their bit for the country, because they recognise just how bad things have got.

Senator Ludwig talked about parochialism and that this is somehow parochial politics and it is a parochial budget. Let me tell you: I do not find parochialism to be some sort of sledge or slur. I think parochialism is about sticking up for your country and turning your back on those internationalists who say, 'Our responsibilities are abroad before they are at home.' That is why I will be a parochial politician. That is why I will look after my state, that is why I will look after my country, and I will let those on the other side say that they want to go out and lead the world with an emissions trading scheme or a carbon tax or some other cockamamie idea that is not going to achieve any outcomes. Let them swan around the world on their junkets to the United Nations to say how important they are. Let them worship at the altar of internationalism. I will be a parochial politician sticking up for my country. And I think that mob on the other side should do exactly the same. But they are not really interested in that.

Senator Ludwig belled the cat when he spoke about outdated ideas. Let me tell you about some of these outdated ideas that Senator Ludwig referred to. He referred to federalism as an outdated idea. He thought we were a federation. But apparently the policy mix that has come through in this budget, where we expect the states to pick up their constitutional responsibilities, where we are going to remove duplication of services and we are going to say, 'States, you look after your knitting and we will look after ours,' is an outdated concept. Well, it's not. I know I get called old-fashioned but it is not an outdated concept where I come from and it is not an outdated concept in the history of our country or our Constitution, and it is what the Australian people want. They want more accountable government, they want government that is closer to them so they can pick and choose what is acceptable. And unfortunately, I must agree that in recent times federalism has not worked particularly well, because we have had these rogue, spendthrift states that have racked up billions of dollars' worth of debt doing nothing. We have had New South Wales—of course we had glamourpuss here; what was his name? Senator Bob Carr. We had him swanning around the place. He was very good at doing nothing in New South Wales, and he wrote a tell-tale book about how flying business class is akin to the slave trade. It was extraordinary. That is what is important to these people.

Where the states have failed it was left to the Commonwealth to pick up the tab. I regret that the Commonwealth does not have the money to pick up the tab anymore. We have got to
stick to our knitting. We have got to look to the things that our Constitution says we should be providing and we have got to make the states accountable for their responsibilities. Federalism and federation are not outdated—not where I come from and not for the Australian people.

Apparently another outdated idea—I should list these as the F words—is financial accountability and financial responsibility. Apparently that is outdated. In Senator Ludwig's and the Labor Party's world, you can just keep clocking up debt after debt after debt. It is only 13 per cent of GDP, we are told. At one stage Greece had only 13 per cent of GDP, as did Japan, as did the United States. If you keep going in that way, soon enough you end up with 20 per cent of GDP in debt and 30, 40, 50 and 100 per cent. And then you go into bankruptcy. Mark my words, the world will experience a sovereign debt crisis in the next two or three years, and I do not want Australia to be part of that crisis. I do not want us to go down the same path that has been committed by the social democrats right around the world, where people have just been expecting to receive cash and handouts for doing nothing and governments put off the day of reckoning until it is too late.

I am pleased that this government has taken steps in the right direction, and that means embracing what Senator Ludwig and the Labor Party called 'outdated ideas: a financial responsibility'. See how outdated that is to the families of Australia who are struggling and know the very real risks of debt. Senator Ludwig also touched upon the issue of the family and how taking away some of the entitlements for families is going to make it more difficult for them. Of course, that is true. But the ultimate goal has to be about allowing families to keep more of their own money, their own earnings, in their pocket to make decisions for themselves. Gone should be the days when governments tax, shuffle, clip the ticket and then give it back. That is wrong. We should be taking less. We should be living within our means and we should be allowing Australian families to make decisions in their own interests. And, yes, starting that process and completing that process can involve pain. And it can be difficult for people, but it is a process that needs to be done. If it is not, this country will end up like those that I mentioned earlier.

Apparently another outdated concept for Senator Ludwig and the Labor Party is freedom, allowing people to make choices for themselves rather than being prescribed what is good for them. Do you know what? If people have responsibilities and if they have freedoms, they will live with the consequences of their decisions. Yes, people will make mistakes and people will experience hardship as a result of it, but they will learn. It is how children learn. It is how adults learn. We need to make sure that we have a safety net, but it should be more like a trampoline so they can bounce back, recover and keep going. We need to encourage people to take more responsibility for themselves, for their health care, for their retirement savings, for their consumption of medical services.

Much has been made about asking for a modest contribution towards attending a medical service. It is a modest contribution when you are on my salary. It is a much more significant contribution if you are a pensioner or unemployed, or you are on a much more modest salary than mine. But the point is it is not so much about how much it is; it is about the symbolic importance of people understanding nothing in this world is free. There is a price for everything. If someone is giving you something for nothing, it is because someone else has paid for it. Government is no different.
It is important to recognise that in the concept of this $7 co-payment, $2 will go to the doctor—and will probably cover the administrative process for the doctor—but $5 of every payment will go towards an investment in the future, an investment in medical research. I think it is a good idea, but my concern with these investments in the future is they can always be undone by future parliaments. We saw it with the rural telecommunications infrastructure fund in 2008. We have seen the Future Fund raided and put under pressure. We have seen those sorts of longstanding commitments have partisan politics applied to them. I do not want to see that happen with this medical research initiative. I sincerely hope it will not happen and I hope those on the other side will actually embrace it and put the partisan politics and the grubbiness aside, put all that aside, and say, 'In the end, this will be good for the country.'

The outdated ideas that Senator Ludwig loathes so much, supposedly—division of powers, financial accountability, freedom, families, responsibility, accountability, acting in the national interest, being a parochial Australian rather than some worshipper at the altar of internationalism—are outdated ideas that I embrace. I think they are outdated ideas, if that is what he wants to call them, that this government philosophically embraces. The former government were a spendthrift, social democratic government that had no accountability. They clocked up $300 billion in debt in six very painful years and left a legacy that expected the debt to run out to $667 billion in the future. They needed to be changed and that is what the Australian people voted for.

Not everyone will like everything in this budget and I certainly don't. I would rather see taxes lowered, but we cannot afford to do it right now. I would rather see less spending. I want to see the government as a smaller proportion of our gross national product. I want to see government stick to its knitting. I would like to see less bureaucracy. At least this government has taken a step in that direction by cutting out a billion dollars' worth of red and green tape over the next 12 months. I would like to see even more defined responsibilities between the states and the Commonwealth.

One thing I would like to see is a bigger saving made against the budget of the ABC. The ABC gets about $1.2 billion of taxpayers' money. Sure, we have shut down the Australia Network, or we intend to, which was playing reruns of Home and Away and mostly highlights of Senator Sarah Hanson-Young's opposition to refugee policy. But there is an efficiency dividend of one per cent applying to the ABC, some $9 million a year. Everyone else is having to make significant cuts, but one per cent is being applied to the ABC. This is less than what Prime Minister Bob Hawke applied to the ABC, which was 1.2 per cent back then. There are plenty of savings that can still be made. I would be delighted if the Minister for Communications would invite me in to give him a blueprint about exactly how we could reform the ABC to make it more financially viable for taxpayers. It would not involve cutting radio or television; it would maybe involve some structural separation. But that will be for another time.

The opportunity before this country is an immense one. We have a chance to get our nation back on the right track. In order to do that, to rebuild this self-reliance, this aggressive ingenuity, this spirit of entrepreneurialism, this idea that we can do it, we need to get government out of the way. We need to stop the bureaucrats from stifling the things that have built this nation. We need to accept the fact that we cannot have such a huge percentage of our workforce working in the public sector, not because they do not work hard or provide a
contribution but because we simply cannot afford it. But if you want to create the jobs for the future, you have to encourage Australian families and businesspeople to invest, to take the risks themselves. We have to provide that opportunity so that whatever reductions come in our public service, those people can be redeployed. It should not matter whether they are young people, old people or middle-aged people; it should be about ensuring they have an opportunity to give to this country. There are incentives in this budget to do exactly that.

While no budget is perfect, we have started on a long journey. It is a journey that should be embraced by those on the other side of politics. I agree with Senator Ludwig that we should leave dumb politics behind, but dumb politics is about refusing to embrace good ideas simply because they come from somewhere else. Dumb politics is about suspending the national interest and the long-term interest of our country for some petty partisan point-scoring—which we have heard a lot of in the last few days.

Good politics is about redefining the goals of a nation and having the courage of your convictions to set those goals out very clearly for the Australian people, to make your case plainly in a language that everyone can understand—that we have to accept that we all have to make a contribution. I do regret that those on the other side have started in a manner that I think they will come to regret. If they do not embrace the change that the Australian people are demanding, they will forgo any opportunity to reacquaint themselves with the Treasury bench. Quite frankly, we need a strong and competent opposition to ensure that the government is itself as strong and competent as it can be. That is how the adversarial system works. Unfortunately, over the last two days, the opposition have demonstrated that they are not willing to be strong and competent.

**Senator DASTYARI** (New South Wales) (16:47): What an incredible insight into the mind and thinking of Senator Bernardi! Senator Bernardi said many things that I object to, but he made one comment in particular about which I will say something. That was his comment about 'worshipping at the altar of internationalism'. Senator Bernardi seems to be arguing that if as a nation we fulfil our international obligations and meet our international responsibilities, somehow that has to come into conflict with the responsibilities we have at home.

I will talk about the budget more broadly, but I think the most horrible parts of this budget, Senator Bernardi, are the decisions to take $7.6 billion out of foreign aid, to cut the Australia Network and to take an average of over $100 million a year out of the DFAT budget. The government seems to want us to believe that we do not have the ability to simultaneously walk and chew gum—that we cannot meet our international obligations while we meet our obligations at home. Quite frankly, I think that is a false choice.

Never has a government so shamelessly lied its way into office. Promise after promise, commitment after commitment made before the last election has been broken. The Prime Minister's actions are made even worse by the fact that he staked his entire reputation on the idea of honesty. This was the standard set by the Prime Minister—repeatedly. Let us not forget how, on election night, after being made the Prime Minister of Australia, he promised us:

… a government that says what it means and means what it says, a government of no surprises, and no excuses, a government that understands the limits of power as well as its potential. And a government that accepts that it will be judged more by its deeds than by its mere words.
Let us then hold them accountable to their own words. Less than 13 hours before polling booths opened, the Prime Minister, then the opposition leader, said:
There will be no changes to pensions …

Now we find out there will be changes. There will be a new indexation system for pensioners. The pension was at 27.7 per cent of average male weekly earnings, against which it was indexed, but from 2017 it will be indexed against the CPI. That is about a 1½ per cent cut. Freezes to means test thresholds on all pensions means more people will receive a lower rate of pension or will be bumped off the pension entirely.

Let us hold the Prime Minister to what he said on 20 November 2012:
We are about reducing taxes, not increasing taxes. We are about getting rid of taxes, not imposing new taxes.

We just heard Senator Bernardi passionately talk about his ideological crusade to bring taxes down in this country. I do not know how he is going to vote for a budget that has an increase in income tax of two per cent for incomes over $180,000 and, by bringing back biannual CPI indexation, an effective increase in the petrol tax. The budget also gives $400 million back to big business by unwinding tax integrity measures.

Let us hold the Prime Minister to account for telling us, 13 hours before polling booths opened, that there would be no cuts to health when, in fact, $2.8 billion will be cut from public hospitals over the next five years, when there will be a $7 tax on GP visits and when there will be—something that has gone largely unnoticed—an increase in PBS co-payments of $5 for general patients and 80c for concessional patients. Let us hold the Prime Minister to account for saying that there would be no cuts to education when there is $181 million being cut from education over the next five years, to be followed by much bigger cuts to school funding beyond 2018.

Finally, let us hold the Prime Minister to account when he said:
A dumb way to cut spending would be to threaten family benefits or means test them further.
The government are cutting family tax benefit part A and part B by freezing indexation and by reducing eligibility for part B. Cutting the family tax benefit end-of-year supplements by up to $306 and freezing family payment thresholds will mean that more people will be bumped off these payments or will incur a lower rate. The one cut that I find quite horrific is that they say there will be no cuts to the ABC and no cuts to SBS, and then they come out on budget night with a $43 million cut, wag their finger and say that there will be more coming.

The Prime Minister said that he would be the Indigenous Prime Minister. He promised bipartisan support for Closing the Gap, yet he cut over $530 million from Indigenous affairs programs. The government said before the election that they had no plans to increase university fees, but straight afterwards they deregulated the entire industry knowing that it was going to mean the fees are going to go up.

The government will be and should be judged by their actions, as the Prime Minister said on election night, and stand condemned for them as well. Instead of saying what they meant during the election campaign, they kept making promise after promise, and it was clear they had no intention of keeping them. They promised that there would be no cuts to health, that there would be no cuts to education, that there would be no cuts to the pension, and that there would be no new taxes. They went to the Australian people under a series of promises in a
budget situation which they were well aware of. Now there has been a kind of rethink and retake and MYEFO. We have gone through this in the Senate estimates process where matters seem to be recalculated and relooked at. Let us be clear, before the election the PEFO, the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook, was signed off as an independent document by the Secretary of the Treasury, Dr Martin Parkinson, and the Secretary of Finance, David Tune. It was signed off by the two most senior bureaucrats as an independent document. The government went to an election knowing that was the financial statement and came out afterwards, after they had made those promises, after they had made those commitments, with a clear view of breaking their promises.

Last Tuesday's budget was both full of surprises and full of excuses. It is a budget that rips billions from schools, from hospitals and from pensions. It will force Australians to work longer, and it introduces a great big new tax—to use the Prime Minister's words—on everything courtesy of the increased petrol prices. You almost have to feel for the state governments that, in good faith, negotiated with the federal government for funding programs in health and education. Many of them are conservative governments and supported the coalition when it was in opposition at the time of the last election, which they are entitled to do. Not once were they told that those programs, those initiatives, were going to be cut. They are not small cuts. We are talking about cuts in the vicinity of $80 billion. The Premier of Queensland said that it is nothing more than a ploy to create a situation in which the states will be forced to make the case for an increase in the GST. Frankly, it is not good enough. It is buck-passing and it is not going to work. I have to commend the state premiers, even the Premier of New South Wales Mike Baird, for being prepared to say that this is a kick in the guts for the people of New South Wales, because frankly that is what this budget is.

At the last election, the government could have said to the Australian people: 'This is what we are going to do. These are the cuts we are going to instil. We are going after Medicare. We are going after pensions. We are going to take away the benefits that middle-income earners have come to rely on. This will be our path to prosperity.' But they did not do that because they knew the Australian public would not vote for it. So, what do we have? We have a great big lie. The government love to talk about and lecture those on this side of the chamber about mandates. There has been no mandate for their savage cuts, no mandate for their tax increases, no mandate for a budget that was built on mistruth and dishonesty. This budget is fundamentally a breach of trust. The worrying thing is that the government are not done yet.

The state premiers have opposed the government's $80 billion cuts to health and education. They have called it unreasonable cost-shifting. Many of the state premiers have come out, in particular Campbell Newman, bleating that it is nothing more than a smokescreen for the government to break yet another promise of no change to the GST. Let us be clear, any change to the GST is going to disproportionately hurt those on the lowest incomes. The idea that it is going to be made an issue for the states is another way of the government saying, 'If the states want an increase, we're not really going to be talking about tax compensation, we're really going to be talking about just broadening the base or increasing the rate.' It is going to disproportionately hurt lower and middle income families. It is just not good enough. It is not good enough as a nation to say, 'We're not going to be able to fund our schools. We're not going to be funding our hospitals,' without putting a greater burden on those lower and middle income families.
What is the plan now? The plan is to buck-pass $80 billion. Pass it onto the states and hope that they will go out and do the heavy lifting for the government, that they will call for an increase in the GST, and thus give the Prime Minister an excuse to blame the states for breaking his promise. The idea that has been peddled out by one government minister after another that you cannot change this agreement because all the states would have to agree is a fallacy and a farce. The government have gone out of their way to create an environment in which the states will be forced to make that argument. Frankly, it is not good enough and it is not fair to the states. It is a cowardly and a treacherous way to raise taxes. This government are hoping that by the next election Australians are going to forget the abuse of power and the abuse of process that this budget has demonstrated. They are hoping that, two years from now, the Australian people will no longer remember what has got on.

But that is not the case. We on this side of the chamber are going to hold them accountable—we are going to hold them accountable to the decisions that they made; we are going to hold them accountable to the promises that they made. This budget has given Australians an opportunity; they can send a signal that governments who betray the electorate cannot be rewarded. The hypocrisy of some of those on the other side—who berated those on this side of the chamber on the issue of placing a price on carbon—to defend this budget! The hypocrisy of going to an election campaign with one set of commitments clearly articulated!

Let us look through the process of what has happened. At first, the government pretended they would not be breaking their commitments. That lasted for about 48 hours—it even began pre-election. It was no coincidence that the Prime Minister was out for a few days but then vanished last week. Then the Treasurer was out and about and he kept fumbling. Then they had to bring out Senator Cormann to do the heavy lifting. What do we have here? We have a budget of broken promises, a budget of lies, a budget built on twisted priorities, a budget built on new and increased taxes and cuts to pensions, a budget built on more than $80 billion of cuts to schools and hospitals, a budget that is being built on the back of low- and middle-income Australians who are going to pay for the majority of it. At the same time, in many areas, this budget delivers more money to those Australians who do not need it.

What I am most concerned about is what this budget does to young Australians and those on low incomes. There is a generation of Australians, particularly those under 35 years of age, who are going to face the ultimate brunt of the horror of this budget—a generation of people who will be working until they are 70, a generation who will have to wait for six months until they get unemployment benefits, a generation of people who are not going to have the same access to family payments as those who went before them. Many of them are still in school and will see money being ripped out of their schools with the government’s failure to commit to funding agreements and increased university fees and debt for the rest of their lives. There is a generation of Australians who are going to be fundamentally hurt by this budget more than others. I think it is a tragedy, I think it is a disgrace and I think it is something that none of us in this chamber should be proud of.

The fabric of Australian society is built on the notions of egalitarianism and a fair go. In the lead-up to the election there was a lot of rhetoric from the government about the idea of sharing the pain, of sharing the burden, of ‘we’re all in it together’. But when you go through the budget documents, when you look at the details of what is actually proposed, you see that this is not the case at all. The rhetoric is one thing; the reality is another. The reality
demonstrates that those on lower incomes, those who are young, those who rely on government support and assistance are again and again the most targeted, the most hurt and the most impacted on by this budget.

This is a budget that the government should not be proud of. On budget night, in the other place, we had the Treasurer's beaming smile and the Prime Minister behind him with his beaming smile. They decided to celebrate the budget by dancing in offices, listening to music and chomping on cigars. That demonstrates not only how fundamentally wrong the government's priorities are, but also its attitude to those who rely on government the most. This was not a budget about keeping commitments made prior to the election; this was a budget about breaking them. They went through a Commission of Audit process which gave them an opportunity to start breaking their promises—and they came through.

There was all that talk of fearmongering. The Prime Minister went up to the electorate of Griffith during the by-election and said the opposition was scaremongering about Medicare co-payments and cuts to pensions. The same thing happened in the Western Australian election campaign. There was all that rhetoric from the government that the opposition was running a fear campaign and scaring people. The reality is that the horror of this budget, the horror of what was released on the day, was worse than anything that the Labor Party had proposed. Not even those who strongly and ideologically oppose this government thought they would be this cruel, this heartless, in their first budget.

As I was saying earlier, this budget has given Australians the opportunity to send a signal that this government has betrayed its electorate and should not be rewarded at the next election for its deceit. We will remember how this government promised that it would not surprise us. We will remember how we were played for fools and that this trust was abused. The Prime Minister will be held accountable for this deception.

**Senator SESELJA** (Australian Capital Territory) (17:06): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important issue of the budget and how we restore our nation's finances. In order to do that, I need to tell the shocking story of how the Labor Party has made a mess of our nation's finances. So I would like to start by going through some of those numbers, the comparison with what Labor inherited and what they left for future generations and for the coalition to pick up as we come into government. It is a shocking tale of taking the best of times and squandering them, taking the greatest terms of trade in our history and blowing the lot, taking the best budgetary position that any government has ever inherited in this country and rapidly sending us on a path towards a European-style way of budgeting and European-style debt and deficits. That is the story of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Labor years.

Let us look first at some numbers. I think it is really important to put it into context when we look at how much money the government was getting when the Howard government left office in 2007 and what the Labor Party have left in terms of both revenue and expenditure. It tells quite a story and it puts into some context Labor's profligacy. When the Howard government left office Commonwealth revenue in that year was around $300 billion. With $300 billion worth of revenue just six years ago the Howard government was able to deliver a $20 billion surplus. So there was $300 billion of revenue and $280 billion of spending, and even then there were critics saying that the Howard government was spending too much and why didn't they return more in taxes. In fact, there were tax cuts right the way through. So $300 billion in 2007-08 apparently was enough to deliver for a coalition government a $20
billion surplus. Revenue during the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years grew by around 25 per cent to $374 billion. That is not bad, $375 billion. In six years we saw revenue go up by about 25 per cent but the problem was the spending. The spending went up around 50 per cent in the same period. So from $280-odd billion to around $412 billion from the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments when they left office, and that is the fundamental problem that the coalition now needs to fix.

The Australian people are not stupid. The Australian people understand that you cannot live beyond your means. If you live beyond your means for a long time, eventually someone has to pay for it, someone has to pick up the bill. In this case it will be the Australian people. It will be the Australian people, if we were to go on in the way the Labor Party was taking us, because not only did we see spending increase by 50 per cent over the period of the Labor government, they also then in the never-never promised to increase spending even further—rapid increases in spending in the out years with no ability to pay for it. So we know that the bill eventually has to be paid and the decision that we have as a nation now is whether or not we choose to start paying some of that bill now, to start making the contribution now so that we are not leaving it to our kids and our grandkids to pick up an ever greater bill, ever greater interest payments, in order to bring the budget back to stability. That is the fundamental choice we have and that is the one that the Labor Party has squibbed.

Here in the ACT one of the biggest issues in the budget is the issue of Public Service job cuts. I am a former public servant myself, my wife is a Commonwealth public servant, family members of mine, including my father for most of his career, were public servants. I understand the importance of the Public Service to this town. As a Canberran I do not want to see any jobs lost in Canberra. What we have got is a situation where even the Labor Party realised spending was so out of control that they in fact started to cut the Public Service. I will use a few figures to illustrate the point. The Labor Party in government, and we saw this in some other areas which they are now denying in opposition, at the very end did start to realise that their policy prescriptions were wrong. We saw it with the boats. Right at the end they said, 'We have to do something because we have lost control of our borders.' And we started to see it in budgeting but of course they were never able to follow through because whilst they proposed some savings in the last budget they now oppose those savings in opposition. And of course they made the decision, and it is important that this is put on the record, to cut 14½ thousand public servants. That was a Labor Party decision. That was the Labor Party recognising that in fact spending was out of control, that they had not controlled spending, that they were living beyond their means.

This is a difficult thing for Canberra. We need to deal with it. We need to do a couple of things that I think are important and it is important to get them on the record. One is that we are not talking about the same as 1996. In terms of magnitude, in terms of the proportion of the workforce, we are talking significantly less, but it is a substantial challenge for the city to deal with. So we need to deal with it in a calm and rational way. What is not helpful is when we hear the comments we have from local Labor politicians such as Gai Brodtmann, who was part of a government that decided to cut 14½ thousand jobs, she was part of that decision, and Andrew Leigh, who was in the government that decided to cut 14½ thousand Public Service jobs, and Kate Lundy, who was part of the government that decided to cut 14½ thousand jobs. When they decided to cut 14½ thousand jobs they did not talk about economic crisis in
Canberra, they did not use hyperbole to describe it, but they now do. So people should see their hypocrisy for what it is. What we need to do is not talk our economy down, and recognise that our private sector has grown significantly over the past 20 years. It is more mature.

These are going to be real challenges for us to deal with, and I would call on the government to have regard to that as we go through the next couple of years. We want to see Canberra continue to prosper—and I believe it will. I believe it will, but it will take some transitional help. We will need that.

But this is the legacy. Whether it is the Public Service or whether it is in other cuts that we see in the budget, this is the legacy of a Labor government that completely lost control of spending. People understand that. The Australian people understand that, if you are headed for $667 billion of debt, when you are paying $12 billion a year in interest and you are headed for $34 billion a year in interest, you cannot keep going along the same path. We have seen what happens when nations lose control of their finances. When nations lose control of their finances, they lose control of their destiny. We have seen the bailouts in other countries. We do not ever want to go anywhere near that situation.

When spending gets out of control and when we see $12 billion a year in interest, headed for $34 billion a year in interest, that is a major concern. That can very quickly spiral out of control, as you struggle to keep up interest payments, as debt gets out of control and more and more needs to be spent just to service that debt. Imagine what we could do with $12 billion a year if it was not needed to service our debt, if it was not needed for interest repayments. Imagine what we could do in infrastructure, in roads building and rail. Imagine what we could do in health and education.

This is the cost that we have when governments lose control. We do not have to look far to see the kind of attitude the previous government had to spending, which led to the debt and deficit crisis that we now face. We are seeing this week the pink batts inquiry, with billions of dollars wasted and people dying because the project was rushed out so quickly without thought—with thought only for tomorrow’s headline rather than the consequences of wasting that money in the way that they did. We saw the cheques going to dead people and the cheques going to people living overseas in order to stimulate the Australian economy—$900 cheques sent to people living overseas in order to stimulate the Australian economy; cheques sent years after the financial crisis apparently in order to stimulate the economy during the financial crisis. There is the NBN blowout—which is being seen in the NBN committee that I am a part of. The independent analysis found that it would cost $73 billion to complete the National Broadband Network—some $29 billion more than the Labor government’s forecast.

These are the legacy issues that we are picking up.

When you see your spending growing at 50 per cent when your revenue is growing at 25 per cent, that represents a problem. When you see interest repayments getting to $12 billion a year and growing rapidly, governments have to act to get the finances back under control. I think it is also worth noting that we do not get the finances under control just for its own sake. Budgetary management is not just about being able to say we can deliver surpluses or we have lowered debt. It has real implications. It has impacts on the economy. It has impacts on confidence.
The comparison between the coalition government under John Howard versus the Labor government under Rudd and Gillard is stark. It is not just about the financial outcomes or the budgetary outcomes; it flows to results in the real economy. I will use some examples—firstly, with the financial outcomes. The coalition left a $19.8 billion surplus; Labor left a $47 billion deficit. That is how much they squandered. The average budget position under the coalition government was an $8.1 billion surplus; the average position under Labor was a nearly $40 billion deficit. The interest on government debt in gross terms under the coalition government was $3.8 billion and it is now $12.4 billion. Government spending increases annually under the coalition government were 3.3 per cent; under the Labor Party it was 4.5 per cent.

We often hear about spending as a proportion of GDP. This one tells a story. Government spending as a proportion of GDP at the end of the Howard government was 23.1 per cent. At the end of the Rudd government spending as a proportion of GDP was 25.9 per cent. That is a nearly three per cent increase in real terms as a proportion of GDP by that Labor government. That has implications. When your spending grows twice as fast as your revenue you are headed for destruction.

We have seen the benefits to the economy in managing the budget properly and getting the economic settings right. We saw things like average GDP growth. Under the Howard government it was 3.6 per cent versus 2½ per cent under the Labor government. We saw annual retail turnover growth of 5.9 per cent under the Howard government and 3.3 per cent under Labor—a massive difference. Multifactor productivity growth under the Howard government was 0.7 per cent annually and negative 0.7 per cent under the Rudd-Gillard government. We saw living standards going up under the Howard government—2.3 per cent annual GDP per capita growth. Under the Rudd-Gillard governments it was only 0.7 per cent. Employment growth under the Howard government was 2.1 per cent and 1.4 per cent under the Rudd-Gillard Labor governments. When we left government the unemployment rate was 4.4 per cent. It was 5.7 per cent at the end of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd experiment. The list goes on and on. Real wages went up annually, above inflation, 1.8 per cent during the life of the Howard government and only 0.6 per cent on average under the Labor government.

These are the facts and these are the consequences of good budgetary and economic management versus poor budgetary and economic management. It is there for all to see. Living standards under good management go up. Productivity growth goes up. People have more choices. We see taxes over time coming down. That is the type of nation we should want to be living in.

As to what the Labor Party continues to advocate for, now in opposition: firstly, they say there is no problem—that $667 billion of debt is okay. We say that it is not. We say that $667 billion of debt is criminal neglect towards our children and our grandchildren. It is leaving them with a legacy of higher taxes and lower growth. That is what $667 billion of debt represents. Lowering debt and deficits and increasing economic growth is a way for us to share the burden with future generations, ensuring that we leave our children and our grandchildren in a better place than the place we inherited. That should be the task of any government. Any government’s fundamental task is to be able to say that we left the country in a better place than we inherited—that we put in place policies that will leave a lasting, positive legacy for our children and grandchildren; that they will have more opportunity; that
they will have more job opportunities; that they will have better living standards; that they will have less debt; that they will have less tax so that they can have more freedom in their daily lives, and so that they can look after their families in the way they choose rather than being burdened by more and more government interference.

The efforts to cut red tape are not simply about saying, 'Cutting red tape—it's politically a good look.' For every bit of genuine economic reform and red tape reduction, we see businesses able to thrive. We see businesses more likely to employ people. We see economic growth, as a result of allowing our businesses to do what they do best, not being constantly bogged down in excessive paperwork.

In the time I have remaining, I will speak on the shift in focus of this budget. It is cutting spending and reducing spending over time, so that we can lower projected debt by around $275 billion. That is fundamentally important. But there is also a shift in the budget from focusing on spending primarily on consumption to spending on investment—on investment in infrastructure so that we can improve productivity, so that we can improve living standards. That is a fundamental part of this budget. It is an important part of this budget. It is something that I think has not been adequately commented on—the shift to more productive spending.

Not all spending by the government is of the same value. Building productive infrastructure is better spending than throwing away money on pink batts. Building productive infrastructure is better than giving cheques to people overseas in order to stimulate the Australian economy. These are the choices that we have every time we deliver a budget. Fixing Labor's mess is not easy. No-one in the coalition is taking the hard decisions because it is fun, or because it makes you popular or because it gets you a good headline, because it does not. These decisions are being taken because they are the right decisions for our nation. And as we get the budget back to good health, as we get debt and deficit under control, the dividend will be a strong one. The dividend for our economy, the dividend for our communities, the dividend for living standards and prosperity and growth will be significant.

That is what this budget debate is about. It is time that those opposite recognise the legacy that they have left, and recognise that we have to get on with fixing the mess that they have left us and, instead of blocking us, get out of the way and allow us to do it.

**Senator THORP** (Tasmania) (17:26): On 7 September last year, the Australian people went to the election and they voted. I am grateful—and I am sure everyone in here is—that we live in a democracy where that could occur. The people who voted made their decision based on what they had been told by all the different candidates and political parties that were there and made themselves available. They decided, in the majority, to support the coalition government that we have today. And that is fair enough—they voted, and that is what they got.

But what really sticks in my craw is the fact that those people were treated like mugs, because those people opposite did not stand up and say, 'We're going to the election to get a mandate to cut spending in Australia.' They did not say that. What they said—and I am assuming that those opposite support the comments made by their leader—was: 'No surprises. No new taxes. No changes to pensions. No cuts to the ABC or SBS. No cuts to health or education.' So when the Australian people cast their vote on 7 September last year, they did so trusting that those opposite and in the other place meant what they said. They did so confident that there would be no surprises, no excuses, no cuts, no new taxes and no
changes to pensions. They cast their vote confident that that would be the outcome. But, unfortunately, that is not what they got.

Senator Seselja, who has just left this place, said in his contribution that people know and people understand what the task of this government is. If he is so confident and others opposite were so confident that that was an honourable task and a task that needed to be done, why not have the courage to say so before the election?

Why not tell the Australian people: 'We believe there is a budget emergency and when we come in we're going to cut your pension. We are going to cut all the funding we promised to improve education in Australia. We are going to cut funding to public health. We are going to hit you with an extra fee every time you go to the doctor. We are going to dismantle universal health care.' They did not say that.

I got an email today from a constituent, a lady from Cygnet in Tasmania. She is in shock. I will not use her name; she did not give me her permission. However, this is her plea. She says: 'When prioritising what to object to in the budget, please put the cruel cuts to support for young people before petrol tax, co-payments to doctors or the debt levy. My son has a severe learning difficulty, was on Newstart for several years but got specialised job search help. Heard of Youth Connections? He got a casual job through a family connection and then his job search people approached the employer and offered three months full wages or six-month half wages if they hired him full time. They did and he's still working there five years on. He was living in Sydney on his Newstart money until things fell into place for him. There are dozens of kids like him, with and without qualifications, who need extra help to find work and something to live on until they do get a job. I don't know how they're going to do it if they can't get it for six months. Without the support he got, my son would probably still be living at home in rural Tasmania; others would be living on the street. There are many bad things in this budget, but this is the worst of them, plus the other disincentives to young people. I do not at all appreciate the prospect of the age pension becoming just as inadequate as Newstart once the indexing is changed, but I think the attack on youth is the worst feature of this budget.'

And it is a budget that is a vicious attack on both Middle Australia and the poor. It is a budget that will hit Australians every time they go to a doctor and every time they get in their car. It will hit their local schools and hospitals. It will hit them when their kids want to go to university and it will hit them when they want to access a pension. The worst of it is that the current Prime Minister said he would not do these things. It is the most blatant dishonesty. He treats the voters of Australia with breathtaking contempt.

We know that families will get slugged. Family benefits and parenting payments are going to get slashed. At the same time, they will be hit with a new GP tax and a new fuel tax. Families on family tax benefit part B will now have their payment cut completely when the youngest child turns six or if their total household income is greater than $100,000 a year. Currently, eligible families continue to receive family tax benefit part B until their youngest child turns 16. This leaves families $2,268 worse off a year. We heard there would be no changes to benefits.

The budget freezes the rates and thresholds for family tax benefits, including the income threshold to receive the maximum rate of family tax benefit A, at $48,837. It confirms the abolition of the schoolkids bonus. How callous—eligible families losing $400 per year for
primary aged children and $820 per year for secondary age children? Family tax benefit supplements are also going to be dramatically reduced. That will cost some families more than $300 a year.

What did Labor do for families? We get the pressure of the costs of living. We gave them support—record levels of assistance for low- and middle-income families at a time when they needed it most. In government, Labor provided targeted support to help ease the cost of living on families through tax cuts, worth up to $2,000 a year, and increased family payments, worth $4,000 a year. We increased the childcare rebate by 50 per cent. We brought in the new schoolkids bonus, worth $820 per year per child, and we brought in the first proper national Paid Parental Leave scheme. That is what Labor think of families; they support them.

Remember pensions. Once again, I quote our new leader saying, clearly, on the television—you could not turn around without hearing him say, 'No changes to pensions.' That is about the longest sentence that that man seems capable of speaking—'No changes to pensions, stop the boats,' blah, blah, blah.

He did not tell the truth and that is becoming patently obvious. This budget slashes the current fair indexation system, which makes sure the pension keeps pace with the cost of living. Is it going to be indexed by the CPI alone, which we know will mean that pensions will fall behind the cost of living?

The government also intends to increase the pension age. The current Prime Minister has no mandate for these changes. How can he have a mandate to make such fundamental changes to the pension, when he told the people of Australia, 'There will be no changes to pensions'? He treats the Australian people like mugs. Tell them anything. Get their vote and then we can do what we like. It is abominable. I hope pensioners are listening to what this government thinks of them. I personally believe they will never vote for this current leader again.

On top of this, all pensioners and state seniors card holders are set to lose valuable concessions for public transport and utilities, with the abolition of the National Partnership on Certain Concessions for Pensioners and Seniors Card Holders. What did Labor do in exactly the same space? We delivered a strong and sustainable pensions system that ensured the pension keeps pace with the rising costs of living and that was targeted at those who need it most.

Labor can think long term. That is why all those years ago Labor made sure that most, if not all, working Australians had access to superannuation. This government has already scrapped the low-income superannuation contribution and it is now going to delay the increase of the superannuation guarantee to 12 per cent. Labor committed to increasing the superannuation of Australia's low- and middle-income workers by introducing the superannuation guarantee rate, increasing each year until it reached 12 per cent on 1 September 2019.

This is sensible policy, and they also abolished the maximum age limit on the superannuation guarantee from 1 July 2013 to increase the incentive for workers aged 70 and over to remain in the workforce and further boost retirement savings. It also amended the eligibility criteria for the low-income superannuation contribution to now pay individuals with an entitlement below $20. It effectively refunds, up to $500 a year, the tax paid on
superannuation concessional contributions of people with incomes of up to $37,000 per year—the people who need it most.

Then carers—more broken promises. Labor has always recognised the significant role that carers play in our community. We provided booster payments of up to $5,300 a year and a new annual $600 carer supplement on top of that. Of course, we have got the NDIS.

What has the Liberal budget done? It has cut the indexation arrangements for the carer payment from September 2017—it is shameful. It has cut the National Respite for Carers Program, which provides much needed relief to people caring for loved ones at home who are unable to care for themselves because of disability or frailty. More than 90 per cent of carers on the carer payment have no other income, because of their caring responsibilities.

May I remind people of one of the other mantras of the now Prime Minister: No cuts to health. What did Labor do with health? Unprecedented investments; strengthening Medicare; hospitals, specialist services; and historic reforms to improving the delivery of primary health care across the country. What Labor managed to achieve was the highest bulk-billing rates in Medicare's history, greater than 82 per cent nationally; increases in the workforce—over 14,000 more doctors and over 28,000 more nurses; and, between 2008 and 2018, that growth is expected to slow. In the first two months of commencement, over 84,000 children had free dental services under Labor's Grow Up Smiling program, but what do we get now?

This budget's GP tax is a cruel broken promise—remember: No cuts to health—and represents the greatest attack on Medicare and universal health care in years. This budget will also see the cost of medicines rise to $42.70 for general patients and, for concessional patients, the cost will be $6.90. Patients will also be lumped with paying a new tax on GP visits, paying for pathology and imaging and will find it harder to get the services they need from public hospitals. It also makes the Medicare safety net less fair, cutting $270 million from the provision of existing arrangements and transferring those costs onto Australian families.

Then we get to housing and homelessness. People understand the pressures on housing fall across a continuum. If people cannot afford to buy their own home, then they have to rent. If rents are high and they cannot afford to get into private rental, then they need to get into public housing. If public housing does not have the scope to look after them, then they fall back on emergency and crisis housing, and the worst end of the spectrum is homelessness. That is a fact.

As former housing minister, I saw the benefits of NRAS in Tasmania. It made an extraordinary difference. We have already had 14,000 dwellings completed. People need to understand that good schemes need long-term thinking and planning to build momentum and then lead to fruition. And now you are going to cut one of the best policies when it came to providing affordable housing in Australia. It is an absolute disgrace—

Senator Mason: It is outrageous to stand here—

Senator THORP: and those opposite may bleat, but I do understand your embarrassment, because you got elected on a con. You said that there would be no surprises, no excuses, no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions and you conned the voters.

Senator Mason: It is an absolute and utter disgrace, and you did it!
Senator THORP: Oh dear! Very upset, are you? What else are you going to do about housing? You are going to cut $44 million to homelessness services. How kind and caring that is! You are going to axe housing help for the seniors program. Poor old pensioners have got less money and fewer houses to live in now. Let's remind everyone opposite what they said about cessation of the first home savers account.

Senator Polley: I rise on a point of order: as much as we are all very cognisant that those on the other side do not share the views, they are not shamed by the budget they brought down. Those sort of outbursts—I cannot even hear Senator Thorp, so I would ask you to bring the chamber to order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Polley. Senator Mason, I do ask you to refrain from shouting across the chamber. It is unparliamentary.

Senator MASON: I apologise; I was just asking a question: when the honourable senator would pay back the debt. We haven't heard an answer.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you. It is not an appropriate question. Thank you, Senator Mason.

Senator THORP: What are they doing now? Having broken all those promises made pre-election and conned the Australian people into believing that they were getting what they voted for, they have now manufactured a budget crisis, a budget emergency. Yet, that is not what the experts say. All the chief economists say that Australia has an 'enviable budgetary position compared to other rich countries'. None thought the speculated deficit levy was 'an intelligent way to repair the budget'. 'Bank of America Merrill Lynch chief economist … said it was important to get the deficit under control in the longer term, but there were serious risks involved in moving too quickly.'

The economy is still fairly soft. Growth is below trend … I don't see any particular urgency about 2014-15 or 2015-16.

On the most recent figures the Australian government's debt is $191.5 billion, forecast to rise to more than $600 billion—

we are recognising the figures here—

The forecast deficit is $47 billion, but all economists said these figures were tiny—compared with other OECD countries—as a percentage of the overall economy.

Senator Boyce: Like Greece? Go Greece!

Senator THORP: Our position was enviable.

Senator Mason: You wouldn't even have an economy!

Senator THORP: Most countries would be envious of Australia's public finances as they currently stand.

Senator Mason: Not because of your efforts, Lin; because of our efforts!

Senator THORP: 'We don't need a surplus tomorrow', said Chris Richardson, economist and partner at Deloitte Access Economics. So what we have is a series of untruthful statements made leading into the election and then a confected budget crisis post-election to con the Australian public. How about, if you want to make a tough decision—

Senator Mason: When have you made one?

Senator THORP: you don't make it on the backs of the poor!
Senator Mason: When have you made one?
Senator THORP: You don't make it on the backs of the sick!
Senator Mason: When have you made one?
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Stephens): Order!
Senator THORP: You don't make it on the backs of pensioners! How about you do a few things like abolish negative gearing? How about you get rid of capital gains tax discounts? You would not know how to make a tough decision if it stared you in the face. Dishonesty before the election and dishonesty after it.
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Thorp. Senator Boyce, hopefully we might be able to give you some reasonable silence for your contribution.
Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (17:46): Thank you, Madam Acting Deputy President, and I make the point that I will be speaking briefly to give my colleague Senator O’Sullivan the opportunity to speak as well.

What a delight to have the chance to talk about twisted priorities because the most twisted of any priorities have to be the priorities of the people opposite, of the opposition in this house. What a performance they have put on. Listening to the comments just made by Senator Thorp, I suppose NRAS may have been a successful program in Tasmania because they did not have enough overseas students to fill up the houses—which is what happened in Sydney. Once again a policy of the Labor government—we already have royal commissions into some of them—that they were unable to implement.

Senator Polley: Madam Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order on the slurs that the good senator there is expressing in this debate. Her federal member for Bass obviously does not share those concerns because he was there taking the credit and opening those facilities.

Senator Back: Point of order—
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! There is already one point of order that I have to rule on thank you, Senator. There is no point of order there, Senator Polley, and I ask Senator Boyce to continue and to focus on the debate at hand.

Senator BOYCE: Indeed I am, Madam Acting Deputy President. I thought the question we were debating was twisted priorities. And if there are any twisted priorities in this place, the kings and queens of twisted priorities are sitting on the opposition benches. In fact the queen of twisted priorities would be Ms Jenny Macklin, the shadow minister for social services, who thinks her priority is to scare people on disability pensions and people with disabilities and their carers witless by misrepresenting and deceiving them about what was happening with this budget.

We will see yet another example of twisted priorities tonight, one imagines, unless of course the opposition leader, Mr Shorten, chooses in his reply to the budget to tell us what he is going to do about the $191 billion worth of deficit that the former Labor government created and the other $123 billion of deficit they would have had in the forward estimates—and that is even without properly funding half of the programs they did. It is amusing to listen to people opposite bleat about the national partnership on homelessness when you realise the funding provided by the former Labor government for the national partnership on
homelessness runs out in just over a month. This government was left with the airy-fairy twisted priorities of Mr Swan, who thought that he could deceive his way into coming up with a surplus. It cannot be done. He could not do it, so he just left half the funding needs for his promises out of his budgets. That is not something that this government will ever do.

I would like to make the point that there are currently 800,000 Australians on the disability support pension. We have a lower rate of workforce participation by people with disability than many other OECD countries. This is not because people with disability cannot work; it is because many of the policies developed by the previous government gave them no opportunity to get into work. The vast majority of people with a disability would like to work, and I am certainly aware of many with an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment who, if the opportunity was there, would work.

Courtesy of the current opposition leader when he was the relevant minister, we had about three reviews of disability employment services with no improvement in outcome. The expenditure on disability support pensions is currently about $16 billion a year, and it is projected to grow by 27 per cent by the end of the decade. It is not sustainable. When is the twisted priority view of the opposition going to ever include the word 'sustainable'? It's not. There is a group of DSP recipients under 35—from between 2008 and 2011, when the then Labor government finally tightened up the impairment assessment tables—who will be reassessed by this government. That is reasonable. You just have to look at the way the graph goes to see that between 2008 and 2012 the growth was unsustainable. And this is not, by any means, suggesting that anyone with a severe or manifest disability will be reassessed—they will not. Let's just put to bed, finally, the deceits and twisted priorities of Minister Macklin, who is far more interested in playing politics with the NDIS than she is in assisting in its development. We will support the NDIS. We have put extra funding into the NDIS to ensure that what happens is right. But we have inherited a budget position that is unsustainable.

I will also put to bed some of the deliberate deceits that have been bandied about by members of the opposition in terms of how household incomes will be affected by the changes we are proposing. For a start, the changes to family tax benefit B, for those already on family tax benefit B, will remain until June 2017. If you have a 10-year-old for whom you are currently receiving family tax benefit B, you will continue to receive that until the child is over 12—June 2017. By 2016-17 a sole parent with one child under six will be earning $60,000 before they pay more in tax than they receive in government benefits. A sole parent with two dependents under six will be receiving $70,000 in private income before the scale cuts in so that they pay more tax than they receive. The list goes on. You will be on at least $60,000 to $70,000 before you do not make a net gain from the government.

So there is no cruelty in what we are doing. What we are doing is trying to fix the ridiculous, unsustainable mess. One would hope that the opposition could get over its twisted priorities and support doing what is right for Australia into the future.

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Queensland) (17:54): Acting Deputy President Stephens, if I had known how exciting it was down here after dark I would have come down here more frequently!

The coalition was elected with a clear promise to the people of Australia that we would stop the boats, and we would stop the debt and deficit problems that were plaguing this
nation's long-term prosperity. These problems are not of our making, but we take the
responsibility to fix them. Only by doing this can we build a prosperous future for all.

Let's take the first part of the coalition's promise—to stop the boats. The government has
taken strong and decisive action to restore the integrity of our borders. Not a single people-
smuggling venture has successfully landed in Australia this year. This has meant savings of
$2.5 billion to the budget, and the closure of nine detention centres. It is clear we are
delivering on this important election promise.

Now let's take the second promise—to address Australia's credit problems. This week our
government has proven its willingness to make the difficult but necessary decisions so that we
can ensure prosperity for all in the future. We are in a situation where we have to make
significant changes to our budget structure. We have to be able to live within our means, and
that means everybody is going to have to make a contribution. If we do not move now to fix
the budget and to strengthen the economy it is only going to get much harder over time. On
the back of five budget deficits in a row we have inherited $123 billion of deficits and debt,
rising to a projected $667 billion if there are no structural changes to the budget process.

Treasury projects that without the policy change we have delivered this week, the budget
will be in deficit for the next 10 years. This would be the longest stretch of deficits in this
country since the Second World War. Decisive action is needed to prevent a tidal wave of
debt swamping our nation's economic future. That was the promise we took to the people of
Australia at the election. And that was the promise the Treasurer delivered in the House of
Representatives chamber on Tuesday night.

This does not mean difficult decisions were not required. But we have never shied away
from this commitment to the Australian people. While there has been disappointing but
predictable criticism from some, they overlook the positive work this budget undertakes not
only to address the nation's debt problems but also to begin the vital process of building a
solid platform for Australia's future. For example, the coalition government are building
Australia's transport infrastructure for the 21st century. Indeed, the Abbott government has
made a record $13.4-billion investment to build the infrastructure needed for the 21st century
in my state of Queensland. These funds are part of the government's economic action strategy
to build a strong, prosperous economy, boost productivity and create thousands of new jobs.

The most important project in my area, though, is that of the Toowoomba Second Range
Crossing. This includes the construction of a bypass to the north of Toowoomba, running
from the Warrego Highway at Helidon in the east to the Gore Highway at Athol in the west.
This project is essential for that part of the world. The coalition will also continue to work on
the Warrego Highway in Queensland, delivering pavement widening and lane duplication, an
additional overtaking lane and intersection safety upgrades. Better roads mean less
congestion, faster travel times and lower fuel costs. The Abbott government's investment in
Queensland will also improve freight transport linkages to key domestic and export markets.

The combined efforts of these projects will better equip rural and regional Australia to
compete in the world marketplace. Our budget strikes a solid balance between the short-term
pain of budget reform and the long-term national interest, because it frees up the funding
needed to invest in economic infrastructure to safeguard the economy. We are preparing our
nation for future prosperity.
On the whole, the government has delivered a balanced and credible budget, designed to repair the budget and build a strong and prosperous economy for decades to come. But there is still much work to be done and this government is focused on laying the foundations so that future generations might benefit. What we did this week was deliver an honest and fair budget. We believe it is a budget that has kept faith with the commitments that we took to the last election. We are asking everyone across Australia to contribute and to help us rebuild, and build a stronger economy and get the budget back on track for future generations.

Debate interrupted.

Sitting suspended from 18:00 to 20:00

BUDGET

Statement and Documents

Debate resumed on the motion:
That the Senate take note of the statement and documents.

Senator McLucas (Queensland) (20:00): I seek leave to incorporate the opposition's speech in reply to the 2014-15 budget.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

Tonight Mr Shorten spoke on behalf of millions of Australians who feel shocked and angry. Shocked by the brutality of this Government's attack on their way of life. Angry at a Prime Minister who pretended to be on their side. This Budget divides our Parliament. More importantly, it will divide our nation. The Government says this Budget is just the beginning. And it is. The beginning of extreme policies with an extreme impact on the Australian people. This is just the beginning, turning Australia into a place most of us won't recognise - a colder, meaner, narrower place.

Losing our sense of fairness and our sense of community. Labor believes in a different Australia. An Australia where your destiny is not pre-determined by your parents' wealth or your postcode. A fair and prosperous nation populated by a creative and productive people. But this is not the Australia we saw reflected in the Budget on Tuesday night.

On Tuesday night we saw the outlines of Tony Abbott's Australia – an Australia divided into two societies.

This was a 'tax it or cut it' Budget. Millions of Australians now know what Abbott's Australia will look like: If you need to see a doctor, you will pay more. If you need to buy medicine, you will pay more. If you go to work and earn a good wage, you will pay more. If you have a family, your support will be cut.
If you lose your job, your support will be cut.
If you are a young person, you will be left behind.
If you rely on a pension, you will be punished.
And if you drive a car, even for that, you will have to pay more.
And if you relied on the Prime Minister's promises—then you were betrayed.
This is a Budget of broken promises built on lies.
And not just lies; systemic and wilful ones.
A Budget that goes out of its way to create an underclass.
A Budget with the wrong priorities for Australia.
A Budget that confirms the worst fears Australians always had about this Prime Minister.
This is a Budget based on a myth.
And now on the basis of this myth, a manufactured crisis, the Australian people have been ambushed with unconscionable changes.
Where is the decency? Where is the honesty? Where is the humanity in this Government?
For a Prime Minister who campaigned to restore trust in our public life, he has let the country down and badly.
The Budget papers reveal the economic truth.
Australia is fundamentally strong, and so is the legacy Labor left behind.
Low inflation
Low interest rates
Net debt peaking at just one seventh of the level of the major advanced economies.
A triple-A credit rating with a stable outlook from all three international ratings agencies – one of only eight countries in the world.
Superannuation savings larger than the size of our whole economy
And around a million new jobs created
That's what we left.
Let's call the Liberal Budget 'emergency' what it is:
An attempt to justify the Abbott Government's blueprint for a radically different, less fair Australia.
From a Government that see the Australian people not as workers, parents, carers, patients or commuters but as economic units unentitled to respect.

**BROKEN PROMISES**
The Australian people have now witnessed this Prime Minister repeatedly promising one thing before an election while doing something completely different after.
Say what you like Prime Minister.
Spin as hard as you can.
Australians know a lie when they hear one.
They can spot a phony when they see one.
And they know when they've been deceived.
This Budget underestimates the Australian people.
Australians are up for hard decisions.
But pay them respect, sit down, talk to them, and listen.
No dancing past the hard questions.
No lectures.
No surprises.
No excuses.
What the Australian public expect are consistent structural changes aimed at the medium and long term.
A Budget that invests in the future.
That is, a Budget which points the way to an achievable destination but by a process, anchored in reasonableness.

COST OF LIVING
A nation's economic confidence begins with the family Budget.
And this is a budget that shows no understanding or respect for around 9 million family budgets.
This is a Budget that will push up the cost of living for every Australian family.
A Budget drawn up by people who have never lived from paycheque to paycheque.
Never sat at the kitchen table with a stack of bills to work out which ones they can put off and which ones have to be paid to avoid being cut off.
People who don't understand that increasing petrol tax will make the school run, the commute and driving the kids to weekend sport more expensive.
So Labor says to the Prime Minister, don't lecture Australian families about hard choices.
Do something to help them make ends meet.
This morning Mr Shorten met with a young family from Queanbeyan.
Karim and Radmilla have two daughters, Isabella aged 4 and Mary Therese aged 8 – and another baby due next week.
Karim is a high school teacher.
Like most Australians, Radmilla and Karim aren't wealthy – they work hard to make ends meet.
They balance their family budget, but some fortnights are harder than others.
They worry about their washing machine breaking down out of warranty – or paying for new tyres on the family car.
No matter how hard they try, the weekly shop never seems to cost less.
It always seems like less than a month has passed since the last bill landed in the letter box.
And if the Prime Minister gets his way – Radmilla, Karim and hundreds of thousands of Australians like them will be worse off every year.
The Government's GP tax, the Hospital tax and the increased cost of medicines will cost this family more than $450 per year.
Whenever they fill up their car – they will be slugged at the bowser.
And when Term 3 starts, there will be no more SchoolKids Bonus to help with the costs of new books and new uniforms and shoes for their growing kids.
This Prime Minister's Budget will smash family budgets across the nation.
NATSEM modelling shows that a couple with a single income of $65,000 and two kids in school will have over $1700 cut from their family budget.
Add in health costs, and the Prime Minister is cutting nearly $40 from their weekly budget, every week.

And under this Budget, the cuts will get deeper and deeper.
More than tripling to almost $120 a week by the time of the next election.
In 2016 this family will suffer cuts of over $6,000 per year.
That's around one in every ten dollars of the family budget gone.
This is not a Budget shaped by the everyday life of real people.

**MEDICARE**

Medicare – universal access to healthcare - is fundamental to our Australian way of life.

Labor created Medicare because we believe that the health of any one of us is important to all of us.

We are all members of the Australian family and Medicare is, at its core, a family measure.

And with it, we created a new community standard one that is now 40 years old.

We reject a US-style, two-tiered system where your wealth determines your health.

The Prime Minister once claimed he was the best friend that Medicare ever had but this Budget proves he is ideologically opposed to Medicare and its central principle of universality.

The government proposes to establish a $7 GP Tax for visits to a general practitioner.

The justification is that the Medicare system is too expensive and requires greater patient contribution.

Yet the Budget reveals that not one dollar of the GP Tax will be returned to recurrent health spending.

Not one dollar.

The GP tax is being applied simply to break the universality of Medicare.

The kind of thing you would expect from American Tea Party Republicans - not from a Liberal Party formerly committed to Medicare.

And no hypothecation to a future fund – whether medical or otherwise – justifies the measure or the wilful breach of promise it entails.

Taxing the sick won't heal them.
Making medicine more expensive won't make us healthier.
Yes, investing in medical research is crucial. All research is crucial.
But you don't fund the search for the cures of tomorrow by imposing a tax on the patients of today.
Australians are smarter and more generous than this.
But the GP tax does another thing.
It seeks to turn Australian GPs into tax collectors.
To dragoon them into the service of a completely ideological quest - to distract their time and attention from the immediate task of diagnosing and treating their patients.

The Government has forgotten that general practitioners are the front line troops in our constant battle to keep Australians healthy.

Only the government's general contempt and disregard of them could lead it to impose such a burden on them.

This Parliament has a choice – it is either for or against Medicare.

Labor gives you this commitment.
Labor will never, never give up on Medicare.
We will fight this wicked and punitive measure to its ultimate end.

**$80 BILLION**

In some ways, the worst thing the Treasurer said on Tuesday night didn't actually come from his speech.

It was concealed in the Budget papers.

Hidden in the papers was a capricious, unconscionable attack upon health and education services.

The Budget papers reveal an $80 billion cut to schools and hospitals – a cut for which there had been no discussion, no forewarning, not a shred of consultation.

And let me repeat, the sum, - in case people might have missed the scale of it.

Eighty thousand million, or in today's parlance $80 billion.

$50 billion dollars from hospitals.

$30 billion dollars from schools.

An attack on this scale is unprecedented.

The Treasurer promised to bring forth massive savings, fairly applied.

Instead, in an incompetent and cowardly way, he has outsourced the main burden of his savings task to the States.

How could a collection of States with limited revenue possibly cope with these cuts?

The Treasurer and the Prime Minister have hinted at the answer: a broader and heavier GST.

The Prime Minister and the Treasurer are blackmailing the States with unconscionable cuts to turn them into the Commonwealth's cat's paw –

A Trojan Horse to a bigger GST but absolving the Abbott Government of fingerprints or blame.

This is how low this Budget's formulations have taken us.

Even John Howard was prepared to take his GST to the people and proselytise on it.

But not Tony Abbott or big brave Joe Hockey.

Never before has the scale of such an attack ever been mounted upon the States and never before so underhandedly.

Labor makes it clear, that we on this side of the Chamber will have no truck with these brutal and cruel cuts to hospitals and schools.

**EDUCATION**

Labor is the party of education.

We are the party that brought the dream of a university degree within reach of all Australians.

We are the party that implemented the Gonski reforms for schools funding based on need.

A $14.7 billion additional investment in Australian schools.

But after this Budget, the Gonski reforms are dead, buried and cremated.

But Labor is committed to making every Australian school a great school.

It was Mr Shorten's mother who taught him the power of education.

The pathway that it can provide.

Mr Shorten's mum was a teacher, winning a teaching scholarship in the early 1950s.

She taught in city and country government schools. She travelled the world, she raised a family.

And then studied again later in life.

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CHAMBER
His Mum never stopped being a teacher.  
She taught his twin brother and him everything.  
She taught him the value of education.  
Like all parents, what we want for our children is a quality education.  
What separates Labor from the Liberals is: we want a quality education for all Australians.  
Because it is Australia's productivity that will determine how we fare in the 21st Century.  
When Mr Shorten was at school there were 7.5 taxpayers to support each Australian aged 65 years or older.  
When his daughter was born in 2009, that ratio was five to one.  
By 2050 it will be only 2.7 to one.  
Labor knows the only answer to this challenge is to make the right investments in skills and productivity.  
Only through education will Australia fully develop our economic potential, our scientific potential, our artistic potential – our people's potential.  
That is why the Prime Minister's $5 billion cuts to Higher education are so destructive.  
Cuts that mark the end of Australia's fair and equitable higher education system.  
Cuts that bring down the curtain on the Whitlam university legacy.  
The legacy that gave Australians like Dr Cathy Foley, Astronomer Bryan Gaensler and author Tim Winton the chance to go to University.  
The legacy that gave Tony Abbott – and at least 12 members of his Cabinet the same opportunity.  
This Prime Minister's cuts to higher education sell-out Australian genius and reject Australian potential.  
Labor will vote against these cuts to university funding and student support.  
Labor will not support a system of higher fees, bigger student debt, reduced access and greater inequality.  
We will never tell Australians that the quality of their education depends on their capacity to pay.  

PENSIONS AND SUPERANNUATION  
Just as we will never tell pensioners to tighten their belts, again and again.  
This Prime Minister sees pensioners as a burden to the Budget.  
Labor rejects this.  
Labor believes that Australians who have worked hard all their lives, who have paid taxes all their lives – and if lucky, have a humble family home – have earned a dignified and secure retirement.  
Pensioners should not have to worry about whether or not they can afford to put on their heating, visit their doctor or buy a treat for their grandkids.  
Let's be clear: the aged pension is not a king's ransom.  
It is a modest sum.  
$20,000 a year.  
The reforms introduced by Labor guarantee the pension keeps pace with the cost of living.  
If the Prime Minister's pension cuts had been in place for the last four years - today pensioners would be at least $1700 worse off.  

CHAMBER
The Prime Minister's breach of trust with pensioners isn't just breaking a promise he made before the last election. He is breaking a promise Australia made with our fellow citizens forty and fifty years ago. At the start of their working life. A promise that if they worked hard and made a contribution, the nation would look after them in their old age.

This Prime Minister's cuts trespass against the nation's covenant with pensioners. This Prime Minister's lies and broken promises hurt every generation of Australians. Pensioners, and their sons and daughters, who are worried about the quality of life for their ageing parents.

Labor makes this solemn pledge to Australia's pensioners. Labor will not surrender the security of your retirement. We will fight for a fair pension. And Labor will prevail.

This Government's failure to plan for the needs of older Australians is not just a problem for those currently on the aged pension. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer should not harangue Australians about working til they're 70. If their only plan is for Australians to work longer and harder and retire later, with less.

Mr Shorten has spent his adult life representing the people who do the real heavy lifting: tradespeople, labourers, cleaners, nurses and other Australians who make a living with skilled hands and strong backs.

Many of them started work at 15 – don't force them to work til they're 70. Rather, empower Australian workers to save for retirement is so important. Labor wants Australia to have the world's best retirement savings system. This Prime Minister wants Australia to have the world's oldest retirement age. And in this Budget the Government continues to target the retirement savings of all Australians. The Abbott Government has cut superannuation – another broken promise. It means more Australians will be reliant on a pension in the future.

As Minister, Mr Shorten moved legislation in this parliament to raise super from 9 to 12 per cent. And reduced taxation on the modest superannuation contributions of Australians who earn $37,000 or less in a year. Yet one of the first acts of this Government was to abolish Labor's Low Income Super Contribution. This was a cowardly raid on the retirement savings of 3.6 million low-income earners. Two thirds of those hurt by this change were women - who had moved in and out of the workforce to start and raise a family.

How can this Prime Minister think it's OK to pay multi-millionaires $50,000 that they don't need. And yet rob the retirement savings of over two million women who earn less than that in a whole year?

Prime Minister – how can you not see how unfair this is?

JOBS

Labor believes every Australian should be able to find good and fulfilling jobs with decent pay and conditions in productive and profitable enterprises.
But for Australians under 30 who are looking for work, this Budget offers no hope.
It offers despair.
It offers poverty.
It offers no plan for jobs.
Prime Minister – where is your plan for jobs?
The changes to Newstart are perhaps the single most heartless measure in this brutal Budget.
Sentencing young people to a potentially endless cycle of poverty when they should be getting a hand to find a job.
Is just a blame-shifting, cost-shifting measure that will put the price of unemployment on to Australian families.
Prime Minister, how are people under 30 looking for work supposed to survive for six months on nothing?
These are purely ideological changes that go to the very core of the Prime Minister's character.
They contradict every piece of expert advice.
This Prime Minister's vicious, victim-blaming policy will create a forgotten generation of Australians – shut out of the workforce.
Labor will have no part of this.

LABOR BELIEVES
Australia does not have a budget emergency, as the Government claims, but it has a budget task.
And that task, in the face of declining terms of trade and lower nominal income, is to change and reconfigure the Budget's trajectory.
To, over time, make certain that the combination and influences of Commonwealth spending and Commonwealth revenue come together to reduce the Government's call on national savings.
In short, to make our national budget sustainable.
But make it sustainable in a fair and reasonable way.
And why is this so important?
Because the Budget supports and needs to support large numbers of dependent people, as it does families on modest incomes, and as it must, on schools and health.
The Budget always needs a balance in its imposition on incomes, the contribution of companies, the incidence of its excises and those expenditures which underpin us as a civil society.
Indeed, we believe, as a great social democracy.
Labor has always held to these precepts.
This is the kind of thoughtful responsibility we in Labor subscribe to.
Recognising what needs to be done and going about the job of doing it.
But this is not the framework this government has adopted.
It is walking away from this kind of balance.
This Budget is designed to change the essential compact of Australian society.
It is conservatism taking it up to consensus – tugging away at the very struts that have held us together as a good and prosperous nation.
This Opposition will support reasonable and balanced remedial budgetary measures but it will not support the conscious development of an underclass.
This is a Budget that would seek to demolish the pillars of Australian society: universal Medicare, education for all, a fair pension, full employment.

The very things this Prime Minister promised not to touch, are the first casualties of his fabrications. Including new and higher taxes.

This is the Budget of a Prime Minister and a Government who want to tear down everything Australians have built together.

By contrast, Labor invests in our people to make our country stronger.
Labor educates.
Labor cares for all.
Labor believes in an Australia writ large.
We believe that economic growth comes from extending opportunity.
We believe in a prosperous Australia: prosperity for everyone who works and prosperity which works for everyone.
An Australia where your Medicare card - not your credit card - guarantees you access to quality healthcare.

An Australia where the National Disability Insurance Scheme is a reality for people with disability, their carers and the people who love them – not a scapegoat for complaints about spending.
Labor believes that a teenager in a regional town should be studying in a great school – and have the choice of a university education, learning a trade or taking up a rewarding job.
We believe that science and innovation should be at the heart of national policy – because they are central to our prosperity.
We believe in an Australia where small business can grow and thrive.
An Australia that still makes things.
An Australia with quality infrastructure – including digital infrastructure.
An Australia where women are equal – and pays them equally.
An Australia that is closing the gap and extending opportunities for the first Australians.
Labor believes in an Australia that cares for its environment – and takes the science of climate change seriously.
An Australia where multiculturalism is celebrated as a social and economic asset – not treated as sport for bigots and ideologues.
An Australia that is a good global citizen, confident and engaged with the opportunities of the Asian Century.
An Australia ready for the future, optimistic about the future and investing in the future.

This Prime Minister and this Treasurer, talk a lot about the freedom of the market, deregulating and liberating.

Of course, you can get rid of fairness and leave people to fend for themselves.
That is a kind of freedom.
Tonight Labor says to Australians there is another freedom.
There is the freedom of integrity and the freedom of respect.
The freedom that gives every person dignity and the right to be treated equally.
There is a freedom of compassion and respect that gives individuals the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
That is the freedom Labor believes in.
This Budget undermines that freedom.
This Budget weakens it.
This Budget tears at the living standards of our people.
And in doing so, this Budget tears at the fabric of our country.
On Tuesday, the Treasurer quoted from Robert Menzies' 'Forgotten People'.
But the Government forgot a lot of people on Budget night.
They are the Australians Labor speaks on behalf of tonight, the Australians I am speaking to.
The Government forgot you in its Budget – and it forgot what makes our country great.
It forgot opportunity.
It forgot reward for effort.
It forgot the fair go.
Well, Labor hasn't forgotten.
We still believe in fairness.
We still believe in an Australia that includes everyone, that helps everyone, that lets everyone be their best, that leaves no-one behind.
This is the Australia that the Prime Minister has forgotten.
And it is the Australia that Labor will always fight for.
If you want an election, try us.
If you think we are too weak – bring it on.
But remember – it is not about us Prime Minister.
It is about the future of our nation and the wellbeing of our people.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (20:00): In my 25 years in politics I have seen governments and budgets come and go—governments like that of Tasmanian Liberal Premier Robin Gray, who cooked the books; governments like that of John Howard, who engaged in gross populism. Remember his 'rivers of gold', manna from heaven, as he squandered the benefits of the last mining boom with tax cuts not to mention his previous decision to freeze the fuel excise to win an election. I have seen governments ignore the challenges ahead, refuse to even mention climate change or the environment, just as this Abbott government is doing, and play instead to comfort zones, promising that if they continue to do what they have always done everything will be okay, in spite of Einstein's great observation that you cannot solve problems with the same mentality that created them. Frankly, that is our problem in this parliament.

But the Abbott government's first budget is in a category of its own. The nation is reeling as people come to terms with the extent to which the Prime Minister has shafted and lied to people and led those who believed in him like lambs to the slaughter. Before the recent Western Australian Senate election I said at the Press Club that people were frightened by the Prime Minister because they didn't know what he would do next or who he really is, what he really believes in. But now the real nature of the chameleon has been revealed. Frankly, I have never witnessed such a brazen attempt by any Prime Minister to ruthlessly and so quickly impose such a vindictive, hard right, cruel and ideological agenda on the Australian
people and our environment and then try to justify it by deliberately concocting a fake national budget emergency.

It is breathtaking to watch the Prime Minister and his cigar-smoking Treasurer, together with their hand-picked commissioners of audit, aided and abetted by the Murdoch press, try to con the community into believing that everyone has a moral obligation to share the burden of a confected crisis, arguing that the burden is being shared fairly whilst making absolutely sure that the full weight is carried by those who have no power to fight back—the young, the sick, pensioners, students and those least able to shoulder it, not to mention the natural environment and future generations. If you are privileged, the Liberals will protect that privilege; if you are already struggling, they will stamp you down and make your life harder. Prime Minister Abbott, your heroes, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, would have been proud of you.

But we live in a democracy. The people wisely did not give the Abbott government absolute power. They did not give Prime Minister Abbott absolute control of both houses of parliament. So I stand here tonight to commit the Australian Greens to taking you on. The Greens will stand up to Prime Minister Abbott every step of the way and we will block these cruel budget cuts. Prime Minister Abbott has threatened to go to a double dissolution election if the Senate does not give him what he wants. Well, the Greens say: 'Bring it on! Bring it on, Mr Abbott!' We could not be more passionate or more committed to kicking your mob out and stopping the damage you are trying to inflict on people, on the environment and our global standing. We will block the attacks on universal health care and vote against the $7 GP co-payment; we will block the cruel changes to the living and studying allowances for young people and students; we will block the unfair and regressive user pays model proposed for our universities. Why? Not only because it is wrong but because there is no budget emergency and there is no burden to share. What there is is a need to recognise that the world has changed and that national priorities must reflect the global emergency of climate change with its myriad consequences for societies and economies. We need to identify other major constraints and opportunities facing us as a nation and to offer leadership to genuinely take the action now that will protect people and make life better for everyone, including our children, their children and generations to come.

We need to work out where as a nation we are going, how much it will cost to get there, how we are going to raise the money to do it whilst reducing our debt over time. Instead, Australia's social contract, our commitment to recognition of Indigenous people in the Constitution, our commitment to equality of opportunity in everything from education to access to justice, our universal health care system, our notion of a fair go for everyone, our federal system of checks and balances, environmental protection right down to our ABC and SBS are being torn up in this budget. It is a backward looking budget delivered by Prime Minister Abbott but written by big business, for big business, for the big miners, big polluters and big banks—the vested interests of the old economy determined to stamp out anything or anyone that threatens their profit or power.

This is not about the future of the country or making life better for our children; it is about making life harder for people now, and our children, and condemns us all to a dog-eat-dog existence in a rust-bucket economy pitching on the rough seas of a world struggling with climate change, environmental degradation and inequality. It is entirely without vision.
This budget is so last century in its focus that one journalist described it as an 'asphalt budget'. It represents a massive opportunity cost to our nation. Where are the jobs for the people whom the Prime Minister orders to earn or learn? Where are the economic platforms from which we can take off in new directions with new technologies and innovation? Road-building driving congestion, coal ports as stranded assets, and shovels in motion hardly represent a platform for economic prosperity.

The Abbott government has ignored and failed to address the global trends likely to hit our nation hard in coming decades and constrain our ability to provide jobs and services for our people. We are facing global warming and extreme weather events; divestment from fossil fuels; environmental degradation; water crises; volatile food markets; dislocation of millions of people in our region; as well as growing health care, education and training costs. We are facing an ageing population needing to be supported by pensions, a growing gap between rich and poor, and a mining industry transitioning from construction to production.

Leading global economist Michael Molitor has recently commented:

History tells us that a great approach to lifting growth comes from investing in infrastructure, as this has the double effect of creating jobs and the new platform from which future growth can take off. Of all the large infrastructure projects one could imagine, nothing comes close to the scale of opportunity represented by a rapid de-carbonisation of the global energy system.

He goes on to identify investment in new, low-carbon energy assets; energy efficiency; more capital into technologies that exist at scale, like solar and wind; and more capital in proven technologies that do not yet exist at full commercial scale like energy storage, smart grids, and battery electric vehicles—and I would add public transport and high-speed rail. He argues for investment in game-changing technologies like graphene or quantum computers.

He asks where the capital will come from and identifies the same large institutional investors who financed all the existing low-efficiency, high-carbon-emitting activities in the past. Why? Because pension funds and insurance companies are moving to invest in infrastructure to secure higher financial returns. Hence the fastest-growing new asset classes are green bonds and climate bonds. Yet this government wants to deny that to our nation.

What is required is the policy framework to make it happen, and we have it with the clean energy package, the carbon price, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the renewable energy target. But despite the success of this package in driving investment and jobs and reducing emissions, the Abbott government is determined to tear it down—to abandon one million solar roofs—in favour of roads and coal. This is vindictive, constitutes environmental vandalism and can only be seen as spite.

As for Direct Action and the Emissions Reduction Fund, forget it. Treasury has already forgotten about it. It has cut its forecasts of take-up and is spreading Direct Action over 10 years. The fig leaf has completely disappeared. Not even the government expects to be able to deliver a five per cent cut in emissions by 2020. How irresponsible it is to abandon a multi-billion-dollar, polluter-pays scheme in favour of paying Gina Rinehart, Twiggy Forrest, BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto fuel tax credits, and charging people to go to the doctor to pay for it.

Worse still, this government have become medieval in their attack on science, research and evidence based policy to the extent that the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology and its environmental science programs have lost $142 million. But compare this with the funding of $250 million which has been directed to the school chaplaincy program, with the added
restriction of requiring it to be delivered by a religious provider with no option for secular welfare providers. Our natural environment will suffer a vicious assault as environmental powers are to be transferred from the Commonwealth to the states, or even local government, or anyone for that matter. Decades of environmental protection and the legal work of environmental defenders offices has been trashed. Our national parks—those precious places—are to be subject to guns, resorts, four-wheel drives, and grazing. Anything goes.

Even the new medical research fund is a smoke-and-mirrors investment. We need medical research but to blackmail the parliament by saying it will not be delivered unless the co-payments to visit the doctor or fill a prescription or get a blood test or X-ray are passed is wrong. It is a Sophie's choice and plain wrong. We will block the co-payments proposition. Research must be funded but it must not come from the pockets of the sick.

That brings me to the question of who will pay—where will the money come from? Well, Mr Abbott, instead of looking after your mates let's admit that revenue is there to be had; you just choose the backs of the young, the sick and the vulnerable rather than Gina Rinehart and her ilk. We, the people, own the iron ore; it is time that we were paid a fair return for it. That is what a mining tax is supposed to do, rather than have the profit from our resources go offshore to foreign shareholders. Why should Australians miss out so that our kids sit for six months at a time with nothing—not one cent. How do you expect young adults to live?

People must be really be feeling conned that they went along with 'axing the tax' without realising that if the big miners did not pay, then they would do so instead. The Greens remain committed to restoring the mining tax to its full potential and keeping the price on pollution—and contributing $48 billion to budget. That is how much could be had.

The G20, the International Monetary Fund, the OECD and the World Bank are all urging governments to stop providing subsidies for fossil fuel use. These are the institutions that define what the economic orthodoxy is. But it seems that the Prime Minister and Treasurer only heed their advice when it matches their ideology.

For an industry that is 150 or more years old to still require subsidies paid for by taxpayers is a blatant rort. While they are cutting from the most vulnerable in our society, this budget has seen another $720 million over the forward estimates directed to the big miners, courtesy of the taxpayer, bumping their subsidies up from $13 billion to close to $14 billion. And there is a new one—another $100 million subsidy for digging holes in the ground. If you want real money from the miners, ending the fuel tax credit is the way to go. There is no industry development justification; it is purely about bloating the profits of old, outdated and harmful industries while at the same time stalling economic progress and holding back a new technological frontier that is already available to us.

So the lie of budget emergency is pretty plain to see. The revenue is there; the political will to collect it is not. As Treasurer Hockey himself said, 'As a result of decisions made since coming to office, the government is collecting less taxation than otherwise would be the case'. It is their choice. So do not believe for a single minute that there is a burden to share. What there is, however, is a need for structural adjustment so that revenue streams match expenditures into the future. Prime Minister Abbott has shielded the rich from any lasting burden in this budget. He has lacked the courage to take on corporate Australia and has instead acted like a bully, targeting the weak rather than those most able to afford it. Don't believe the nonsense of the temporary and phony repair levy. It is a trick. You would only
have a repair levy if there was a crisis to repair, and if the levy was real and not token. But there is not a crisis. If you accept the need for a temporary repair levy, you are accepting there is a budget emergency when there is not one. It is an attempt to justify vicious, permanent cuts to the poor with a forgone coffee for the rich, and we reject that embedded deceit absolutely.

There is no need for the poor and vulnerable to sacrifice anything; in fact, Newstart needs to be increased. But there is every need for permanent structural changes that ensure the rich pay a permanent new marginal tax rate, and that is what the Greens will pursue in this budget. We will not have a bar of the nonsense around their whole budget repair story. But what the Greens will do is stand up for a fundamental principle in Australia and that is: no matter where you are born or who you are, if you have a disability we will take care of you and your carer. No matter what your parents' financial position or where you live, you should have access to equal and high-quality education and support. If you need medical care our universal healthcare system will look after you. We will not stand for the US system where the rich have everything they need and the poor go without. This is where Tony Abbott, our Prime Minister, is taking us with his system of co-payments and deregulation of university fees, increasing costs and debt levels.

The architect of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, economist Bruce Chapman, has labelled the changes as unfair and said they would 'unduly impact on poorer students.' To put it in perspective, it is estimated that the fee increases from deregulation would increase a nursing degree from $18,000 to—wait for it—$89,000 and an engineering degree from $26,000 to $106,800. Under this deregulation proposal, a teacher will graduate with a HECS debt estimated at $90,000. It will take them 43 years to pay off their debt and their interest bill—compared to an average of 10 years currently. On top of this, new interest rates for loan repayments are on their way. What message about the value of education is this sending to our younger generation?

Now let's move to schools. It is appalling that the fifth and sixth years of the Gonski reforms have been abandoned. I cannot tell you, Madam Acting Deputy President, how heartfelt the sadness, frustration and anger will be in the education community around Australia to see that fifth and sixth year funding not there. How can Treasurer Hockey talk of leaving a better future for our kids whilst abandoning help for the most disadvantaged kids in our schools? It is just disgraceful. But the real bullying and the true revelation of character for the Prime Minister and his cabinet is his treatment of young people and people who cannot fight back. All young people under 30 will need to either work at least part-time or study to receive a government payment. If you find yourself unemployed there will be a waiting period of up to six months—six months with nothing—and once the waiting period for benefits is over, you will be eligible for Work for the Dole for six months and you will need to work 25 hours a week. After six months the income support ceases and on the cycle goes until you find a job, begin studying or turn 30.

The Prime Minister is completely out of touch with people trying to live on payments like Newstart or Youth Allowance. What does the Prime Minister think people will eat? Where does he think they will live? They cannot afford to rent; where are they going to live? And where does he think they will get a job? Youth unemployment is already high in so many places around the country, but I can tell you that in north-west Tasmania, for example, there
are very few jobs to have. My office has been inundated, as have many of my colleagues, with desperate messages from young people around the country, petrified of what these changes will mean to them. I will read a couple of examples for the benefit of government senators. I quote:

I'm on a 12-month traineeship and I'm terrified of not having a job to go to once my contract is up. I go to the doctors often for check-ups on my anti-depressants, so not only will I have to pay that but for my prescription, which will be going up too. I'm 22 and I feel helpless.

What about that, Prime Minister?

Here is another one:

I live rurally and already I was planning to take a gap year in 2015, not out of want but out of necessity to save up for university and earn enough to be considered 'independent' in the government's eyes. Now I'm not so sure that uni will ever be a possibility. The fee deregulation scares me how high will they rise? Already many can't afford them and now? Living rurally is a challenge when it comes to uni, as rarely can rural kids stay at home whilst attending uni. Instead, they face an expensive move to the city or campus they are studying at. This puts them (us) at a significant disadvantage already compared to city-living uni students. Getting a job now in order to begin saving for university is out of the question. Well, I'm out of ideas as to how I'm supposed to go about things now. How do you move to the city for university when you have no money?

These are just two examples of what the cuts will mean for young Australians. It is actually devastating for them. But it is not just the young this budget will hit; it will hit families and it will hit the sick and it will, at some point, hit every Australian.

The budget raises the spectre of sick Australians having to choose between a doctor's visit and the necessities of life. Universal accessible health care is to be done away with. This budget puts us on the path of a US style, two-tier, underfunded health system where your credit card is more important than your Medicare card. The announcement that bulk-billing is to be abolished and replaced with a raft of co-payments for seeing a doctor, for blood tests, for imaging and for medicines signals the end of Medicare. It means an explosion in out-of-pocket costs for Australian health consumers. Elderly Australians will simply be unable to afford to go to the doctor. Parents will have to say no to medicines for their kids. Combined with billions ripped out of hospitals, it signals a drastic drop in the quality of health care that we can now expect from this government.

This budget is a vicious attack on the fabric of our society. It abandons the environment and it jeopardises our future. It will leave a legacy of environmental and social damage, a legacy of lost opportunity and a legacy of shame when it comes to our engagement with our region, with a massive hit on overseas aid. It is a massive hit on our budget that we choose to spend billions being cruel to people being held in detention centres. But this budget will also widen gap between the rich and the poor in Australia. Our country deserves better than a cruel budget written for big business, big miners, big polluters and big banks, who are all completely let off the hook.

The Greens will stand with university students, with schoolkids, with families, with pensioners, with carers and with the sick. We will stand with environmental campaigners, with children not yet born, with our precious threatened species and with the places we love, from our magnificent rivers to our great forests to our national parks and to our Great Barrier Reef.
We will stand against the Abbott government. We will stand for a decent life in a country that can afford to have not only decent quality of life and health and education but a great and optimistic future if we have a vision to move quickly in the face of climate change. But, tragically, we are trapped with a government without vision, a government with such a narrow focus that it chooses to let those who can afford to pay off the hook and put the entire burden on those who cannot. The ideological dimension cannot be overlooked here. This is being driven from the Institute of Public Affairs, from Rupert Murdoch, from a whole perspective with a hundred asks. In this budget, the IPA is getting delivered for it exactly what it has campaigned for and what it has asked for.

But I want to reassure the Australian people that the Greens will stand with you. We will stand with you against the Abbott government. We will stand with you to kick this mob out. We will do that now and we will do it right up to the next election, whenever that is. The Greens have a strong commitment to democracy, to fairness, to ecological sustainability and to a good life for everyone. That is what we commit to do and to campaign for, and to stand against the Abbott government's cruel cuts in this budget. We will not be supporting them.

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (20:27): On Tuesday, the budget of bad ideas was tabled. It shows that the government is implementing fierce austerity measures when it comes to offering something innovative and appropriate to ensure that the most vulnerable, including pensioners, families, the unemployed and asylum seekers are not continually taken advantage of.

Since the Commission of Audit came out of two weeks ago, I knew the government was going to hit the Australian people with a sizeable punch in the guts. I have come to expect nothing less. This is a family-hostile budget. Families are going to be hit hard.

It is ironic that today, United Nations International Day for Families, I am giving my response to the budget, which has moved Australia closer to abolishing any financial recognition of the cost of dependent children on taxpayers. Taxpayers in this country are treated as single individuals for tax purposes. This is regardless of whether they have dependent children and/or a dependent spouse. There is no universal recognition of the cost of children in our tax or welfare system. Only those families on significantly low incomes benefit from family tax benefit A and now those families who receive family tax benefit B will be subjected to harsher income testing and eligibility criteria.

Despite the rhetoric about the value of families, this government's fiscal policies tell us a different story. According to figures from Treasury officials, a family of three will lose $4,171 a year in family tax benefits. Add to this the increased cost of doctor's visits and the increasing petrol costs, cuts to hospitals and cuts to education funding, and it is not hard to see who the biggest losers will be. Meanwhile, the dreaded deficit levy will cost someone on $190,000 a year a mere $200.

Thirty years ago, Australia acknowledged the cost of raising children through a universal family allowance system. This was known as horizontal tax equity. Since then successive governments, both ALP and Liberal, have eroded this concept. Allowances were means-tested, then abolished and replaced by family tax benefits A and B. These have subsequently been eroded. Then we had the baby bonus, which has also been changed and devalued. The current proposals will further restrict eligibility for family tax benefit B, freeze the current
levels of family tax benefit A and family tax benefit B and reduce payments to large families and single parent families.

Family assistance in Australia is now a welfare payment rather than a universal recognition of the cost of children. Families are now considered to be a drain on the public purse rather than a productive and necessary part of our economic and social system. It has come to this: the government of the day now believes that you should only have children if you can afford to, as though children are a private indulgence rather than a national benefit. This builds resentment in our community from the childless, who feel they are supporting those with children rather than acknowledging that an income supports more than the individual earning it.

The Democratic Labour Party believes we must all remember that our children are the future generation of Australia. They will assume responsibility for all of us and will inherit all of our failures and our fortunes one day. What kind of legacy are we leaving a generation whom we are continually devaluing?

Abolishing family tax benefit B after the youngest child turns six places more pressure on mothers in single income families to seek employment. Australia faces huge youth unemployment, yet now mothers are pressured into entering the paid workforce in order to make ends meet. Many older mothers are forced to compete for jobs with their own young adult children. It seems only those families already living in poverty will be able to receive benefits.

Mr Acting Deputy President, I seek some indulgence to speak a little about the establishment and evolution of family benefits in our tax system. It was during the Second World War that workers gave up a pay rise in favour of a general payroll tax to redistribute wage income to workers with dependent children. Child endowment had its origins as a voluntary redistribution of income by workers collectively in favour of their mates with dependent children. It was a social contract.

Later on, child endowment was severed from the payroll tax, which was given to the states to exploit as a general revenue source. By the 1970s, child endowment was merged with abolished tax rebates, formerly deductions, to create universal family allowances. These allowances were universal precisely because they were meant to recognise horizontal equity at all levels of income. Over the intervening years, family allowances and family payments have increasingly been as described as 'welfare'. But they were never welfare. The name 'family tax benefit' explains their original purpose—to even up tax burdens between those with dependent children and those without. Children were seen as a benefit to all.

The government and the Treasury cannot have it both ways. If they want to say a child or student is not entitled to government support because of that child's parents' income then they ought logically say that that part of the parents' income really belongs to the child and should be split with the child through a system of deductions. They should be saying that X thousand dollars of the parents' income should be reallocated and treated as the child's income and income tests applied accordingly to that income in the child's hands. Likewise with spouses—if you are to going to deny a social security benefit to a person because of a spouse's income, you should logically split the spouse's income between them and tax accordingly.
This budget simply does not make sense for Australia. The fuel excise levy is just one example where the government has lashed out indiscriminately. This levy will disproportionately affect low- to middle-income earners, particularly those who are supporting a family or living in regional Australia. It is all good and fine for the Greens to suggest that the revenue be invested in more public transport; however, a myki card for those living on hundreds or thousands of acres in regional Australia is no real substitute for affordable fuel prices.

The Democratic Labour Party believes education is paramount for the development of young people in our society. The education industry and the future of education in this country has not been left unscathed by this budget. The massive multi-billion dollar cuts to higher education are not encouraging signs for those who are studying and those who are planning on future study.

Low- to middle-income families are the hardest hit in this budget. There is no recognition of any contribution they make to our society. Mothers at home raising children have no voice and no profile in a society which values money alone at the expense of human dignity and the common good. This budget further divides Australia into two classes: haves and have-nots. Low- to middle-income families will be hit hard.

What the government is doing to age pensioners deserves an honourable mention. All age pensioners have made a significant contribution to Australian society and should not be the target of cuts to spending. Forcing pensioners to pay $7 to visit a GP and to pay more on their medications due to changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is a strange way of thanking them. I asked the minister yesterday to outline how much money will be raised by increasing co-payments for concessional patients by 80c—how much impact this will have on the budget's bottom line—and whether this can be considered fair, reasonable and proportionate for the sick and elderly. Do you think I got a response? Of course not. We are charging pensioners an extra 80c, yet I could not even get an answer on how much impact this would have on our bottom line. I bet it will have much less impact on our economy than it would on the standard of living of older members of our community.

This leads me to my next point. The Democratic Labour Party believes all pensions should be indexed by an independent tribunal in much the same way as parliamentary salaries so that they are not subject to political manipulation. It has become all too easy for successive governments to tamper with the pension amount, often forgetting how difficult it is for thousands of Australians to live on the allowance which they have been taxed all their life to create. Now, it is not as if the government is not consistent—it is consistent at putting the most vulnerable last.

This brings me to our responsibility towards people from other countries who turn to us for asylum. A government's act of compassion to asylum seekers can often be an indication of the heart of a nation. This budget would indicate that, as a nation, we are suffering a serious cardiovascular disease. This budget compromises Australia's ability to respond to asylum seekers with compassion and independence. Stationing Customs and border protection personnel out of Indonesia, Malaysia and particularly Sri Lanka indicates that we would prefer to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in the hope of maintaining strong diplomatic relations with often compromised governments. The Democratic Labour Party has a very
strong policy on asylum seekers and refugees, and I implore those listening to the debate in the chamber this evening to read it.

I do not feel as if I would be doing the right thing by younger Australians, particularly Young Liberals, if I do not make mention of the government's privatisation plans. Before the budget, I had written off Medibank Private as a likely target for assured privatisation, but to read that the government has allocated $11.7 million towards a scoping study on another five agencies is ludicrous. This money would be much better spent on ensuring pensioners do not have to contribute to the costs of their much needed medication, not to mention what is going to be left for future generations of Young Liberals to privatise.

This budget leaves a lot to be desired. It truly is a budget of bad ideas. The government is committing $2.8 million over four years to assist small business to compete for Commonwealth contracts, yet it allocates $10 million over the same period to jointly fund research with China to assist them to take our natural resources.

The decreases in the income threshold for repaying HECS debts to $50,638 will place extra financial pressures on low-income families and single-income families. This is compounded by the increase of the interest rate from two per cent to a capped level of six per cent in repaying HELP debts. This will have a negative impact on many families. How will single-income families manage debt as these pressures skyrocket?

The new Trade Support Loans scheme for apprentices has really been promoted through a wolf in sheep's clothing. At a cost of $439 million over five years this is only possible due to the scrapping of the $914.6 million from the Tools For Your Trade scheme. A country is what a country makes, and further discouraging young people from doing apprenticeships is not helping the future of our nation. The government may argue that they have their priorities right, though it is clear that they simply do not.

It is not all bad news. It is nice to see that the government has announced a freeze on politicians' pay for a year and the removal of certain gold pass benefits for past and present politicians and their family members. However, these measures do not go far enough. I know I would certainly welcome a freeze on politicians' pay until we are back into surplus. This would be truly leading by example. After all, why should our finances improve if the finances of the nation we are responsible for do not?

What happened to Menzies' the forgotten people? What happened to Howard's battlers? The real challenge is to grow the cake for all Australians. Those with the least will, it seems, pay the most. This truly is the budget of little innovation, empathy or compassion.

Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*Senator COLBECK* (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (20:43): I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

**Palliative Care**

*Senator BOYCE* (Queensland) (20:43): Tonight I want to speak about National Palliative Care Week, which I acknowledge that Senator Bilyk mentioned earlier this week. National
Palliative Care Week begins next week, 25 to 31 May, with the slogan, as all weeks have these days, of ‘palliative care is everyone’s business—let’s work together’.

This year, Palliative Care Australia is celebrating the people who work in palliative care and the important role they play in ensuring quality care at the end of a person’s life. They are also aiming this year to educate the community about all the different people, all the different professions and non-professionals, who are involved in palliative care. Indeed, there will be an education day at Parliament House on Thursday, 29 May.

Death and palliative care are something of taboo topics in our society. Both death and palliative care are not discussed as much as they should be, so much so that there seems to be a preference for debating and advocating euthanasia instead. Perhaps that is because we have not fully come to terms with that middle ground between the binaries of life and death. And given the accounts I have heard from people about the suffering their loved ones have endured, I can understand that people would think euthanasia is a better option. It seems to me that, in many cases, those accounts are more about our poor or non-existent palliative care and that we need to do something for all of our people to fix those problems with palliative care before we continue any sort of debate on the topic of euthanasia.

The process of dying can be very confusing and it is an uncertain time. For family and friends, there are overwhelming options and potential outcomes. A person receiving palliative care is likely to have an active, progressive and far advanced disease with little or no prospect of a cure irrespective of age. The aim is to achieve the best possible quality of life for all those people—irrespective of whether they are children or elderly—as well as for the people who care for them and for their families. This area of healthcare aims to provide relief from pain and the many other distressing symptoms that can accompany the end of life. Palliative care is about affirming life, and it regards dying as a normal process. It does not set out to hasten or postpone death. It offers a support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death, and it works to address the needs of their families. Palliative care deserves to have a lot more public conversation. As I said earlier, Palliative Care Week affirms that palliative care really is everyone’s business.

I note that my colleague Senator Moore is in the chamber tonight. The Senate Community Affairs References Committee, of which we are both members, in its inquiry into palliative care, found that traditionally palliative care had been associated with caring for cancer patients—oncology was the first thing that people thought about. But as our population ages and life expectancy increases, so too the instance of the many life-limiting illnesses increases, including dementia and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. These chronic and generally incurable illnesses often have a much longer disease trajectory than cancer, yet they similarly require the provision of palliative care services.

In recent years the broadening of patient groups accessing palliative care has begun to be recognised by policymakers and to some extent, somewhat belatedly, by the health and medical professions overall. In the future there will be a massive increase in demand for quality and effective palliative care services. Our Community Affairs References Committee inquiry heard that the majority of people, when asked, would prefer to die at home than in a hospital setting, yet only 20 per cent of them currently have this wish granted. Dying at home requires that a lot of support services be in place; it requires that the family and friends also understand the needs of those dying and what they are likely to experience.
The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in a report that they produced last year, made the point that palliative care is currently provided in almost all settings where healthcare is provided, including neonatal units, paediatric services, acute hospitals, general practices, residential and community aged services, and generalist community services. Specialist palliative care services operate from a variety of settings, including specialist inpatient consultant services, specialist inpatient settings, hospices and community based special services. The majority of people who are candidates for palliative care are telling us that almost none of those places are where they want to be. Yet there continues to be the problem that people who require palliative care end up in acute hospital settings—the absolute wrong setting for them—where people do not understand their needs or, in many cases, cannot provide the services that they require. It is in the home—and in hospices when that is not possible—that we should be looking at caring for people who require palliative care. It should absolutely not under any circumstances be in acute hospitals. Not only is that not the place where people needing palliative care want to be and where their families want them to be; it is also absolutely the most expensive way to go about providing palliative care and, as I said, it is palliative care that does not meet the needs of anyone involved.

To illustrate the broadening of the palliative care spectrum—the people who now require help—according to a recent report by the Institute of Health and Welfare there were 5½ thousand palliative care separations in 2010-1011 and 16½ thousand of those people had died with cancer as the principal diagnosis. I should explain that a separation means leaving the hospital, irrespective of the reasons for which you leave. Hopefully some of those people went home for their last days.

The growing number of palliative care cases was also examined by the AIHW. They found that there was a 49 per cent increase in palliative care related separations between 2001-02 and 2010-11. This certainly shows a significant shift in palliative care and the beginning of a change in sentiment, with people actually understanding what palliative care should be, what the people receiving palliative care should want and what the family wants. But there is a lot more work to do.

Palliative Care Australia reported in January this year that more than 50 per cent of people who had recently lost a loved one had not discussed end-of-life care with them, nor were they confident that their loved one's end-of-life wishes were carried out. Furthermore, 70 per cent of Australians think we don't talk enough about death and dying. I presume the same people who undertake those surveys then immediately went out and began those conversations. It is interesting to note that while Palliative Care Australia has the slogan 'Palliative care is everyone's business', those figures of what people should do and what people actually do simply do not tie up. So we must continue to make the point that not only is good palliative care about meeting our international obligations but it is also about our parents and our children listening to our community and keeping in step with the sorts of attitudes that must prevail.

**Budget**

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (20:53): I was inspired to witness the speech tonight in the House by the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Bill Shorten. He laid out why we on the opposition side and the Australian people see this budget as one of betrayal, one of broken promises and one of deceit. If you look at the legacy that was left by the Labor government,
when we look at the low inflation, when we look at low interest rates, when we look at the net debt and when we look at the Triple-A rating, that is a picture that tells the story of why those in government now have manifested their own story to tell about a budget emergency. When Mr Shorten tonight in the House of Representatives delivered his budget reply speech he spoke for the Australians who are going to be hurt by this cruel budget. He spoke about the Australians who will not be able to afford to go to the doctor. He was speaking about those who will have to think twice about having prescriptions filled. We are also concerned about those families and those people in the Australian community that will now struggle to fill up at the petrol bowser. There are so many issues that were covered and highlighted by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to Medicare, in relation to education and talking about having a vision and the lack of vision from those opposite.

I will talk about a few other issues that have come out of this budget of broken promises and what it means to ordinary Australians, many of whom will wonder what they did to earn the wrath of vindictive tory politicians. Tony Abbott has broken his word; it is as simple as that. If there is any sort of fairness or balance in the reporting of Australian politics and in the response of the Australian electorate to political messaging, then our Prime Minister should be absolutely taken to task. When Labor sought to introduce an emissions trading scheme via a fixed period price on carbon it was deemed a ruinous 'carbon tax' and clearly a broken promise. The coalition hammered this point at every opportunity at the expense of intelligent debate or analysis. They misrepresented the price on carbon and, sadly, their attempt to appeal to the lowest common denominator succeeded politically. So here we are with their new taxes and clear broken promises, and I certainly hope that those opposite are held to account. In some small way I actually marvel at their pluck. Here are two leaders who advanced their careers beyond most people's expectations by misrepresenting Labor's carbon policy as a 'carbon tax' now nonchalantly introducing new taxes which they actually promised they would never introduce.

It just gets worse and worse no matter how you look at the budget. In my own role as shadow parliamentary secretary for aged care I have taken careful note of some of the harmful changes that will impact on older Australians. Just a little over six months after scrapping the Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing, the government has opted to also axe the Andrew Fisher Applied Policy Institute for Ageing. This was a body charged with placing Australia at the forefront of policy development on the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population. Now, due to the short-sightedness of the Abbott government, it is gone. Right now, we have an ageing baby boomer population entering retirement. This is something that the Abbott government really need to pay close attention to but we know it is not their priority—they do not even have a minister for ageing. The government has no strategy. There is no vision here in their budget and there certainly is no heart either.

I would also like to point out that many of the aged care cuts in this budget will negatively impact on those who deliver care and support for older Australians at the most vulnerable point in their lives. The decision to reduce the annual growth of the Commonwealth Home Support Program means that valuable services such as Meals on Wheels and respite care will be hit hard. The axing of the National Respite for Carers Program is particularly cruel. This program had a simple but compelling aim: to provide just a little bit of help to those relatives and friends caring at home for older people who are no longer capable of caring for
themselves. But of course there is more bad news in this budget—it isn't just deceitful and cruel, it is retrograde. This budget cannot be seen as an anomaly and it cannot be seen in isolation. It is part of a broader trend in conservative politics and it needs to be analysed in full, proper context. So that is precisely what I will do and what we on this side of the chamber will do.

If we are looking for reasons as to why we are being handed this budget, I think we need to look at the people that are influencing the coalition's direction. As Rachel Nolan noted recently in The Monthly, the Abbott government is influenced by certain figures who wildly agree with each other at every opportunity. As soon as the coalition assumed power, it was review time. It is not so much what the reviews were investigating that is so important, it is who led them. Let us look at the cavalcade of conservative white men who lead the charge.

The man who led the National Commission of Audit, Tony Shepherd, is a past president of the Business Council of Australia. He is someone who is so out of touch that he falsely claimed that Australians were going to the doctor too frequently—a claim soundly rejected this week by the ABC's Fact Check. His comment that a GP co-payment will 'give people cause for thought over whether they really need to go to a doctor' was nothing short of condescending. He may have a born to rule mentality, typical of conservative Australia, but he is not a medical professional nor is he a health policy expert.

Then we saw a similar sort of comment today from our esteemed Treasurer, Joe Hockey, who momentarily lost control of his conversation on ABC radio and claimed that the co-payment was not a big deal because it was only equivalent to a few beers. I certainly hope people remember that one. I certainly hope it comes back to haunt him. Treasurer, there are people out there struggling to make ends meet. Once costs like school equipment, medicine, petrol and healthy food for the family are factored in, there is not very much left over in their weekly budgets. And, when there is, it does not necessarily go to cigarettes or alcohol; it goes to things like a visit to the doctor—and now that has become just a little bit more difficult. I just do not think you guys understand it.

It just goes to show how out of touch you all really are—I mean, really, the pure arrogance to lecture people on how to spend their money wisely when families around the country are doing just that! A GP co-payment will disproportionately affect those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds—a segment of our society especially prone to chronic diseases that require medical attention. The Treasurer should consider this and, as our Prime Minister is so fond of saying, stick to his knitting. We do not want people avoiding the doctor, for crying out loud! Don't you get it? Those opposite me are so out of touch. They have no vision. They have no concern for families. They have no concern for those struggling to make ends meet and no concern for the future environmental challenges. All they are about is short-term political gains.

The Prime Minister himself said, 'It just isn't right that people should say one thing before an election and do the opposite after the election.' Well, for once, let Hansard show that I wholeheartedly agree with the Prime Minister. Those opposite should hang your heads in shame for the decisions that you have brought before this chamber and the other house and before the Australian people with your budget. I certainly hope that we and the Australian people make you a one-term Tony.
Budget

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (21:03): We live in a community, a society, a country—not in an economy. This sounds simplistic but how we think about these things helps frame our world view as individuals, political parties and as governments. The truth is that there are only two real things in this world: people and nature. Economics should primarily be targeting social and environmental outcomes. The economy is not a physical thing. It is not something that exists in its own right. Rather, it is a tool we have invented for governing the relationships between people, between governments and people and between people and nature.

Our economic tools, such as money, national accounts, trade, financial markets and business investment make good servants but poor masters, because they have failed to deliver universal prosperity, and make even worse religions. This Tony Abbott budget sacrifices these profoundly important wisdoms and insights on the altar of the empty, dangerous and fickle religion of extreme ideology. Joe Hockey said in his budget speech that he wants to redefine the role of government in people's lives—those last words again: 'in people's lives'. To me this was the most critical, honest and revealing line in his speech.

I grew up in a generation when it was a government's primary role to look after its people. Mr Hockey wants to spend less on people—most the poor and needy. He wants to increase Australians' cost of living—all, ultimately, at the expense of giving big business and investments the opportunity to prosper. He is a reverse modern day Robin Hood—taking from the poor and giving to the rich. His message, the ideology, is simple: economy before people; focus on business profits, money and economic management and health, prosperity, happiness, an end to suffering, poverty, inequality and lower catastrophic risks of global warming are sure to follow—in other words, let the economy govern us all. Government has little role to play except to help business make more profits.

This is the biggest regression of public policy our nation has ever seen, by arguably the most ideological reactionary government our Federation has ever seen. In an attempt to put economic forces and principles first, such as their obsession with business investment and the elimination of budget deficits, the government has perpetrated a full-frontal assault on the most vulnerable people in our society. This is not a conservative government. A conservative government wants to maintain the status quo. This is a reactionary government. A reactionary government wants to send us all back to some distant bygone era—way back; back before Rudd and Gillard; back before Howard, many of whose reforms are proposed to be unwound; back before Hawke and Keating's social contract; back before Whitlam, who gave us all our publicly funded healthcare safety net that Mr Hockey now wants to take away; and back before Chifley and Menzies. Remember Menzies' forgotten people.

It was Curtin who introduced universal unemployment benefits. They started in 1945. We have had universal unemployment benefits now for nearly 70 years. Before this, charities and state governments handed out blankets and food stamps. If you were lucky there was a make-work scheme that you could earn a pittance from. Mr Abbott, Mr Hockey and Mr Abetz are going to take our unemployment benefit scheme back to the pre-1945 days for people under 30—and who knows what in next year's budget? Now, if any young person has the misfortune of losing their job, they will be without any government support for the first time since 1945. This is the definition of a reactionary government.
Mr Abbott, Mr Abetz and Mr Hockey will widen the divide and entrench the poverty gap in Australia. Nowhere in Australia will this be more apparent than in my home state of Tasmania. Youth unemployment, as Senator Colbeck well knows, is currently at around 17 per cent. In the north and north-west of Tasmania the levels are now over 21 per cent.

The Liberals are asking parents with grown-up children across Tasmania to take the role of financially supporting the unemployed. What was once a government role—a role that I expected when I was unemployed and on unemployment benefits—is now a family role. If your 20-year-old son is laid off from the mechanic, it is now your job to feed, clothe and house him until he gets employment again. If your daughter struggles to get a job after her hairdressing apprenticeship, it is your role to feed, clothe and house her.

What about the young people whose parents cannot afford this? What about the young people from abusive families, or families or individuals who suffer from mental illnesses? How does a young person afford to buy clothes for an interview? How does a young person afford to travel to places to ask for work?

This is ideological. It is cruel. And it is unnecessary. We will see more destitution and more homelessness. We will see more crime. We will see more people with no money and no opportunities doing desperate things simply to survive. If you had no income and no opportunities, what would you do?

Economist Saul Eslake said that the No. 1 thing that needs to be done for Tasmania’s economy is to lift the educational attainment levels of the state. This budget sends that goal backwards. There is no commitment to the full rollout of Gonski. They are putting up university fees, and putting up the interest on university loans. It becomes more expensive to enter university and more expensive to pay it back. The government has put up the price signal for education. Fewer people will study. People from poorer backgrounds will stop seeking a tertiary education. So not only is the government making it harder for the unemployed in Tasmania, it is making it harder for them to gain an education. The government is entrenching a two-class society.

And to top it all off for the young unemployed, this government has cut funding to the three youth employment programs in existence—a triple whammy for the youth of Tasmania: cutting unemployment support, making university more expensive, and cutting youth employment programs. And it's not just the unemployed that are going to suffer.

Tony Abbott is pushing the retirement age up to 70. Australians will have the oldest retirement age on the planet. In Tasmania, where blue-collar physical jobs like nursing and cleaning dominate, this will be devastating. Not only are Tasmanians less likely to physically cope with a later retirement age, they will also be less likely to have built up a large amount of retirement savings. My wife works with chronically injured patients in Tasmania, and I understand this to be a truth.

Single-parent pensioners, age pensioners and disability support pensioners are going to be made poorer by this government’s change to indexation. I do not remember the self-proclaimed ‘three amigos’ elected into Bass, Braddon and Lyons campaigning on lifting the pension age and cutting the pension indexation, or charging fees to go to GPs and taking away free health care. I do not remember the Liberals telling the 65,364 pensioners and the 27,993 disability pensioners in Tasmania that the indexation would be cut.
Lyons and Braddon have the third and seventh highest proportion of disability pensioners in this country. What did their local MPs tell them about this at the election, and what have they told them since? What about the doctor's payment and the payment for going to emergency or the medical co-payment?

The Liberal Party were elected in 2013 on a cascade of lies. They were deceitful, because they never told Australians how they would make up the revenue shortfall after they 'axed the taxes'. On the day before the election, Tony Abbott promised that no matter how much the budget may blow out, he would still keep his election promises.

Tasmania and Tasmanians will reject these policies. They will reject any politicians that brought them—especially in light of the failure of the new government to deliver jobs and prosperity in the next three years. It is a big roll of the dice: the inevitable risk you take when you put your economic ideology—your religion—first, before caring for people and providing equal opportunity.

I will fight these policies from here until they are repealed, and the Greens will stand with Tasmanians shoulder to shoulder to help them get through these very difficult next few years to come.

**Budget**

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (21:13): I rise to make a few comments about the benefits of the budget to Tasmania. But, before I do, I might just make a couple of comments on some of that which I have heard in this chamber while I have been waiting for my turn.

Senator Polley's comments demonstrated to me, and I think probably to any objective listener, that which was so evident from the speech which was delivered tonight by the Leader of the Opposition—and that is that Labor is in total denial and will not face up to the mess that they created and are totally unable to offer any solutions to fix that mess. Senator Polley mentioned in her speech the issue of aged care and the funding of it. Coincidentally, the amount of interest that the Australian government currently has to pay on the debt that arises as a legacy of the last six years under Labor is around $12 billion a year, every year, and that is only going to rise, in the absence of policy changes. As it turns out, that is almost exactly the same amount of money that we spend a year on aged care. So we could double the amount that we spend in this country on aged care if we did not have to pay the $12 billion a year interest on the debt that Labor accumulated.

As an economist, Senator Whish-Wilson should know that economics is all about the best use of scarce resources. For some reason he tried to divorce economies from people and nature. But the reality is that they are inherent in people and nature. Whether it is a hunter-gatherer society or a modern 21st century society, the economy arises when people look at the best ways of how to make use of scarce resources.

The fact is that getting the economy right means that we are making the best use of those resources for the benefit of those who comprise it. So you cannot divorce the economy from people and nature. It is an inherent part of people making use of resources, which are needed to survive.

On Tuesday night the coalition stood up as an adult government and delivered a necessary and responsible budget for Australia. After six years of reckless spending, debt and deficits
from Labor the government has clearly and methodically laid out a plan to strengthen our economy and get the nation moving forward.

The coalition has delivered an honest budget that will move Tasmania forward, my home state. As I mentioned, the nation is currently borrowing $1 billion per month just to cover the interest on our existing borrowings. To break that down, Tasmanians are paying $30 million a month to pay Australia's interest bill. That is $360 million that Tasmanians have to pay a year that is realistically going down the drain. Six years of Labor has torn away at Tasmanian's future. The coalition respects the taxpayer and wants to invest and build a strong and prosperous economy in my home state of Tasmania. That is why in the budget the government announced up to $1 billion in a raft of incentives and benefits for my state. Tasmania's unemployment rate is above the nation's average. The government believes that those who can work should be able to do so. Job growth in Tasmania is vital.

The Restart program announced by the government will provide up to $10,000 in federal assistance and will be available to individual employers who take on job seekers aged 50 or over. Restart will be available to all employers in conjunction with the Tasmanian Jobs Programme, which already provides a payment of up to $3,250 for businesses that employ job seekers who have been out of work for at least six months and who are at risk of long-term unemployment in full-time positions for at least six months.

Tasmanians will notice that infrastructure investment is the centrepiece of the budget. That is why the government has announced $400 million for the Midland Highway infrastructure initiative. This will upgrade the road significantly and improve safety and efficiency as freight and passenger vehicle usage increases.

The Abbott government will also honour its commitment to lengthen the runway of Hobart International Airport. The $38 million upgrade will see the runway extended by up to 500 metres, allowing Hobart airport to become Australia's gateway to the Antarctic. On Antarctica, early last month Greens leader Senator Milne held a stump press conference, fearmongering outside the Antarctic Division, claiming that the government would be abandoning all funding and research involvement. She said:

Tony Abbott is jeopardising Australia's actual investment in Antarctica at a global level in strategic terms, he's risking jobs in Tasmania and he is undermining Tasmania as one of those key global hotspots for Antarctic research …

I am pleased to say tonight that Senator Milne's fearmongering has been well and truly quashed. The government announced in the budget a long-term commitment to Antarctica, by approving the process to procure a new icebreaker to be based in Hobart to replace the ageing *Aurora Australis*. This will be a massive boost for jobs in the region and will expand Tasmania's role as the doorway to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica. As those who are interested in Antarctic research know, it is absolutely vital to Australia's presence in Antarctica and its continuing research.

Also contrary to Greens' alarmism is the government reaffirming its commitment to the funding of the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme, the TFES. The government is retaining the TFES, as promised last election, and eligibility for the scheme remains unchanged. The Greens, having done all they could to destroy Tasmania's economy, now seek to misrepresent the coalition's efforts to repair the damage!
Tasmania's environment is also benefiting from the budget: $3 million will be dedicated to the Tamar River Clean Up Program, which will be welcomed by the local community and will have a positive economic, environmental and recreational impact.

Other benefits for Tasmania include: $2.7 million to establish the Tasmanian Major Projects Approval Agency for Launceston that will speed up regulatory approvals and encourage private investment in the Tasmanian economy; funding for the Tasmanian agriculture sector, including $100 million for research and development and $15 million to help small exporters with export costs; $5.2 million for improvement of the Bell Bay intermodal terminal; funding for the veteran's community, including funding to support the work of veteran's advocates, pension and welfare officers, in helping veterans to access important information and services; and $20 million to build a stronger biosecurity and quarantine system; and $8 million to improve access to agricultural and veterinary chemicals—measures that will benefit Tasmanian farmers and producers.

There is also funding to upgrade the iconic Cadbury factory. The upgrade is aimed at boosting tourism by creating a unique visitor tour offering a chocolate manufacturing experience—and, for those who had the luxury of experiencing that tour in the past, I can assure you it is something that has been sorely missed since 2008 and will be warmly welcomed when it restarts, courtesy of the assistance that we are providing by restoring the famous tourist attraction to the standing that it once had.

The upgrade was announced prior to the election. Work on the factory will create 200 new direct jobs and 120 indirect jobs by 2017, and helping to secure 600 existing direct jobs and 340 existing indirect jobs. It will also have a massive supportive effect on the dairy industry in Tasmania, requiring a significant percentage increase in the dairy herd across the state to supply the milk needed.

Funding for mobile phone black spots in Tasmania has been included in the budget. There is also funding for the Burnie Pool redevelopment; Smithton and Devonport hockey clubs; the Devonport soccer club; and the Cradle Coast outrigger club.

The coalition government has begun the job of repairing the budget mess we inherited from Labor. Tasmanians deserve to have their tax dollars put to investment in their state—not thrown away by paying down debt to overseas investors.

The Labor-Greens alliance in the Senate needs to allow the government to get on with the job of building a more prosperous Tasmania and strengthening our economy by acknowledging the mess that they left and help doing their bit to fix it.

Senate adjourned at 21:21

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:


The following documents were tabled pursuant to the order of the Senate of 24 June 2008, as amended:

Departmental and agency appointments and vacancies—Budget estimates—Letters of advice—Attorney-General’s portfolio.
Department of Human Services.
Finance portfolio.
Industry portfolio.

**Departmental and Agency Grants Tabling**

The following documents were tabled pursuant to the order of the Senate of 24 June 2008:

Departmental and agency grants—Budget estimates—Letters of advice—Department of Human Services.
Finance portfolio.
Industry portfolio.
National Health and Medical Research Council.