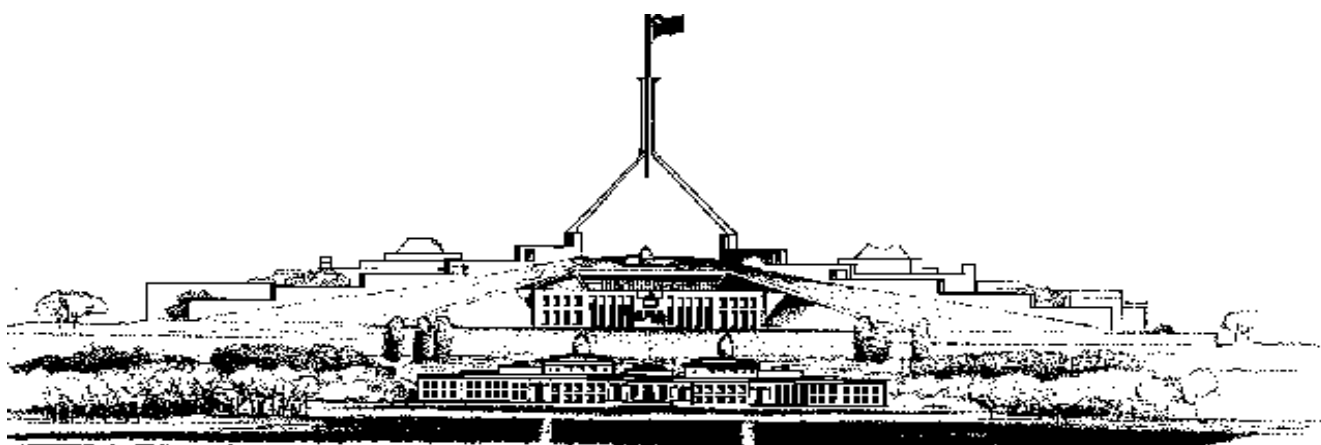




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

Wednesday, 13 February 2019

FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—EIGHTH PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SITTING DAYS—2019

Month	Date
February	12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21
April	2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18
May	13, 14, 15, 16, 27, 28, 29, 30
June	3, 4, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27
August	12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22
September	9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19
October	14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24
November	25, 26, 27, 28
December	2, 3, 4, 5

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**FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—EIGHT PERIOD**

Governor-General

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

House of Representatives Office Holders

Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP

Deputy Speaker—Mr Kevin John Hogan MP

Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—

Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP, Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Andrew Gee MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mr Andrew William Hastie MP, Mr Luke Ronald Howarth MP, Hon. Craig Arthur Samuel Laundry MP, Hon. Dr John Joseph McVeigh MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP and Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP

Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—Hon. Scott John Morrison MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Joshua Anthony Frydenberg MP

Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

Government Whips—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP and Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP

The Nationals

Leader—Hon. Michael Francis McCormack MP

Deputy Leader—Senator Hon. Bridget McKenzie

Chief Whip—Hon Damian Kevin Drum MP

Deputy Whip—Mr Kenneth Desmond O'Dowd MP

Australian Labor Party

Leader—Hon. William Richard Shorten MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Tanya Joan Plibersek MP

Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

Opposition Whips—Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP and Mr Graham Douglas Perrett MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Abbott, Hon. Anthony John	Warringah, NSW	LP
Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Alexander, Mr John Gilbert, OAM	Bennelong, NSW	LP
Aly, Dr Anne	Cowan, WA	ALP
Andrews, Hon. Karen Lesley	McPherson, QLD	LP
Andrews, Hon. Kevin James	Menzies, VIC	LP
Bandt, Mr Adam Paul	Melbourne, VIC	AG
Banks, Ms Julia Helen	Chisholm, VIC	IND
Bird, Hon. Sharon Leah	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel	Curtin, WA	LP
Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles	McMahon, NSW	ALP
Broad, Hon. Andrew John	Mallee, VIC	NATS
Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan	McMillan, VIC	LP
Brodthmann, Ms Gai Marie	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Buchholz, Hon. Scott Andrew	Wright, QLD	LP
Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Burney, Ms Linda Jean	Barton, NSW	ALP
Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher	Port Adelaide, SA	ALP
Butler, Ms Terri Megan	Griffith, QLD	ALP
Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael	Holt, VIC	ALP
Chalmers, Dr James Edward	Rankin, QLD	ALP
Champion, Mr Nicholas David	Wakefield, SA	ALP
Chester, Hon. Darren Jeffrey	Gippsland, VIC	NATS
Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie	Bendigo, VIC	ALP
Christensen, Mr George Robert	Dawson, QLD	NATS
Ciobo, Hon. Steven Michele	Moncrieff, QLD	LP
Clare, Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Coleman, Mr David Bernard	Banks, NSW	LP
Collins, Hon. Julie Maree	Franklin, TAS	ALP
Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Coulton, Hon. Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	NATS
Crewther, Mr Christopher John	Dunkley, VIC	LP
Danby, Hon. Michael David	Melbourne Ports, VIC	ALP
Dick, Mr Dugald Milton	Oxley, QLD	ALP
Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC	Isaacs, VIC	ALP
Drum, Hon. Damian Kevin	Murray, VIC	NATS
Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, QLD	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Ellis, Hon. Katherine Margaret	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Entsch, Hon. Warren George	Leichhardt, QLD	LP
Evans, Mr Trevor Mark	Brisbane, QLD	LNP
Falinski, Mr Jason George	Mackellar, NSW	LP
Fitzgibbon, Hon. Joel Andrew	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Fletcher, Hon. Paul William	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Flint, Ms Nicolle Jane	Boothby, SA	LP
Freeland, Mr Michael Randolph	Macarthur, NSW	ALP
Frydenberg, Hon. Joshua Anthony	Kooyong, VIC	LP
Gee, Mr Andrew Robert	Calare, NSW	NATS
Georganas, Mr Steven	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Giles, Mr Andrew James	Scullin, VIC	ALP
Gillespie, Hon. Dr David Arthur	Lyne, NSW	NATS
Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald	Moore, WA	LP
Gorman, Mr Patrick	Perth, WA	ALP
Gosling, Mr Luke John	Solomon, NT	ALP
Hart, Mr Ross Anthony	Bass, TAS	ALP
Hartsuyker, Hon. Luke	Cowper, NSW	NATS
Hastie, Mr Andrew William	Canning, WA	LP
Hawke, Hon. Alexander George	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick	Fowler, NSW	ALP
Henderson, Hon. Sarah Moya	Corangamite, VIC	LP
Hill, Mr Julian Christopher	Bruce, VIC	ALP
Hogan, Mr Kevin John	Page, NSW	NATS
Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald	Petrie, QLD	LP
Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, VIC	LP
Husar, Ms Emma	Lindsay, NSW	ALP
Husic, Hon. Edham Nurredin	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Irons, Hon. Stephen James	Swan, WA	LP
Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick	Whitlam, NSW	ALP
Joyce, Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard	New England, NSW	NATS
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, QLD	KAP
Kearney, Ms Ged	Batman, VIC	ALP
Keay, Ms Justine Terri	Braddon, TAS	ALP
Keenan, Hon. Michael Fayat	Stirling, WA	LP
Kelly, Mr Craig	Hughes, NSW	LP
Kelly, Mr Michael Joseph	Eden-Monaro	ALP
Keogh, Mr Matthew James	Burt, WA	ALP
Khalil, Mr Peter	Wills, VIC	ALP
King, Hon. Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, VIC	ALP
King, Ms Madeleine Mary Harvie	Brand, WA	ALP
Lamb, Ms Susan	Longman, QLD	ALP
Laming, Mr Andrew Charles	Bowman, QLD	LP
Landry, Hon. Michelle Leanne	Capricornia, QLD	NATS
Laundy, Hon. Craig Arthur Samuel	Reid, NSW	LP
Leeser, Mr Julian Martin	Berowra, NSW	LP
Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Littleproud, Hon. David Kelly	Maranoa, QLD	LNP
Macklin, Hon. Jennifer Louise	Jagajaga, VIC	ALP
Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Marles, Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, VIC	ALP
McBride, Ms Emma Margaret	Dobell, NSW	ALP
McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis	Riverina, NSW	NATS
McGowan, Ms Catherine, AO	Indi, VIC	IND
McVeigh, Hon. Dr John Joseph	Groom, QLD	LNP
Mitchell, Mr Brian Keith	Lyons, TAS	ALP
Mitchell, Mr Robert George	McEwen, VIC	ALP
Morrison, Hon. Scott John	Cook, NSW	LP
Morton, Mr Ben	Tangney, WA	LP
Neumann, Hon. Shayne Kenneth	Blair, QLD	ALP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
O'Brien, Mr Llewellyn Stephen	Wide Bay, QLD	LNP
O'Brien, Mr Ted Lynam	Fairfax, QLD	LNP
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John	Gorton, VIC	ALP
O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond	Flynn, QLD	NATS
O'Dwyer, Hon. Ms Kelly Megan	Higgins, VIC	LP
O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen	Hotham, VIC	ALP
O'Toole, Ms Catherine Elizabeth	Herbert, QLD	ALP
Owens, Ms Julie Ann	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Pasin, Mr Antony	Barker, SA	LP
Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas	Moreton, QLD	ALP
Phelps, Dr Kerry Lyndel	Wentworth, NSW	IND
Pitt, Hon. Keith John	Hinkler, QLD	NATS
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Porter, Hon. Charles Christian	Pearce, WA	LP
Prentice, Hon. Jane	Ryan, QLD	LP
Price, Hon Melissa Lee	Durack, WA	LP
Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice	Sturt, SA	LP
Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Robert, Hon. Stuart Rowland	Fadden, QLD	LP
Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine	Lalor, VIC	ALP
Sharkie, Ms Rebekha Carina Che	Mayo, SA	CA
Shorten, Hon. William Richard	Maribyrnong, VIC	ALP
Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn	Casey, VIC	LP
Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Stanley, Ms Anne Maree	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth	Gilmore, NSW	LP
Sukkar, Mr Michael Sven	Deakin, VIC	LP
Swan, Hon. Wayne Maxwell	Lilley, QLD	ALP
Swanson, Ms Meryl Jane	Paterson, NSW	ALP
Taylor, Hon. Angus James	Hume, NSW	LP
Tehan, Hon. Daniel Thomas	Wannon, VIC	LP
Templeman, Ms Susan Raye	Macquarie, NSW	ALP
Thistlethwaite, Hon. Matthew James	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Tudge, Hon. Alan Edward	Aston, VIC	LP
Vamvakinou, Ms Maria	Calwell, VIC	ALP
van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes	Forde, QLD	LP
Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier	Bonner, QLD	LP
Wallace, Mr Andrew Bruce	Fisher, QLD	LNP
Watts, Mr Timothy Graham	Gellibrand, VIC	ALP
Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth	Robertson, NSW	LP
Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien	Denison, TAS	IND
Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Wilson, Mr Richard James	O'Connor, WA	LP
Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert	Goldstein, VIC	LP
Wood, Mr Jason Peter	La Trobe, VIC	LP
Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM	Hasluck, WA	LP
Zappia, Mr Antonio	Makin, SA	ALP
Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir	North Sydney, NSW	LP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CA—Centre Alliance;
IND—Independent; KAP—Katter's Australia Party; LNP—Liberal National Party;
LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson

MORRISON MINISTRY

Title	Minister
Prime Minister	Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Minister for Indigenous Affairs	Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion
Minister for Women	Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer MP
<i>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>Hon. Steve Irons MP</i>
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development	Hon. Michael McCormack MP
Minister for Regional Services, Sport, Local Government and Decentralisation	Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie
Minister for Cities, Urban Infrastructure and Population	Hon. Alan Tudge MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</i>	<i>Hon. Sussan Ley MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Roads and Transport</i>	<i>Hon. Scott Buchholz MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</i>	<i>Hon. Andrew Gee MP</i>
Treasurer	Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
Assistant Treasurer	Hon. Stuart Robert MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Treasury and Finance</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja</i>
Minister for Finance and the Public Service (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann
Special Minister of State	Hon. Alex Hawke MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Treasury and Finance</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja</i>
Minister for Defence (Leader of the House)	Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Minister for Defence Industry	Hon. Steven Ciobo MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Hon. Darren Chester MP
Minister for Defence Personnel (Deputy Leader of the House)	Hon. Darren Chester MP
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC	Hon. Darren Chester MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. David Fawcett</i>
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham
<i>Assistant Minister for International Development and the Pacific</i>	Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston
<i>Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</i>	<i>Hon. Mark Coulton MP</i>
Attorney-General	Hon. Christian Porter MP
Minister for Home Affairs	Hon. Peter Dutton MP
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs	Hon. David Coleman MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Home Affairs</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds CSC</i>
Minister for Communications and the Arts (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield
Minister for Jobs and Industrial Relations	Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer MP
Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education	Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash
Minister for Resources and Northern Australia	Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan
Minister for Industry, Science and Technology	Hon. Karen Andrews MP
Minister for Education	Hon. Dan Tehan MP

Title	Minister
Minister for Health	Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care	Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP
Minister for Indigenous Health	Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP
Minister for Families and Social Services	Hon. Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Human Services and Digital Transformation	Hon. Michael Keenan MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services</i>	<i>Hon. Sarah Henderson MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</i>	<i>Hon. Michelle Landry MP</i>
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources	Hon. David Littleproud MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</i>
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Drought Preparation and Response	Hon. David Littleproud MP
Minister for the Environment	Hon. Melissa Price MP
Minister for Energy	Hon. Angus Taylor MP

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. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the *Ministers of State Act 1952*.

SHADOW MINISTRY

Title	Shadow Minister
Leader of the Opposition	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Shadow Minister for Young Australians and Youth Affairs	Terri Butler MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</i>	<i>Senator Patrick Dodson</i>
<i>Shadow Cabinet Secretary and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Jacinta Collins</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader (Tasmania)</i>	<i>Senator Helen Polley</i>
Deputy Leader of the Opposition	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Education and Training	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Women	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Preventing Family Violence	Hon. Linda Burney MP
Shadow Minister for Skills, TAFE and Apprenticeships	Senator the Hon. Doug Cameron
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Schools</i>	<i>Andrew Giles MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Universities</i>	<i>Senator Louise Pratt</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Equality</i>	<i>Senator Louise Pratt</i>
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs	Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific	Senator Claire Moore
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
Shadow Special Minister of State	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
Shadow Minister for Sport	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
Shadow Treasurer	Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Shadow Minister for Small Business	Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP
Shadow Minister for Competition and Productivity	Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP
Shadow Minister for Charities and Not-for-Profits	Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP
Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy	Hon. Ed Husic MP
Shadow Minister for Financial Services	Clare O'Neil MP
Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs	Madeleine King MP
Shadow Minister Assisting for Small Business	Madeleine King MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Treasury</i>	<i>Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Small Business</i>	<i>Julie Owens MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Environment and Water	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Australia	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Shadow Minister for the Arts	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives	Hon. Tony Burke MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Australia</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Jacinta Collins</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Australia</i>	<i>Julie Owens MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services	Hon. Linda Burney MP
Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness	Senator the Hon. Doug Cameron
Shadow Minister for Human Services	Ed Husic MP
Shadow Minister for Disability and Carers	Senator Carol Brown
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Families and Communities</i>	<i>Senator Jenny McAllister</i>

Title	Shadow Minister
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development	Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Shadow Minister for Tourism	Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government	Stephen Jones MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure</i>	<i>Pat Conroy MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for External Territories</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety</i>	<i>Senator Glenn Sterle</i>
Shadow Attorney-General	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP
Shadow Minister for National Security	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP
Shadow Minister for Justice	Clare O'Neil MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for an Australian Head of State</i>	<i>Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Shadow Minister for Employment Services, Workforce Participation and Future of Work	Terri Butler MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Workplace Relations</i>	<i>Lisa Chesters MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy	Hon. Mark Butler MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>Pat Conroy MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Defence	Hon. Richard Marles MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Personnel	Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Cyber Security and Defence</i>	<i>Gai Brodtmann MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Industry and Support</i>	<i>Hon. Mike Kelly AM MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	Senator the Hon. Kim Carr
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing and Science</i>	<i>Hon. Nick Champion MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Innovation</i>	<i>Senator Deborah O'Neill</i>
Shadow Minister for Health and Medicare	Hon. Catherine King MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Medicare</i>	<i>Tony Zappia MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP
Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Australia	Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Australia</i>	<i>Lisa Chesters MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Resources and Northern Australia	Hon. Jason Clare MP
Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment	Hon. Jason Clare MP
Shadow Minister for Trade in Services	Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP
Shadow Minister Assisting for Resources	Madeleine King MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Northern Australia</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection	Hon. Shayne Neumann MP
Shadow Minister for Finance	Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Shadow Minister for Communications	Hon. Michelle Rowland MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Communications	Stephen Jones MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing and Mental Health⁽²⁾	Hon. Julie Collins MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Ageing</i>	<i>Senator Helen Polley</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health</i>	<i>Senator Deborah O'Neill</i>
Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development⁽¹⁾	Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP

Each box represents a portfolio except for ⁽¹⁾ which is in the Education portfolio and ⁽²⁾ which is in the Health portfolio. **Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.**

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Wednesday, 13 February 2019

The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Australian Business Securitisation Fund Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Frydenberg**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (09:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill introduced today will establish the \$2 billion Australian Business Securitisation Fund (the fund). This fund will enhance access to debt finance for Australian small and medium businesses by improving smaller bank and non-bank business lenders' access to the Australian securitisation market.

Small and medium businesses, or SMEs, are at the heart of the Australian economy. Nearly 70 per cent of private sector employment is generated by small and medium enterprises. Creating the conditions that allow these small businesses to grow and thrive is critical to the prosperity of Australia.

One of the largest barriers these businesses face is accessing the affordable finance needed to support and grow their businesses. Many business owners cannot access finance without putting their home up as collateral and struggle to gain additional finance to grow once all of their real estate has been pledged. For those who can access finance, the interest rates charged are often high and the process of applying for finance is long and onerous.

A major underlying factor in the difficulties some firms face in accessing funds is the lack of competition in the market. Eighty per cent of small and medium enterprise lending is held by the major banks. There are a number of non-banks and smaller banks entering the SME market and targeting underserved segments, but many of these lenders are constrained by their ability to access funding on competitive terms.

This bill seeks to increase competition in the SME lending market by unlocking securitisation funding for smaller lenders, which will allow them to compete more effectively against the major banks.

Securitisation is a method of funding whereby the cash flows from illiquid assets, such as loans, are packaged into tradeable debt securities that are generally tranching, with each tranche having different risk characteristics. The cash flows from the underlying loans are used to make interest and principal payments to investors in the securities. These securities often only have recourse to the underlying assets, with generally no recourse to the originator of the assets. Securitisation may be undertaken on a warehouse or term basis. Warehouses are

securitisation facilities that allow a lender to fund loans until they have built up a large enough pool and track record to refinance them into the term securitisation markets.

Australia has a well-developed securitisation market for residential mortgages, which provides funding for a significant number of smaller bank and non-bank lenders. The securitisation market provides smaller lenders with access to new investors and a potentially cheaper source of domestic debt funding to enable them to compete with the major banks. The development of the residential mortgage backed securitisation market since the mid-nineties has significantly increased competition and lowered interest rates in the mortgage market.

The securitisation market for SME loans is currently very small, consisting of only a handful of deals a year. The SME securitisation market is constrained by a self-perpetuating lack of scale; low issuance means that potential investors are unwilling to undertake the due diligence needed to enter the market. However, the lack of investor interest constrains the issuance of new deals.

The fund will help break this cycle by stepping in as a patient investor that is willing to do due diligence despite the small scale of the market. This would accelerate the development of the securitisation market which would unlock a new sustainable funding source for smaller lenders.

The fund will allow these smaller lenders to compete more effectively in the SME lending market, which should improve borrowing conditions for the SMEs in the medium to long term. The fund builds on other government measures to improve small business access to finance, including supporting the creation of a private sector owned Australian Business Growth Fund and reforms such as open banking and comprehensive credit reporting.

Now to the provisions of the bill.

The bill will establish the fund and the fund's special account. The bill will credit \$2 billion in increments into the special account between 1 July 2019 and 1 July 2023. Any proceeds of the fund will be returned to the special account, unless otherwise directed by the Treasurer.

The minister will be able to invest the moneys of the fund in eligible debt securities, namely Australian dollar denominated debt securities which are issued by a trust or special purpose vehicle. These eligibility requirements reflect standard securitisation market deal structures. These securities must be backed by SME loans, which are defined as business loans with a principal value of less than \$5 million.

The bill provides the minister with the power to delegate certain powers to certain officials within the Department of the Treasury. Consistent with the government's public announcements, administration of the fund will be delegated to officials of the Australian Office of Financial Management (AOFM) within the Treasury.

The bill also provides the minister with the power to issue directions about the exercise of the minister's investment powers and to make rules. It is intended that the minister would issue an investment mandate that establishes more detailed rules for the fund, including further eligibility requirements, considerations the AOFM must take into account when selecting securities to invest in, financial performance requirements, risk management and transparency obligations.

The government has consulted on key features of the investment mandate and rules and will shortly release the proposed final versions of these instruments.

Finally, the bill includes provisions to ensure there is reporting of the activities and outcomes of the fund. Reviews of the fund will be undertaken two and five years after its establishment to consider its effectiveness in meeting the objectives set out in the bill. The reviews must be tabled within 15 sitting days of being provided to the minister. The bill also requires annual reporting on the operations of the fund.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Consumer Data Right) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Frydenberg**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (09:39): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will amend the Competition and Consumer Act 2010, the Privacy Act 1988, and the Australian Information Commissioner Act 2010 to introduce a consumer data right and open banking.

Australia's data revolution begins today. With this bill, Australia becomes a world leader in implementing an economy-wide right for consumers to access and use data that businesses hold about them.

This important reform will provide individuals and businesses with a right to access data relating to them and to authorise secure access to their data by accredited data recipients. It will also enable data about products on offer to be available in machine-readable form.

The consumer data right is a right for consumers to authorise data sharing and use. Consumers will determine which data is shared under the right, on what terms and with whom.

The consumer data right is a game changer for consumers and small businesses. It will enable consumers to better harness their data for their own benefit. The consumer data right is a fundamental structural reform that will drive competition and improve the flow of information around the Australian economy.

And the right will incentivise Australian entrepreneurs to develop new products and applications that reach more consumers and are better tailored to their needs.

For consumers, improved access to data will support better price comparison services, taking into account their unique circumstances, and promote more convenient switching between products and providers. It will also leverage new technology such as artificial intelligence and allow consumers to make more informed decisions on where they spend their money.

For small and medium businesses, it will allow for more effective budgeting tools that can deal with data in real time and help them manage their cash flow and working capital more effectively than they can do today.

Improved access to data will also enable the development of new, better and more convenient products and services, many customised to individual needs.

We live in a world of increasing complexity. Many consumers need assistance in understanding the choices open to them and how best to navigate the sheer volume of choices presented to them—choices that may not be presented in a way that allows them to make effective comparisons.

For example, the recent Productivity Commission review on competition in the Australian financial system reported that the average Australian household could be saving up to \$1,000 per year on their home loan if they switched to another lender—but many do not. With over 4,000 different residential property loans on offer, it's no wonder that customers struggle to determine which home loan is best for them.

The consumer data right provides efficient and convenient access to accurate information and empowers third parties to develop tools that will allow consumers to make the most of the choices available to them.

These tools are likely to include comparison sites that take into account the actual ways the consumer uses the product; budgeting apps that analyse actual spending behaviours and services that assess the expected return for a household that is considering the installation of rooftop solar panels, taking into account their actual electricity usage.

By doing so, the consumer data right will increase competition and drive consumer focused innovation.

Today, we are laying the tracks for Australia's future data economy.

The consumer data right will support data-driven innovation across the economy. New high-value jobs will be created by positioning Australia at the global forefront of data access and innovation.

By introducing this bill today, we are implementing commitments made by the government in its response to its review into open banking in Australia and to the Productivity Commission's data availability and use inquiry.

The government has committed to applying the consumer data right to banking—where it is referred to as open banking—then to the energy and telecommunications sectors, and in due course more widely across the economy.

This bill establishes a broader framework that can apply across all sectors to ensure that the data can be transferred in a safe and secure way, while retaining the flexibility to recognise that data access arrangements must be able to adapt to different sectors, different datasets, different risks, different customers' needs and changing technologies.

This bill allows for the growth and evolution of the consumer data right by allowing new datasets to be added over time.

When deciding whether to add new sectors or datasets as being subject to the consumer data right, the minister will be required to seek the public advice of both the ACCC and the Information Commissioner. The minister must consider a range of factors prior to adding a sector, including the impact on consumers, competition, data-driven innovation, privacy and confidentiality, and whether the data may contain intellectual property.

The bill also creates a rules and technical standards framework that recognises the need to allow for flexibility in implementation over time as technology adapts, and between sectors that have different risks and differing levels of technological capability.

Nevertheless, implementation between sectors should be as consistent and interoperable as possible. Consistency and interoperability will facilitate the growth of a vibrant data ecosystem and ensure consumers are able to navigate easily the emerging data economy as active participants.

Strong privacy and information security provisions are a fundamental design feature of the consumer data right. These protections include privacy safeguards and additional privacy protections through the consumer data rules. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner will advise on and enforce privacy protections, and provide complaint handling for breaches of the privacy safeguards. Consumers will have a range of avenues to seek remedies for breaches of their privacy or confidentiality including access to internal and external dispute resolution and direct rights of action.

Only trusted and accredited third parties will be able to access data from data holders at the customer's direction. Accreditation can be considered to be a 'data safety licence'. Accreditation will contribute to the justified confidence that consumers can have that the system supports safety and security for their data.

The ACCC will be the primary regulator of the consumer data right. In addition to advising what sectors should be added and writing rules, the ACCC will be responsible for accrediting new participants, overseeing a new data standards body, and enforcing serious and systemic breaches of consumers' rights.

Complementing the rules, technical standards turn what is a right in principle into real action. The data standards chair, advised by the data standards body, will be responsible for working with businesses, consumers and innovators to ensure that the right is implemented in a way that promotes efficiency, convenience and safety. Consistent standards will support access to data that is usable and reduce the barriers to service providers offering new services to consumers.

The bill also contains a statutory review provision, with a review to be completed by 1 January 2022. This review will provide an opportunity for the government to confirm that the system is operating as intended; and to consider the impacts of the system on consumers and industry.

I would like to thank the active and ongoing engagement by industry, consumer and privacy groups, and fin-techs in the development of this bill. I also thank them for their ongoing engagement in the Productivity Commission's inquiry and the open banking review and in the development of rules by the ACCC and standards by Data61.

This bill will provide all Australians with a new right to access their data and use it in a way that they have never been able to do before. We live at a time of unparalleled technological advances. The consumer data right will allow Australia to fully leverage these advances.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate adjourned.

Fair Work Amendment (Right to Request Casual Conversion) Bill 2019**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Ms O'Dwyer**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Women and Minister for Jobs and Industrial Relations) (09:50): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Fair Work Amendment (Right to Casual Conversion) Bill 2019 amends the Fair Work Act 2009 to insert into the National Employment Standards a new right for eligible employees to request to convert to full-time or part-time employment.

This means that, if they want to, all eligible employees will be able to ask their employer to move from casual employment to full-time or part-time employment.

This is necessary because there are currently a significant number of employees in the national system who do not have such a right. This bill will fill that gap.

It is only fair that a right to request casual conversion is extended to all eligible employees.

The new right in the bill is in line with a model casual conversion clause that was developed by the Fair Work Commission.

On 5 July 2017, the Fair Work Commission determined that a model casual conversion clause should be inserted into 85 modern awards that did not contain such a right. This took effect in 85 awards on 1 October last year.

The Fair Work Commission made this decision after considering the evidence provided by employee and employer representatives in extensive proceedings over a period of four years.

However, the Fair Work Commission's decision only affects employees whose terms and conditions of employment are set by one of those 85 awards.

Another 27 modern awards already contain casual conversion clauses, specifically tailored by the commission to respond to the needs of each of those particular industries.

For example, in the manufacturing and construction industries, the right to request casual conversion in the relevant modern awards has been a longstanding feature in those industries.

The government, with this bill, does not seek to disturb these arrangements.

However, it currently remains the case that a significant number of employees in the national system do not have access to a protected right to request to convert to full-time or part-time employment.

The government's bill will fill this gap and ensure that a right to request conversion will be available to:

- employees who are covered by a modern award that does not contain a right to request casual conversion;
- employees to whom an enterprise agreement applies and who are either covered by a modern award that does not contain a right to request conversion or not covered by a modern award at all; and

- employees who are award and agreement free.

In this way, the bill will ensure that all employees in the Fair Work system will have access to a protected right to request casual conversion, irrespective of whether their terms and conditions are set by a modern award, an enterprise agreement or any other arrangement.

No-one falls through the cracks.

The bill will also have the effect of ensuring that employees to whom an enterprise agreement applies and who are covered by a modern award that contains a casual conversion clause will get the benefit of that award clause.

Enterprise agreements will not be able to trade away these casual conversion terms, which must be derived from an underlying modern award with such a term for that particular industry, or in other cases, where there is no underlying award with such a term, the new right in the National Employment Standards.

Importantly, this bill will not mandate that any particular employee will have to convert to full-time or part-time employment.

We know that casual employment is a genuine and fulfilling choice for many people. Working as a casual enables people to balance work with other priorities. This includes allowing flexibility for those with caring responsibilities for children, parents or those with disabilities, helping mature-age people to stay in work while transitioning to retirement, and enabling students to have a job while studying.

In this country, casual employees are entitled to a higher hourly pay rate than equivalent full-time or part-time employees in place of annual leave and other entitlements. They usually get a 25 per cent loading.

Casual employment is also important for employers, particularly small business. They need flexibility to manage their workforce to better compete in the market and manage peaks, troughs, and seasonality in their business. For example, they may need flexibility to put on extra staff during busy times, such as holiday periods or at harvest time.

Casual work is often temporary and can be a stepping stone to other jobs. Almost three-quarters of workers who enter casual work leave within two years. And over half move to full- or part-time jobs.

As noted in the Fair Work Commission's decision, the needs of employers and employees can change over time. It is necessary for casual employees who have worked regular hours over extended periods to have a pathway to convert to full-time or part-time employment.

The bill is in line with the Fair Work Commission's model casual conversion clause to the greatest extent possible.

The bill will provide eligible employees who have worked a regular pattern of hours for the previous 12 months with the right to request that their employment be converted to full-time or part-time employment, under certain circumstances.

Employers will only be able to refuse a request from an eligible employee on known or foreseeable reasonable grounds.

This bill provides all employees in the national system with access to a dispute resolution mechanism to resolve any disputes that may arise between the employee and their employer about the operation of the new National Employment Standards right. The bill does not intend

to disturb existing dispute resolution procedures in industrial instruments, employment contracts or other agreements.

As already stated, the bill will not disturb existing industry-specific standards in modern awards from operating as a minimum safety net.

Where awards that contain a casual conversion clause apply to employers and employees, there will be no change for them.

Where enterprise agreements are in place, those agreements must provide a right to request casual conversion that is the same as or better than any casual conversion clause in the relevant modern awards.

This government is committed to fairness and balance in Australia's industrial relations system, where people find reward and value in their work, and business can thrive and create jobs.

The government is fulfilling its responsibility to ensure that all employees have access to a minimum entitlement of a right to request casual conversion, and all businesses, big and small, have clarity on their obligations in making workforce planning decisions.

Importantly, for small businesses, the majority of which employ their staff under a modern award, this bill will not create significant new obligations.

Including casual conversion in the National Employment Standards will also increase awareness of this entitlement. Employers are required to give all new employees a copy of the Fair Work Information Statement. Under the bill, all current potentially eligible casual employees will also be informed by their employer of this new entitlement.

This bill is the right result for Australian workers, Australian business and the Australian economy. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management and Cashless Welfare) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Fletcher**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Families and Social Services) (09:59): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The cashless debit card is working.

An independent evaluation of the cashless debit card found a 'considerable positive impact' in the initial trial sites, including:

- 41 per cent of participants surveyed who drank alcohol reported drinking less frequently;
- 48 per cent of participants surveyed who used drugs reported using drugs less frequently; and
- 48 per cent of those who gambled before the trial reported gambling less often; and

- A doubling of the proportion of participants trying to get paid work.

And I've heard firsthand from leaders across all four trial sites—Ceduna, the East Kimberley and the Goldfields, and most recently, Bundaberg and Hervey Bay—about the positive impacts they're seeing and expect to see in their communities, from a reduction in drug and alcohol related presentation in the emergency wards and less police call-outs late at night through to a general feeling of improved safety on the streets of these towns.

I've heard directly from business leaders, from local Indigenous leaders, from elected members, from police and from health officials, and there is a consistent message—'The card must stay.'

Feedback from local communities has informed every aspect of how the cashless debit card will operate in their communities, from the percentage of welfare to be quarantined right down to the colour of the card.

This is a community-driven, bottom-up approach to tackling the scourge of welfare-funded drug and alcohol abuse.

Technicalities of the bill

The cashless debit card has been in operation for almost three years in Ceduna in South Australia and Kununurra and Wyndham in the East Kimberley in Western Australia. It's been operating in the Goldfields region in Western Australia for almost a year.

This bill will allow the cashless debit card to remain in place for a further 12 months until 30 June 2020 in the first three trial sites of Ceduna, the East Kimberley and the Goldfields under the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999.

This will align the legislated review date for the first three sites to that of the newest trial site, the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay region, which is already legislated to continue until 30 June 2020.

This bill gives these communities further confidence about the government's commitment to reducing the devastating effects of alcohol, drugs and gambling in these communities.

CDC justification

Welfare payments are provided to people in need to help with essential living costs, in particular food, clothing, shelter and transportation. Australians expect that these payments will be used for these purposes rather than on harmful goods such as alcohol, gambling and drugs.

In these three trial sites, everyone on a working-age welfare payment is a trial participant. Eighty per cent of their welfare payments are placed into a separate account which is accessible only by using their cashless debit card. The remaining 20 per cent is placed into their regular bank account.

The card operates like any other ordinary debit card, with the primary difference being that it does not work at liquor stores or locations where people can gamble—be they online or physical locations. Further, the card cannot be used to withdraw cash or purchase cash-like products.

Importantly, these amendments do not change any of the current parameters for the cashless debit card program; nor do they change a person's entitlement to welfare or how much they receive.

The only real difference concerns how a person can dispose of their welfare benefit—that is, they cannot spend on alcohol, drugs or gambling the 80 per cent benefit which is paid on the card.

Evidence

According to the first evaluation, the cashless debit card has been effective in reducing alcohol consumption and gambling in both trial sites, and that evaluation also found that the participants who reported drug use before the trial were using illegal drugs less often.

In addition to activity underway to collect baseline data for the fourth site in Bundaberg and Hervey Bay, a second evaluation of the cashless debit card trial by the University of Adelaide has commenced across the first three sites to assess the ongoing effectiveness of the program.

Data collection for the second evaluation will be completed by mid-2019, with findings expected in late 2019. Funding has also been committed for a further wave of data collection in late 2019 through to early 2020, in line with the new end date of 30 June 2020 in this bill.

Extending the cashless debit card trial for a further year will provide sufficient time to continue evaluation of the trial in these three sites, incorporating initial baseline findings from the Goldfields site. This will build on the positive findings of the first evaluation report.

In accordance with amendments recently passed through parliament, the second evaluation will be subject to an independent review process.

Cape York income management

In addition to amending the sunset dates for the cashless debit card, this bill will allow the continuation of the Cape York income management measure, as part of Cape York welfare reform, for an additional year to 30 June 2020. This applies to the Cape York welfare reform communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

The 2018-19 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook extended income management for a further year in all current locations; however, income management in Cape York is the only income management measure with a legislated sunset date of 30 June 2019. Ceasing this program without a mechanism to replace it could place vulnerable people in Cape York, in particular women and children, at risk.

As recently noted in the Queensland University of Technology *Review of Cape York Income Management*, the role of the local Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) in Cape York income management enables it to be delivered in a way that is more culturally appropriate, community driven, and is uniquely matched to the individual circumstances.

The review specifically found:

... there is good qualitative evidence that the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) and Cape York Income Management have contributed to a reduction in alcohol (and in particular, harmful consumption of alcohol), drugs, violence and crime. There is also evidence that outcomes have improved in terms of children's overall health and wellbeing, and engagement in school.

These findings present a strong case for this measure to be maintained.

This extension will give further certainty to these communities in Cape York about the government's commitment to ensure that income support payments are spent in the best

interests of children and families, with an aim to reduce social harm and drive positive social change in the community.

Summing up

We must continue to support communities that put their hand up and drive positive change and improved outcomes for vulnerable individuals within those communities.

This bill does exactly that.

Building on the significant positive findings, and strong, ongoing community sentiment, this government considers the extension of the cashless debit card trial and the income management program essential to sustaining the positive impacts of welfare quarantining and supporting communities to tackle welfare fuelled dysfunction.

Debate adjourned.

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Overseas Welfare Recipients Integrity Program) Bill 2019**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Fletcher**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Families and Social Services) (10:08): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill implements a measure announced in the 2018-19 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook to confirm that Australian pensions are only being paid to pensioners living overseas who are still alive.

Australia is a multicultural country, with around one-third of Australians born overseas and over half of Australians with at least one parent born overseas. The government recognises that many people wish to return to their country of birth or to be with family and friends at a later stage in life. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect a large number of Australian pensioners to retire overseas. In fact, Australia pays a pension to approximately 96,000 Australian pensioners who live overseas.

It is a longstanding policy of successive Australian governments to recognise that Australian pension recipients have contributed to Australia and are not required to remain in Australia to be eligible to receive a pension. Australia has international social security agreements with 31 countries that allow people who have lived part of their working life in Australia to claim an Australian pension while living overseas.

The effect of this bill is that, from 1 July 2019, pensioners aged 80 years and over and residing permanently overseas will need to complete and return a proof-of-life certificate to continue receiving their pension overseas. This will confirm that Australian pensions are only being paid to pensioners who are still alive.

The government estimates that approximately 24,900 pensioners who are aged 80 and over and live overseas will be required to provide proof of life. Limiting this process to pensioners aged 80 and over will minimise the administrative burden on pensioners, while helping to ensure that Australian pensions are only being paid to pensioners who are still alive.

This measure is expected to modify the behaviour of Australian pensioners and their families living overseas over time by reminding them of their reporting responsibilities. It is possible that there may be some misunderstanding by pensioners and their families overseas that Australian pensions may be bequeathed to or inherited by partners or family. Many overseas pension or national insurance schemes contain survivor or revisionary provisions that may be payable to partners or family. This is not, however, the case in respect of Australian pensions.

This misunderstanding can be compounded when a person is concurrently receiving pensions from Australia and from another country, and the other pension remains payable to a widow or widower under the laws of that other country. As overseas pensioners rarely contact the Australian government after leaving the country, the proof-of-life process will help to establish more regular contact with this group, and may lead to an increase in voluntary reporting.

The introduction of the proof-of-life process brings Australia in line with current international practice. Many other countries have regular assurance processes for people living overseas and receiving a pension from that country. For example, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Italy all have processes to verify that a pensioner living overseas is still alive, including a requirement to complete a proof-of-life certificate.

The measure proposed in this bill would require age pension, disability support pension, widow B pension and carer payment recipients who are aged 80 and over and permanently living overseas to complete a proof-of-life certificate every two years to continue receiving their payment. If a pensioner does not return his or her completed proof-of-life certificate after 13 weeks, their payment will be suspended. If the pensioner does not provide the certificate after a further 13 weeks, making 26 weeks in total, their payment will be cancelled.

The measure includes safeguards to reinstate a living pensioner's payment if that pensioner's pension has been suspended or cancelled. If the pensioner makes contact with the Department of Human Services and provides a completed proof-of-life certificate, the Secretary of the Department of Social Services or an appropriate delegate will have the discretion to reinstate the payment. A pensioner who has his or her payment reinstated will be paid any arrears to which he or she is entitled. This process will make sure that only people entitled to an Australian pension continue to receive it, while at the same time minimising the impact on pensioners who do the right thing.

To help protect against fraud, there is a requirement that the certificates are verified. Pensioners will have a range of options available to have their certificate verified. These may include, but are not limited to, a judge or magistrate of a law court, a medical doctor who is registered or licensed to practice in that country, or an Australian official at an embassy, consulate or high commission. This will provide overseas pensioners with multiple options for verifying their proof-of-life certificates, with a view to making this process as easy and practical as possible.

This government is committed to maintaining a welfare system that is fair and sustainable. The measure introduced in this bill strengthens the integrity of the welfare system by making sure that Australian pensions are only being paid to pensioners who are still alive.

Debate adjourned.

National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Worker Screening Database) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Fletcher**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Families and Social Services) (10:15): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill establishes the National Disability Insurance Scheme Worker Screening Database to support a nationally consistent approach to screening people who work with people with disability in the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

This bill aims to protect and prevent people with disability from experiencing harm from the people who work closely with them.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is one of the largest social and economic policy reforms in Australian history. It is transforming the lives of people with disability across the country.

January 2019 marked a major milestone, with more than 250,000 Australians now receiving support through the scheme. Around 78,000 of these people are receiving support for the very first time. These figures will continue to grow as the national rollout continues.

At full scheme, it is expected that around 460,000 Australians with disability will be supported, and this will represent an investment of \$22 billion a year in supporting people with disability to live with choice and control.

This government is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. In December 2016, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework. The framework is the result of over three years of consultation with people with disability, carers and providers. It sets out a new approach to regulation for the NDIS to protect NDIS participants.

A key part of the framework is nationally consistent NDIS worker screening. Worker screening is a way to check that people who are working, or seek to work, in the NDIS do not pose an unacceptable risk of harm to people with disability.

Current worker screening arrangements for disability workers are state based and of variable quality. Clearances are not recognised across jurisdictions. A national NDIS Worker Screening Check is a major step forward from the variable arrangements currently operating in each state and territory.

Nationally consistent NDIS worker screening will help create a safe and trusted workforce in the NDIS, and minimise the risk of harm to people with disability. This bill is integral for the implementation of the NDIS Screening Check.

Nationally consistent NDIS worker screening is a joint effort from all Australian governments. We have collectively agreed to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nationally

Consistent Worker Screening for the NDIS. The intergovernmental agreement sets out the responsibilities of states and territories and the Commonwealth.

The new NDIS Worker Screening Check is due to commence in July 2019 in all states and territories, except Western Australia. Western Australia intends to implement worker screening from July 2020.

Through this bill, the Australian government is delivering on our responsibilities under the intergovernmental agreement. We are getting on with the job of ensuring that participants, their families and carers can be satisfied with the quality of services they receive and feel comfortable that necessary protections are in place to ensure their safety.

To support the quality agenda, the government has taken strong, decisive action by establishing an independent, national body—the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission—to protect and prevent people with disability from experiencing harm. The government has committed \$209 million over four years to support the work of the NDIS commission.

The bill will enable the NDIS commission to establish and maintain a national database for information about NDIS worker screening. This will provide timely and accurate information for employers and self-managed participants about NDIS workers' clearance status.

The NDIS commission commenced operations in New South Wales and South Australia from 1 July 2018. By July 2020, the NDIS commission will be operational in all states and territories. As an independent statutory body with integrated functions and powers, the NDIS commission is a fit-for-purpose, evidence based, responsive regulator.

The NDIS commission is responsible for registering NDIS providers, responding to complaints, managing reportable incidents notifications, and providing leadership to reduce and eliminate the use of restrictive practices in the NDIS.

The NDIS commission will also lead the overall design for nationally consistent NDIS worker screening. This aligns with its responsibility to work with all governments and oversee the broad policy settings for nationally consistent NDIS worker screening, and recognises that the NDIS commission is the national point of contact for NDIS providers.

This national leadership and consistency provides many benefits, but the NDIS commission does not act alone—worker screening is a joint effort. All states and territories have been consulted on the content of the bill and are supportive.

The NDIS Act currently provides for the screening of workers through the registration requirements for registered NDIS providers and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Practice Standards—Worker Screening) Rules 2018. From July 2019, these checks will be conducted by worker screening units within a nationally consistent framework.

We know from our consultations that stakeholders have consistently supported this approach. They want to see a robust, risk based worker screening check in the disability sector that is portable across jurisdictions.

Worker screening checks will be mandatory for some NDIS workers. Those who have more than incidental contact with a person with disability and who work with a registered NDIS provider must have a clearance. Worker screening will not be mandatory for workers with only incidental contact with participants.

As part of the NDIS worker screening check, worker screening units based in each state and territory will consider applicants' criminal history information, any relevant disciplinary and misconduct information, and information taken from the NDIS commission's complaints and reportable incidents system.

Under this bill, the database will store information about NDIS workers who have applied for an NDIS worker screening check, the status of their application, and decisions by the NDIS worker screening unit about their check, including whether the worker was issued a clearance or an exclusion or not.

This means that NDIS worker clearances will be portable across jurisdictions and employers, including self-managed participants—reducing duplication and complexity for workers and providers moving between, or operating across, jurisdictions. Similarly, a worker who has been excluded by one state or territory will be excluded nationally. This represents a major step forward from the existing fragmented arrangements operating in each state and territory.

The database will also include information about a person's employer, including if this is a self-managed participant. This will ensure that employers are appropriately informed if a worker they have engaged has had their clearance suspended or revoked, or if their clearance expires.

The bill provides for the minister to determine additional information to be included in the database through a legislative instrument. This provides flexibility to respond to future circumstances and is appropriate to accommodate the introduction of a new policy. For example, if there is a new application status required in the future that is not currently envisaged by the bill, the minister may provide for this to be captured in the database.

The protection of people with disability from violence, abuse and neglect is a key priority for all Australian governments. A national approach, as enabled by the database to be established under this bill, eliminates the opportunity for people to make multiple attempts at gaining a worker screening clearance. It prevents people with adverse records in one state or territory from attempting to gain a clearance to work in the NDIS in another state or territory.

The database will provide employers with an important tool for their recruitment, selection and screening processes and help with their responsibility to ensure people chosen to work in the NDIS are safe to work with people with disability. It also provides self-managed NDIS participants and their families with important information to help them make informed choices about workers providing their supports. Employers and self-managed participants will be able to use the database established under this bill to verify that workers hold a clearance.

Importantly, nationally consistent worker screening will deter predatory individuals from seeking work in this sector. Participants and their families can have confidence that workers with clearances have been assessed as not posing an unacceptable risk of harm to people with disability.

The database provides for the ongoing monitoring of clearance holders' criminal history information. Ongoing monitoring provides certainty that unsuitable individuals will not remain in the sector if they do the wrong thing.

Information in the database will be protected NDIS commission information and will only be shared and used for the NDIS commission's legislated functions and other purposes of the NDIS Act. Penalties apply for misuse or unauthorised disclosure.

The Australian government is committed to a high-quality, sustainable National Disability Insurance Scheme. Ensuring that people with disability, their families and carers, and NDIS providers know that workers have a clearance is an important part of having a trusted workforce. The database will provide timely, accurate access to this information for employers and self-managed NDIS participants, ensuring that they can make an informed judgement about who should work with people with disability.

Our paramount consideration is the right of people with disability to live free from abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation. Our government is committed to meeting this objective and ensuring that people with disability are not exposed to harm from those who are there to support them. This bill is a major step forward in implementing nationally consistent NDIS worker screening.

Debate adjourned.

Aged Care Amendment (Movement of Provisionally Allocated Places) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Wyatt**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care and Minister for Indigenous Health) (10:28): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I am introducing the Aged Care Amendment (Movement of Provisionally Allocated Places) Bill 2019. This bill will amend the Aged Care Act 1997 to allow the movement of provisionally allocated residential care places from one determined aged-care planning region (region) to another.

The Liberal-National government (the government) is committed to ensuring all older Australians have access to high-quality aged care and services when they need it. Integral to this is supporting approved providers to make residential aged-care places ready for use as quickly as possible.

The government has overarching responsibility for delivery of aged-care services across the country, as part of an end-to-end system covering both residential and in-home aged care. A key policy objective for the government is to ensure that residential aged care is available to those older Australians who require it as quickly as possible, and appropriately allocated to regions to address local needs.

Through a competitive process, residential aged-care places are provisionally allocated to approved providers by the Department of Health (the department) in a region that has a demonstrated need for these services.

Constructing aged-care homes is a difficult, time-consuming and expensive exercise. It takes on average 4.3 years for providers to acquire land, obtain planning approval and construct an aged-care home.

Following an allocation of places, providers can often have difficulties locating suitable land and navigating local government planning processes.

It is not uncommon for suitable land to be located just outside a planning region or for local councils to decide a planned 120-bed aged-care home should only have 100 beds.

In such circumstances, operationalising places in current regions may not be feasible, but by moving them to another region the approved provider can make them available to older Australians more quickly. This is not, however, permissible under the current legislation.

The amendments within this bill seek to change the legislation to allow provisionally allocated residential aged-care places to be moved from one region to another, where a provider can demonstrate that the movement is in the interests of aged-care consumers and there is a clear need for places in the new region.

This bill also makes it clear that, in considering any such application, the department will also consider the needs of the region from which it is proposed to transfer the provisionally allocated places.

In particular, the department will ensure that this does not become a mechanism for moving residential aged-care places out of regional areas of high need to metropolitan areas with a lower need.

This change is in the best interests of all older Australians and the broader community. It will remove a potential barrier to the community in accessing residential aged care, thereby aligning with the government's commitment to ensuring delivery of high-quality aged care and services where and when they're needed.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Combating Illegal Phoenixing) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Corporations Act 2001 (Corporations Act), the A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 (GST Act) and the Taxation Administration Act 1953 (Taxation Act) to combat illegal phoenix activity.

Illegal phoenixing involves the stripping and transfer of assets from one company to another by individuals or entities to avoid paying liabilities. It has been a problem over many decades.

This bill will give our regulators additional enforcement and regulatory tools to better detect and address illegal phoenix activity and to prosecute or penalise directors and others who facilitate this illegal activity, such as unscrupulous pre-insolvency advisers.

To support these reforms, the government will also provide an additional \$8.7 million over four years from the 2018-19 financial year to increase funding for the Assetless Administration Fund. This additional funding will increase ASIC's ability to fund liquidators who play a vital role in investigating and reporting illegal phoenix activity.

The bill also makes minor amendments to the government's already legislated insolvency reforms which form part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda. These amendments will ensure that these important reforms operate as intended.

Full details of the measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:34): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill increases consumer choice and underpins the coalition government's plan for a stronger economy in ensuring all Australians get a fair go, especially in retirement.

Schedule 1 to the bill increases the maximum number of allowable members in self-managed superannuation funds and small Australian Prudential Regulation Authority funds from four to six.

Self-managed superannuation funds are often used by families as a vehicle for managing their own superannuation savings and investment strategies. For families with more than four members, currently the only real options are to create two self-managed superannuation funds (which would incur extra costs) or place their superannuation in a large fund. This limits their choice and flexibility.

By allowing groups of five or six people to establish a self-managed superannuation fund or small Australian Prudential Regulation Authority fund, schedule 1 to the bill supports greater consumer choice. It provides increased flexibility for Australians to manage their retirement savings, particularly those Australians with larger families.

Schedule 2 to the bill supports the Excise Tariff Amendment (Supporting Craft Brewers) Bill 2019, which extends concessional draught beer excise rates to kegs of eight litres or more.

Currently, draught beer sold at pubs, clubs and other licensed venues from kegs exceeding 48 litres is taxed at lower rates compared with beer sold from smaller kegs.

Extending the concessional draught beer excise rates to kegs of eight litres or more will support craft brewers, which prefer to distribute beer from smaller kegs. This measure levels the playing field between small and large breweries.

As part of this measure, schedule 2 to this bill contains consequential amendments to the Excise Act 1901 to ensure that the concessional rates of excise duty continue to apply only to draught beer dispensed for consumption at licensed commercial premises.

Schedule 3 to the bill will extend the current income tax exempt status of the Global Infrastructure Hub for an additional four years until 1 July 2023.

The hub is a G20 initiative that was created during Australia's 2014 presidency to advance international efforts to lift infrastructure investment. On establishment, the hub was granted tax exempt status to ensure that financial contributions provided by other G20 members were not subject to income tax in Australia.

In July 2018, the G20 agreed to renew the hub's mandate for a further four years. Extending the current income tax exempt status ensures that future financial contributions will not be taxed.

Schedule 4 makes a number of amendments to Treasury portfolio legislation to ensure that the law operates as intended by clarifying the law, correcting technical or drafting defects, removing anomalies and addressing unintended outcomes. The schedule also includes amendments to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility for individuals to access the First Home Super Saver Scheme, so that first home super saver tax applies in circumstances intended by the original policy.

This furthers the government's commitment to restore simplicity and fairness to the Australian tax system and other Treasury laws and to the care and maintenance of the law. By clarifying the laws and repealing unnecessary provisions, these amendments also reduce the regulatory burden and make it easier for Australians to access current laws.

Finally, the Legislative and Governance Forum for Corporations was consulted in relation to schedules 1 and 4 of this bill as required under the Corporations Agreement 2002.

Full details of the measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Excise Tariff Amendment (Supporting Craft Brewers) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:38): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill, together with schedule 2 to the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Bill 2019, extends concessional draught beer excise rates to kegs of eight litres or more to support brewers of craft beer.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Commonwealth Registers Bill 2019**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:40): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill creates a set of core provisions related to the administration of business registers in the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 and the A New Tax System (Australian Business Number) Act 1999.

The core provisions have been mirrored in almost their entirety in the Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019.

Full details are contained in the explanatory memorandum, and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:41): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019 provides a flexible legislative framework to modernise the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) registers and the Australian Business Register (ABR).

The government announced the Modernising Business Registers (MBR) program in the 2018-19 budget. This program will shift the ABR and the ASIC business registers onto a single platform that will be administered by the Australian Business Registrar within the Australian Taxation Office.

To facilitate the implementation of a modernised registries platform, new legislation has been drafted that is flexible, technology neutral and governance neutral.

The legislation allows the minister to appoint a Commonwealth body to be registrar. Rather than having administrative requirements prescribed in primary legislation, the registrar is able to create standards and disclosure frameworks via legislative instruments to assist them in carrying out their registry functions and powers.

The data standards will allow the registrar to determine what and how information is collected and the manner in which it is maintained. The disclosure framework will be used to determine under what circumstance information is disclosed.

This bill also provides a legal framework for the introduction of director identification numbers, or DINs.

The DIN will be a unique identifier for any person who verifies their identity and consents to being a director. Directors will keep their DIN forever, even if their directorship with a particular company changes. This will allow tracking of a person's director profile over time and improve integrity by preventing the use of fictitious identities, which facilitates phoenixing and other fraudulent activity by people who set up companies for dishonest purposes.

DINs are being progressed as part of the Modernisation of Business Registers program to ensure that the DIN is integrated with other important registry data. This enables data to be linked and provides greater insights to regulators, businesses and individuals on the identity and affiliations of directors.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Business Names Registration (Fees) Amendment (Registries Modernisation) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:44): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill supports the Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019 by allowing the registrar to collect fees for registry services.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum, and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Corporations (Fees) Amendment (Registries Modernisation) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:45): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill supports the Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019 by allowing the registrar to collect fees for registry services.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum, and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

National Consumer Credit Protection (Fees) Amendment (Registries Modernisation) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:46): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill supports the Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019 by allowing the registrar to collect fees for registry services.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum, and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Petroleum Resource Rent Tax Reforms No. 1) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:47): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill strengthens the integrity of the petroleum resource rent tax, the PRRT, and implements the key parts of the government's response to the PRRT Review undertaken by Mr Mike Callaghan AM PSM.

The PRRT is an additional profit-based cash-flow tax on petroleum production, designed to ensure the Australian community receives a fair return on the extraction of Australia's finite petroleum resources whilst minimising disincentives for business to invest in the petroleum industry.

Since the PRRT was introduced in 1988, the nature of Australia's petroleum production has changed, shifting from an industry dominated by crude oil and condensate to a more significant role for liquefied natural gas (LNG). For example, over the last 30 years, oil and condensate production has nearly halved and gas production has increased over sevenfold. Australia is now one of the world's largest LNG exporters.

The government initiated the Callaghan review in November 2016 to provide advice as to whether the PRRT is operating as it was originally intended and to address the reasons for the decline in Australia's PRRT revenues.

The Callaghan review, released in April 2017, found that while the PRRT remained the preferred way to achieve a fair return to the community without discouraging investment,

changes should be made for new projects 'to make them more compatible with the developments that have taken place in the Australian oil and gas industry'.

LNG projects typically involve longer periods between discovery and extraction compared to oil projects. Capital expenditure is also generally higher and revenue flows smaller earlier in the life of a project. As a result, large amounts of undeducted expenditure are uplifted for potentially long periods of time before eventually being used to offset revenue once a project starts producing LNG. This allowed deductions to compound, reducing the PRRT.

The review's key recommendation was for a process involving consultation to update the PRRT in the following areas: uplift rates; gas transfer pricing rules; and outcomes of transferred exploration expenditures.

The government undertook this consultation carefully and methodically and on 2 November 2018 announced our final response to the Callaghan review.

The bill introduced today deals with the key design issues identified by the Callaghan review.

Schedule 1 to the bill lowers the uplift rates that apply to certain categories of carried-forward expenditure. This limits the excessive compounding of deductions and updates the PRRT design settings to better reflect Australia's petroleum industry.

General expenditure for PRRT projects that successfully apply for a production licence from 1 July 2019 will be uplifted at the long term bond rate (LTBR) plus five percentage points until 10 years from the financial year in which a project first earns assessable petroleum receipts, and then the long term bond rate. This replaces the indefinite uplift of LTBR plus five percentage points and provides some assurance that projects pay PRRT if the timing of cash flows is different to investment forecasts.

All exploration expenditure incurred or transferred after 1 July 2019 will be uplifted at LTBR plus five percentage points for a maximum of 10 years from the time the expenditure is incurred, with any remaining augmented amount maintained in real terms by applying the GDP deflator until the expenditure is deducted. This change means that exploration expenditures will be capped in real terms rather than being able to compound indefinitely. This is appropriate as exploration expenditures, unlike all other PRRT expenditures, can be transferred and do not attach to a particular PRRT project.

The government will also prospectively alter the uplift rate for exploration expenditure incurred before 1 July 2019 that is deducted within a project at the rate of LTBR plus 15 percentage points. The LTBR-plus-15-percentage-point rate will apply until 1 July 2019, after which the uplift will be LTBR plus five percentage points.

Schedule 2 will remove onshore projects from the PRRT regime from 1 July 2019. No PRRT revenue has been collected from onshore projects since they were brought into the PRRT in 2012, and that is expected to remain unchanged into the future. In practice, onshore projects that would never pay PRRT have been able to transfer their exploration deductions to profitable offshore project interests, reducing PRRT collected. The government's changes protect PRRT revenue, reduce regulatory burdens and simplify the tax. Onshore petroleum projects will remain subject to state resource taxes.

Both schedules in this bill strengthen the integrity of the PRRT and ensure a fairer return for the Australian community for the extraction of our oil and gas resources.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Increasing the Instant Asset Write-Off for Small Business Entities) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (10:53): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This government is continuing to back business by helping them to invest and grow by increasing and extending the instant asset write-off. This bill will increase the instant asset write-off threshold from \$20,000 to \$25,000 and extend it until 30 June 2020. The increased threshold applies from announcement on 29 January 2019.

Across Australia, there are over three million small businesses with an annual turnover of less than 10 million that are eligible to access the \$25,000 instant asset write-off. These small businesses employ around 5.7 million Australians or employees.

The government has built on the very successful \$20,000 instant asset write-off first introduced by the government in the 2015-16 budget. The government's \$25,000 threshold will improve cash flow by enabling business to immediately deduct purchases of eligible assets, each costing less than \$25,000.

There is no limit on the amount of assets that a business can purchase. Assets valued at \$25,000 or more can be placed into the small business simplified depreciation pool and depreciated at a rate of 15 per cent in the first income year and 30 per cent each year thereafter. The pool itself can also be immediately deducted if its value falls below \$25,000 at the end of the financial year.

To facilitate access to this measure, the lockout rules that stop small businesses that elect out of the simplified depreciation regime from re-entering for five years will continue to be suspended until 30 June 2020. This bill will benefit small businesses, improving their cash flow and bringing forward investment. The 25,000 instant asset write-off also reduces red tape for small businesses as they no longer need to track the annual depreciation for assets that are written off immediately or maintain detailed records substantiating their depreciation claims. It will boost small-business activity and encourage more small businesses to re-invest in their operations and replace or upgrade their tools and equipment.

I call on all members and senators to give this measure their fullest support. Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Export Finance and Insurance Corporation Amendment (Support for
Infrastructure Financing) Bill 2019**

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Coulton**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (10:56):
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I'm pleased to introduce this bill to amend the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation Act 1991. The amendments give Australia's export credit agency, Efic, new overseas infrastructure financing power and an extra \$1 billion in callable capital. These initiatives will support infrastructure projects in the region that have a benefit for Australia or Australians, and enable Efic to write larger loans, including within its current export mandate. The amendments will enhance Efic's ability to support Australian businesses, and drive stronger links between Australia and its region by enabling Efic to support, more and more, larger overseas infrastructure projects.

Engagement with the region and the Pacific is vitally important. This legislation forms part of the Liberal-National government's package of measures to broaden and deepen our engagement in the Pacific and the region. Australia has a long history of cooperation with its Pacific neighbours. We want to work with our Pacific island partners to build a Pacific region that is secure strategically, stable economically and sovereign politically. This bill enhances our regional commitment, especially to infrastructure. It delivers on the major new initiatives announced by the Prime Minister to address the infrastructure needs of the Pacific region by boosting Efic's ability to support Australian commercial participation in the Pacific's infrastructure, as well as the timely implementation of the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific.

These measures form part of the Liberal-National government's significant new package of security, economic and people-to-people initiatives that will build strong partnerships in the Pacific. As the Liberal-National government's *2017 Foreign policy white paper* outlined, the stability and progress of the Pacific region are of fundamental importance to Australia. No single country can tackle the challenges on its own.

The bill will allow Efic to finance essential overseas infrastructure, such as telecommunications, energy, transport and water, where it is commercially viable. This will complement the Liberal-National government's new Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, which will stretch our aid dollars even further. The demand for infrastructure financing in our region is large. The Asian Development Bank estimates the Pacific region needs US\$3.1 billion in infrastructure investment per year to 2030. It estimates South-East Asia needs a further US\$210 billion in infrastructure investment per year by 2030. Efic can play an important role to help meet these needs.

When projects have strong commercial prospects they should be funded commercially. Efic has a track record of supporting infrastructure projects on its commercial account, like

the US\$19 billion PNG LNG Project, which is the largest ever private sector investment in PNG and will bring significant economic benefit to PNG and provincial governments via tax and royalties, local landholders and local businesses.

The bill grants Efic a new power to finance overseas infrastructure projects, based on a broad Australian benefits tests, enabling it to finance overseas infrastructure projects that result in positive outcomes for Australia both now and in the future. This will enable Efic to take account of previously unrecognised benefits that will flow to Australia or Australians over time as a result of Efic financing, such as a greater Australian participation in supply chains; access to new markets for Australian businesses; more Australian jobs, payments, dividends or other financial proceeds from overseas to Australia; or stronger relationships with our regional partners, especially in the Pacific.

Using an Australian benefit test, Efic could finance a wide range of infrastructure projects in the region. For example, in the telecommunications sector Efic's new power would enable it to finance projects that improve regional connectivity through greater broadband internet access. This benefits Australia by reducing the cost of doing business and increasing our exports to the region, encouraging economic integration and e-commerce opportunities. In the energy sector, Efic's new power would enable it to finance the construction of LNG receivable terminals, leading to increased energy exports or engineering services.

The bill increases Efic's callable capital by \$1 billion on its commercial account. A larger capital base will allow Efic to provide more commercially meaningful financing offers, given that the total size of debt financing required for regional infrastructure projects is large, and also to support Australian exporters more broadly.

It will give Efic the commercial flexibility and credibility it requires to offer finance to project proponents, sovereign borrowers and financing partners, who will require the confidence that Efic's support is meaningful and can be sustained over long repayment terms. It will enable Efic to finance more infrastructure projects in Papua New Guinea, one of our most important neighbours. Efic is already approaching its country lending limit for PNG and just one more infrastructure project would see it once again reach this limit, constraining Efic's ability to take up future financings and the jobs and opportunities that will flow to both Australia and PNG from this.

The increase in callable capital is a commitment from the Liberal-National government to increase opportunities for Australia and Australian businesses through Efic. The increase in callable capital will bring Efic's total capital base to nearly \$1.7 billion, around a 150 per cent increase, comprising \$1.2 billion in callable capital and almost \$475 million in cash capital. The increase will enable Efic to provide more financing over time with an unchanged, regulated upper limit for the contingent liability of \$6.5 million.

Increasing Efic's callable capital by legislative amendment, rather than by legislative instrument, will provide the higher degree of certainty that infrastructure projects proponents, borrowers and commercial financing partners require when they look to Efic to assist with financing gaps.

The bill will enable Efic to help address the infrastructure needs in the Pacific region. It will complement the new Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, which is commonly known as the AIFFP. Efic will have the lead where there are stronger commercial

prospects, as Efic's financing will be on a commercial basis. The AIFFP will boost Australia's support for infrastructure development in the region by combining loans with grants on a case-by-case basis. The bill will also enable Efic to assist with the timely implementation of the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific by administering the AIFFP loans. The government will detail how Efic's new power will support the AIFFP and be applied in our region, including the Pacific, under a new statement of expectations.

The government remains committed to ensuring that Efic delivers for Australian exporters, retaining a focus on support for SMEs.

Efic will continue to be required to maximise Australian participation in overseas infrastructure projects. Efic will continue to be required to ensure Australian companies, especially SMEs, have every opportunity to expand into overseas markets.

This bill does not change Efic's existing Australian content requirements or Efic's focus on SMEs.

The bill enhances Efic's existing function to facilitate and encourage exports. It enables Efic to take account of not only the immediate export opportunities from the involvement of Australian companies, including SMEs, in overseas infrastructure projects but future streams of export opportunities and future jobs for Australians arising from the opening of new and emerging markets for Australian businesses. Creating new export oriented jobs is important for Australia's economy. One in five Australian jobs is trade related, and, in the last five years, trade contributed around one-quarter of Australia's economic growth.

The Liberal-National government's trade agenda, which has included delivering comprehensive free trade agreements with Australia's three largest export markets—China, Japan and Korea—has supported Australia's strong economic growth, which is faster than any of the G7 nations.

In 2018, the Liberal-National government delivered the TPP-11, one of the most comprehensive trade deals ever concluded, covering 11 countries with a combined GDP of more than \$13.8 trillion and close to 500 million consumers. The TPP-11 benefits Australian farmers, manufacturers, service providers and small businesses.

The Liberal-National government is backing small business via free trade agreements, via tax relief, for around 3.3 million businesses who employ around seven million Australians via this bill.

An enhanced role for Efic in infrastructure will boost its ability to support Australian businesses, including SMEs, which have the specialised skill and knowledge base that underpin major infrastructure projects, increasing Australian participation. For example, Efic's support of the PNG LNG project was crucial in encouraging private sector finance and led to over \$1 billion in contracts being awarded to Australian businesses, including SMEs, as well as providing local jobs and valuable export earnings for PNG.

The bill will allow Efic to conduct operations under the name 'Export Finance Australia'.

A new simpler name that references Australia will provide greater recognition for Efic and the Australian government, both with Australian SMEs and other exporters and in important overseas markets. The bill maintains Efic's risk controls and commercially appropriate risk appetite. Efic will continue to conduct rigorous due diligence for infrastructure projects in the

same manner as for other transactions under the Efic Act. This includes robust environmental and social risk assessments.

Efic has a strong record of prudent lending and sound commercial judgement, evidenced by a historical write-off rate on its commercial account of less than one per cent. Efic's historical write-off rate is lower than the average for commercial banks across the economic cycle. In each year of the last 20 years, it has delivered a profit on its commercial account. In 2017-18 alone, Efic supported 160 Australian businesses with \$194 million of facilities, enabling \$1.39 billion of export contracts which contributed \$1.15 billion of Australia's GDP and supported 7,600 jobs in Australia.

The bill maintains existing legislative safeguards requiring a net increase in Australian jobs within a business applying for Efic financing for overseas direct investment. It will not provide advantages to overseas competitors or deprive Australian companies who produce in Australia of financial assistance.

The bill will enhance Australia's role and attractiveness as a partner in regional infrastructure development.

It will boost sustainable economic growth and support stronger commercial links between Australian businesses and our region.

Together with the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, the bill will help address the infrastructure needs of the Pacific region.

I commend the bill to the chamber.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Approval of Work

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Special Minister of State) (11:09): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: CSIRO Myall Vale New Cotton Breeding Research facilities project.

As advised when this project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 16 August 2018, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation is proposing to build a new cotton-processing facility, a laboratory research facility, and a plant and equipment workshop at its existing Myall Vale site in New South Wales. The proposed works will assist the Australian cotton industry to remain ahead of overseas competitors in terms of yield, fibre, quality and resource-use efficiency. It will resolve work health and safety issues, increase productivity and allow the CSIRO to undertake research to assist the Australian agricultural industry to be sustainable, productive and profitable. The project will employ a diverse, skilled range of consultants, contractors and construction workers. It will also provide economic opportunities for the local area through construction contracts. The estimated cost to deliver the project is some \$18 million, excluding GST. The committee has conducted an inquiry and considers the project to be value for money for the Commonwealth, fit for purpose and expedient to carry out. On behalf of the government I would like to thank the

committee for once again undertaking a timely inquiry. Subject to parliamentary approval of the proposed works, construction is planned to commence in mid-2019 and be completed by early 2021. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Special Minister of State) (11:11): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Defence High Performance Computing Centre.

As advised when the project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 13 September 2018, the Department of Defence is proposing to construct a new fit-for-purpose, high-performance computing centre in the Defence Science and Technology Group precinct at RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia. The proposed works will provide the Defence Science and Technology Group in the Australian Defence Organisation with a secure capability for high-fidelity modelling and simulation that it currently does not have. The Defence Science and Technology Group is the Australian government's lead agency responsible for applying science and technology to safeguard Australia and deliver support to the Australian Defence Force on operations, sustainment, improvement to current capability and development of new and emerging capability. The committee has conducted an inquiry and considers the project to be value for money for the Commonwealth, fit for purpose and expedient to carry out. On behalf of the government, I want to thank the committee for once again undertaking a timely inquiry. Subject to parliamentary approval of the project, construction is expected to commence in 2019 and be completed by mid-2020. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Special Minister of State) (11:13): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: LAND 200 Tranche 2 Battlefield Communications Systems facilities project.

As advised when the project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 23 August 2018, the Department of Defence is proposing to construct and refurbish facilities to support the training requirements for the battle management systems being introduced under the Land 200 tranche 2 capability, which will modernise the command and control of the Joint Land Force. The *2016 Defence white paper* identifies the importance of providing Defence with enhanced situational awareness and decision-making superiority. This project will ensure that the land force can achieve these functions by providing the soldier, the heart of land force capability, with a leading-edge digital communications capability. This project will enable the land force to achieve an unparalleled level of networking across the battle space. The project will employ a diverse range of skilled consultants, contractors and construction workers and

provide opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises throughout the construction trade packages. The estimated cost of the project is \$24.3 million, excluding GST.

The committee has conducted an inquiry. It considers the project to be value for money for the Commonwealth, fit for purpose and expedient to carry out. On behalf of the government, I would like to thank the committee for once again undertaking a timely inquiry. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction is expected to commence mid-2019 and be completed by late 2019.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Special Minister of State) (11:15): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to parliament: LAND 4502 Phase 1 Additional CH-47F Chinook facilities project.

As advised when the project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 23 August 2018, the Department of Defence is proposing to construct and refurbish shelters and supporting infrastructure for three additional CH-47F Chinook helicopters and the associated increase in staff for the 5th Aviation Regiment at the RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland.

The *2016 Defence white paper* noted the government's intention to increase the ADF's airlift capability, including the acquisition of the helicopters. The project expects to generate short-term employment opportunities, predominantly in the building construction and unskilled labour markets in the Townsville region. It is expected that around 50 personnel will be directly employed.

The project is also anticipated to provide potential economic benefits to the local region through the procurement of construction materials. The estimated cost to deliver the project is \$49.9 million, excluding GST. This includes management and design fees, construction costs, information and communications technology, furniture, fittings, equipment, contingencies and a provision for escalation.

The committee has conducted an inquiry and considers the project to be value for money, fit for purpose and expedient to carry out. On behalf of the government, I would like to thank the committee for again undertaking a timely inquiry. Subject to parliamentary approval of the works, the plan is to commence construction from early 2019 and be completed in late 2020. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Special Minister of State) (11:17): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to parliament: Naval Guided Weapons Maintenance Facilities project.

As advised when the project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 16 August 2018, the Department of Defence is proposing to construct a purpose-built integrated weapons facility to increase the maintenance capability and alleviate constraints within the Naval

Guided Weapons Sustainment System, a Defence establishment at Orchard Hills, located near Penrith in New South Wales.

The 2016 *Defence white paper* reinforced the necessity for guided weapons maintenance, stating that Defence must maintain a technological edge, while simplifying maintenance of equipment. The project will employ a diverse range of skilled consultants, contractors and construction workers. The project is also anticipated to provide potential economic benefits to the local region through the procurement of construction materials and labour. The estimated cost of the project is \$95.5 million, excluding GST.

The committee has conducted an inquiry and considers the project to be value for money for the Commonwealth, fit for purpose and expedient for the parliament to carry out. On behalf of the government, I would like to thank the committee for once again undertaking the inquiry. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction is expected to commence in early 2019 and be completed by mid-2020. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Reference

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Special Minister of State) (11:19): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's Sydney Consolidation Project.

The CSIRO Greater Sydney area property portfolio presently comprises seven sites, accommodating approximately 880 full-time staff and over 300 part-time staff and students, across a total of 126,000 square metres of laboratories, technical and specialist support facilities, and commercial office space. CSIRO is proposing to reduce its property portfolio in the Greater Sydney area to five key sites, with the goal of reducing surplus accommodation capacity, providing relief in managing currently escalating property operating, repair and maintenance costs, and delivering fit-for-purpose scientific facilities for current and future science operations. The reduction will be achieved through a mix of divestment, expiry of lease and consolidation of CSIRO capability at five existing sites.

The estimated outturn cost of this project is \$113.7 million, excluding GST. The cost estimate includes construction costs, consultant fees, furniture and fittings, escalation and risk provisions. The project will provide significant employment opportunities for local construction industry businesses and support services. Subject to parliamentary approval of the project, construction is expected to commence in late 2019 and be completed in mid-2022. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Reference

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Special Minister of State) (11:21): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: National Museum of Australia Proposed Gallery Development Stage 1: Life in Australia.

The National Museum of Australia has a program of gallery renewal that will redevelop the current permanent galleries into three distinct spaces with a linked narrative experience that

will tell the story of Australia. These works are part of the National Museum of Australia's asset replacement program. The first phase of the program is the redevelopment of the current Old New Land exhibition space with a new 1,500 square metre permanent exhibition of environmental history, provisionally entitled *Life in Australia*; a new multipurpose mezzanine for both exhibitions and functions; and new external stairs. The work will be within the existing National Museum of Australia building, located on the Acton Peninsula in Canberra.

The estimated cost of the works is \$19.4 million, GST exclusive, and the total cost is \$20.5 million from 2015 to 2016 and will be fully funded by the National Museum of Australia. This cost estimate includes construction costs, consultant fees, furniture and fittings, escalation and risk provisions. The fit-out will create jobs during the construction and fit-out works and support local trades and services through ongoing maintenance and supply requirements. Subject to parliamentary approval of the works, construction is expected to commence in mid-2019 and be completed by the end of 2020. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (11:22): I present the report of the Australian parliamentary delegation to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste from 28 October to 1 November 2018, and I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with this report.

Leave granted.

Mr O'DOWD: I'm pleased to present the report of the parliamentary delegation to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Ms Sharon Claydon, the member for Newcastle—she is also in the House and will make a short statement when I finish—Senator Pat Dodson, Senator Rex Patrick and I visited Timor-Leste from 28 October to 1 November last year. We were able to pack a lot into our short visit, which was fascinating and very worthwhile. In addition to meetings in Dili, we had the opportunity to visit Balibo and some rural areas in the west of the country.

We met with a wide range of people in the parliament, the government and the non-government sectors. We heard many views on the current issues in Timor-Leste and what has already been done to further the relationship between the two countries, which continues to grow. We were pleased to visit soon after agreement was finally reached on a permanent maritime boundary between Australia and Timor-Leste. This was a turning point in our relations and has been welcomed by both governments.

As a young nation still emerging from conflict Timor-Leste faces many challenges. One of the biggest is to build and diversify its economy. This includes creating employment and other opportunities for its youth, as 74 per cent of the population is under 35 years of age. We were pleased to see the great benefits that well-targeted Australian support can have for Timor-Leste's people, including the highly successful Seasonal Workers Program, projects delivering clean water and roads to rural communities and measures to combat violence against women, which Sharon will talk about.

This year, 2019, marks the 20th anniversary of Timor-Leste's independence and, therefore, also the 20th anniversary of Australian-led military intervention there. Twenty years on, the bonds and spirit of friendship between the two countries remain very, very strong. We encourage Australia to continue focusing on supporting Timor-Leste at the government level and also through the extensive people-to-people links that we share.

On behalf of the delegation, I would like to extend a warm thanks to the many people we met and spoke to during the visit. I would also like to thank the ambassador, Peter Roberts; the second secretary, Carolyn Skorupa; and all the staff at the Australian Embassy in Timor-Leste for their excellent assistance to us. I commend the report to the House.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (11:26): by leave—I was very, very pleased to be able to take part in this important delegation from Australia to Timor-Leste. I thank the chair of the delegation, the member for Flynn, for his indulgence in allowing me to speak after him. A big thank you to Shennia Spillane, who provided some terrific on-ground and post-trip secretariat support to pull this report together, and to my colleagues from the other place, Senator Patrick Dodson and Senator Rex Patrick.

It was an important time for Australia to undertake this visit in the wake of the maritime boundaries treaty that has been struck. I'm very pleased that we have arrived at an agreement around those maritime boundaries. That has been a longstanding issue of hurt between our two nations that is on the way to resolution now. I bring back a message from Timor-Leste, and that is about a certain keenness to see the respective legislation in both our parliaments ratified with haste. They would like to see that done as soon as possible.

I would also, in this very limited time, like to flag some of the work that I was able to do as part of the delegation there. The chair mentioned earlier the important meetings we undertook in terms of some local initiatives to combat violence against women and children. It's an issue that Timor-Leste women and, indeed, men in their culture are taking very seriously, and they are trying to make inroads. As we in Australia know, trying to make those cultural changes is hard work. It's really hard work, yet it is really important and none of us can give up on doing that.

I acknowledge that this week we actually have in this House a delegation from the Timor-Leste women's caucus. I know that many people here have had an opportunity to meet with them. The delegation met with this women's caucus, which is a cross-party caucus in the Timor-Leste parliament. You may be interested to know, Acting Deputy Speaker Andrews, there is a legislative quota for women in the Timor-Leste parliament. They have a very strong and formidable presence. There are seven parties that make up the parliament there, and six of them have women. There is one party that only has a sole representative, and he's a man, so he can't have a woman on the caucus. Together, the caucus are resolute in their determination to bring about important changes for women, for their children and for people with disability, who are often primarily in the care of women in Timor-Leste. A huge thank you to them for their generous spirit, which they showed us in our meeting. I'm so delighted.

I would like to acknowledge the former foreign minister, Ms Julie Bishop, who helped set up the initial exchange project that is underway now. I'm pleased that the government has chosen to provide some assistance through DFAT to ensure that that happens. There will be some terrific women from this parliament now partnering with the Timor-Leste women parliamentarians to ensure that program is carried on.

I think the delegation report covers many of the big issues and messages that we wanted to bring back to the Australian parliament. I'd like to very briefly touch on some other meetings that I had outside of the work of the delegation. While I was there, through the assistance of APHEDA, I had the opportunity to have some meetings with the Working Women's Centre of Timor Leste and some of their partners. One project that the working women's centre highlighted to me—and one that I would like to note in this parliament—is the work that they are doing around bringing about some significant legislative changes to protect domestic workers in Timor-Leste. This has become quite a big issue, particularly in Dili, where it is found that most of the women working as domestic help come from one specific district, which is a very poor part of Timor-Leste, where women have very low levels of education and are very vulnerable to exploitation. I want to take this opportunity to salute the Working Women's Centre of Timor Leste for the work they are doing on that issue and for the work they're doing with the parliament. They've negotiated some important changes in the legislation that would give some protection around wages and working conditions for the poorest and most vulnerable women in the Dili community.

I'd also like to say thank you to APHEDA's country manager in Timor-Leste, Elisabeth de Araujo, who welcomed me and the Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Peter Roberts, and was able to provide me with some introductions to a range of other important NGOs and unions working in the area. I'd quickly like to acknowledge the work of the KSI, which is representing a group of farmer organisations and helping them to get organised to work as a collective towards having a national voice for farmers in Timor-Leste. When so many people are living on farms there, that's a really important piece of organising work being undertaken by the KSI in Timor-Leste.

I'd also like to acknowledge the General Workers Union, who have been in existence for about 10 years now. They are supporting many of the Timorese seasonal workers who travel to Australia. They come here for three to six months for work placements. The General Workers Union is providing pre-departure briefings for those men and women, providing advice on union memberships and workplace rights here in Australia. That is critical to ensuring that that Seasonal Worker Program can proceed. It's a very successful program, but making sure people are aware of their rights in Australia is critical to ensuring they are not subject to workplace exploitation here. We have a responsibility to ensure that's happening. I salute the work of the General Workers Union in ensuring as much as they can in Dili that workers are well prepared.

Finally, I would like to thank the Australian ambassador, Peter Roberts, for taking some time out of an incredibly busy schedule to accompany me on those meetings. I think it was an opportunity for the Australian embassy to connect with a number of other organisations working in and around Dili, doing important work to strengthen the safety of women and children, to ensure safe and fair workplaces and, indeed, to ensure the social and economic wellbeing of the Timor-Leste people. I think any work that the Australian government can do to lend support on that front is work well done for our closest neighbours. In that post-treaty environment, that is one way in which we can ensure that the bonds between Timor-Leste and Australia remain strong.

COMMITTEES

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

Report

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (11:35): On behalf of The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I present the following reports: *Advisory report on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Police Powers at Airports) Bill 2018* and *Review of Administration and Expenditure No. 16 (2016-2017): Australian Intelligence Agencies*.

Reports made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Mr HASTIE: by leave—The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Police Powers at Airports) Bill 2018 seeks to ensure that the aviation network is safe and secure for all Australians and addresses advice from Australian Federal Police that the current powers available to police to check evidence of identity at airports are no longer fit for purpose.

Consequently, the bill makes several amendments to the Crimes Act to provide additional powers for police at airports. These proposed powers include empowering constables and AFP protective service officers to direct individuals to move on from an airport; enabling officers to direct an individual not to take a flight to or from a major airport for a specific period of up to 24 hours; and providing police with new grounds to issue a direction, based on safeguarding aviation security.

During its review of the bill, the committee examined whether the new powers were proportional to the threat posed to aviation security and considered whether oversight and accountability mechanisms were sufficient and appropriate.

The committee received seven submissions to its inquiry and four supplementary submissions. It held a public hearing on 17 October 2018 in Canberra.

The committee made nine recommendations in relation to the bill.

The first recommends a change to the definition of 'aviation security' to specify the scope of activities to which the term applies.

The second introduces a savings provision to ensure that the new laws do not interfere with the right to peaceful protest or assembly.

The third introduces annual reporting obligations on the Australian Federal Police to inform the public on how often the powers are used.

The fourth provides for expedited judicial review in certain restricted circumstances.

The fifth recommends that the term 'senior police officer' be defined in the bill.

The sixth introduces further additional annual reporting obligations on the Australian Federal Police on the use of the powers.

The seventh requires police officers to ensure that all authorisations given orally are documented in writing as soon as practicable.

The eighth recommendation is to ensure that obligations for police to provide information, if requested, apply equally to uniformed and plain-clothes officers.

And finally, the ninth and final recommendation is that, subject to implementation of these recommendations, the bill be passed.

The second report I have tabled today fulfils the committee's statutory oversight responsibility to review the administration and expenditure of the six Australian intelligence agencies, including the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, the Office of National Assessments and the three defence intelligence agencies.

Through its review, the committee received comprehensive submissions and conducted private hearings with each of the agencies. The committee also took evidence from the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security.

The committee is satisfied that agencies are overseeing their administrative functions effectively.

Agencies have continued to respond to the changing security environment, and with the support of funding have invested in a range of new programs and capital projects to enhance their future capacity.

The committee carefully scrutinised each agency's financial management arrangements, including their internal controls.

On the basis of the evidence provided, the committee was satisfied that agencies appropriately managed their expenditure in 2016-17.

While this review relates to the 2016-17 financial year, the report recognises that the intelligence community is currently undergoing a period of significant change.

This change has been largely driven by the recommendations of the 2017 Independent Intelligence Review, conducted by Mr Michael L'Estrange and Mr Stephen Merchant, as well as the machinery-of-government changes following the creation of the Department of Home Affairs.

As the report notes, these changes will also affect the role of the PJCIS and that of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security.

The committee took the opportunity during its private hearings to discuss some of the implications of these changes with the inspector-general and affected agencies.

The committee considered it essential that as these changes occur within the intelligence community, a corresponding and effective level of oversight be maintained.

The committee therefore welcomed the increased funding for the Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security.

Noting the legislative and machinery-of-government reforms that have already occurred, the committee considers that amendments to expand the inspector-general's remit, and other oversight mechanisms, should be brought forward without delay.

The committee looks forward to continuing to engage closely with the intelligence agencies as the administrative arrangements within which they operate are revised.

I commend both reports to the House.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (11:40): by leave—The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security has today handed down a bipartisan report recommending the passage of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Police Powers at Airports) Bill 2018. A number of recommendations have been made to improve the

bill and make it stronger and more effective. Those recommendations, if implemented, would also make it clear that the new powers cannot be used to interfere with the right to peaceful assembly.

If legislation reflecting these bipartisan recommendations is presented by the government and passed by the parliament, the rules governing the powers of police at airports around Australia will be unified for the first time and strengthened. Police constables and protective service officers will have the power to direct a person to move on from airport premises or to prevent a person from taking a specified flight when that person is reasonably suspected to have committed, be committing or be intending to commit an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more, or if it is necessary to safeguard aviation security. It also expands the existing power that constables have to direct a person to produce evidence of their identity in specified circumstances.

Labor is absolutely dedicated to giving enforcement and security agencies the powers they need to keep Australians safe. Labor has always taken a bipartisan approach to national security matters and will continue to do so even as the government continually tries to trash that approach. We have helped to make more than 500 amendments to national security bills since 2013. Every one of those has made our laws stronger and more effective. Today's report shows that the bipartisan process of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security remains intact. Labor will do all it can to uphold the vital role of the committee while the government descends into hysterical attacks.

BILLS

Parliamentary Service Amendment (Post-election Report) Bill 2018

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (11:43): Labor will support the Parliamentary Service Amendment (Post-election Report) Bill 2018, which implements one of the recommendations of the independent review into the Parliamentary Budget Office. It will give more time for the Parliamentary Budget Office to release their post-election report on election commitments. That post-election report lists the commitments made by major parties during an election campaign that will have a material impact on the Commonwealth budget. Currently, it must be published within 30 days after the end of the caretaker period for the general election. These amendments change that, giving the Parliamentary Budget Office more time, so that the report will need to be published by either 30 days after the caretaker period or seven days prior to the first sitting day of either or both houses of the parliament, whichever date is later.

This change takes into account other recommendations of the independent review which noted that the report can take longer to compile if it includes things such as medium-term financial impacts. It has been Labor that has led the way on medium-term costings, recognising that for many policies it's important to understand the implications not just over the four years but also over the decade. This is particularly true with grandfathered reforms, such as Labor's changes to capital gains and negative gearing, where the impact over the 10 years is materially different from the impact over four years. It's important, too, when we're

thinking about long-term policies and the issues typically raised in the *Intergenerational report*, that we aren't simply confined to thinking about fiscal costs over a four-year window.

The Parliamentary Budget Office has accepted the other recommendations of the independent review and is undertaking a process to implement them. The independent review was finalised in 2017. Labor welcomed the Parliamentary Budget Office's acceptance of all of the recommendations put forward by Ian Watt and Barry Anderson. It recognised that the Parliamentary Budget Office has been a successful institutional development in Australian governance, filling a significant gap in our public policy landscape. It produces rigorous, independent and non-partisan analysis that ensures that we are debating the substance of policies rather than how much they will cost.

I remember that so many of the elections in my childhood were focused on costings. The costings battles between costings that had been prepared for the opposition by independent accounting firms were brought into scrutiny, with the government saying that policies would cost different amounts from those private firms. It meant that the political debate was distracted from the substance of the reform and moved on to the narrow technocratic question of how much it will cost.

The Parliamentary Budget Office is an equal status coster to the Treasury, a point sometimes missed by those opposite. Labor established it. We are proud of the institution it's become. It's helped the parliament and the public develop a deeper understanding of the budgetary impacts on policies being considered. Its independence and focus on transparency have improved the information and data available to the public. The Parliamentary Budget Office also produces regular reports on important fiscal issues, which shine a light onto key questions around budget sustainability and ensure that the public has a strong idea of who is bearing the heavy lifting for fiscal changes.

But for all the important work the Parliamentary Budget Office does, it can't stop the wasteful spending of those opposite. And nothing but an election will put an end to the budget mismanagement that has occurred under the aptly named ATM government. The Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government has been treating the Commonwealth budget like its own personal ATM, racking up debt that is now, in net terms, \$360 billion. That's double what they inherited when they came to office. That means that a majority of Australia's net debt today was accrued by the ATM government. The Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government is responsible for more than half of Australia's net debt.

When they speak about 'Labor's debt' they are speaking about a minority of Australia's debt, debt accrued in order to stare down the global financial crisis, the greatest downturn to strike the world since the Great Depression and in which Australia—unusually, among advanced countries—managed to put in place a timely, targeted and temporary fiscal stimulus to see us not incur recession. That ensured that hundreds of thousands of jobs were saved, that tens of thousands of small businesses were saved.

What's the excuse for the coalition? Gross debt has crashed through half a trillion dollars now for the first time in the nation's history. It's a record \$542 billion and rising. We can put this in personal terms. Net debt for Australians is now \$360 billion. That's around \$14,000 for every man, woman and child in Australia. Most of that was accrued by the coalition. Last year alone the Liberals blew \$200 million on political ads to distract from their cuts and chaos and the division and dysfunction that has characterised the government.

Australians want their taxes to fund better schools. They want their taxes to fund reduced elective and emergency surgery wait times—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): The member for Fenner is straying from the subject matter of the bill. I'd ask him to direct his attention to the bill.

Dr LEIGH: I appreciate your guidance, Deputy Speaker Andrews. The Parliamentary Budget Office's post-election report will show, at the next election, the total cost of policies put forward by both sides—including political advertising—including Labor's reforms to ensure that we no longer spend \$100 million a month on cash refunds for excess franking credits. The Parliamentary Budget Office has costed our policies, and the Parliamentary Budget Office's figures ensure that Labor will go to the next election offering more generous personal income tax cuts for anyone earning under \$125,000, we will pay down debt faster than the coalition over four years and over 10, and we will invest more in schools and hospitals. These are policies costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office in the independent and authoritative way that they are able to do.

We'll support the bill. We established the Parliamentary Budget Office. We're proud of the institution it has become, and we believe it is appropriate that it have a little more time post the election to prepare that report and to consider, in particular, the medium-term financial impacts of policies prepared by the major parties. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health) (11:51): Firstly, I'd like to thank those members who have contributed to the debate on the Parliamentary Service Amendment (Post-Election Report) Bill. The bill will help to ensure that the time frame for the Parliamentary Budget Office to prepare the post-election report of election commitments allows additional time and additional scope to increase the way in which the report is able to include medium-term financial impacts of election commitments and include the policies of parties with less than five members, where that party has asked to be included. Additional time is also expected to enhance the visibility of the post-election report by moving the timing closer to the resumption of parliamentary sittings. Expanding the scope of the post-election report will increase transparency around the budget impacts of the election commitments that have been made by political parties. It is important the post-election report is accessible, informative and available in time to inform deliberations of the parliament.

I particularly want to acknowledge, and thank for their work, the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and especially the finance minister in ensuring that this change is brought forward. It builds upon the work that they have done in order to secure the nation's finances. Of course, we inherited a large fiscal black hole in 1996, and we repaired that. That, coupled with the financial services regulation, enabled Australia to pass through the GFC. It was not expenditure on pink batts and school halls which did that; it was the fiscal situation of the nation which allowed us to ensure that we avoided the worst of the international excesses and the worst of the international downturn.

At the same time, when we came into office in 2013, there was a deep structural deficit which had been built. Almost all attempts to pass legislation through the parliament which would deal with that structural deficit were blocked by those on the other side. Despite that, we have been able to bring the budget back to surplus, and I think that that is an abiding achievement. I want to honour, thank and congratulate the finance minister, the Treasurer and the Prime Minister for their work in that event. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health) (11:54): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

COMMITTEES

Selection Committee

Report

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (11:54): On behalf of the Speaker, I present report No. 35 of the Selection Committee relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private members' business on Monday, 18 February 2018. The report will be printed in the *Hansard* for today, and the committee's determinations will appear on tomorrow's *Notice Paper*. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

Report relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and of private Members' business

1. The committee met in private session on Wednesday, 13 February 2019.
2. The Committee deliberated on items of committee and delegation business that had been notified, private Members' business items listed on the Notice Paper and notices lodged on Tuesday, 12 February 2019, and determined the order of precedence and times on Monday, 18 February 2019, as follows:

Items for House of Representatives Chamber (10.10 am to 12 noon)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 Ms M. M. H. King: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the *National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009*, and for related purposes. (*National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Small Amount Credit Contract and Consumer Lease Reforms) Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 29 November 2018.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

2 Mr Wilkie: To present a Bill for an Act to provide a legislative response to all people seeking asylum in Australia, and for related purposes. (*Refugee Protection Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

3 Mr Bandt: To present a Bill for an Act to prohibit the mining of thermal coal in the Galilee Basin, and for related purposes. (*Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

4 Mr Bandt: To present a Bill for an Act to restrict activities in relation to thermal coal, and for related purposes. (*Coal Prohibition (Quit Coal) Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

5 Ms Sharkie: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Banking Act 1959* in relation to loans to primary production businesses, and for related purposes. (*Banking Amendment (Rural Finance Reform) Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

6 Ms McGowan: To present a Bill for an Act to establish the Office for Regional Australia, and for related purposes. (*Office for Regional Australia Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

7 Mr Katter: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Reserve Bank Act 1959*, and for related purposes. (*Reserve Bank Amendment (Australian Reconstruction and Development Board) Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

8 Ms Sharkie: To present A Bill for an Act to amend the *Export Control Act 1982*, and for related purposes. (*Export Control Amendment (Banning Cotton Exports to Ensure Water Security) Bill 2019*)

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.

9 Ms O'Toole: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Townsville has experienced the worst floods in recorded history;
- (b) Townsville received a year's rainfall in nine days, with 1,134 millimetres recorded up to 9 am on Monday 4 February 2019, reaching over 1.65 metres;
- (c) the Ross River Dam reached a record breaking 244 per cent capacity; and
- (d) more than 22,000 homes and 110 roads in Townsville were affected by this extreme weather event;

(2) acknowledges the:

- (a) professional and skilled work undertaken by the Townsville Local Disaster Management Group;
- (b) dedicated and collaborative work undertaken by the Australian Defence Force (ADF), Emergency Services and State Emergency Services (SES) in rescuing stranded residents in dangerous circumstances;
- (c) commitment and hard work of the ADF in the massive recovery clean-up process; and

(d) amazing work of the SES, Ergon Energy, Townsville City Council workers, businesses and the thousands of community volunteers for their efforts to assist the many people whose homes were inundated; and

(3) calls on the Government to end the confusion related to the disaster recovery payment and assist the thousands of distressed Townsville residents during this difficult time.

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 12 noon

Speech time limits—

Ms O'Toole—10 minutes.

Next Member speaking—10 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 2 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Federation Chamber (11 am to 1.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 **Mr Entsch:** To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 24 March is World Tuberculosis Day, a day to commemorate the precious lives lost due to tuberculosis, a disease that is preventable and curable;

(b) tuberculosis is contagious and airborne—it is the world's leading infectious disease killer, killing more people than HIV/AIDS;

(c) in 2017 alone, 1.6 million people died from tuberculosis worldwide and 10 million people became sick with the disease; and

(d) there is a funding gap of US\$1.3 billion annually in tuberculosis research and development and it is critical to develop quicker diagnostic tools, better drugs, and a new tuberculosis vaccine in order to end the tuberculosis epidemic;

(2) recognises that the:

(a) funding that Australia is providing jointly with the World Bank to support testing and treatment in Papua New Guinea is already leading to an initiative to achieve universal testing for tuberculosis in Daru; and

(b) provision of \$75 million over five years for Product Development Partnerships in the Indo-Pacific health security initiative to accelerate access to new therapeutics and diagnostics for drug resistant tuberculosis and malaria, building on the successes of Australia's previous investments; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) develop an action plan to monitor the progress made towards the targets and commitment made at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB; and

(b) make an increased financial commitment to the Global Fund at its Replenishment Conference in October 2019.

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Entsch—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

2 Ms Ryan: To move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that our public schools are at the heart of our education system;

(2) notes that:

(a) public schools teach two in three of all school students, and the overwhelming majority of Australia's neediest children, including:

(i) 82 per cent of the poorest children;

(ii) 84 per cent of Indigenous children; and

(iii) 74 per cent of children with disabilities;

(b) under the current Government, almost nine in ten (88 per cent) of public schools will never get to their fair funding level because the Government has capped federal funding for public schools at just 20 per cent of the Schools Recommendation Scheme;

(c) after spending a year trying to deny there were cuts, the fact the Government has restored funding to Catholic and independent schools was finally an admission that it is cutting billions of dollars from schools;

(d) Labor has announced a plan to restore funding to public schools; and

(e) Labor's plan will transform public schools across Australia and give all children the opportunity to reach their full potential, no matter where they live, or what amount their parents earn; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) immediately adopt Labor's plan to restore funding to public schools to ensure every public school reaches its fair funding level; and

(b) work with school systems to get every school to its fair funding level.

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Ms Ryan—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3 Mr Leeson: To move:

That this House:

(1) strongly endorses *An India Economic Strategy To 2035*, the independent report by Mr Peter Varghese AO, and its goals of:

(a) lifting India into Australia's top three export markets by 2035;

(b) making India the third largest destination in Asia for Australian outward investment; and

(c) bringing India into the inner circle of Australia's strategic partnerships, and with people to people ties as close as any in Asia;

(2) recognises the unprecedented opportunity for Australia to cement India as a priority economic partner; and

(3) acknowledges the importance of building a broad and deep bilateral relationship based on:

(a) a sustainable long term economic strategy;

(b) our shared strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific, including the importance of the rules based international order; and

(c) the strength of the Indian community in Australia, the fastest growing diaspora in our nation.

(Notice given 26 November 2018.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Leeser—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

4 Ms Owens: To move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges:

(a) that 21 February is International Mother Language Day (IMLD);

(b) the work of the Ekushe Academy Australia and the Mother Language Conservation Movement in creating awareness of the importance of mother languages in Australia;

(c) that 2019 is the Year of Indigenous Languages; and

(d) that about 200 different languages are spoken throughout Australia; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) observe IMLD on 21 February;

(b) promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by people around the world, especially in Australia;

(c) build on Australia's multilingual strengths including support for second language education in Australian education institutions; and

(d) actively work to support communities in their efforts to preserve their mother language.

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Time allotted—20 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Ms Owens—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Orders of the Day

1 Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018 (*Ms Sharkie*): Second reading—Resumption of debate (*from 20 August 2018*).

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 1.30 pm

All Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Federation Chamber (4.45 pm to 7.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices—continued

5 **Mr Leeser**: To move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges that parts of Australia have been affected by fire, floods and storms during the recent summer period;
- (2) recognises the support the Government has given in response to these disasters;
- (3) also recognises the outstanding work of emergency services, the Australian Defence Force and volunteers in supporting victims of these natural calamities; and
- (4) offers support to the victims of the fires, floods and storms and will do all we can to support our fellow Australians in their time of need.

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Time allotted—60 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Leeser—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 12 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

6 **Mr B. K. Mitchell**: To move:

That this House:

- (1) recognises the devastating impact that the recent bushfires have wreaked across Tasmania, particularly in the Central Highlands, Derwent Valley and the Huonville regions, and that sadly these fires have:

(a) burnt more than 194,000 hectares of land, including many unique natural areas such as the Tasmania Wilderness World Heritage Area; and

(b) resulted in:

- (i) the loss of eight homes while causing damage to others and to infrastructure;
- (ii) significant damage to the iconic Tahune Airwalk at Geeveston; and
- (iii) significant economic loss to affected regions from the loss of trade, wages and tourism;

- (2) acknowledges and commends the:

(a) work and dedication of the men and women of the Tasmanian Fire Service (TFS) who have demonstrated remarkable courage and strength while working relentlessly to contain and extinguish the fires;

(b) women and men who travelled from interstate and New Zealand to offer assistance and to support the work of the TFS;

(c) contribution of Tasmania's volunteer firefighters who demonstrated unflinching dedication for days and weeks, often at significant personal cost in terms of lost family time, wages and consumption of annual leave; and

(d) resilience and strength of the Tasmanian people and their willingness to rally in support of firefighters and fire affected communities, including volunteers and others who operated and staffed evacuation centres at Bothwell and Huonville; and

(3) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) continue to provide disaster relief funding to Tasmania as per established Commonwealth-state processes, and ensure there is no unnecessary delay in the distribution of federally funded relief to affected parties; and

(b) liaise with the Tasmanian Government on an appropriate Commonwealth funding contribution to rehabilitate fire affected World Heritage and other wilderness, which does not qualify for assistance under existing disaster relief agreements.

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Time allotted—35 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr B. K. Mitchell—10 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 1 x 10 mins + 5 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Orders of the Day—continued

2 Economic management: Resumption of debate (from 23 October 2018) on the motion of Mr van Manen—That this House:

(1) notes that over the year, the economy grew 3.4 per cent, which is the fastest rate of growth since the 2012 September quarter during the height of the mining investment boom, and the 27th year of consecutive economic growth;

(2) recognises that strong employment outcomes have been accompanied by an elevated rate of labour force participation, particularly for women, and that wages can be expected to rise if economic growth remains strong; and

(3) calls on the Government to remain resolute in its effective economic management to ensure funding for the essential services we need.

(Order of the day will be removed from the Notice Paper unless re-accorded priority on any of the next 6 sitting Mondays including 18 February 2019.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

All Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

7 Mr Giles: To move:

That this House:

(1) pays tribute to the work done on loneliness in the United Kingdom in memory of Mrs Jo Cox;

(2) acknowledges that:

(a) the Jo Cox Loneliness Commission's inquiry into loneliness has succeeded due to bipartisan support, including the appointment of a responsible minister; and

(b) there is a similar problem in Australia, but it is less well understood than it should be, particularly having regard to its impacts on younger Australians and the influence of social media; and

(c) the problem of loneliness is under recognised, despite its acknowledged and significant negative impacts on individuals and society;

(3) notes the work of Australian academics and civil society in this area; and

(4) calls for a national response in Australia, to better understand the scope of the challenge and to inform and support an evidence based policy response.

(Notice given 27 November 2018. Notice will be removed from the Notice Paper unless called on on any of the next 7 sitting Mondays including 18 February 2019.)

Time allotted—20 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Giles—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

8 Mr Hayes: To move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the Australian Parliament's ongoing commitment to the global promotion of democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law;

(2) notes with concern the existence of a policy of extrajudicial killing in the Philippines, an issue which has escalated with a nationwide drug campaign based merely on suspicion, providing police and vigilante groups with a 'licence to kill';

(3) notes that Philippine Senator Leila De Lima, the former Secretary of Justice, has been a notable critic of President Rodrigo Duterte's policy of extrajudicial killing;

(4) notes the deteriorating plight of Senator De Lima, who since 24 February 2017 has been arbitrarily detained without trial, charged with drug related offences on the strength of untested statements of convicted drug lords, police officers and prison officials;

(5) further notes that the conditions and circumstances of her arbitrary detention have restricted her:

(a) freedom of movement; and

(b) capacity to carry out her duties as an incumbent Senator of the Republic of the Philippines, including the very fundamental and critical right of a legislator to attend parliamentary hearings and cast her vote on legislative measures;

(6) also notes that President Duterte is on record having made a number of attacks against Senator De Lima, publicly vowing to destroy her;

(7) further notes that the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the United Nations Human Rights Council, handed down a ruling in November 2018 confirming the injustice of Senator De Lima's arrest and has recommend a number of measures be adopted by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, most notably, her immediate release; and

(8) calls on the Australian Government to use all diplomatic measures to urge the Philippine Government to:

(a) immediately:

- (i) release Senator De Lima from incarceration; and
- (ii) remove all undue personal and work restrictions that have been placed on her;
- (b) ensure the conduct of a fair and transparent trial, consistent with the rule of law; and
- (c) permit Senator De Lima to fully discharge her office as a duly elected Senator.

(Notice given 12 February 2019.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 7.30 pm

Speech time limits—

Mr Hayes—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

BILLS

Defence Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (11:54): Today I rise to speak on the Defence Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. I'd like to start by acknowledging all those men and women who serve in our defence forces around Australia. We talk a lot about the assets—the submarines and ships and a whole lot of different equipment—but of course our greatest defence asset is the people that serve. They put their lives on hold to serve our country, and they deserve our respect, gratitude and support now and into the future. It is also important to recognise those who are no longer serving but who have served our country in the past.

The bill before us today seeks to improve the transparency and independence of the military justice system, to strengthen protection for reservists and to clean up some redundant provisions. Schedule 1 particularly deals with military justice and seeks to enhance the independence of judge advocates and provide greater transparency in their selection and termination.

Judge advocates are senior military legal officers appointed by the Chief of the Defence Force, or service chief, following a nomination by the Judge Advocate General. They may be appointed as the judge advocate for a court martial, assisting court martial members with the application of military law. Alternatively, they may be appointed as a Defence Force magistrate to try charges referred to the Registrar of Military Justice. These members are central to the operation of our superior service tribunals in the military justice system, and, given the importance of such roles, it is appropriate that the bill before us gives consideration to improving the independence and transparency of the selection, length of appointment, termination and remuneration of such members.

There were calls in the past for more independence for these positions. The 2016 annual report by the Judge Advocate General stated:

... the existing legislation does not provide optimal safeguards of the independence of such JA appointments: these other JA appointments are only for terms of three years, are renewable and lack the benefit of pay fixed by the Commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal.

The bill is important in addressing these issues. Under these changes, members of the judge advocate's panel will have their remuneration set by the Remuneration Tribunal, a statutory body which determines the pay of key Commonwealth officers. It is appropriate that the tribunal determines the amount of pay for judge advocates, which will enhance their independence from Defence. This bill also addresses the length of service issue noted in the 2016 report by increasing the length of service from three to five years.

It should be noted that previous Judge Advocate Generals have also called for the appointment of judge advocates to be made not by the Chief of the Defence Force but by the Governor-General-in-Council to afford them greater independence. It is important to note that this bill does not make that change. However, the opposition sees the changes in the bill as important steps in improving the independence of judge advocates, even though the CDF is still able to appoint them.

Labor has sought the views of a number of organisations, including the current Judge Advocate General, and has been advised by the government that those organisations do not oppose this bill. DFWA have also been consulted by the opposition, and they also support this bill. Therefore, we will be supporting these amendments.

In addition, there have been changes to this bill to improve the transparency of the selection criteria for judge advocates which will see the Chief of the Defence Force determine the selection criteria and the selection process for appointment to the panel via an instrument. At the moment, it is completely discretionary around these selection criteria, and so better transparency in the selection criteria and process is an important step forward. I note there were concerns raised about the fact that the selection criteria—while an important step forward in terms of transparency—do not impose a duty on the Chief of the Defence Force to determine the criteria and process for selection of judge advocates, meaning it will still rely on the willingness of the Chief of the Defence Force to utilise this provision. In addition, consideration of criteria such as diversity is discretionary, as it only requires the Chief of the Defence Force to have regard to the desirability of reflecting diversity of expertise, experience and gender among the members of the panel. We understand the concerns that have been raised. However, we believe that transparency in the process of selecting judge advocates is important, so, while the change may not impose an obligation on the Chief of the Defence Force, it is still worthwhile to proceed with it.

In addition, the bill goes to transparency around termination: changes will also be made to clarify the termination provisions. Currently, there is no direct provision for the termination of judge advocates. Rather, they are subject to the same regulations as Defence personnel, which enable them to dismiss members if needed. These changes will provide for the termination of an appointment which is consistent with the standard provisions of the termination of statutory appointments. This is an important step in the right direction, ensuring that independence of the judge advocate is preserved. Concerns have been raised with regard to the termination provision in this bill as it still enables the Chief of the Defence Force to remove a judge advocate by terminating their appointment as an officer, essentially going around these termination provisions. While it's correct that this power does exist, the

opposition believes that this provision will provide greater transparency around the termination of appointments than what currently exists. For that reason, we support the amendment.

Transparency matters—such as the criteria under which people are appointed, how long they are appointed for, how they are paid and how they are terminated—are important to ensure that there continues to be faith in the military justice system, and, as such, we support the changes in this schedule.

Schedule 2 will enshrine protections for reservists in the act by moving existing complaint mechanisms, investigations and mediation schemes for reservists into the principal act. Reservists are fundamental to maintaining Australia's defence capability, and help safeguard our security and national interests. Reservists provide support to the ADF, help rebuild following natural disasters, deliver humanitarian support overseas, and deploy alongside our regular ADF members in times of war. They are vital to our capacity and it is important that they are not disadvantaged by their participation in the ADF.

Currently, Defence reservists have a number of protections to assist with their civilian employment and education, and to mitigate some of the employment and financial disadvantages some reservists can face when rendering Defence service. Schedule 2 proposes moving these protections from the regulations into the principal act, as recommended by the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills. These changes will insert a new division into the act based on the complaint and mediation scheme currently in the regulations. The scheme will be simplified and improved by these changes.

Some of these changes include reducing the prescriptive provision for complaint handling and investigation, replacing them with broad discretions of the Chief of Defence Force to deal with complaints and investigations. One of these changes relates to the investigation of complaints that would give the Chief of Defence Force the power to compel civilians and employers to provide information or documents; seek a civil penalty from a relevant court if a person fails to produce the information or documents; and direct a person to attend a conference and, if the person fails to attend, seek a civil penalty.

This element has caused some concern, as it has been argued it's uncommon to give the Chief of Defence Force power over civilians during peacetime. However, the government has advised the opposition that this power already exists in regulations for this act, and there are several examples in both acts and regulations where powers exist that enable the Chief of Defence Force to compel citizens during peacetime. These include the Defence (Inquiry) Regulations 2018, which compel both civilians and military members to provide documents or things that are relevant to inquiries; and section 86 of the Defence Act 2003, which can apply penalties if people fail to appear as required by a summons under the Defence Force Discipline Act 1928. In addition, the government has advised that this provision is for the Chief of Defence Force to exercise a statutory power and is not a use of his command executive powers that would give rise to any constitutional or other concern.

It is because of these assurances that Labor supports this element of the bill that moves regulations into the principal act. As a consequence of moving these provisions into the act itself, a number of the regulations will become redundant. Most of these are due to sunset later this year, but two of the regulations that are not moving into the act will need to be remade. These two remaining regulations deal with financial arrangements.

In addition, the amendments in this schedule will also require the Chief of Defence Force to prepare a report in relation to the administration operation of the act for inclusion in the Defence annual report. This is an important addition. Given the significance of the role our reservists play and the importance of the regulations that enable their participation, it is appropriate that this act be reviewed annually and a report be made public. I understand the Defence Reserves Association is in support of these changes and gives assurance around broader issues that have been provided by the government. Under those circumstances, Labor offers support to this schedule.

I would like to thank both the Australian Defence service associations and the Defence reservists for their examination and independent feedback of the proposed changes. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the assurances provided by the government in relation to judge advocates and the use of powers to compel civilians by the Chief of Defence Force which enable us to support this bill.

In closing, I will end where I started. I would like to thank all of those who serve our country. The service provided by approximately 83,700 members of the ADF and reservists, and all those family members who stand by them, is fundamental to the protection of our country and is appreciated by all of those in this place. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (12:08): I would like to thank the member for Kingston for the way in which she conducts herself in a bipartisan approach, generally speaking, in this important portfolio. This bill delivers on two things which I believe should be critical priorities for any national government: delivering fairness in our military legal system and looking after those who volunteer to serve our nation in the Australian Defence Force.

The ADF is full of dedicated, hardworking and professional people. I've been fortunate to meet many of them during my time in this place. I've taken part in a number of exchanges and activities under the ADF Parliamentary Program, including spending some time with our personnel in Afghanistan. As a member of the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, and in my work on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, I've had further opportunities to work closely with our ADF personnel.

Our soldiers, sailors and air men and women are some of the best trained and most disciplined in the world. In any large organisation like the ADF, especially one which by its nature involves stressful work under pressure, individuals will occasionally make less than optimal decisions. Some people will fall foul of the rules, and when they do a court martial stands ready to assess the facts of the case and pass judgement. Although a court martial has special procedures most appropriate to the administration of military justice, it remains ruled by our society's core legal principles. One of the most important legal principles that underlies our justice system is the independence of our judiciary. To deliver fairness in legal proceedings, judges must be independent from the state's prosecution arm. It is that independence which helps to ensure the judiciary's impartiality, and impartiality is at the heart of fairness. In civilian life a judge has tenure. There is clarity of their remuneration structures and, at least in some jurisdictions, there is a transparent process in respect of their appointment.

The effect of schedule 1 of this bill is to enhance the independence of these processes in the military judicial structure to further secure fairness in the cases that come before it. The bill

will increase the maximum term of appointment for members of the judge advocates' panel, who sit as Defence Force magistrates and provide legal advice to court martial members, from three years to five years. It will also provide for the Chief of the Defence Force to set selection criteria and processes for the appointment of judge advocates to the panel in a notifiable instrument. This will support a more open selection process, providing transparency for all in how candidates apply and how they are assessed.

The bill also ensures that remuneration for judge advocates when acting during a court martial is determined by the remuneration tribunal rather than by the ADF, ensuring that judge advocates do not depend on the chain of command for their pay. This will bring the process of setting remuneration of judge advocates in line with the process for the Registrar of Military Justice and the Chief Judge Advocate, ensuring consistency and clarity as well as maximising their independence. The rules and procedures of these courts are set by the Judge Advocate General, who is supported in their work by the Chief Judge Advocate. Once again, this bill makes similar provisions enhancing the independence of that position. The bill provides for the Judge Advocate General to lay out, in a notifiable instrument, the selection criteria and process for the role. It provides for more-robust processes for the termination of the Chief Judge Advocate where necessary, which are consistent with the standard provisions for termination of statutory appointments.

Taken as a whole, the amendments in schedule 1 will bring greater guarantees of fairness to the military justice system. They are part of this government's growing track record of bringing greater fairness to all aspects of our national policy making. We have brought fairness to our taxation policy, eliminating bracket creep for low- and middle-income earners and cracking down on multinational taxation avoiders. We've brought greater fairness for vulnerable workers, passing legislation to punish employers who exploit them and banning dodgy deals between employers and unions. We've brought greater fairness to industrial relations, reinstating a tough cop on the beat in the construction sector and reducing exploitation of workers by the criminal CFMEU. We have increased fairness in the distribution of GST with a more equitable and sustainable funding formula and greater fairness in medical treatment, listing an additional 1,900 medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The contrast with the Labor Party and the Leader of the Opposition is stark. While we've introduced fairer taxes, the Leader of the Opposition wants to slug retirees with a huge new multibillion-dollar tax. He wants to ensure that high-income earners on \$200,000 a year can get a refund on their franking credits, but a self-funded retiree who has done the right thing and saved for their future will get nothing. While we've introduced fairer taxes for small businesses and more opportunity for society's vulnerable jobless, Labor's tax plans threaten 1.4 million workers' jobs and will undermine the investment decisions—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Order. The member for Scullin on a point of order?

Mr Giles: The speaker might turn his remarks to the bill. We will give him some leeway. I note that he started off with a plea for bipartisanship. The last several minutes have had no relation to the bill which is before the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I give the call to the honourable member for Fisher.

Mr WALLACE: It is perhaps no surprise from this Leader of the Opposition. The workers at Clean Event and Chiquita Mushrooms learnt all about what this Leader of the Opposition thinks is fair—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Scullin?

Mr Giles: Mr Deputy Speaker, you should direct him, if you will, to confine his remarks to the bill before the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Fisher will be relevant to the topic.

Mr WALLACE: So while schedule 1 of the coalition government's bill will support greater fairness in the administration of our military justice, schedule 2 will improve fairness and security in the treatment of reservists who render defence service.

Reservists are a vital part of our Defence Force and are commonly required to interrupt their lives and their employment to go on active duty alongside regular service men and women. I met a number of the most amazing, dedicated reservists who had given up nine months of their lives and served their country in Afghanistan. I met neurosurgeons, emergency medicine specialists, dentists, lawyers and a chaplain—to name just a few. Often in the process of rendering this service these men and women sacrifice career opportunities as well as their personal lives, and existing legislation provides them with some critical entitlements and protections to mitigate some of the impact of these sacrifices. However, unfortunately, sometimes reservists may not feel that those entitlements and protections have been complied with and complaints sometimes arise. In fact, in 2017-18 there were some 1,400 inquiries of this nature.

I recently had a discussion at one of my listening posts with a retired reservist—I'll call him Tim—who served in the Solomons. Tim felt that a number of his needs weren't being properly met by the DVA, and I undertook to look into that for Tim. Tim personifies what being a reservist is all about. He has a common day job but has served his country in the Solomon Islands and other places where he experienced some graphic and very unfortunate circumstances which stay with him every waking moment of his life. This bill will go some way to improving the reservist complaint process. I want to give a shout-out to Tim and thank him once again for the service that he has given this country.

This improved complaint process makes the handling of complaints the responsibility of the Chief of the Defence Force, ensuring that accountability for looking after reservists lies with the ADF's most senior officer. The bill provides the Chief of the Defence Force with the necessary powers to investigate complaints of this kind and, indeed, any suspected breach of the relevant act, including the power to give notices to produce information or documents. The bill further provides the Chief of the Defence Force with the flexibility to deal with complaints in the most appropriate manner. In particular, it broadens the ability of the Chief of the Defence Force to deploy dispute resolution services other than formal mediation and gives them the power to compel parties' attendance at a conference to facilitate discussion.

These powers will help ensure that complaints are dealt with as quickly, fairly and efficiently as possible and, by extension, that as many reservists as possible get good employment outcomes following their active service. This is only the latest in this Liberal-National government's strong track record of delivering support for transition and future employment for those who have served in our armed forces. In total, in the most recent

federal budget the government committed more than \$11 billion to provide the essential services that our veterans rely on. This is accompanied by a substantial package of reforms. We've instituted a policy of no discharge without documentation, for example, to ensure ADF members are prepared for civilian life and future employment with all the documents they need, including medical and training records, to make transition as seamless as possible. We've delivered an extra \$8 million for the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program, which includes a new veterans employment commitment to which businesses can sign up. This program will help veterans to identify employers who are likely to support them and will reward employers for their insight. To help further, we've established individual professional career coaching for ADF members prior to and up to 12 months following separation from the ADF.

Employment prospects for veterans can often be improved by further education. We've allocated \$10.8 million to remove the reduction in the amount of incapacity payments which eligible veterans who are undertaking approved full-time study as part of their rehabilitation plan receive. There's much more to be done in this space, and I'll continue to encourage the government to examine ways that Australia can look at adopting a US-style GI bill.

Employment outcomes for veterans can also be significantly impacted by their mental health, and we've taken action to support them in this regard. The coalition government has made mental health treatment free of charge for anyone who has served at least one day full time in the ADF, whatever their mental health condition, and whether or not the condition is related to their service. We're funding a coordinated veterans care program for mental health, which will support up to 250 DVA clients living in rural and regional areas who have mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression, alongside a chronic physical condition accompanied by pain. In total, we've committed an extra \$89.6 million to support veterans' mental health, including \$16.1 million for a new veterans payment for financially vulnerable veterans living with a mental health condition; \$9 million to pilot new approaches to suicide prevention; and \$7.1 million to extend support to families of veterans. To administer all of these programs we have provided an additional \$100 million in the 2018 budget, on top of the \$166.6 million last year to support the coalition government's improvements to DVA, upgrading internal computer systems and making sure we have faster and better service delivery to people when they need it.

There are an estimated 15,000 veterans living on the Sunshine Coast, and I'm absolutely passionate about ensuring we support our armed forces—both those who are serving and those who have served. In my own electorate of Fisher I've introduced a Fisher defence industry initiative to try to support new employment opportunities for former service men and women on the Sunshine Coast. I've held a local veterans forum, instituted a Sunshine Coast Veterans Day and advocated in this place for more support for veterans' tertiary education.

I believe this bill, though modest in its effect, will make important changes to the administration of military justice and the handling of reservists' complaints, which will see greater fairness for all ADF personnel. For that reason, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (12:23): I have made it known in this place many times that I am proud and honoured to represent the largest garrison city in Australia. But the recent extreme weather event in Townsville has demonstrated to me just how amazing and committed our

community of ADF are to the people of Townsville, and that is just another reason why I am honoured to represent the ADF constituents in Herbert.

Townsville has experienced our worst flood event in history. It's being called a one-in-1,000-years event. In fewer than nine days Townsville received more than a year's worth of rain. More than 22,000 homes were affected, and 110 roads were also affected. The ADF played a major role in ensuring that lives were not lost in this catastrophic weather event. The men and women of the ADF doorknocked thousands of homes, advising residents that they were in a flood zone and would need to evacuate their homes. They spent evenings rescuing residents from the sudden wall of water that would flow from the dam and also the rain that was falling. Our dam had reached a capacity of 244 per cent. Our ADF personnel put their own lives at risk to rescue Townsville residents, and they did so when many of them were not able to even protect their own homes. An estimated 100 Defence personnel were affected by the floods. A newspaper article said:

LANCE Corporal Daniel Hyman of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment is one of the many Townsville based personnel who helped residents evacuate as their own homes were inundated.

Displaced Defence families were being housed in evacuation centres as their loved ones worked—to save and help other residents. The article continued:

LCpl Hyman said the ordeal has been physically and mentally taxing but was proud of the Army's efforts.

"I put it to the back of my mind and tried not to think about what was happening ... there were people who needed our assistance more, so we had to put our stuff aside so we could help the community," he said

"I was very happy that we were out there to help our community, we put the community first."

However, the ADF's amazing efforts have not stopped there. Since the devastating flood, ADF personnel have spent every single day assisting in the clean-up, making their way through mountains of smelly mud, walking through sewage, removing the mountains of damaged furniture from people's homes and assisting with the disposal. Their efforts have helped Townsville residents and have been vital in helping Townsville get back on our feet. In this place, it's important that we acknowledge their amazing work. I want to sincerely thank all of our current serving Defence personnel and their families. You looked after Townsville, and I will work hard to ensure that you and your families are looked after also and to assist you to get back on your feet.

I am proud to support the Defence Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 in the House today. This bill amends the Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001 and the Defence Force Discipline Act 1982 to help improve transparency, ensure protections for reservists and clean up some redundant provisions.

Schedule 1 will enhance the independence of judge advocates and provide greater transparency in the selection of judge advocates. Judge advocates are senior military legal officers appointed by the Chief of the Defence Force or a service chief following nomination by the Judge Advocate General. They may be appointed as the judge advocate of a court martial, assisting court martial members with the application of military law. Alternatively, they may be appointed as a Defence Force magistrate to try charges referred to them by the Registrar of Military Justice. Members of the judge advocates panel are central to the proper operation of the superior service tribunals in the military justice system. The amendments

made in this section will ensure transparency in the selection of judge advocates and greater independence when it comes to their remuneration. Under these changes, members of the judge advocates panel will have their remuneration determined by the Remuneration Tribunal, establishing an independent process to determine their pay. In addition, the selection criteria will be established by a notifiable instrument, providing greater transparency in the selection and termination of their appointments.

Schedule 2 moves existing complaint mechanisms, investigations and mediation schemes for Defence reservists from the regulations into the principal act. Defence reservists are afforded a number of protections in their civilian employment and education, mitigating some of the employment and financial disadvantages that reserve members may face when rendering Defence service. Reservists are fundamental to our capability, and we should be doing all we can to ensure that there are no barriers to their participation in the ADF. The amendment will insert new divisions into the act based on the complaint and mediation scheme currently in the regulations. The scheme will be simplified and improved by these changes.

The final schedule makes a number of minor technical amendments, most of which relate to redundant and repealed provisions. For example, the amendments will update the definition of 'prohibited drug' to reflect other legislation and provide for court martial records to be disclosed by the Registrar of Military Justice rather than the Attorney-General. Given the technical nature of these changes, I offer my support to this schedule.

I have spoken in this place on every single Defence or veteran bill because our current serving and ex-serving veterans and their families deserve the strongest representation and assurance that they have a member who stands up for them in this place. I stand here again today, as I have done many times before, to support a bill that supports our Defence personnel. Once again, I thank the men and women of the ADF for the outstanding contribution they have made in Townsville in recent events.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:29): In summing up, I would like to acknowledge the honourable members who contributed to the debate on this bill, acknowledge the bipartisan support shown in the second reading debate, and also acknowledge the member for Herbert's contribution in particular, in relation to the contribution our Australian Defence Force personnel have made in response to the Townsville flooding event. The efforts of our serving men and women have been nothing short of extraordinary. Lives have been saved as a direct result of their intervention. Their efforts during the response phase and now the recovery phase have been commended right across our country, and we're very proud of them. We are also particularly proud of their families, many of whom have themselves been exposed to flooding and have had to deal with their own situations while their serving member of the Defence Force has gone out to protect the community. It has been quite an extraordinary effort.

The Defence Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 has three separate measures. The first measure amends the Defence Force Discipline Act 1982 to ensure greater transparency in the selection of the members of the judge advocate's panel and to enhance the independence of judge advocates. The second measure amends the Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act

2001 to move the complaint, investigation and mediation scheme from the regulations to the act, whilst simplifying and improving these processes. The third measure also amends the Defence Force Discipline Act, making number of technical, flow-on and minor amendments.

In conclusion, this bill moves to make some small but significant changes to Defence legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:31): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2018

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (12:32): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2018. This bill proposes a range of minor and technical changes to the operation of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, TEQSA. These are to give effect to aspects of the government response to the 2016 *Review of the impact of the TEQSA Act on the higher education sector* that require legislative endorsement. I note that this review is the first substantive review of the agency, although, of course, the Lee Dow-Braithwaite review initiated and responded to some sectoral concerns about the scope of the activities of the agency.

Labor will not be opposing this bill and are supportive of the measures contained within it. I will be proposing a second reading amendment which goes to some other aspects related to the bill and the government's higher education policy. It was Labor that created the national regulatory system in higher education back in 2011, which was an important part of our response to the Bradley review. I'm sure my friend the member for Lingiari well remembers that and appreciates its significance. Labor in government recognised then, as we do now, that if we want to expand and strengthen higher education in Australia then we need a national approach to regulation that is fit for purpose today and tomorrow. While this system develops and evolves, Labor continue to recognise that there will be a need for periodic review of the operation of this agency to ensure that its structure is fit for purpose as the sector continues to develop.

The changes proposed in the review and incorporated into this bill before the House now are really under three broad headings. The changes include simplifying the Higher Education Standards Framework, and changes to the operations, functions and skill base of the Higher Education Standards Panel within the agency—this is to broaden the skill base and also require contemporary experience in higher education across both universities and non-

universities. It also includes a range of measures that are updates to rules around disclosure of information, largely to ensure consistency with other provisions.

The proposals in this bill come from a review initiated by the government, as required by the substantive act. This was more than three years ago. It is difficult to see why the government have hastened so slowly. It really speaks volumes about their chaotic approach to governing and their neglect of this critical sector under three ministers. It has taken them well over three years since the review was completed to present this legislation to the parliament. To members opposite, this is clearly not the priority it should be, as it is to this side of the House. I say again that these changes are supported by Labor and by the sector, although I do note that some minor concerns have been expressed, particularly by Universities Australia. I make clear that we are paying careful attention to them as we consider the ongoing operation of the agency. These concerns, as I said, are minor and technical.

More generally, the sector has made clear its deep frustration with the government, for good reason. It is little wonder the higher education sector has had enough of this government. Since they've come to office, they have done nothing but undermine Australia's world-class higher education system. Instead of fostering our universities and all that goes on within them, all we've seen are cuts and chaos. But, worse than that, we've seen no plan—no plan for this vital export sector; no plan for this critical enabler; no plan at all. Billions of dollars have been cut. Undergraduate places have shamefully been capped. They've made students pay back their HELP debt sooner and millions of dollars have been slashed from university research funding, despite rhetoric to the contrary. Consequently, I move:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that the Government has damaged the quality of Australia's world-class higher education system, having cut billions from universities by effectively capping undergraduate places, and slashing research funding".

Labor knows that, if we are to fully realise the potential of all Australians—young Australians and those who are older—and seize the opportunities presented to us as a nation by the Asian Century, we need to invest deeply in higher education and research. That is a bigger challenge than that contained within the provisions of this bill, but the deputy leader, the shadow minister for education, and all of us in the Labor team are up for this challenge.

As the world becomes more technologically advanced, we need to ensure that we are at the forefront of these changes and that our education system remains responsive. Part of this challenge is, of course, having an adaptive and appropriate regulatory system, but obviously it goes much beyond that. Unlike most of the major economies in our region that are investing in universities, science and research, this government have been doing precisely the opposite: ripping money out of our universities, starving them for funds and starving our brightest Australian researchers of opportunities and the confidence to pursue careers in higher education. This is short-changing their potential and it is short-changing all of us as a nation. We know, on this side of the House, that this is going to do long-term damage to our economy as well as to our society. It's going to impact very, very significantly on the aspirations of thousands of Australians who will miss out on university places because of these cuts. As I said, it will impact on the capacity of others who have entered higher education to continue to flourish, develop their skills and pursue research excellence in the university sector. The last Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook demonstrated just how chaotic the government has

become and the serious consequences of that for this sector. They have left so many regional universities in a dire state with the cuts.

Let's remember, they were forced to rip hundreds of millions of dollars from university research in order to allocate additional places to some regional universities. This is robbing Peter to pay Paul and it is absolute errant nonsense. If members opposite really wanted to ensure that Australians, particularly those in regional and outer-metropolitan areas, have the opportunity of a university education, they should follow Labor's lead and return to a demand-driven system. Labor knows that we need to boost participation in higher education in order to meet the needs of our future economy as well as to respond to the trend towards inequality, which members opposite seem determined to accelerate. Let's remember that this is not just rhetoric on our part. That is what we have done, when it comes to higher education, since the government of Gough Whitlam, since reforms carried out under the Hawke and Keating governments, particularly on this point of the demand-driven system that boosted opportunities in universities—and in life—for so many first-in-family students under the governance of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard.

That's why we have committed, again, to uncapping undergraduate places—a huge \$10 billion commitment—over the next decade. We have expressed our values clearly through the depth of our financial commitment to supporting the aspirations of young Australians, particularly those who are first in family. We have also made sure that we are underpinning a vision for Australia's economy with an approach that is all about inclusive growth, not the narrow, blind, ideological insistence on trickle-down economics that is failing Australia and failing too many Australians today.

We also want to do more to ensure that students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds get the opportunity of a university education. We will support them not just through words said in this place but through a real investment, our \$174 million equity and pathways funding program. We know that, fundamental to our vision of the Australian economy of the future and a fairer Australian society for the future, is our appreciation that nine out of 10 jobs created by 2021 will require either a degree or a VET qualification.

We recognise that it is imperative to boost participation in universities as well as TAFE and apprenticeships. According to the Mitchell Institute, if the government doesn't lift its caps on university places, around 235,000 students will miss out on a place by 2031. This is absolutely shocking and an indictment of a government that has been asleep at the wheel under Minister Pyne, Minister Birmingham and now Minister Tehan. The numbers are even worse when it comes to vocational education. Quite frankly, it is a recipe for disaster.

In finishing my contribution to this debate, let me emphasise that Labor has a better and positive plan across all education sectors. We will support the measures contained in this bill today, but beyond that we will do so much more. We will properly fund our universities, with three-year funding agreements guaranteed, so they can plan with certainty. We will uncap university places so that 200,000 more Australians will get the opportunity of a university education in the next decade or so. We will invest in university research and infrastructure with our \$300 million university future fund.

We will introduce—and this is absolutely vital at the other end of the education spectrum—universal places for three- and four-year-olds in early childhood education, a fundamental building block to an equal society, as well as equal participation in higher

education down the track. I'm particularly proud that we will invest \$14 billion extra in our public schools, those schools that educate two in three, or 2½ million, Australian kids.

We will waive up-front fees for 100,000 students to attend TAFE and invest \$100 million in modernising TAFE facilities around the country. We will go further than this, when it comes to skills, by ensuring that one in every 10 jobs on Commonwealth priority projects are filled by Australian apprentices. We will provide 10,000 pre-apprenticeships for young people who want to learn a trade and will provide 20,000 adult apprenticeships.

It's very clear when you look at this plan—and at the gulf, the void, on the other side of the House—that Labor is the only party Australians can trust when it comes to education.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Snowden: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Scullin has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. If it suits the House, I will state the question in the form that the amendment be agreed to. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (12:44): I rise to speak to this Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2018; and to the second reading amendment, which talks about how we should fund education and places that should be available and how we should have world-class research.

I want to remind the House that there was a time when university was free. Many of the politicians in this place are from a generation that received free education and graduated without debt. They went on, though, to reintroduce fees for university and saddled a generation with repayments.

People entering university today are facing a totally different reality, and young people are getting screwed over. If you're a young person you enrol in university or TAFE because you're told it's the pathway to a good job and to personal growth that will let you make a contribution in our community. You enrol for possibly years of study. Throughout this time, the fees, or HELP payments, keep building up, and your debts keep growing. Class sizes are growing, and teaching staff are increasingly stretched because of government cost cutting. You have to work long hours while you study, because you have to pay rent or other costs, and Austudy is low, and youth allowance is low and hard to access.

Then, when you finish studying, thousands of dollars in debt, you get told: 'Sorry, but you don't have enough experience to get a job. You're going to have to study more. You're going to have to market yourself to employers and take on unpaid labour just to get your foot in the door.' Just don't rely on Centrelink, though, when you're seeking work, because Newstart is below poverty levels and you might be issued an incorrect robo-debt. And you get told that it's your fault that the housing system is broken and that the reason you can't buy a home is café breakfasts—not the unfair system that helps investors buy their fourth, fifth or sixth home to rent to you at inflated prices. And by the way: not only do you have to pay off your debt, not only can you not afford a secure home, and not only will you be working casual hours in precarious jobs or taking on side hustles, but you're also going to live in a world with

a hotter climate and more-extreme weather, and you're going to have to lead the fight against big coal because the last generations of politicians failed and left it to you.

This is what happens when government stops seeing education as a fundamental right and starts seeing it as a business. Australian governments over decades—Liberal but also Labor—gave into neoliberalism, and this generation of young people now is paying the price. We accept in our society that schools and hospitals should be free and universal. You can receive health care and secondary education no matter what your bank balance is—and that is one of the good things about this country. It would be a scandal if we were forcing people into debt to access these rights. But that is what is happening with TAFE and university. This is one of the reasons I got into politics in the first place. My dad was the first person in his family to go to university, and he was able to do it because it was free. When I was at university I got involved in the education campaigns, against a then-Labor government, because you could see the cost of education going up and up and up, and people being put into such debt that people like my dad might not have been able to go to university and might not have made the decision to go there in the first place.

That is why I am proud to be part of a party—the Greens—that have a plan to bring back free university and TAFE education. We will make TAFE and undergraduate uni free, and we'll pay for it by making the fossil fuel industry pay its fair share. No more unfair tax breaks, no more right to pollute for free; just start making them pay the same tax as everyone else on things like diesel fuel in the mining industry, and you will find that we have the money to pay for things like free education. We can increase youth allowance, Austudy and Abstudy by \$75 a week so that students can get by while studying. Let's lift youth allowance by \$75 a week. And we'll fix the government cuts that led to stretched staff and teaching. We have to boost university funding by 10 per cent per student. This bill talks about education quality. The only way we're going to restore quality back to the world-class level that so many of our institutions were at is by boosting university funding by 10 per cent per student. That call has been out there for many years. The first real funding increase for universities in decades, this would improve learning and teaching conditions, would reduce class sizes and would enable researchers to pursue solutions to the big problems of our time, because for too long universities have been asked to do more with less.

It has been decades since the last real increase in funding to universities. Our plan delivers an extra \$16 billion over the next decade for universities to improve learning and teaching conditions, reduce class sizes and give researchers the resources they need. Importantly, we will work with universities to reduce casualisation in the sector and to reduce job insecurity and improve staff working conditions. Government must also link additional funding for universities with an increase in security of work for university staff. We must reverse the decades-old trend of casualisation and insecure work.

People have this idea that somehow universities are places where everyone has tenured positions for life. Well, you're looking at less than a third of people who work in universities at the moment enjoying that security of ongoing employment, which should be a right. People working in research, academia and teaching are facing the pressure of successive governments' failure in this area and the neoliberalisation of higher education and research. I know this, and I see it on a daily basis, because my electorate is home to major universities and research institutions. I have spoken to too many people in Melbourne who've always

dreamed of working in research and teaching, and who've worked hard their whole careers to get there, who are feeling the pressure of competitive grant applications for a diminishing pool of funding, administration, growing workloads not related to their core research, casualisation and the insecurity that comes with not knowing whether you're going to have a job after the next grant round.

We looked into this a couple of years ago. I introduced a bill into this place to wind back casualisation in our workforce, with a special focus on the university sector—a bill that, at the time, didn't get the support of either Labor or the Liberals, but I'm hopeful the tide might turn on that. When we introduced that bill and had an inquiry into it, we heard from a woman who had worked for 10 years in the same area and for the same institution but had not been entitled to a period of sick leave or long service leave during that time because she was on rolling contracts and treated as a casual. This must stop.

We are always going to have universities, and we will have better funded and more jobs in those universities if we lift funding. Because we're always going to have universities, people there should have greater rights to secure employment. Good people at the moment who are experts in their field or on the way to becoming experts in their field are being pushed out of research because of the insecure conditions and lack of funding in Australia.

The tragedy is that this is entirely preventable. It's a consequence of government decisions to cut costs and to treat research and universities like money-making businesses instead of something contributing to the public good. If only, for example, we could say to universities: 'You don't have to spend more money advertising on billboards or the side of trams, trains or buses. You can put that money into research and teaching, because we're not going to make you compete against each other. Instead, we're going to encourage collaboration.' Most staff around the country would breathe a sigh of relief. The advertising companies might get a bit worried about it, but that money could go back into supporting staff and students.

Let me say it clearly: education is not a product, students are not consumers and university is not a factory. The Greens will fight for free education and a thriving research sector. I'm proud that we're putting free education on the agenda, and I believe that sooner or later the other parties will follow us as they have on so many other issues. I call on everyone in this place to get serious, join us and back the plan to push for free education in Australia again.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (12:53): I rise to enter the debate and speak on the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2018, and strongly support the amendment moved a short time ago by the member for Scullin. For a long time, Australia's higher education has been world leading. Can I say at the outset that my Labor colleagues and I support this bill because it helps to keep Australia's higher education system as a world leader. Students come from all over the world to further their education on our shores with some of the best universities, professors, researchers, tutors, support staff and administrative staff anywhere in the world. Our universities support more than one million students, both international and domestic, and our universities directly employ 120,000 people and support another 40,000 jobs.

On this side of the House, Labor has a long record of standing up for our universities. I listened to the member for Melbourne prattle on about the Greens' achievements. He had the hide to talk about free education. It was a Whitlam Labor government that introduced free education. We know in Australia, when it comes to higher education, this side of the chamber

has a proud record and, indeed, custodianship of supporting education at every level across our country—investing in students, courses and research so that Australia can become a world power when it comes to higher education. This is where we educate the next generation of doctors, engineers, teachers and entrepreneurs.

A strong, stable and future-focused higher education industry is what Australia needs. That's why, in 2011, the Gillard government established the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. It's Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education to safeguard student interests and the reputation of Australia's higher education sector. At the time, Prime Minister Gillard said that the TEQSA will be at the heart of bolstering our reputation by ensuring quality for all students, domestic and international students alike, because that is what good governments do.

Good governments support our higher education sector. Good governments back students, teachers and universities. This is in stark contrast, as we know, to what those opposite have delivered for our universities. The second reading amendment moved today by Labor's shadow assistant minister for schools, the member for Scullin, notes that we do, and should, recognise that:

... the government has damaged the quality of Australia's world-class higher education system, having cut billions from universities by effectively capping undergraduate places, and slashing research funding.

Make no mistake, this government has taken a wrecking ball to our universities and our higher education system, with \$2.2 billion in cuts since they came to power. That's a simply staggering number that means our universities will be under-resourced and our students will miss out on the vital education they need to succeed in the fast-moving 21st century.

When Labor was last in office we lifted the caps on the number of uni places—which saw, in my electorate in Oxley, huge increases in the number of students going to university. But we've seen the complete opposite from this government. Their \$2.2 billion axe to our universities means that 9½ thousand Australians missed out on an Australian university place in 2018 and another 9½ thousand will miss out again in 2019. This is just unacceptable. We must be supporting and investing in our universities, rather than gutting the institutions that will guide the next generation of scientists, doctors and teachers.

Here's what the cuts by this government and this Prime Minister mean for universities in my home state of Queensland: the University of Southern Queensland, who have a campus in my electorate, are facing \$36 million in cuts; Griffith University is facing a cut of \$92 million; the Queensland University of Technology is facing a cut of \$100 million; and the university that I attended, the University of Queensland, is facing a \$100 million cut as well. That is ironclad evidence that this government does not care about students in this country going to university and receiving a higher education. We know this because they have a track record of tearing down our universities. They have repeatedly attacked higher education, year after year.

When this government was first elected there was a 20 per cent cut and full fee deregulation, as we've heard, which would have seen \$100,000 degrees. In the next iteration they wanted to hike up fees by 7½ per cent, have a commensurate cut in university funding, have a further cut to university funding and then drop the HECS repayment threshold down to as low as \$42,000. This is barely more than the minimum wage. It would mean Australians on

low incomes who have a HELP debt would be required to make huge repayments. This change would also have a greater impact on women, particularly those who return to the workforce part-time after taking parental leave.

I have to wonder if those opposite are aware of where Australia currently sits in public investment in universities in the OECD. Are we near the top? We're not even close. Are we about mid-range? Absolutely not. Australia has the second-lowest level of public investment in universities in the OECD, and this government only wants to make it worse. At MYEFO last year they went after research, ripping \$328.5 million from university research, which will devastate our critically important research sector.

I might also add that this government's attacks on TAFEs and apprenticeships are appalling. We know that since the government came to power Australia has lost over 140,000 apprenticeships, a decline of over 35 per cent. I speak about this a lot when I move around chambers of commerce, high school graduations and even local businesses. Locally, the apprentices in my electorate have been hit even harder. Our community has seen a loss of almost 1,500 apprenticeships, which is equivalent to a 43 per cent decrease and the signs are that this will only continue to get worse. The 2017 budget cut a further \$637 million from TAFE training and apprenticeships. And their proposed Skilling Australians Fund, supposed to deliver 300,000 apprenticeships, has been widely panned as unworkable.

The evidence continues to stack up that this government does not take higher education seriously, which brings me to the finer points of this bill and the government's incredibly slow response to implement the recommendations from the review into the TEQSA. I shouldn't be surprised. This slow response is in line with everything else that they've done to higher education in this country, and that is to cut it down. The review, undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics, was undertaken between July 2016 and March 2017 and was a substantial body of work. Thirty-six written submissions were received, 33 stakeholders were interviewed and the act was extensively analysed. Overall, the review was positive about the establishment of TEQSA as the national regulator noting that, 'Broadly... the Act is operating effectively and as intended.' Therefore, the review did not recommend changes that would significantly alter the regulatory framework or its role.

However, the review did recommend amendments to the act that are designed to improve the act's administration, strengthen the regulatory role and better reflect the role of the Higher Education Standards Panel as the statutory advisory body established under the act. I want to go through those recommendations now. They are to simplify the Higher Education Standards Framework by removing references from the act to specific categories of non-threshold standards that have never been made and are not needed and expanding the skill set that the minister must ensure is encompassed by panel members, so that the panel has contemporary experience in the provision of higher education by both university and non-university providers.

However, the general positive outlook from the review should not mask this government's lack of attention to it. We know where they have been focusing all attention lately, and of course you only need to pick up a newspaper to realise that the government is focused on themselves first, second and third. As we know, the chaos and dysfunction of this government is unrelenting and grows on an almost daily basis, whether it be in this chamber, outside in their party room or outside in the community. We know that they have basically given up on

governing, but there are so many important pieces of legislation that this government has decide not to turn up for. We know that this important work must continue. The recommendations in this bill were given to them years ago, yet here we are debating them now. The only thing this government has been doing in that time is tearing down the higher education system in this country and, let's be honest, tearing down themselves. The fact is that when you look at the *Notice Paper* today not one member of the government is actually speaking on this legislation, on the government's bill.

We know that the Australian public deserve a lot better, but there is an alternative. We know that when it comes to higher education and general education this side of the chamber does believe in the best for our students. That's why in the time remaining I want to focus on the alternative positive plans that the Australian community are crying out for, including the announced National Inquiry into Post-Secondary Education. This is a once in a generation national inquiry that will look at every aspect of the vocational and higher education systems to ensure that they can best respond to the needs of the Australia's economy and society.

I want to place on record that this is the first time that a national inquiry has put TAFE and unis on an equal footing. It is about making sure that Australians have access to the best post-secondary opportunities in the world. We want our kids to get the education and skills they need to thrive and to make sure that all Australians have the opportunity of lifelong learning. If as a country we are to continue to be a wealthy and highly educated nation, we must boost participation in quality postsecondary education. It's clear when you look at the evidence—it's not a term that this government likes to use too much of the time. Experts have warned that, if we rest on our laurels or continue with the cuts from this Morrison government, Australia risks being left behind.

On this side of the House, we know that. Labor knows education at all levels is key to the future of prosperity and key to a stronger community. That's why we will properly fund our universities with three-year funding agreements, guaranteed; uncut university places so that 200,000 more Australians will have the opportunity of a university education over the next decade or so; invest in university research and infrastructure with our \$300 million university future fund; and provide more support for disadvantaged and underrepresented students to get the confidence and skills they need to get into university with \$174 million for equity and pathways funding.

One of the greatest joys that we have as members of parliament is to attend school graduations. One of the greatest joys we have is to participate in those school graduations. Being in parliament, you don't always get to visit every single school in your electorate. I have approximately 53 schools in and around the Oxley electorate. I visit high schools and I see kids from non-English-speaking backgrounds, from migrant families—kids who started perhaps at Inala State School in my electorate and had little English. I see those students go on, whether they be from Somalia, South Sudan, Vietnam or Malaysia. When I see those kids graduate—and they not only graduate but are dux of their schools and have done early entry university courses or will be going to post-trade or secondary education—they have a look of pride. They're the people who we need to always be remembering—those kids who perhaps have had it a little harder but who are just as smart and just as talented as any other student at that school.

Sadly we've seen this government not investing in those students. Sadly we've seen this government remove the access and equity to higher education, remove the pathways. That's why I'm such a strong supporter of what the Leader of the Opposition and the deputy leader have announced with \$174 million to improve equity and pathways funding. We need to be lifting people up wherever we can. To all those students who I have witnessed and the tens if not hundreds of thousands across Australia who are doing it tough and perhaps have just gone back to school in the last week or so: I want you to be very clear that we on this side of parliament will support you, we will invest in you and, more importantly, we value you.

We know a Shorten Labor government will invest across the whole education sector, whether it be by universal accessibility to early childhood education for three- and four-year-olds or investing a vital \$14.1 billion of extra funding in our schools. We'll waive up-front fees for 100,000 students to attend, we'll provide 20,000 adult apprenticeships and we'll provide 20,000 pre-apprenticeships for young people who want to learn a trade. This is how a government should support education. We will continue to invest in and support education because we know it is the right thing for our country, for our economy and for the future of our nation.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:08): I stand here as someone who formerly spent 27 years in state education, in high schools and primary schools in Victoria, someone who spent many years in a role as a secondary year level coordinator, who worked with young people year in, year out not only in their classrooms as an English teacher, a drama teacher and a history teacher but also as a coordinator working with young people from year 7 through to year 12 to build in them an aspiration to gain entry into university or, if that was not going to be the case, an aspiration to attend TAFE and to build in them an understanding that we need to be lifelong learners. So it is with absolute pleasure that I rise to speak today on the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2018 and to support the amendment moved by the member for Scullin. It was Labor in 2011 that established TEQSA as the national regulator of Australia's higher education system, so I'm happy to speak today on the importance of government support for our education system at all levels but particularly at the university level.

Support of our education system is something that is foreign to the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government, as we have seen across the last five-plus years. The fact that we are only debating this bill now, three years after the recommendations from the review of TEQSA were provided to the government, speaks clearly about this government's attitude to universities and its responsibilities in responding to reviews and ensuring that we have the best system possible. It demonstrates just how much this government doesn't value our higher education system. I'm not surprised, and why should I be when all we have seen from this government is cuts and chaos in this space?

Let me be clear. After the government were elected in 2013, students were placed under attack with the threat of university fee deregulation. Those of us on this side fought the government on that war, and we won in support of young people across the country, joined by those people who were seeking to retrain, seeking higher education or seeking to rejoin education as a way of ensuring that they had a bright economic future. Students are now forced to pay back HELP debts when they earn \$45,000 a year. That is only \$9,000 more than the minimum wage. We know that debt is a barrier for many students, particularly those from

low-income families. It puts more pressure on household budgets at a time when they can least afford it. No-one knows this more than I do from working in Melbourne's western suburbs with kids from working-class families, kids whose parents were struggling to pay the rent every week. Building aspiration in those young people meant confronting their family's fear of debt at a young age. So I know full well how hard people are working on the ground to build that aspiration; to have those conversations with young people; to ensure that they seek a tertiary education; to identify our best and our brightest; to encourage them to talk to their families about the fact that the debt they will take on will be worth it; and to assure them that they have their government's support.

Since this government was elected, we have also seen students turned away by universities because of capped places. This unfairly leaves regional and outer suburban communities like mine worse off. It means that we are not seeing our best and brightest. It means that other determinants are getting in the way of us seeing the best of every young person in our country. Universities have been under attack with various funding cuts, the latest being in the 2018 MYEFO with the slashing of \$328.5 million from university research, something that our university sector is speaking loudly on but without effect.

In electorates like mine all over the country, we are seeing youth allowance wait times blowing out. This leaves young people and those waiting to retrain with no support. I have stories in my electorate of people waiting for up to six months, so it's the end of first semester and they're yet to receive a youth allowance payment. What that means in communities like mine, in those families, is that they could be in a situation where that young person chooses to discontinue a university education because the family can't afford to support them while they study. This is heartbreaking—absolutely heartbreaking—and it's under this government's watch that these things are happening. It goes to the very core of what we believe.

As someone who has spent most of their life teaching, I believe that every child can learn if given the right circumstances. What is the message we're sending now? We know intelligence is not defined by postcode or region, but under this government it appears that going to university is determined by postcode or region or by the wealth of your family. The basic support that governments commit to—to support our best and brightest from low socioeconomic areas to go to university—is not being met in that critical first semester, which is when their studies get set up. It is an absolute shame.

In contrast, under previous Labor governments my electorate saw increased numbers of students accessing university. Those numbers have slipped over the past five years, in terms of percentages per capita, on this government's watch. I find that to be absolutely reprehensible, because we know that for our economy we need young people to be as highly skilled as we can allow. We need to be investing in our young people to ensure that Australia continues to be competitive in a global economy. We all know that in this place. We hear member after member on their feet talking about just that, yet we have a government that doesn't back that in with the legislation required and with the support required. Perhaps a review of why Centrelink can't manage to process youth allowance applications in a timely manner would allow young people in any community to pursue their dreams.

Unfortunately, it is not just the higher education sector that this government has cut and slashed. We've seen vocational education and training cuts, as well as 2.5 million public school students in this country being left worse off by its failure to properly fund public

education. This government has cut more than \$3 billion from TAFE skills and apprenticeships since being elected. This clearly demonstrates that they do not value vocational education and skills. When it comes to our public schools, almost nine in 10 public schools will never get to their fair funding level because of the Prime Minister's cuts. You have to extrapolate that to what that means in our university sector and what that means in our economy. On this side of the chamber, we understand that education, at all levels, is the key to a stronger society and the key to future prosperity.

In contrast to this government, a Shorten Labor government, if elected, will properly fund our universities with guaranteed three-year funding agreements. We will uncap university places so that 200,000 more Australians will have the opportunity of a university education over the next decade. We will invest in university research and infrastructure with our \$300 million university future fund. We will provide more support for disadvantaged and underrepresented students to acquire the confidence and skills they need to get into university, with our \$174 million equity and pathways funding.

We will invest across the whole education system by introducing universal early education for three- and four-year-olds and by investing \$14.1 billion extra into the public schools across our nation, who educate two out of three Australian children. We will waive up-front fees for 100,000 students to attend TAFE. We will invest \$100 million in modernising TAFE facilities around the country. We will be ensuring one in every 10 jobs in Commonwealth priority projects are filled by Australian apprentices. Labor has a plan for the entirety of education across this country. We will provide 10,000 pre-apprenticeships for young people who want to learn a trade. We will provide 20,000 adult apprenticeship places. We will establish an apprenticeship advocate to ensure Australia has an excellent, high-quality and inclusive apprentice system.

On top of that, we will return the workforce to Centrelink so that we can get over some of these processing issues that this government has been ignoring. When you draw all of these pieces together, what we see from this government is not just a lack of care. It's not just a lack of interest. If you grow up in my electorate and you're from a low socioeconomic area, what you perceive is a government that doesn't want you to be educated; a government that doesn't want to see you strive to be your best. It's a very sad state of affairs.

On this side of the parliament, Labor have committed to a national inquiry into post-secondary education. It's an inquiry that would look at the needs in this country and the broad, post-secondary space with TAFE and university. Importantly, it would look at them separately, but it would also look at the way they work together and the way they need to be supported by government to ensure that we're getting the best and the brightest in the right places—doing the right things and providing them with the level of support that they need.

I cannot get past the fact that it has taken this government three years to respond to the review conducted. It has taken them three years to draft a piece of legislation and pay attention to the recommendations made. They have been slow to act and, when they act, they act in limited ways. In contrast, I stand here proudly as a member of the Labor Party and proudly as the member for Lalor, because I know the people on this side of the chamber will act in the best interests of all Australians. I also know they'll take particular care of the students who are being raised in my electorate. They want all children in Australian schools to aspire to be their best. We want to see Australians leading in every industry. We want to see

Australians applying themselves. We want to see them aspiring to high education levels. We want to see them applying themselves. And we want to see a government that will support our young people and those retraining—all people engaging in lifelong learning. We want to see a government that's prepared to support the industries that provide the education and support young people across their lifetime, from kindergarten all the way through to their PhDs.

I'd like to thank the member for Scullin for moving the important amendments that give us the opportunity to speak on this bill and support the government's recommendations—slow to act as they are. We will support the bill, but we speak strongly about the amendments that were put forward by the member for Scullin.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (13:22): I rise to support the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill—it's not the catchiest title that we've had before us, but it's a worthwhile evolution of that agency—and to support the amendments moved by this side of the House. What concerns me is the fact that we are talking about this today. Having been in this chamber for 2½ years, I can say that it's not often that we get to speak about the broad quality of higher education here. It really highlights for me a lack of interest in this area by those opposite.

There was a review of the national regulator. That is the body that regulates our world-class higher education system. It looks at what's working and it looks at how it needs to be tweaked to ensure standards are met. The review of this regulator was provided to government three years ago. That's a really long time for there to be no action. I don't think the complexity of it meant that anyone was unable to get their head around it. I think it shows us that it just kind of got pushed to the side. Quite frankly, I do not get a sense of the belief we have on this side of the House. Education is a game changer for people. It transforms people's lives. They deserve quality education. Whether it's at the preschool level, primary school in the public school system, high school, TAFE or university, that quality needs to be available to people, especially at a time when we are shifting the cost to students more than they have ever seen. Those opposite have done that to an enormous degree. They have shifted the cost to students so that they now have to pay higher fees and they need to pay off their HELP debt sooner. It is only fair that they should expect a reasonable standard—a high standard of quality, in fact—that reflects the high level of fees that they are expected to pay.

Not many people have mums and dads who can afford to pay the fees. Most young people will finish TAFE or university with a debt. They will then have to spend years, at the same time that they've got this debt, trying to get themselves established in their chosen profession or career. They will have to equip themselves for that career and that role. They may also be looking at moving into a place that isn't perhaps five students squished into a four-room house. They'll be wanting to invest in themselves and their future at the same time that they've got this debt, so the cost for them to make their way in this world means it will just become really tough. I see it time and time again. I've got kids who are in their 20s. I see story after story of the challenges they face, not just when they're educating themselves but when they're taking the time to equip themselves for this world that is rapidly changing.

There will be many students right now preparing for their first semester of university. But, unfortunately, the freeze that the government has put on university places—the capping of places—means far fewer students are going to be doing that, especially in the outer western suburbs and regions like mine on the periphery of Sydney, such as the Hawkesbury and the

Blue Mountains that make up the Macquarie electorate. There is no doubt that we in this place should be talking about broadening participation in higher education, in both TAFE and university, not talking about things to reduce it. Nor should we be talking about anything that reduces access or quality. Yet what we've seen from this government is the capping of university places. We have seen a slashing of research funding. Research done in universities is what's going to set us up to cope with a world that we can't even predict, and to take that away is the most short-sighted thing I can imagine. We've also seen under this government cuts to vocational and education training the likes of which no-one could contemplate or imagine, and we've also seen a failure to fund public education. We have, in addition, seen a lack of commitment to early childhood education. That is where it all starts, and it's vital that every step of that education cycle gets funded—preschool, school, vocational training and universities. That's how we create our future. That's how we make sure that we are fulfilling our responsibilities as a parliament to make the opportunities for those who are coming behind us that much easier and more suited to the world in which they're going to live.

It does concern me that this is a technical bill, and I'm very grateful that we on this side of the House have moved amendments to recognise just how important quality of education and access to education are. That's why, under a Labor government, we will also properly fund universities with three-year guaranteed funding agreements—not just 'here's a little bit to get you through the next year'. Universities need certainty in funding and they need to be able to plan. Their staff need to know that there's a future there so that they have a sense of assurance that the work they do will be able to continue and evolve. We also will uncap university places, and that is expected to lead to 200,000 more Australians having the opportunity to get an education over the next decade or so.

I think one of the most impressive things we're going to do is focus on research. As I said, I think it's just fundamental. Our \$300 million university future fund, which will invest in university research and infrastructure, is part of that. In the electorate of Macquarie, we have the Western Sydney University campus at Richmond. That campus—the Hawkesbury campus—will benefit under Labor because of the incredible greenhouse that they have constructed. It is a massive glasshouse. You have never seen anything like it because there is nothing like it anywhere else in Australia. And Labor has committed to an additional \$20 million in research funding that will make sure that we capitalise on the potential that we have in agriculture, in terms of working out how much water or how little water we can use to grow things, how few nutrients we can use to get the maximum benefit, and how we can grow things that will transport easily, either within Australia or, more importantly, for export. Labor's commitment to research will really pan out in my electorate in supporting our agricultural sector to be able to make the most of the opportunities as one of the most fertile areas within a short drive of Sydney. We should be growing for, and we should in fact be feeding, not just Australia but Asia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples: 11th Anniversary**

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (13:30): Today we celebrate the 11th anniversary of the historic apology to the stolen generations made in this place 11 years ago. Those of us who were here will forever remember that day and its importance in our history in acknowledging what we have done as a nation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families over many generations. Sadly, it came so late. But it was made here, and I had the privilege of being in this chamber when members of the stolen generations sat on the floor and observed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd give that historic national apology.

But things are yet to be done. There is still unfinished business. And, as a result, it's very clear that we need to establish, as we in the Labor Party are committed to doing here, a compensation scheme for survivors of the stolen generations in Commonwealth jurisdictions. This scheme will recognise and respond to the legacy of pain and trauma that the stolen generations and their families continue to experience today. The compensation scheme will be accessible to surviving members of the stolen generations in Commonwealth jurisdictions—the Northern Territory, the ACT and Jervis Bay. We will also provide money for the national Healing Foundation to fund healing support for the stolen generations and their families, in recognition of the intergenerational effects of forced removal.

Rose, Ms Shari

Mr HOGAN (Page—Deputy Speaker) (13:31): On 23 March 2017, Shari Rose of Lismore was diagnosed with lymphoma. Shari endured many rounds of chemotherapy, three stem cell transplants, viruses, chronic pain, as well as kidney failure and respiratory failure caused by pneumonia. Two years after her first diagnosis, Shari, very sadly, passed away on 12 January 2019. She was just 16 years old. Her mother, Jen; sister, Olivia; brother, Jacob; and father, Daryl, as well as extended family and friends, were obviously devastated. Indeed, the wider community mourned with them.

I bring this up today to make people aware of Hummingbird House. It provides, amongst other services, care at the end of life. In the words of Shari's mum, Jen:

Shari died quite suddenly at the end and we were not ready to say goodbye and leave her at the hospital. We were so heartbroken to have lost our beautiful girl, we weren't ready to let her go. Moving her to Hummingbird House allowed us to spend the next two days with her, we felt so incredibly blessed to have more precious time, celebrating every wonderful thing about her. We made more beautiful memories that we will cherish forever.

Besides making people aware of this service, I encourage any who would like to financially support facilities like these to please do so—a service important to Shari's family and many more. Rest in peace, Shari.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples: 11th Anniversary

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (13:33): Eleven years ago, Lorna 'Nanna Nungala' Fejo held her grandchild as then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd asked Lorna, with my friend the member for Jagajaga, for a message to send to the people of Australia. 'Families,' she said, 'keeping them together is important.' You see, more than 80 years ago, Lorna, as a very young child, was taken from her family, from a camp near Tennant Creek, by the welfare men. Today Lorna is listening from Darwin. So, g'day, Lorna.

Lorna's youngest son, Richie Fejo, is the chair of the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, and I spoke with him just a little while ago. Richie said: 'We remember that day, the day of the apology, very clearly. The apology was genuine, sincere and meaningful. It offered all the First Nations people a fair go and the opportunity for reconciliation in the spirit of sincerity. In the tradition of sincerity today, we should remember to re-empower that genuine exchange and opportunity so that we can celebrate equally with other Australians.' Well done, Richie. There's still a lot of work to do.

Dairy Industry

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (13:35): I rise to highlight the plight faced by dairy farmers in my electorate of Lyne and across the nation. At the moment our dairy farmers are operating, in many places, under drought conditions. That is putting up their input costs considerably. The costs of feed, water and all the things that go into producing a quality product rise, but the price that they are being paid doesn't match that. In the current framework, there is an unequal power arrangement. The producers have little bargaining power because they have a perishable product. Exclusive, long-term supply agreements are limiting their ability to trade with more than one processor. Long-term penalties apply if they try to move.

Last year, we started consultations into developing a mandatory code of conduct that would define and limit a lot of the exclusivity and the restrictions on getting a fair contract price. We also to need work on a milk price index that is real and includes reference to international processing costs and international retail margins. The major supermarkets who control the market and control the processors, who then influence the deal that producers get, need to change their behaviour. The dollar-a-litre milk, as a loss leader product to get people into supermarkets, is not a fair deal.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples: 11th Anniversary

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (13:36): Today marks the 11th anniversary since former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered the apology to the stolen generations. I, as would many others in this place, remember the day well. I remember hearing the then Prime Minister's words echoed on the evening news, and I remember their impact on my community. This was an important moment in our nation's history and an essential step for us all to take on the path towards reconciliation. I have a copy of the apology in my office. I often think of these words and how long it took for us to finally say them. We must continue to blaze the path towards reconciliation. Mere words are not enough. Our actions and the decisions that we make in this place must always reflect this vision, with the goal of healing as a nation.

I eagerly await the handing down of the 11th the *Closing the gap* report tomorrow, which provides a timely reminder of our goals and objectives. But First Nations children are still being removed from their families at far too high a rate. First Nations people can expect to live 10 years less than the average. Incarceration rates are far too high, particularly the incarceration rates of children and young adults. The rates of smoking, alcohol abuse and the abuse of other drugs are also far too high. Babies are born with low birth weight far too commonly. We must do more. Yes, we have made some progress; but, all in all, progress has been far too slow. Today we must seriously reaffirm our goal to close the gap and tirelessly pursue a more reconciled Australia.

Dividend Imputation

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:38): Constituents in my electorate are worried. They usually look forward to receiving refunds from the Australian Taxation Office when the tax deducted from their wages exceeds their tax liability at the end of the tax year. In the same way, shareholders, including self-funded retirees, look forward to receiving refunds after they lodge their tax returns when the tax deducted from their dividends—at the corporate tax rate of 30 per cent—exceeds their personal tax liability because their overall income is low.

I received many emails, including one from John of Burns Beach, who said that Labor's plan to abolish refunds for franking credits would result in \$1,000 to \$2,000 less income per year for John and his wife. He states: 'With the costs of rates and utilities services rising regularly, it is getting difficult to manage. This would result in having to cut back on children and grandchildren's presents and generally cutting out extra items, such as dining out.' Self-funded retirees, who have worked hard to provide financial independence for themselves in retirement, should be treated fairly and should not be forced to pay for Labor's mistakes.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples: 11th Anniversary

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (13:39): Today marks the 11th anniversary of the apology to the stolen generations. I want to pay tribute to Kevin Rudd, my predecessor as the member for Griffith and, much more importantly, the then Prime Minister, for having made that apology. It seems uncontroversial now, but of course there'd been a long road to get to that apology. It was particularly important that there were members of the stolen generations here on the floor of the parliament as a way of the parliament paying its respect to those people who had suffered such pain and loss.

In marking the anniversary, I also want to mention Link-Up in my electorate, an incredible organisation that brings people back together with their loved ones. Sometimes they're graveside reunions; sometimes they're with living relatives. They're always incredibly difficult and incredibly moving. Thank you to Link-Up. In fact last year, on the 10th anniversary, they held a very large and well-attended commemoration at Hill End in my electorate. It was wonderful to see Kevin Rudd there and to hear him address the assembled group on the anniversary of the apology.

Like so many Australians, I was so proud to watch the apology when it was given, and to hear the then Prime Minister give the apology. But I have to say it was pretty regrettable that there was a frontbencher from the Liberals who did not attend. Of course, that frontbencher was the then and current member for Dickson, the Hon. Peter Dutton. It was a great shame, and I'm sure that he remains very upset by his shameful absence from the apology to this day.
(Time expired)

Youth Insearch

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (13:41): Today I rise to speak about the work being done by Youth Insearch, a youth intervention organisation based in north-west Sydney. Suicide is the leading cause of death among young Australians. Rates of suicide amongst young people are the highest that they've been for more than a decade. In the last fortnight, we've seen the coroner's report from the Kimberley highlighting what a major issue this is for young Indigenous Australians, and this should be deeply concerning to each and every one of us.

Today Youth Insearch is launching a campaign called Blue Heart to raise awareness of youth suicide and to help prevent it.

Founded in 1985, Youth Insearch has helped over 31,000 at-risk youths across New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland to turn their lives around. Using peer networks to build communities of support, Youth Insearch is giving young Australians ways to get the help they need, and it's equipping them to lead full lives of hope. I commend the staff, led by Heath Ducker, the board and the leaders of Youth Insearch for the life-changing work that they're doing. During 2018, 60 per cent of the people who attended their workshops and support groups had contemplated suicide and 40 per cent had attempted suicide. Three-quarters of these young people no longer felt suicidal after attending a Youth Insearch program.

Today I am wearing this Blue Heart pin to encourage all Australians to do a little bit more to notice the people around us and ask the hard questions about whether someone is contemplating suicide, so that we can turn these terrible statistics around. I commend Youth Insearch for their work and I encourage all other Australians to wear a blue heart on Blue Heart Day.

Petition: Child Care

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:42): It's my pleasure to present a petition to the House. The petition has been considered by the Petitions Committee and found to be in order.

The petitions read as follows—

Community Early Years Centre

This petition of the parents of the Community Early Years Centre (CEYC) of Bellbridge, draws to the attention of the House the announcement that seven rural Community Early Years Childcare Centres (CEYC), including our own, will be suddenly closing on December 21st, 2018. These closures are predominantly due to the recent changes in childcare subsidies. The loss of these facilities has many widespread effects throughout each community, as there is no alternative in each region, placing our communities at a severe disadvantage. Our Bellbridge Childcare centre acts as a feeder to our two local Primary Schools, Talgarno and Bethanga. The loss of the centre will undoubtedly mean the removal of children from these two schools. We will hence see a dramatic drop in numbers, potentially impacting the ability of the schools to remain viable into the future. The childcare facility allows parents in our rural area to return to work and seek out employment opportunities that otherwise wouldn't be possible. The loss of our facility will mean more parents currently living in our rural area are forced to go into town to seek out these services. We vitally need this service in our community to keep young families in the area. If this service goes, many families may be forced to move into town which will impact heavily on our schools and hence, our community. Request:

We therefore ask the House to put forward a bill to provide additional funding for rural childcare facilities to help support rural families whose options differ greatly from their urban counterparts. from 336 citizens (Petition No. PN0394)

Community Early Years Centre

are submitting this petition in regards to the announcement that seven rural Community Early Years Childcare Centres (CEYC), including our own, will be suddenly closing on December 21st, 2018. These closures are predominantly due to the recent changes in childcare subsidies. The loss of these facilities has many widespread effects throughout each community, as there is no alternative in each region, placing our communities at a severe disadvantage. Our Bellbridge Childcare centre acts as a feeder to our two local Primary Schools, Talgarno and Bethanga. The loss of the centre will

undoubtedly mean the removal of children from these two schools. We will hence see a dramatic drop in numbers, potentially impacting the ability of the schools to remain viable into the future. The childcare facility allows parents in our rural area to return to work and seek out employment opportunities that otherwise wouldn't be possible. The loss of our facility will mean more parents currently living in our rural area are forced to go into town to seek out these services. We vitally need this service in our community to keep young families in the area. If this service goes, many families may be forced to move into town which will impact heavily on our schools and hence, our community.

We therefore ask the House to put forward a bill to provide additional funding for rural childcare facilities to help support rural families whose options differ greatly from their urban counterparts.

from 3 citizens (Petition No. EN0796)

Petitions received.

Ms McGOWAN: I acknowledge the principal petitioner, Gennifer Hamam from Bellbridge, Victoria. It concerns the provision of child care in north-east Victoria. The petition includes 339 signatures, and we therefore respectfully ask the House to put forward a bill to provide additional funding for rural childcare facilities and to help support rural families, whose options differ greatly from their urban counterparts. In bringing this petition to the House, I'd also like to acknowledge and thank the Minister for Education, Dan Tehan, his staff and departmental staff; Craig Laundy, for attending the roundtable in Albury-Wodonga; and Towong shire and Wodonga TAFE for stepping up on behalf of the communities of Mitta Mitta, Walwa, Kergunyah, Baranduda and Bellbridge.

I would like to say it was no surprise to my communities when the childcare services were shown not to be economical. We predicted it happening. I call on the government side to pay particular attention to rural and regional Australia and their differing circumstances, particularly for families' need for child care. We've resolved this issue in the short term, but we haven't got a long-term solution. I'm hoping the National Party steps up on child care in the lead-up to the election. *(Time expired)*

Dividend Imputation

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:44): Over the break I've had many of my constituents express their concern over Labor's proposed retirees' tax. Make no mistake: this proposed new tax of Labor's is unfair, regressive, discriminatory and, most of all, it's un-Australian. It is unfair because it moves the goalposts, cutting the earnings of hundreds of thousands of low-income earners by up to 25 per cent. It discriminates against retirees with a self-managed super fund but not against those with an industry-controlled union fund. Fancy that. It's regressive because the change in franking credits only affects low-income earners. The lower a person's income, the greater the cut they'll be punished with under this proposed new Labor tax. It's anti-Australian because it makes investment in Australian companies—that create jobs here in Australia—less attractive than investments overseas.

Ultimately, this is an attack by the Labor Party on those Australians who have worked hard all their lives, then sacrificed and saved so they can have a modest lifestyle in retirement, self-reliant from government. It shows the difference between the two sides. We believe the money a company earns belongs to the people who earn it, not the government.

Queensland: Floods

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (13:45): I acknowledge the 11th anniversary of the apology to our First Nations people, but I also stand here with great sorrow. Yesterday I spoke in this place about eight people who had fallen ill due to a deadly bacteria in the soil after the floods in Townsville. Sadly, one of those people has lost her life to the deadly illness, known as flood disease. My thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends during this difficult time.

It is an incredibly sad and timely reminder that the devastations of the flood are ongoing and the risks are very real. The number of cases of melioidosis infection has skyrocketed since the unprecedented flood event. Two more cases were confirmed today, bringing the total to 10 so far. Townsville residents are at an increased risk of contracting this disease. Melioidosis and the many other infections that stem from flooding can more severely impact people who are unwell or elderly or who have chronic conditions. Flood water is heavily contaminated with dirt, sewage and bacteria.

The vital public health message is to ensure that people are wearing protective clothing and shoes so that they do not have the floodwater come in contact with their body, particularly if they have cuts or scratches. To all people assisting in the clean-up, I thank you very much, but please stay safe. Please wear protective clothing and shoes, including airway protection, and, importantly, please stay hydrated during this very humid heat.

National Security

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (13:47): I acknowledge the previous member's contribution. Having been through a one-in-200-year flood, in 2013, I know that North Queenslanders are doing it tough, but they are resilient and will recover.

Back to the matters at hand. We know that those opposite do not consider our national security important. They do not want to keep the gate closed for illegal arrivals. Under their watch, there were 50,000-plus illegal arrivals by boat, thousands of people in detention and over a thousand lives lost at sea. It is not good enough for them just to have it as a legacy—they want it to happen again. We now have a Leader of the Opposition who is the Pied Piper for those who want to bring more illegal arrivals to this country through the wrong path. What absolute hypocrisy by those opposite to want this to start again.

The anger of the people in my electorate is red-hot. I've made calls this morning. They do not want this to start again. They know that our tough policies have worked and will continue to work, and we know that those opposite simply do not support them. Regardless of what they say, they do not support them. It is a clarion call from the Leader of the Opposition to people smugglers. He wants those boats to restart. We are here for the national security of this nation, for the people of this nation. Whether they arrived through the right channels or were born here, their security is first and foremost. You should hang your heads in shame. (*Time expired*)

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples: 11th Anniversary

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (13:49): Eleven years ago today was my very first day in parliament and my proudest day as a politician. The apology to the stolen generations delivered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was a seminal moment for this nation, where the truth of this nation's history was formally acknowledged in this house of the people.

It was an important step towards reconciliation, and I acknowledge the member for Jagajaga who had so much to do with that day.

Today, I again acknowledge those people who were forcibly removed from their families, from their culture, from their community and from their country. The annual *Closing the gap* report tells us that there is still much to do and that's why Labor has committed \$10 million to assist with the healing programs and will hold a summit on First Nations children so that all kids have the opportunity to have a happy, healthy childhood. A Shorten government is committed to closing the gap and building a reconciled Australia. There is much work to do.

Eleven years ago, I saw some appalling behaviour in this chamber. There was some disgraceful behaviour from former Speaker Bronwyn Bishop and also from a couple of other members, who actually boycotted the apology. Most of them are gone. There is one person, however, who is still here—the member for Dickson, who has actually never properly explained why he did not attend the apology. He was the only frontbencher in Brendan Nelson's opposition to boycott that historic apology to the stolen generation. (*Time expired*)

Mental Health

New England Electorate: Bushfires

Mr JOYCE (New England) (13:50): There are two issues I wish to speak on today. First and foremost is the blue heart that I'm wearing, which is to deal with youth suicide. We have so many issues in regional Australia, but youth suicide has to be addressed. The most likely way people will die between, I think, the ages of 14 and 45, for males especially, is by their own hand, and I hope attention is brought to that.

The second issue is the fires that are currently happening in my electorate of New England. In Tingha, we've had over 5,600 hectares burnt out. Tingha is a town between Inverell and Guyra which has a very high proportion of Aboriginal people in it. This fire is a big concern. The other one is at Wallangarra, which is near Jennings at the very top of my electorate, where over 5,000 hectares have been burnt out. About 25,000 acres are affected in those two fires alone. On the eastern side, at Jubullum, which is another Aboriginal community just before you cross the river, another fire is burning. These fires add to the stress of drought and I wish all the people fighting them and dealing with them the very best of luck and encouragement. I wish I was there. Obviously I can't be because we are sitting, but, as soon as I get my first opportunity, I will be down there to offer my support.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples: 11th Anniversary

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (13:52): Eleven years ago today I watched in the Great Hall as the Prime Minister said sorry. Saying sorry was not the hard part. The hard part was Indigenous Australians choosing to accept the apology in the spirit in which it was given. And they did. I had the honour that day of spending time with Heather Vicenti, who had travelled from Western Australia. She had been taken from her mother at two years of age. Indigenous Australians like Heather came from all over our country. Many entered through the Prime Minister's courtyard and many sat on the lawns at the front of parliament. A whole nation watched as the parliament said sorry and we as a nation took an important step in a healing journey.

In the 31 years this building has stood, I believe the apology was the best day in this building. Political rivals worked together. I have a photo in my office of Dr Brendan Nelson

and former Prime Minister Rudd shaking hands at the conclusion of the apology. I think it was one of the beautiful moments that happened in this chamber. It was a proud day to be an Australian. I'm equally proud of the work that the member for Jagajaga did and the work that former Prime Minister Gillard did in making sure that we continue to honour the spirit of the apology.

Working for Kevin Rudd myself for many years, I saw him thanked many, many times for delivering that apology, both here at home and abroad, but there is so much more to do. Constitutional recognition— *(Time expired)*

Dividend Imputation

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (13:53): As those on this side of the House know, Labor's proposed retiree tax is an absolute shocker. By abolishing tax refunds on share dividends, the opposition leader is taking money from self-funded retirees to bankroll his own ridiculous policies. But what I want to highlight this afternoon is the hit that Labor's tax would be to my community in Canning.

Canning is home to around 5,000 retirees who currently benefit from the franking credit system. They stand to lose big if Labor wins government, and they are worried. I've met some of them and many others have written to me. Peter from Halls Head said he will lose \$30,000 a year under Labor's tax grab. Ian and Maxine from Falcon will lose \$50,000. Alan from Greenfields will lose \$40,000 per year. Their retirement plans are being shredded, and the flow-on effect of Labor's tax will go even further.

Local business owners in my community are worried. They know Labor's retiree tax will mean less money in our community, which will mean fewer shoppers willing to spend in their businesses. Canning small-business owners are staring down the barrel of 5,000 people thinking twice about purchases they would otherwise make. They know these retirees will have to think twice about going out for a coffee, spending at local shops or hiring a tradesman. Our community, its small businesses, seniors and families cannot afford a Labor government.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples: 11th Anniversary

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (13:55): This was the day 11 years ago that this parliament told the truth. This was the day that Kevin Rudd as the Prime Minister apologised on behalf of the parliament and the Australian people to those children who had been taken from their families. Finally the truth was told, and so many people—the people who were taken, the mothers and fathers, the brothers and sisters, all of the families—finally knew that they were believed.

It was an extraordinary day. This amazing chamber was full of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We had decided, on the advice of Linda Burney, that the members of the stolen generations would sit on the floor of the parliament, but all the galleries were full of members of the stolen generations and people who had come to support them. In the Great Hall, on the lawns outside, in every single capital city, in workplaces and schools, everyone came together to say sorry—to acknowledge the truth.

People cannot heal unless they hear the truth, unless they are believed, and they were that day. It was an amazingly special day, and I thank everyone who made it such an important occasion for those who were taken.

Bowman Electorate: Redland Hospital

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:56): I rise also seeking an apology from Queensland Labor for the way they're treating our beleaguered but beloved Redland Hospital. We are seeing cuts in funding to this hospital year on year, month on month.

I have before me the IHPA funding data showing that these cuts are continuing into this financial year. In data recently released, and the last data we will have until May, we can see that Commonwealth contributions to Redland Hospital increased from \$49 million to \$53 million. For the same time, the state government that runs the show, in August of last year cut its \$127 million to \$94 million year on year. This is IHPA data. It's data provided by the state Labor government, which is cutting the heart out of Redland Hospital. This is a hospital on life support. It is a hospital held together by the morale of its staff. It is a hospital that Labor is about to flick the switch on and possibly take many services that should be delivered at Redland out to Logan.

We're sick of hearing the blame game. State Labor is blaming the 20 people on home oxygen as being the problem. It's blaming late payments, as if that's a problem, and it's not building the car park that this hospital dearly needs. This is a hospital that we think is at serious risk under state Labor. Two state MPs from the Labor Party in witness protection won't even turn up and talk about the fate of this great hospital. It's important and it's loved, and we will make sure what every corner of this nation knows what state Labor is doing to Redland Hospital.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (13:58): I acknowledge everyone's contributions in reminding us of the momentous occasion 11 years ago in this chamber—Kevin Rudd's apology to the stolen generations. With these words, the then Prime Minister said:

... I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The member for Jagajaga has just spoken about the importance of truth-telling, and it was a day—and many of you were here—where the truth was truly told in this place on behalf of the peoples of this country. What we do here does matter, and it does very much set the mood and the way in which the nation sees and feels itself. That day marked the acknowledgement of the truth of this nation—the removal of Aboriginal children from country and culture, and the destruction of families and communities.

Tomorrow the Prime Minister will deliver the *Closing the gap* report. We await hearing what is in that report. We know there is much work to do and we also know that that work will not be done properly unless First Nations people are part of the solutions. The apology that took place in this place 11 years ago did mark the beginning of truth-telling in our nation.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Human Services and Digital Transformation

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (14:00): My question is to the Minister for Human Services, and refers to previous answers he has given in his current portfolio concerning the raids on the AWU when TV cameras turned up before the police. On 1 March last year the minister confirmed to the House no less than three times that neither he nor anyone in his office informed media outlets prior to the execution of the search warrants. Does the minister stand by the three answers he gave?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Human Services and Digital Transformation) (14:01): The answer to the question is yes, I do stand by those statements. I was justice minister for 4½ years. Every single day, I and my office dealt with sensitive information, we had protocols associated with dealing with that information, and we continued to make sure that those protocols were adhered to in all circumstances.

Now let me remind the House what this investigation is actually about. The AWU offices were raided in search of documents about wrongdoing by the Leader of the Opposition when he was in charge of that union.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides! The Treasurer!

Mr KEENAN: When he was in charge of that union, donations were made to GetUp! and to his own campaign fund.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my right!

Mr KEENAN: The question that the Australian Federal Police were investigating was whether those donations were made in a lawful way or whether the law was broken. The response of the AWU has been, for 18 months, to run interference to try and close down this police investigation. If those documents don't incriminate the Leader of the Opposition, then why is it that they can't be made public? What is it that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to hide?

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs!

Mr KEENAN: I don't have questions to answer about this matter—the Leader of the Opposition does.

National Security

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House the government's plan for a safer and more secure Australia?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister) (14:02): I thank the member for Boothby for her question and her resolute support—like all members on this side of the House—for ensuring that we keep Australians safe and secure. Whether it's on our borders, whether it's in our defence forces, whether it's protecting women in our community—wherever it is, this government, this side of the House, will always be voting for measures that support and strengthen Australia and that strengthen our national security.

We have a plan that has been working to make Australia stronger. I outlined that plan again this week at the National Press Club and I table that plan that takes Australia forward to keep Australians safe and secure into the future. And it's a plan that's working, because the first responsibility of any Australian government is to keep Australians safe and secure, and our government is discharging that duty of responsibility. What we saw in this chamber yesterday was the leader of the Labor Party fail to discharge his responsibilities for national security and protecting our borders in this country. So there is a clear contrast, but the contrast goes wide when it comes to national security. Our plan is to recapitalise our defence forces to get us back from the shameful position which saw defence spending as a share of our economy fall to pre-Second World War levels under the Labor Party. Our plan is to protect our borders, not weaken them as the Labor Party voted to do yesterday in this chamber. Our plan is to disrupt and deny terrorists, and, under the great work done by our security agencies, 14 terrorist attacks—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith!

Mr MORRISON: were disrupted under the national security arrangements put in place by our government. Our plan is to keep women safe by continuing—I acknowledge the bipartisan work—to ensure that we move to the Fourth Action Plan to deal with domestic violence. Just this week, there were further announcements to keep women safe in their homes from the threat of domestic violence.

Dr Mike Kelly interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Eden-Monaro!

Mr MORRISON: Our plan is to protect children from predators online and in the streets, and the child exploitation unit that has been put in place by the Minister for Home Affairs demonstrates a commitment to that task and a conviction that is shared by all members on this side of the House. It is our plan to throw criminals out of this country when they commit crimes when they're on visas, and we have done that on 4,150 and more occasions. The Labor Party did less in six years than we did in the last year alone, as they let bikies, criminals, rapists and others stay in the country because they simply don't have the mettle to make the decisions to protect Australia and keep Australians safe. You have to have a strong economy to deliver all this, but, above all, you've got to have the ticker and the leadership to deliver it—something that the leader of the Labor Party does not possess.

Minister for Human Services and Digital Transformation

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:06): My question's to the Minister for Human Services and refers to his previous answer. Is the minister willing to repeat the answer he gave the parliament outside the parliament, without the benefit of parliamentary privilege? And is he willing to provide that statement as sworn evidence to any relevant inquiry?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House, on a point of order?

Mr Pyne: The question is not going to any of the responsibilities of the Minister for Human Services. It is simply a fishing expedition question. The first question asked by the member for Gorton rightly referred to previous statements that the minister had made, and the minister answered that question. This question is simply a fishing expedition. Questions of

this nature have been ruled out before by Speakers, and I'm not sure how the minister can answer a question that's not about his responsibilities, either when he was the Minister for Justice or now as the Minister for Human Services.

The SPEAKER: I'll give the Manager of Opposition Business an opportunity to address the point of order.

Mr Burke: I first of all refer to previous rulings that we are allowed to inquire into answers that have just been given. I went to nothing further than the specific words that have just been given and asked whether the minister is willing to restate them in other forums and in particular whether the minister is willing to provide them as sworn evidence.

The SPEAKER: I listened to the first question very closely, and I think that did have the attachment necessary, because it referred to those previous answers. Again, I have a difficulty with this question, because it's referring to the previous answer and asking him whether he'll do certain things that aren't within his responsibility, and I just don't think the connection's there. So I'm going to rule that out of order, and we'll go to the next question.

National Security

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (14:08): My question goes to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the importance of strong and consistent border protection policies based on the advice of our national security agencies? And is the minister aware of any alternative approaches that would weaken our national border sovereignty and put at risk people's lives at sea?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (14:09): That's a great question from the member for Fairfax, because he, like all members in this parliament and the Australian public, understand the history of border protection in this country. When John Howard left office in 2007 there were four people in detention—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned.

Mr DUTTON: including no children; 50,000 people arrived on 800 boats—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith will leave under 94(a). She was just warned 10 seconds earlier.

The member for Griffith then left the chamber.

Mr DUTTON: Under Labor, 50,000 people arrived on 800 boats; 1,200 people, including women and children, drowned at sea; and 8,000 children were put into detention. Did the Labor Rudd and Gillard governments listen to the intelligence agencies? No, they did not. They had advice not to change the policies that John Howard had put in place, but they ignored the advice of the intelligence and law enforcement agencies. We know that Labor has learnt nothing since that time.

In December the Leader of the Opposition instructed 19 of his senators to vote for a reckless bill that will restart boats, and he did it without advice. That was bad enough. This week the Leader of the Opposition took a security briefing, eventually. He was given certain advice in relation to the bill proposed by him and the Greens and he chose to ignore the specific advice given to him by the director-general of ASIO, by the Chief of the Defence

Force, by the general in charge of Operation Sovereign Borders and by the head of my department. If anybody has any doubts about what Labor would be like in relation to border protection—if people thought that maybe the Labor Party had learnt their lesson over the last six years—

Dr Mike Kelly interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Eden-Monaro is now warned.

Dr Mike Kelly interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Eden-Monaro is warned!

Mr DUTTON: Perhaps they thought that Minister Shorten was going to support the government on Operation Sovereign Borders.

Dr Mike Kelly interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Eden-Monaro has been warned.

Mr DUTTON: Let me say to those people: have no doubt that this man sitting opposite me is not fit to be the Prime Minister of this country. Let there be no doubt about that at all. He has taken a reckless course of action that will see coming from Manus Island people who have been accused of being in sexual relationships with 14-year-old girls. There is a person who stands accused of murder in Iran. Under the Labor Party's proposal they will have a right of entry into our country.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr DUTTON: They can scream all they like. They are the facts. Far from standing strong on borders, this Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated that he is even worse, that he is even weaker, than Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard combined. *(Time expired)*

Coalition Government

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): My question is to the Prime Minister. Malcolm Turnbull has said that he is sorry for not calling the banking royal commission sooner, but since the final report was released the Prime Minister and members of his cabinet have refused 10 times to say sorry for delaying the banking royal commission for nearly two years. Given that Malcolm Turnbull was decent enough to say sorry to the victims of the banks, why is he no longer the Prime Minister of Australia?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister) (14:12): I refer the member to my answer yesterday. On the subject of sorrys: When will the Labor Party apologise for 50,000 people turning up on 800 boats? When will the Labor Party apologise for 1,200 deaths at sea? When will the Labor Party apologise for destroying the border protection regime that was working? They are simple questions.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has concluded his answer.

Regional Australia

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, the Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation tabled its report *Regions at the ready* in June last year. The report recommends the government develop a comprehensive regional Australia white paper to provide a clear statement of the government's vision for

regional Australia. After a year of analysis, 14 public hearings and almost 200 written submissions, there is enormous interest in the government response, particularly in my electorate of Indi. Is the Prime Minister now in a position to outline a response to the recommendations of the report? Prime Minister, will you please commit to a regional Australia white paper?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister) (14:14): I thank the member for her question. My government is committed to taking a strategic and long-term approach to regional development. That's demonstrated in the policies that we've pursued as a government and continue to implement. The *Regions at the ready: investing in Australia's future* report canvassed a range of issues from population, economic growth, employment to livability, as I'm sure the member is aware. The Minister for Regional Services, Sport, Local Government and Decentralisation will table the government response in the Senate later today. We have accepted or noted all of the recommendations. I understand that the member for Indi has been offered departmental briefings on the response, and I understand she's agreed to undertake those briefings.

The government will convene an expert panel to undertake a targeted assessment of the issues raised in the report, and they will report back to the government by 31 March 2019. In the meantime, there is \$641.6 million for three rounds of the Building Better Regions Fund; \$270 million supporting transformational investments through the Regional Growth Fund; \$220 million through the regional jobs and investment packages; \$137 billion for the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund; \$2 billion for the National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility to help identify and build water infrastructure that supports jobs creation and opportunities; \$1.8 billion in drought assistance measures and concessional loans to support drought-affected farmers—

The SPEAKER: The member for Indi, on a point of order.

Ms McGowan: It's a point on relevance. The question was: will the Prime Minister commit to a regional white paper?

The SPEAKER: That was one of a couple of questions, and I've made the point to members in this situation on numerous occasions that, if there's more than one question, on a point of order you can't demand that just one part be answered. The only way to have a minister or a prime minister stick to that point is simply to ask them one question. So the Prime Minister is in order and has the call.

Mr MORRISON: \$3.9 billion for the Future Drought Fund, which will grow to \$5 billion; and \$220 million through the Mobile Black Spot Program, co-investing with the private sector, the states and local government in new mobile telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage. The specific points raised in the member's question will be addressed in the government's response, which will be tabled in the Senate today.

Economy

National Security

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:16): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the government's strong economic management is guaranteeing a

safe and secure Australia; and what impact would weaker approaches to border security have on the budget?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:16): I thank the member for Robertson for her question. She knows, as we know on this side of the House, that the first priority of government is to protect its people, and you can only protect your people when you have a strong economy to make the necessary investments. We have a strong economy, a stronger economy than the one we inherited—an economy that is growing at 2.8 per cent, compared to 2.1 per cent when Labor was last in government; unemployment at five per cent, the lowest in seven years, compared to 5.7 per cent when Labor was last in office; a AAA credit rating from the three leading credit ratings agencies, one of only 10 countries in the world to have so; and a budget that we will announce on 2 April that is coming back to surplus for the first time in over a decade.

Now, having a strong economy is allowing us to invest in national security—investing in our \$200 billion Defence Industrial Capability Plan to bring defence spending to two per cent of GDP; investing in 12 new submarines, 12 offshore patrol vessels and nine frigates; and investing in equipping ASIO, the Federal Police and our enforcement agencies for the task ahead.

But I tell you what weakens a country's budget. It's the same thing that weakens a country's national security, and that is weak borders. Those opposite presided over 50,000 unauthorised arrivals, a budget blowout and the tragic loss of lives at sea. We've all seen that movie before, including the member for McMahon. And the member for McMahon was not watching that movie; he was the lead actor, because on his watch there were 25,000 unauthorised arrivals. On the member for McMahon's watch, there were 398 boats; on the member for McMahon's watch, there were six new detention centres opened; and, on the member for McMahon's watch, there was a \$5.2 billion blowout because of weak border policy. That's money that could have helped build 360 schools. That is money that could have built 35 hospitals. That money was lost to the budget because of Labor's approach to border protection. It is said that those who fail to learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it, and yesterday we saw in this House that the Labor Party have not learnt the lessons of history and, if given a chance in government, will certainly repeat their failures when they were last in office.

Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why won't the Prime Minister say sorry to the victims of the banks for voting 26 times against the banking royal commission?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:20): It's the Labor Party that needs to say sorry to the victims of Opes Prime, it's the Labor Party that needs to say sorry to the victims of Storm Financial, it's the Labor Party that needs to say sorry to the victims of Trio Capital, because the Leader of the Opposition was proudly saying, when he was the financial services minister, 'We have the best regulators and the best banks in the world,' and he did not call a royal commission when they were in office for six years. I want to show the Labor Party what a response to the royal commission looks like. That's what it looks like—it's got a heading, it's got a title, it's got 40 pages, it's got 76 responses to 76 recommendations.

The Labor Party have had nine days to respond to the royal commission, and what have we seen? We've only seen stunts. We want to know what more the Labor Party can give than just their agreement in principle. We looked up the dictionary definition of 'in principle'. It's a general idea, although the details are not yet established. What is the Labor Party going to do? What is the Labor Party saying to the 17,000 mortgage brokers? Are they going to say to the 17,000 mortgage brokers, small businesses, that they ignored the advice of the Productivity Commission? Are they going to say to the 17,000 mortgage brokers, employing 26,000 people, that they don't care about competition? Are they going to say to the 17,000 mortgage brokers that they want to give a big free kick to the big banks? Are they going to give the big banks a \$2.6 billion free kick as a result of their response to the royal commission? What about once-only default when it comes to super? Where is Labor's position? They're turning; they're wriggling. We're going to see some weasel words, but where is Labor's position?

The member for McMahon has had over a week. He was demanding we respond, demanding we release it, so he could rush out his response, but it's nowhere to be seen. The member for McMahon and the member for Hotham have gone missing. They're running around the gallery whispering sweet nothings in the ears of the journalists, saying the response will come. It's in-principle support. I'll tell you what the 17,000 mortgage brokers, the small businesses across all your electorates, want to know: what are you going to do for their future, or are you going to end their businesses in your response to the royal commission, whenever we get it?

National Security

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:23): My question is to the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs. Will the minister please update the House on how the government's strong border security and border protection policies, such as Operation Sovereign Borders, have been so successful? Is the minister aware of any threats to this success?

Mr COLEMAN (Banks—Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (14:23): We know what happened under those opposite in this policy area: a humanitarian catastrophe. Twelve hundred people lost their lives, including children. We'll never know how many children, but 1,200 people lost their lives. Eight thousand children were forcibly placed in detention by those opposite—that's what happened—and 50,000 people arrived unlawfully. In the June quarter of 2013, across the entire Australian youth justice detention system, there were 956 people in detention. At the same time, under those opposite, there were 1,820 children merely in immigration detention—twice as many as across the entire youth justice system.

We know what we did. We stopped the boats. We got 2,000 kids out of detention. We closed 19 detention centres—we're going to have to come back to that, aren't we? We've resettled more than 450 people in the United States. Very importantly, secure borders—and the confidence that comes with that—underpin a generous humanitarian program: this government has increased the size of our humanitarian program by 35 per cent since it came to office. This government has provided medical care to those who need it. There are 64 medical professionals on Nauru and there are 418 transferees—that is a ratio of one medical professional for every seven people on Nauru.

Those on that side say there's no medical care, but that is absolutely false. They also say that the bill that they voted for is about people who are critically ill, but the bill that they brought to this House does not require people to be ill. The bill merely requires that those people be brought to Australia for an assessment. That is an extremely low threshold, and the consequence of that is clear.

I want to talk about something else in their bill called amendment (14). It goes to this issue of who this bill will allow into Australia. At the moment you might have relatives or friends or family who want to come to Australia. They're assessed under the Migration Act character test. For skilled employees, tourists, students—everyone—an extensive list of criteria are applied before those people are allowed to enter Australia. Under amendment (14), for people coming from Manus or Nauru, those criteria do not apply. So somebody's relative coming to visit them from overseas will have to meet a higher character standard than someone under this bill. It's another failing of those opposite. *(Time expired)*

Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:26): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and every member of his government voted against a banking royal commission 26 times. Having delayed the royal commission, the government should not delay parliament implementing its recommendations. Given that the parliament is only scheduled to sit for 10 days in eight months, why won't the Prime Minister schedule extra sittings of the parliament to implement the recommendations of the royal commission?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:27): The member for McMahon hasn't even provided his response to the royal commission and he wants extra sitting weeks. He says, 'We have an in-principle agreement.' What is your message to the 17,000 mortgage brokers employing 26,000 people across the country? What is your message on once-only default? Does the member for McMahon agree with the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, who, on our approach on mortgage brokers, said:

I think the government is right to be cautious about going the full way and making the borrower pay.

ME Bank, owned by industry funds, has said about that recommendation:

I do not think it's about making the consumer pay.

Talking about extra sitting weeks, none other than the Law Council of Australia said:

Parliament must hasten slowly. We must take time to get this right. We must ensure a real opportunity to set this right through meaningful reform is not lost in the race to the election.

That's the Law Council of Australia sending the Labor Party a message about their stunts.

We have already taken action. We've announced the APRA capability review. The minister is talking to the states about putting in place a national farm debt mediation scheme. The Minister for Families and Social Services, the member for Bradfield, is working to ensure that there's a proper review to avoid the ad hoc approach that is currently underway for financial counselling.

We have said we're going further than the royal commission when it comes to extending the jurisdiction of the Federal Court of Australia to hear criminal cases in relation to white-collar crime. We've said we're going even further than the royal commission when it comes to

AFCA, the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, extending their jurisdiction and remit back not six years but 10 years to hear cases consistent with the period that was examined by the royal commission. We are setting up a scheme of last resort, and I pay tribute to the member for Higgins for the work that she undertook in that respect, and I pay tribute to the now Prime Minister, who as Treasurer put in place the Banking Executive Accountability Regime, which was endorsed by the royal commissioner. He said it not only should apply to banks but also should apply to insurance companies and superannuation funds.

We are taking action on many fronts. Indeed, we have legislation before this parliament to implement two recommendations of the Hayne royal commission with respect to super funds and bringing in penalties for trustees and directors. We are taking action; the Labor Party can't even be bothered with a response. *(Time expired)*

Domestic and Family Violence

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Jobs and Industrial Relations, and Minister for Women. Will the minister update the House on how the government's plan for a safer and more secure Australia is supporting the safety of our Australian women?

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Women and Minister for Jobs and Industrial Relations) (14:30): I thank the member for Gilmore for her question and also for her very strong advocacy and support on behalf of the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre, which is a very important centre in her constituency that helps women and children affected by domestic violence.

Every woman in this country has the right to be safe in their community, online, at their workplace and in their home. We all know the terrible statistics around domestic violence in this country, and we must never forget that every single one of those statistics is a wife, a mother, a daughter, a friend, a work colleague. We must agree as a parliament that it is not right for women not to be protected and safe.

The government has, in fact, got a strong plan to keep women and children safe, to protect them from the scourge of domestic violence. We have committed well in excess of \$350 million in safety initiatives since 2015, including additional funding for 1800RESPECT, the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling line. It will deal in this financial year with around 160,000 contacts and is a vital resource for those people who are experiencing traumatic events.

As part of the Women's Economic Security Statement, the very first time that we as a parliament have delivered such a statement, we provided \$14.9 million to Good Shepherd Microfinance for no-interest loans, to help women to be able to rebuild their financial security in a safe environment. The government has extended funding of more than \$42 million for specialist domestic violence units and health justice partnerships, which will help women and children with legal advice and health services when they have experienced family and domestic violence. And, for the first time, we have enshrined five days of leave for domestic and family violence as a minimum workplace right in the National Employment Standards. But, of course, we're doing more and must do more. Only this week the government announced \$60 million of additional investment in emergency accommodation—something that I know is a particular passion project for the Minister for Families and Social Services—

as well as \$18 million of continued support to help keep women and children safe in their own homes.

As the Prime Minister has said, domestic violence is a national security issue, and it is a commitment for every single one of us in this place and at all levels of government. I hope it continues to receive bipartisan support.

Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:34): My question is to the Prime Minister. It is a matter of record that, after Labor called for a banking royal commission in April 2016, many Australians were still subsequently ripped off by the banks. How many people does the Prime Minister think suffered during the 600-day period that he opposed Labor's banking royal commission? And will the Prime Minister at least say sorry to this group of victims, who suffered because of his decision to put big banks ahead of the victims of banking scandals?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:34): We're waiting for the Leader of the Opposition's response to the banking royal commission and so are 25 million Australians. They're sick and tired of these stunts. The member for McMahon was desperate for us to put out the banking royal commission report so he could respond. A week later, we've seen absolutely nothing. The member for Hotham said they would agree to every single recommendation. Where is the start date for their response on the banking royal commission? This is what the Leader of the Opposition said back in 2012: 'Our banks are amongst the best in the world.' He said:

Well you know it's easy perhaps for politicians, current politicians, to go to extremes. Banks do have to make a profit.

That's what the Leader of the Opposition said. We are getting on with legislation in this parliament to implement the recommendations of the Hayne royal commission.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr Shorten: Yes, on direct relevance. I asked the Prime Minister if he would apologise, but the other part of the question—which I suppose the Treasurer can answer—is: how many people suffered during the 600-day period that the government refused to have the royal commission? How many victims were there?

The SPEAKER: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, there are a number of aspects to the question. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr FRYDENBERG: The royal commission looked back at misconduct a decade ago, which included misconduct that occurred on the Leader of the Opposition's watch. The Leader of the Opposition had Trio, had Storm Financial and had Opes Prime. The Leader of the Opposition, who was then the financial services minister of this country, was running around saying our banks were the best in the world. The Leader of the Opposition, who was then the financial services minister, said our regulators were the best in the world. The Leader of the Opposition, who was then the financial services minister, didn't call the royal commission. When we came to government, we called the Murray financial systems inquiry and we have been implementing the recommendations ever since. Now, with the Hayne royal commission, we're implementing its recommendations too.

National Security

Mr RICK WILSON (O'Connor) (14:37): My question is to the Attorney-General. Will the Attorney-General update the House on the impact on the justice system of weakened border protection?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General) (14:37): The members opposite want to make a bit of noise because they voted 22 times in the Senate for a bill that would have radically limited the minister's discretion over transfers, even the transfers of serious criminals. We said that that was absolutely untenable. A few days ago, they produced advice that said that wasn't a problem; it wasn't a problem according to their advice. We argued that you could not have no ministerial discretion to exclude people who perpetrated murder or serious sexual assault from transfer to this country. Labor then recognised that problem, and they produced a new, but not so different, amendment last night. The new amendment still radically decreases the minister's discretion. It does not solve the problem. It only retains some discretion if the person has been sentenced for a serious criminal offence because the transfer would expose the Australian community to a serious risk of criminal conduct.

There are very serious problems with that amendment that was pushed through this House last night. We never got the opportunity to debate those problems because they, with the help of the Greens, gagged debate on those serious issues. What was it that you did not want to talk about last night? There is no discretion for this government or our minister to stop the transfer of a person who is being investigated for, charged with, on trial for or even awaiting a sentence for a serious criminal offence. This isn't a hypothetical issue. We are well aware of the reporting of a potential transferee on Manus Island who is charged with four counts of sexual penetration of a minor under the PNG summary offences and crimes against children act. We are aware of another potential transferee who has been charged with an indecent act with a child under 16, who is detained in Nauru and yet to have their first court appearance. There is another potential transferee who is charged with the assault of a treating psychiatrist. None of those cases could result in the minister exercising the discretion to stop the transfer.

Just think about what we were prevented from debating last night. Two doctors could initiate a process, where the minister has no discretion, to bring someone to Australia who is charged with assaulting a doctor offshore to get further assessment by a doctor onshore, and we could not stop that transfer. That is absolute madness and something that we were stopped fulsomely debating last night. What a ridiculous situation that you gagged debate and rammed through such an outrageous situation where ministerial discretion is reduced over serious criminality.

If they had such a big win last night on border protection, why not a single question on it today? If it was such a magnificent evening for you, the victory that dare no speak its name—
(*Time expired*)

Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (14:40): My question is to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister regret describing the royal commission as a populist whinge? Given that this sort of attitude delayed the royal commission for almost two years, why is the Prime Minister

repeating his mistake by refusing to schedule extra sittings to implement recommendations of the royal commission?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:40): Does the member for Hotham regret hitting 5,000 people in her electorate with a retirees tax? Does the member for Hotham regret that? The fact of the matter is that we are the only side of politics in this place that have provided a formal and comprehensive response to the royal commission.

The member for Hotham said that they were going to implement every single recommendation, yet the Australian people have seen nothing. They have seen nothing other than an empty press release with no details. What do you say to the 17,000 mortgage brokers across this country, including in your electorate, and the 26,000 people they employ? When do you start to end their businesses? When do you put them out of work? When do you give a big free kick to the banks? Only the coalition, only the Liberal and National parties in government, are delivering a formal, comprehensive response to the banking royal commission, taking action on all 76 recommendations.

Coalition Government

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (14:42): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House as to how the government is keeping Australians safe and guaranteeing essential services? Why is it important to stay the course and continue to invest in measures to keep Australians safe?

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of The Nationals) (14:42): If what happened in this House yesterday was so important, and what happened over in the Senate last night was so important as well, why not a single question in question time from those opposite? They are embarrassed. They are absolutely embarrassed. We've got the member for Gorton, the member Watson and the good old member for McMahon, who were former members for immigration—

Mr Khalil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wills is warned.

Mr McCORMACK: They were embarrassing on their watch. We saw 50,000 people arrive on 800 boats. We saw 1,200 people die at sea. They are weak on border protection. They are weak on the economy. What they want to do is jack taxes up—\$200 billion worth of new taxes. Thank you to the member for Dawson for his question.

Labor are focusing on political point scoring about the banking royal commission. I don't know why. The member for Maribyrnong had six long years. He was assistant treasurer. He was minister for financial services in the Gillard-Rudd years and not once did he ever show any interest in a royal commission then. Why is he so interested in it now? But that's all they're interested in.

The member for Dawson is interested in national security. The member for Dawson is interested in infrastructure. We are committed to the safety and security of the travelling public. Upgrading security screening technology at airports is one of the most effective changes that we can make and we are making it. Equipment upgrades include advanced X-ray and body scanning technology. The member for Dawson understands how important this is.

Our program includes investment to ensure regional airports are made safer. I don't know why the members opposite find that amusing, but regional airports need that safety and security. Working with the airports and stakeholders, we are providing \$50 million in funding to support eligible regional airports to purchase or upgrade equipment. Funding for equipment will be distributed through the Regional Airport Security Screening Fund grants program. Funding will vary from airport to airport, depending on their individual requirements, because no two airports in Australia are the same. Certainly, no two regional airports are the same. It's not 'one size fits all'.

But regional airports and securing the safety of the travelling public are only one part of keeping Australians safe. Another part is keeping our borders safe—and we as Liberals and Nationals are doing just that—and another is investments in such things as the Mackay Ring Road. Another is essential services. You can have essential services when you have a strong economy, and we have a strong economy. We are improving health outcomes and putting more drugs on the PBS—life-saving drugs, such as Orkambi for cystic fibrosis, Lynparza for ovarian cancer, and the various other cancer drugs that the Minister for Health has been able to put on the PBS because we've got a strong economy. What do those opposite stand for? Two hundred billion dollars in new taxes.

Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm reports that he was the last senior member of the government holding out against having a banking royal commission? Can he also confirm that he is the key senior member of the government now holding out against extra sittings of the parliament to finally implement the recommendations of the royal commission that he delayed?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:46): Can the member for McMahon confirm that there are 3,000 retirees in his electorate who he's told, 'Don't vote for Labor'? The reality is the member for McMahon has had an opportunity to provide to the Australian people a comprehensive, formal response to the banking royal commission. Despite all the huff and the puff about how important this is, he's been left wanting. He's been left wanting with empty hands. What is the member for McMahon saying to the 17,000 mortgage brokers across the country—including those in his electorate—employing 26,000 people? Is he saying that he will back the government and the judgement of the governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia who said that we were right to be cautious about changing the fee model for mortgage brokers? Or is he going to back the member for Hotham who said, 'We are going to accept and implement every single recommendation'?

The reality is not only was the member for McMahon a complete failure as the minister for border protection with 25,000 boats, but now, as shadow Treasurer, he has come up with a genius plan to slug Australians with \$200 billion of taxes, including a retirees tax. And he's offended over one million Australians by telling them, 'If you don't like the policy, don't vote for Labor.' That was the most arrogant dismissal of the real concerns of over one million Australians. And it's a display of arrogance that the Leader of the Opposition has not dared repeat to back up his shadow Treasurer. And the question is: how long will it be before the Labor Party crab-walks away from its retirees tax? And if they don't, then over one million Australians will make their feelings known at the ballot box.

Australian Defence Force

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (14:48): Would the defence minister update the House on how the government is protecting Australians and our national sovereignty through appropriate investment in the Australian Defence Force and in the capability that they rely upon? How does the government's approach to protecting our national security and national sovereignty differ from other approaches?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Defence and Leader of the House) (14:48): I thank the member for Menzies for his question. I can confirm with him that the government continues to invest in significant military capability. Just on Monday, we signed a strategic partnering agreement with France and Naval Group to deliver the 12 submarines—a \$50 billion project with 12 submarines to be built here in Australia, using Australian workers, Australian steel and Australian know-how. And since the parliament rose last December, we have also taken charge of the first two of our Joint Strike Fighters, the F-35As, as part of an \$18.5 billion program delivering 72 F-35As to the Australian Air Force. On this side of the House, we know that defence capability is a very important priority of any government. We understand national security and we understand defence, and you can trust this side of the House to deliver on national security and on defence.

In fact, you can trust us on this side of the House to get to two per cent of GDP being spent on defence by 2020—a year earlier than we promised. The other side of the House, when they were last in government, managed to get defence spending down to 1.56 per cent of GDP—the lowest level since 1938, the lowest level since the last year of appeasement. Since the Second World War, we are investing more in our military capability than any government in our peacetime history, and on this side of the House we're very proud of that.

But I was pleased when I was reading the consultative draft of the Labor Party's National Policy Forum, which was to be debated in Adelaide at their national conference, to see at article 44 that Labor is committed to achieving and maintaining spending on defence at two per cent of GDP—good news, I thought. I thought, 'The shadow minister for defence has finally had a win! He doesn't have much of a profile, but he's finally had a win!' But imagine my dismay when I read the entire document as it was presented at the national policy conference of the Labor Party. Their entire platform, their final document, and do you know what? No. 44, about that two per cent of GDP, didn't make it into the final document. It was in the consultative draft; it didn't make it into the final document. So the Labor Party is not committed to two per cent of GDP being spent on defence. The shadow minister for defence lost that argument to the Left. The Left nobbled national security yet again in the Labor Party's platform.

Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (14:51): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why does the Prime Minister find it so hard to just admit that he got it wrong when he blocked the royal commission? Why is he repeating the same mistake with his part-time parliament, which will stop recommendations of the royal commission being implemented before the election?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister) (14:52): I thank the member for her question, and I refer her to my answer on this yesterday, but I am very surprised that the member for

Herbert would come in here and not ask me about what we're doing to support the people of Townsville during the floods.

Australian Defence Force

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (14:52): My question is to the Minister for Defence Personnel. Will the minister update the House on the role played by the Australian Defence Force in our strong, consistent approach to border security? What impact have previous approaches to border security had on the men and women of the Australian Defence Force?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Deputy Leader of the House) (14:53): I want to thank the member for Canning for his question and acknowledge his work in representing the veterans in Western Australia. He certainly understands their issues and is in this place a very strong champion of their issues.

Operation Resolute is the ADF's contribution to Australia's civil maritime security in support of Operation Sovereign Borders. Around 350 ADF personnel support Operation Resolute. This figure may vary from time to time, depending on the number of assets that are deployed at any given time. Since 1999, a total of 26,000 of Australia's ADF personnel have deployed on border protection operations. What concerns me is that Labor's policies when they were in government effectively sent a green light to the people smugglers and had a real impact on the men and women of the ADF. Under Labor, the operational tempo was extreme, placing our personnel in danger and exposing them to horrific scenes.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr CHESTER: Those opposite may complain, but this is a matter of fact. This was the unseen cost of the border protection policy failure under Labor. Remember, as we've heard again today, that over 50,000 people arrived in over 800 boats and, tragically, there were 1,200 deaths at sea that we know of. As a local member and also as a minister I have the rare privilege of spending time with our personnel, both in training and while on deployments. But, sadly, I also have to sit with serving members and veterans who have been traumatised by their experiences, including personnel who were exposed to the traumas of boarding unseaworthy vessels, recovering drowned men, women and children. We know that Navy personnel had to recover bodies, many of which had been in the water for days and were decomposing. Navy personnel talked to me of the sensory overload—the smell of diesel fuel, vomit and rotting wood; children screaming; and adults crying. I know this is confronting and sickening, but it's true. This is not about politics. There is nothing humane about policies that lead to people drowning at sea.

Dr Mike Kelly interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Eden-Monaro has already been warned twice.

Mr CHESTER: There is nothing humane about sending our ADF personnel to pick up the pieces. There is nothing humane about subjecting them and their families to the nightmares that have followed. The emotional and the physical impact of exposure to these experiences can have and has had long-term consequences for some veterans and their families. I simply take this opportunity to thank them for their service and to thank them for keeping us safe and protecting our borders. Our Defence Force members and their families will carry an enormous burden if the people smugglers get back into business. I take this

opportunity to advise both our current and former serving members and their families that the Open Arms counselling service is available for free support 24 hours a day seven days a week on 1800011046.

Coalition Government

Ms LAMB (Longman) (14:56): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why is the Prime Minister stubbornly refusing to schedule extra sitting days of the parliament? Doesn't this just show that this Prime Minister will always side with the top end of town?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:56): The member for Longman might want to listen to the advice of the Law Council of Australia. The member for Longman might want to support the legislation that is currently before the parliament to implement the Hayne royal commission findings. The member for Longman may want to acquaint herself with the work that we're doing in relation to financial counselling and setting up a farm debt mediation scheme. The member for Longman might want to know about the APRA capability review that we have announced under the leadership of Graeme Samuel. The member for Longman might want to have a word to the member for McMahon and the member for Hotham and tell them to get their skates on and come up with a response to the royal commission report, which they've had for more than a week. The member for Longman might be more interested in serving her constituents with a real response to the royal commission rather than the political stunts that we have seen from those opposite. The member for Longman might want to apologise to the 4,356 constituents in her electorate who the member for McMahon said don't vote for Labor, because they don't want a retirees tax. The member for Longman might want to know the facts before she gets up in this place and makes it very clear that she's not interested in real outcomes for real Australians.

National Security

Mr JOYCE (New England) (14:58): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister advise the House what measures the government has taken to address the decision of the parliament, moved and supported by the Australian Labor Party and the Independents, to weaken Australia's border protection regime?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister) (14:58): I thank the member for the question. It's something I thought the opposition might ask me today, but they clearly have no interest in the consequences of the weakness that they displayed in this chamber yesterday.

I understand that last night the Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs met with the Operation Sovereign Borders personnel. This morning the National Security Committee of cabinet was convened to address this very question. We took the advice and recommendations of our security and border protection agencies—something the leader of the Labor Party failed to do when he came into this place yesterday and wilfully weakened Australia's border protection regime. The recommendations we have taken are to strengthen the posturing, positioning and resources of Operation Sovereign Borders, as required by those who advised us to do so. Secondly, we have commenced the process of reopening Christmas Island—as recommended we do—to deal with any possible future arrivals as well as any transfers that may now take place. I have also asked the home affairs department to provide advice on the implementation of the measures

that were set out in the parliament yesterday and were voted upon, moved and supported by the Labor Party in defiance of the national security advice that they were very well aware of.

There is an eerie ring to what we are hearing. The Leader of the Labor Party stood here last night and he talked about getting the balance right on border protection. I remembered that phrase very clearly because there was another Leader of the Labor Party who said just that. It was Kevin Rudd. He said:

Our policy is clear-cut. It's balanced ... we've got that balance right.

It's a balance that led to 800 boats, 50,000 arrivals, 1,200 people dead at sea, all on the heads of those who sit opposite, all on their heads—on your head, your head, your head and your head! They were all there, willing it on. I remind him of the words of Senator Evans, the Minister for Immigration under the Labor Party, who said: 'The scrapping of TPVs fulfils the Rudd government's commitment to providing a fair and equitable outcome.'

Mr Watts interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gellibrand is warned!

Mr MORRISON: He said:

...the measure would not compromise the Government's commitment to protecting Australia's borders. He said that on 13 May 2008. And we know what followed. That set the boats running again.

This leader of the Labor Party does not have the strength to lead this country, to keep Australians safe and secure, and he demonstrated his weakness in this place yesterday, beyond measure. The Australian people have got this man's number. It comes up a big, fat zero when it comes to strength to secure our borders.

Mr Morrison interjecting—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Prime Minister and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I'm trying to call the next question. The member for Cowan has the call.

Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry

Dr ALY (Cowan) (15:01): My question is to the Prime Minister: Why is the government claiming that the recommendations of the banking royal commission can't be implemented before the election while, yesterday, saying it was possible to start legislating the recommendations? Isn't the truth that this government just can't be trusted to implement the recommendations of the royal commission?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (15:02): I'd say to the member for Cowan that she should have a word to the member for McMahon and tell him to get his skates on and produce a response to the royal commission. From those opposite we've had zip, zero, nada, nothing, zilch! Where is the Labor Party's response to the royal commission? All we have seen is stunts—the Leader of the Opposition, the Evel Knievel of Australian politics, the stunt master.

On this side of the House, we have delivered a 40-page comprehensive response to the royal commission. We are taking action on all 76 recommendations. The Labor Party are telling 17,000 mortgage brokers employing 26,000 people that they don't care about their

future. They want to end their business model and they want to send their business to the big banks.

I'd just say to the member for Cowan that if she was really interested in focusing on those people across her electorate—the 3,173 people who will be hit by Labor's retirees tax and the 9,443 people in Cowan who will be hit by Labor's housing tax—if she really cared for her constituents she would tell the Labor Party to drop those bad policies and produce a formal response to the banking royal commission.

Tasmania: Bushfires

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (15:03): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, as you acknowledged yesterday, the devastating Tasmanian bushfires are taking a dreadful toll on the community and environment, particularly in the World Heritage area. Indeed, the Tasmanian government is concerned that the national disaster relief and recovery arrangements will not cover all of the costs, which led Premier Will Hodgman to write to you, on 25 January, requesting that the government make an extra contribution outside of the normal arrangements. Prime Minister, do you agree to the Tasmanian Premier's request, and what other assistance will the federal government provide to Tasmania to help deal with the damage bill from these terrible fires?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister) (15:04): I thank the member for his question on a matter that I know is of extreme importance to his community and communities all across Tasmania. I was able to be with Premier Hodgman down in the Huon Valley. We met with emergency workers and firefighters, and with those in the response centres and evacuation centres. On 6 February I wrote to him and told him that our thoughts were with those communities impacted by the recent fires and commended the efforts of the firefighting response.

As you know, Mr Speaker, we've had around 1,500 firefighters rotating throughout Tasmania over this period of time, particularly in those deep wilderness areas. The specialist firefighting support that has come out of New Zealand has been astonishing and fantastic, and I want to thank, in particular, Prime Minister Ardern and the New Zealand government for their support.

Assistance, including to cover certain firefighting costs, has already been provided under the jointly funded Commonwealth-state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements in the local government areas of the Central Highlands, Derwent Valley, Huon Valley and West Coast. Assistance under the DRFA may also be extended in exceptional circumstances to cover the costs of protecting cultural and environmental assets, similar to that provided during the January 2016 Tasmanian bushfire recovery response.

Our government stands ready to assist Tasmania with any assistance that may be required in relation to any ongoing bushfires. In this context, I've offered Premier Hodgman the assistance of an Emergency Management Australia recovery liaison officer to help them prepare their request for additional recovery assistance—in other words, working with them to work out what the ask is so that we can then seek to meet that ask. I have committed to fast-track any request for assistance as a matter of priority to aid the recovery of Tasmanian communities.

I will also say this: with the significant fires that have ravaged Tasmania, it's important for Australians to know that places like, for example, the Walls of Jerusalem and Cradle Mountain—all of these incredible natural assets—have been untouched by those fires. As was said by a member from the opposition yesterday, the best way you can help Tasmania is to go to Tasmania. It is beautiful. The people are just as friendly, the coffee is just as good, and the food is just as fantastic. There are large areas of Tasmania that have not been affected by those fires, and I would very much encourage Australians to take the opportunity to go there.

I've also spoken directly to the Premier about what will be needed to support the recovery of the tourism sector operators in the affected areas. I met with some of them with the Premier when I was there recently. We're working together through our offices to work up a plan with the Tasmanian government about how we can provide that support. But that is a plan that will have to come from the ground up, and I would invite the member to be very much a part of that.

Domestic and Family Violence

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Families and Social Services. Will the minister update the House on how the government is keeping Australians safe and secure by combating violence against women and keeping women and children safe in their homes? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches that would not have the same outcomes for vulnerable women and children?

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Families and Social Services) (15:07): I thank the member for North Sydney for his question. He's been a strong champion on the need for appropriate support for women and children facing the threat of domestic violence. He's worked closely with Mary's House and Delvena in his electorate, and through that experience he is acutely aware of the shortage of emergency accommodation for women escaping domestic violence—as indeed am I from my involvement with the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter in my electorate of Bradfield.

The facts are shocking. Eight women are hospitalised every day in Australia due to domestic violence. When a woman needs to leave her home because of the threat of domestic violence, very often she has virtually no time to prepare. She may have jumped in the car with just the clothes on her back. She may have bundled the kids in the car as well. Then the question is: where does she go? There is a shortage of emergency accommodation, which is why the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday was so important.

The Prime Minister committed, as part of a \$78 million commitment, that \$60 million would be provided over three years for capital grants to eligible organisations to provide new or expanded emergency accommodation facilities. The grant program will encourage contributions from other levels of government and from private and philanthropic sources. It's estimated that this will create some 450 additional places, and some 6½ thousand people a year are likely to be able to find refuge in this emergency accommodation. This funding of \$78 million, on top of the additional funding we've committed—for example, \$10.9 million in November last year, additional funding for 1800RESPECT—is possible because of our strong budgetary management. When we make this commitment, we know we can pay for it.

I'm asked if there are any other approaches. I'll tell you, Mr Speaker. You know that when the member for Kooyong stands up in a few weeks time and announces a surplus the people

of Australia can be confident that surplus will be delivered. That's in very stark contrast to when the member for Lilley stood up and announced a surplus, which Labor comprehensively failed to deliver not once, not twice, but four times. A strong budget is absolutely critical to being able to deliver the services that Australians rely upon—services like emergency accommodation for domestic violence and services across the breadth of my portfolio, across health and across social services. Our Liberal-National government can be relied upon to maintain a strong budget and a strong economy and, therefore, to dependably fund the services that Australians rely on.

Mr Morrison: On that note, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

BUSINESS

Federation Chamber

The SPEAKER (15:11): I advise the House that the Deputy Speaker has fixed Thursday, 14 February 2019, at 11 am as the time for the next meeting for the Federation Chamber, unless an alternative day or hour is fixed.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Defence and Leader of the House) (15:11): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

PRIVILEGE

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:11): Mr Speaker, I wish to raise a matter of privilege under standing order 51 in relation to the conduct of the member for Goldstein as the chair of the House Standing Committee on Economics—specifically, his conduct in relation to the committee's current inquiry into the implications of removing refundable franking credits.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business may proceed.

Mr BURKE: In raising this issue, Mr Speaker, I'm also raising the matter with respect to the administration of the House and to the Speaker's role in protecting the dignity of the House. I won't go through all of the information twice but wish to raise it in both ways.

As the House has not been sitting for some time, some of these circumstances have only come to light today and I have only now been able to properly consider all the relevant material. I'm, therefore, raising this matter at the earliest opportunity. As you would be aware, the practice around raising a matter of privilege requires me to set out the matter in some detail. I will try to be as brief as possible, although there is a lot of conduct to refer to.

The first item is the conference call. Mr Geoff Wilson of Wilson Asset Management has been perhaps the most vocal critic of Labor's policy to remove refundable franking credits for those who don't pay any income tax. This is the subject of the committee's inquiry. On or before 7 September 2018 and before the Treasurer had even asked the committee to undertake its inquiry, Wilson Asset Management announced that it would hold a shareholder presentation in Sydney at the Westin Hotel at 1 Martin Place, Sydney, on 20 November 2018. On 25 September 2018, Mr Geoff Wilson of Wilson Asset Management reportedly conducted an investor conference call, the audio of which is publicly available. During that conference

call, Mr Geoff Wilson said, 'I was actually talking to the chairman of the Senate committee for this hearing into franking and I was saying it'd be nice if we could have—if one of the hearings could be on a day that we're doing our roadshow. Then we could do a little protest, we could have our placards and we could all walk down.'

On 20 November 2018, the committee did hold a public hearing of the inquiry—at the Law Society of New South Wales at 170 Phillip Street, Sydney. The committee's public hearing occurred on the same day and some 400 metres away from the shareholders' presentation organised by Mr Geoff Wilson. This raises a question as to whether the chair organised the committee's hearing schedule and locations at the behest of a person with a vested interest in the inquiry. This also raises a question as to whether the actions of the chair amount to an improper interference with the free exercise of his own committee's authority or functions such as to constitute a contempt of the House.

The next issue relates to conflict of interest. The fact that it has since been revealed that the chair is also a shareholder in two Wilson Asset Management investments raises other concerns about his conduct. It also raises questions over the chair's reported failure to declare this obvious conflict of interest to the committee, including when Mr Geoff Wilson appeared before a public hearing of the committee on 30 November 2018 while it was being chaired by the member for Goldstein. I note that at one point during the hearing Mr Geoff Wilson spoke about his shareholders, and the chair even then failed to declare his obvious conflict of interest. Again, this raises the question as to whether the chair's actions amount to an improper interference with the free exercise of his own committee's functions so as to constitute a contempt of the House: by chairing a hearing and asking questions of a committee witness when other committee members and, indeed, the people attending the hearing were not aware that he had a pecuniary interest in investments run by that witness. It also raises the question whether the chair is in breach of standing order 231—

Mr Falinski interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will pause. Member for Mackellar, this is a serious matter that is being raised and I'm trying to listen to it.

Mr BURKE: It also raises the question whether the chair is in breach of standing order 231, which states:

... no Member may sit on a committee if he or she has a particular direct pecuniary interest in a matter under inquiry by the committee.

One of the Wilson Asset Management investments which Mr Wilson holds is through his self-managed superannuation fund, meaning that in his retirement Mr Wilson may be impacted by the very policy his committee is inquiring into.

The next issue concerns the website. In or about November 2018, the chair authorised a website as the 'chair of Standing Committee on Economics'. Mr Geoff Wilson has since admitted that he, along with a number of unnamed individuals, personally contributed to the cost of that website. The website includes the ability to submit to the committee a prefilled submission—which states it is against Labor's policy—and begins with, 'Attention: Tim Wilson MP, Chair'. Clearly this will mean that a number of the submissions received by the committee will have been written by the chair of the committee to himself, and that when the committee writes its report it will use evidence written by the chair. The fact that submissions

to the committee are lodged through a website partly funded by a person with a vested interest in the chair's inquiry is also concerning. Again, this raises the question as to whether the chair's actions amount to an improper interference with the free exercise of his own committee's functions: the committee is being asked to assess evidence addressed to the chair which he himself wrote and which has been submitted through a website partly funded by a person with a vested interest in the chair's inquiry.

Equally concerning is that, from when the chair's website was set up until the beginning of February this year, people could only register to attend a public hearing of the inquiry on the website by agreeing to be registered for a Wilson Asset Management petition against Labor's policy. Fortunately, this has since been resolved. However, this again raises a question as to whether the chair improperly interfered with the free exercise of his own committee's functions such as to constitute a contempt of the House—that is, by only allowing people to register to attend a public hearing of the inquiry if they agreed to sign a Wilson Asset Management petition against Labor's policy. This website also continues to create the misleading impression that, in order to attend, people are required to register, even though that is not the case.

These circumstances are concerning not only because it meant that, in order to register to attend a public hearing of a parliamentary committee, people were forced to provide their private information to a commercial enterprise but also because it would likely have discouraged people who held a different view to that outlined in the petition from attending. It also may have the effect of continuing to discourage people more generally from attending. As such, in its deliberations, the committee will be forced to rely on evidence which has been prejudiced by actions of the chair. Again, this raises the question as to whether the chair has improperly interfered with the free exercise of his committee's functions.

The website also collects a large amount of private information from people who either registered to attend a public hearing, agreed to be contacted about future activities, or registered for the petition. This information is collected on a website which states it is authorised by the chair of the Standing Committee on Economics but is not operated by the committee's secretariat and is, in fact, partly funded by Mr Geoff Wilson. It is not clear who has access or who will have access to this information collected by the member for Goldstein in his capacity as chair.

It is also reported that at a public hearing of the inquiry on 30 January this year the chair did nothing when the member for Fisher called for people to join the Liberal Party while he was giving evidence to the committee, and then reportedly allowed the handing out of Liberal Party membership forms to people at the hearing.

The member for Mackellar has also used the member for Goldstein's position as the chair to encourage people to attend a Liberal Party fundraiser, and the chair allowed the member for Mackellar to have A-frames directly outside the public hearing of the committee, at the Dee Why RSL Club, printed with the member's face, name and the words 'Liberal Mackellar'.

I also note that, contrary to the House resolution on the registration of members' interests, it is reported today that the member for Goldstein failed to declare until today that he had been a director and shareholder of a particular company. In relation to this matter, I understand the member for Isaacs has, in accordance with practice, written directly to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests.

To assist you in considering this matter, I provide you—as is normal practice—with a number of documents. I ask you to consider giving precedence to a motion to refer any or all of these matters to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests. Additionally, for the matters I have raised, I ask you to consider and report back to the House as to any impact on the dignity of the parliament and its committee system. I thank you for your consideration of this matter.

The SPEAKER: Just before I make a short preliminary statement, I just say to the Manager of Opposition Business to assist me in the consideration of this matter. I've seen media reports that certain aspects of the matters the Manager of Opposition Business went through have been referred to the Australian Federal Police. I'd like to confirm whether that's the case and, either through the Manager of Opposition Business or anyone else who may have been part of that referral, which aspects have been referred.

Mr BURKE: I'm not part of that referral, but I will endeavour to find that information, if it's available to me, and provide it directly to you.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Manager of Opposition Business. In the usual way, I'll carefully consider the matters that have been raised by the Manager of Opposition Business and I'll report back to the House in due course on the privileges issues that have been raised. At that time, I'll also address what essentially are questions to me about administration of the House.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr MARLES (Corio) (15:22): Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a matter of personal explanation.

The SPEAKER: Does the honourable member for Corio claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr MARLES: I do.

The SPEAKER: The member for Corio may proceed.

Mr MARLES: During question time the Minister for Defence referred to paragraph 44 of the draft ALP platform, which provided Labor's commitment to a two per cent spend on GDP. He asserted that this being contained in the draft platform indicated that I'd had a win and that the absence of this in the final platform suggested that I'd had a subsequent loss. Whilst it is true that paragraph 44 has been changed in the final platform of the ALP, paragraph 49 of the ALP platform states:

Labor is committed to achieving and maintaining spending on defence at two per cent of GDP.

So I would like to assure you, Mr Speaker, and, through you, the Minister for Defence, that the win was sustained.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides! I thank the member for Corio for correcting that. No doubt, he and the Leader of the House can discuss it on Friday.

BILLS**Aged Care Amendment (Movement of Provisionally Allocated Places) Bill 2019****Explanatory Memorandum**

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care and Minister for Indigenous Health) (15:24): by leave—I present the explanatory memorandum to the Aged Care Amendment (Movement of Provisionally Allocated Places) Bill 2019.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**Economy**

The SPEAKER (15:24): I have received a letter from the honourable member for McMahon proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The economy not working for everyday Australians.

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

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

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:24): Like you, Mr Speaker, I've been in this House for some years now, and I've had the pleasure of witnessing some important moments in this House over the last 15 years or so. There is one that stands in my memory—it's not a particularly pleasant moment, but one I remember particularly well. Some years ago I was sitting in my spot, where the member for Batman is currently sitting, and I heard the then Prime Minister of Australia, John Winston Howard, stand at the dispatch box and utter some immortal words. I remember being quite shocked when I was sitting where the member for Batman is sitting and I heard the Australian Prime Minister of the day say, 'Australian working families have never been better off.' The Australian people had a different view, and they expressed that view at the ballot box at the next opportunity.

I'm reminded of that incident because every time this Prime Minister and his current Treasurer tell the Australian people how well their economic plan is working they get a similar reaction from Australians right across the country, who say, 'It's not working for me.' It's not working for working Australians. It's not working for those who put all their efforts into their day-to-day working lives and receive no wage increase for it and, in many cases, receive a pay cut. Every time the Prime Minister and Treasurer arrogantly boast about how their plan is working, they underline how out of touch they are with the needs of ordinary Australians. They underline just how they get it wrong with their economic policies. Australians know that everything is going up except for their wages, and they know this economy is not working for them. And they know that their living standards aren't improving. We've seen more evidence of that in recent weeks.

We've seen evidence released by the Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods, which has found that, over the last three years, living costs have outstripped growth in wages by almost three per cent, by 2.9 per cent. This means that, under the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison governments, Australian households have experienced the worst cost-of-living crunch in more than 30 years. This has occurred on the watch of these Prime Ministers and these successive Treasurers. The same analysis shows that, since 2013,

when this government came to office, living standards have gone backwards by 1.2 per cent. That compares with a 7.6 per cent increase under the previous, Labor government, in very difficult international circumstances. That's the difference of economic approach between the two governments.

Driving this stagnation of living standards is the flat wages growth in Australia—indeed, in some instances, worse than flat wages growth. The fact of the matter is that wages growth has been stuck at its lowest rate on record, and private sector wages, in particular, which account for the majority of workers in the economy, have been growing at just 2.1 per cent, after having grown by less than two per cent for much of the last couple of years. Real wages, taking into account the cost of living, increased by just 1.3 per cent in the five years to 2018, compared with a nine per cent increase under the previous five years of Labor government. And, since 2013, nominal wages have been growing at two per cent a year, half the rate of the 2000s. So this is why this government gets it so wrong.

The previous Labor government understood the importance of wages growth, understood the importance of a fair industrial relations system. Not only does the Labor Party understand it; other experts understand it. The Governor of the Reserve Bank—appropriately, central bankers are very careful in their economic commentary; they're not radical, not extreme in their views, by and large—has said that 'slow wages growth is diminishing our sense of shared prosperity'. The Governor of the Reserve Bank understands the importance of wages growth going forward. He went on to say:

The best outcome is one in which a pick-up in wages growth is accompanied by stronger growth in labour productivity. That's because, ultimately, the basis for sustained growth in real wages is that we become more productive as a nation.

The Governor of the Reserve Bank has highlighted this time and time again as one of the key issues facing the nation.

I will say this: the slow wages growth in Australia is not just entirely an Australian phenomenon. Other countries have experienced slow wages growth as well. I don't hold the government responsible for every element of that. But the fact of the matter is that we are still doing worse than many other countries, countries we compare ourselves with. Until 2013, under the Labor government, wages growth in Australia was better than the OECD average. We were doing better than our competitors, comparable countries in the developed world. But since 2013 we've been doing worse than the OECD average. In 2013 something important happened: the government changed and the Liberal and National parties became the government. In fact, since then, in the OECD, in the developed world, there have been just five economies that have done worse than Australia in wages growth—just five out of the entire developed world. We were doing better than the developed world under the Labor government and we're doing worse under the Liberal government.

In fairness, when it comes to wages, I give them this: they do have a plan. We hear a lot about their plans. The government do have a plan: to cut the wages of the people who work on the weekends. That's their wages plan. That's the only plan they have when it comes to wages. Their only idea, their one big idea when it comes to wages, is to say, 'If you work on a Sunday, you deserve less. If you work on a Sunday, you shouldn't be paid as much as you were.' For a long time in Australia, you've been recognised for the work you do on Saturdays and Sundays. My dad worked every Sunday of my childhood. My dad worked every

Christmas Day and every Easter Sunday of my childhood. I remember once asking my dad, 'How come you work every Sunday? How come we can't spend time together on a Sunday?' and he said, 'Well, the time that I work on a Sunday, mate, puts food on the table for our family.' Just as my father deserved that extra pay for working on a Sunday, so does every Australian who works on a Sunday in 2019. They deserve it no less than him. They work just as hard as he did for all those years. Under this government, they see their wages going backwards and their living standards going backwards and they know this economy is not working for them, just as Australians know that right across the board.

There's an impact of the low wages growth and stagnation in living standards, and it affects our economy. We have the second-highest household debt in the developed world, and we should not be proud of that. Our household savings ratio has been falling. Do you know why? Because more and more Australian households are dipping into their savings just to get by, just to make ends meet, just to keep food on the table, because costs are going up and wages aren't following them, and the government thinks that's just fine. The government thinks that's okay. We see the impacts too in consumption. We've seen consumption growth come down. In fact, it's at its lowest rate in six years under this government's watch, because Australians aren't sharing fairly in our economy; they're not sharing fairly in the economic growth we have.

We'll hear a lot, I predict, in the contributions of government members about unemployment and employment growth. We welcome that debate too, because the fact of the matter is that, during the global financial crisis, we did better than the world and now we're doing worse on this government's watch. The fact of the matter is that we have 1.1 million Australians who are not getting as much work as they want and need. We have 1.1 million underemployed Australians who want more work and are happy to work longer hours but are simply not getting the work that they need and want.

We also know, and we agree with the Governor of the Reserve Bank, that one of the things we can do is improve productivity growth for the economy. Even on that measure, Australia is not doing as well as it should. We have seen seven out of the nine last productivity measurements not growing at all; they've been falling in relation to productivity growth. So this government can't point to any economic indicator which is working for most Australians. We're seeing record high underemployment and record low wages growth; we're seeing consumption growth falling and we're seeing productivity growth being flat as well. The government keeps saying, 'Just hold on a little bit longer. Could you just wait a little bit longer. Our plan will start to work soon.'

Ms Madeleine King: Any day now.

Mr BOWEN: 'Any day now, our plan will start to work.' The trouble is that they've been saying that for years. The then Treasurer, the now Prime Minister, said in 2017:

This has been a painful process but there are reasons to now be hopeful that we are near end of this adjustment process and consumers will start to see their real wages growing in line with productivity again ...

That was two years ago. That person was the Treasurer at the time; now he's the Prime Minister and he's still staying, 'Can you just hold on? One more election win and then it'll start to work for you.' There's a better way. We could have a government which believes in better and fairer tax cuts for 10 million Australians to give some cost-of-living relief. We could have

a government that believes that people who work on Sundays should have their wages restored to their rightful levels. A Labor government would do so. This is a government completely out of touch with the needs of the majority of Australians. The economy is not working for them under this government, but it will under a Labor government.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Treasurer) (15:34): This government will have an economic debate with those opposite any day of the week. We will compare the strength of the economy with the economy under the weakness of those opposite. We will compare the strength of our numbers with the weakness of theirs. We will compare the strength of the tax cuts of where we are heading as a country with the weakness of their \$200 billion in higher taxes.

This matter of public importance is all about the economy, and apparently those opposite think the economy is not working. Let me tell you what a strong economy delivers. In fact, I would encourage the opposition to get a copy of a booklet that shows what a strong economy looks like; it would outline what this government has achieved. Let's look at the definition of a strong economy. There were more than 1.2 million new jobs since we were elected in 2013. There were more than 100,000 new jobs for young Australians between the ages of 15 and 24 in 2017-18, the highest number of jobs in a financial year on record. That's strength. That is employment strength, compared with the weakness that \$200 billion of new taxes will bring under those opposite. A strong economy has delivered lower taxes for households, with more than 10 million taxpayers receiving tax relief in 2018-19. That's what we've delivered: tax cuts for 10 million Australians. That's strength. What do those here think \$200 billion of new taxes will deliver? It will deliver weakness.

A strong economy is lower taxes for 3.3 million small businesses, which are employing seven million Australians. Those opposite have vowed to wind back some elements of that tax. There is the lowest level of welfare dependency in 30 years. That's what a strong economy produced: the lowest level of welfare dependency in 30 years. There is an extra \$36 billion in schools funding over the next decade, which is, on average, a 62 per cent increase in funding per student. That's what a strong economy delivers. There is over \$5.7 billion for drought relief, recovery and resilience. That's what a strong economy delivers. There is record funding for both Medicare and a new hospital agreement, plus a \$1.25 billion community health and hospitals program. That's what a strong economy delivers.

There is a fully funded National Disability Insurance Scheme with no increase in the Medicare levy. I can only imagine that those opposite will now try to tell us that the NDIS was fully funded when they left office. Is that what I'm hearing? Because it wasn't. The so-called full funding by Labor for the NDIS also had two or three other things that that was apparently going to fund. A strong economy under this government has delivered a fully funded National Disability Insurance Scheme. A strong economy under this government has delivered more than 1,900 new life-changing medicines, worth over \$10 billion, listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. We can all remember, those who were here, one of Labor's latter budgets when they stopped funding any new medicines on the PBS. That is a fact. This government has put over 1,900 new medicines on the PBS. That is the dividend of a strong economy.

There is a record \$75 billion investment in major highway upgrades, local road projects, inland rail and a new airport in Western Sydney. That is \$75 billion in infrastructure to allow

Australians to get home sooner and safer. There is greater support and respect for our seniors and retirees, greatly expanded aged-care packages, record investment in defence and continued action to secure our borders. That's the dividend of a strong economy. That's what this government has delivered.

We all remember, those of us who were here, that fateful statement on budget night 2012-13, when the then member for Lilley, the then Treasurer said:

The four years of surpluses I announce tonight ...

2012-13 was minus \$21 billion in underlying cash. 2013-14 was \$48 billion in deficit. What happened to the four surpluses announced that night—

Dr Leigh: Announcing isn't good enough?

Mr ROBERT: You've got to deliver. You have to deliver and that's what this government has done. That's what the dividend of sound governance has done. We have delivered. And if we ever want to compare that to those opposite—four surpluses announced in that 2012-13 budget, only to find a final budget figure of minus \$21 billion, followed in 2013-14 by minus \$48 billion. The old adage is so true—we all know it: you cannot trust Labor with money, because sooner or later they will run out of it and they will come looking for yours.

The next thing, of course, is our plan for a stronger economy, to keep the economy strong. Labor have a plan for weakness—\$200 billion in new taxes. That is a plan for weakness, while we have a plan for strength.

Firstly, it is about ensuring government lives within its means, and that starts with not wasting taxpayers' money on pink batts and overpriced school halls.

Secondly, we are returning the budget to surplus. The Treasurer announced in MYEFO that the budget will return to surplus in 2019-20, with a bit over \$4 billion increasing to \$12 billion and then \$19 billion, with an underlying cash balance deficit this year of only \$5 billion. Compare that to \$48 billion in Labor's last year. Thirdly, it is about lower taxes. Australians will keep more of what they earn under the strength of the economic management by this government. They will lose more under the weakness of those opposite.

Thirdly, we will back small, family, and medium sized businesses to realise their potential and create even more jobs. And, of course, I introduced the bill this morning to see depreciation for small businesses increase from \$20,000 to \$25,000 as an instant asset write-off. We as a government can do those things because we have stewarded the economy sensibly. We have ensured that we are living within our means and we are backing in the strength of that economy now with a stronger plan.

Fourthly, we're ensuring affordable and reliable energy for householders and businesses by taking on the big energy companies, ensuring 24/7 reliable power and investing in hydro-electricity.

Fifthly, we'll continue to build the transport and technology infrastructure we need. This will help to strengthen the economy and connect people, products and markets. By busting congestion in our cities and building the infrastructure of regional Australia we'll make life easier for families—projects like off-ramps, exit 41 and exit 49 in the electorates of Fadden, my electorate, and Forde; \$1.2 billion for the M1, connecting the nation's sixth and third largest cities; and over \$110 million for the next phase of the light rail on the Gold Coast. These are some of the core projects that good stewardship of an economy can deliver.

Sixthly, we'll drive all of our industries forward. This means encouraging new technology and service industries and strengthening traditional sectors like resourcing, farming and manufacturing. We'll ensure all Australians of all generations have the skills they need for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow by funding more apprenticeships and with vocational education that responds to the strong economy we are driving forward. We will keep Australians working together by supporting productive, cooperative and law-abiding workplaces. Everyone knows we cannot afford a throwback to the lawlessness and conflict that comes when militant union bosses have too much power. No-one wants to go back there. No-one wants to go back to pattern bargaining. People want to move forward sensibly together.

We will keep big businesses accountable, and you've seen that by this government acting on all 76 recommendations of the royal commission—while we all wait for what the opposition is going to do. We will keep big banks accountable, and you've already seen that through BEAR, the Banking Executive Accountability Regime, and through the banking levy. You've seen what we've done with multinational anti-avoidance law and base erosion and profit shifting, where already we have booked, in cash, \$5.7 billion extra through taxation, including a billion dollars for the e-commerce—

Dr Leigh: Labour laws—

Mr ROBERT: The shadow assistant Treasurer said 'labour laws'. You voted against the MAAL, you goose. You voted against it. Lastly, we'll continue to expand opportunities for exporters to create even more jobs. That is the dividend from a strong economy. All that those opposite have to offer is more weakness.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (15:44): It's not often I pick up a copy of the Australian *Spectator*—hardly a bastion of sensible thought—but my eyes were drawn to an article on Monday by Victorian Liberal Party member Tom Waite. He wrote:

... making the case for necessary economic reform was once benchmark of Coalition political effectiveness. Now it has been placed in the 'too hard' basket in Cabinet discussions and leaves the Coalition economically directionless as it approaches the May federal election.

Mr Waite went on:

There is nothing more pertinent and embarrassing to highlight this absence of vision than the fact that almost half a year since the National Energy Guarantee failed to pass the Party Room, the Coalition still does not have a Federal energy policy.

He concluded:

Where the government continues to shoot itself in the foot, Labor presented itself ready-to-govern at its December national conference.

Even a stopped clock is right twice a day, and Mr Waite, I think, has hit the nail on the head. As the shadow Treasurer has said, we have in Australia inequality up and home ownership down; debt up and living standards down; power prices up and savings down. The things that should be going up are going down. The things that should be going down are going up.

Labor, leading the policy debate, have no better example than our willingness to tackle tax havens and multinational profit shifting. Tax havens are a scourge on the global tax system. They're used by money launderers and counterfeiters, kidnappers and illegal arms dealers. And they've been used by those who were meant to pay the \$4.5 million bill for cleaning up

Melbourne's Stawell tyre dump. They shifted the ownership of their company to a Panama based firm in order to escape their obligations. We now know that most of the money in tax havens is there in breach of other countries' tax laws. Two dollars in every five of multinational profits are channelled through tax havens. Among individuals, most of the money in tax havens is held by the top 0.01 per cent, the richest 1/10,000th of the population. Australian assets held in tax havens may be worth as much as \$100 billion.

Labor will get tough on tax havens. We'll stop people claiming a tax break for flying to tax havens to check on their investments. We'll require firms to disclose to their shareholders tax haven shenanigans as a material tax risk. We'll require government tenderers to disclose their country of tax domicile, we'll put in place a publicly accessible register of beneficial ownership and we'll develop guidelines for responsible tax haven investment by superannuation funds.

The fact is, Labor has a track record on tax. It was Labor's laws—opposed by the Liberals—that helped deliver the tax office's \$300 million win against Chevron in the High Court. It was Labor's laws—opposed by the Liberals—that underpinned the tax office's \$529 million settlement with BHP. And it was Labor's laws—opposed by the Liberals—that delivered the majority of the \$5.6 billion collected from multinationals. Remember that the government's Multinational Anti-Avoidance Law only applies from 1 July 2016.

The coalition only has falsifications. The member for Fadden keeps on persisting in misleading the House by claiming that Labor voted against the government's Multinational Anti-Avoidance Law. The fact is, we supported it in the House and we supported it in the Senate. But that's not all the member for Fadden is misleading people about. We've got an article in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* today relating to a donation given to the Fadden Forum by Shac Communications, a company that made a \$114,000 donation to the Fadden Forum months before it went into liquidation with debts of \$437,000, including \$355,000 to the tax office.

We've asked the Queensland Liberal-National Party, the Fadden Forum and the member for Fadden whether they will return the money, because the taxpayer is out of pocket and the Queensland Liberal-National Party has got money that would otherwise have gone to the taxpayer. It seems pretty reasonable to us that they would return that donation from Shac Communications. Do you know what the answer was from the member for Fadden to his local newspaper? He said, 'The Fadden Forum doesn't exist.' That's it. The Fadden Forum doesn't exist.

The website—helpfully archived before the member for Fadden had to give evidence to the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission—shows an organisation that apparently doesn't exist. It apparently didn't exist in 2013. The Liberals think they can wipe this down the memory hole, leaving the taxpayer out of pocket—and leaving the Queensland Liberal Party with money that should be in the taxpayer's pocket.

Mr IRONS (Swan—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (15:49): I rise to speak on the MPI. Like the member for Fadden, I've been here long enough to remember the wreckage that the Labor Party visited on the Australian economy in the six years that they were in government. But, firstly, on the member for Fenner's comment about the member for Fadden: the member for Fadden was completely exonerated, and I think that needs to be put on the record. If you want to muckrake about a member in this place, you should also add that he

was completely exonerated. If you'd like to repeat your muckraking outside this place, go for it.

As Liberals, we know that a strong economy is the foundation for everything else. This government has continued to keep our promise of ensuring that the economy works for those who want to have a go. But it has to work for everyday Australians as well, as the MPI says. We on this side of the House understand the economy. We understand that it isn't governments that create all the jobs, but we create the environment that gives employers and small and medium enterprises around the country the confidence to employ people. We've seen record employment over the last few years, and we've created 1.2 million jobs since 2013.

The three million small and medium-sized Australian businesses that employ around seven million Australians are the backbone of our economy. We on this side of the chamber understand that to help all Australians and to help our economy prosper we need to back these businesses every step of the way, instead of denigrating them every step of the way like those opposite do. I know that because I was in small business long enough to know that when the Liberal-National coalition was in government small businesses always prospered. But in 1992, during the Hawke-Keating government, when we had the recession we had to have, we saw companies, wholesale, go under. I'm lucky enough to remember that, but there are plenty of people who don't remember what the Labor Party visit upon the Australian economy every time they get into government. The coalition government is committed to keeping our economy strong, keeping Australians safe and keeping our borders strong.

Our plan for the Australian economy, which affects everyday Australians—and this is what the MPI is about—is to give tax relief to encourage and reward working Australians. Fact: over 10 million Australians received tax relief from 1 July. Fact: 4.4 million Australians received the full \$530 benefit of the new low- and middle-income tax offset. The government is backing small businesses to create more jobs. As I said, the government doesn't create the jobs; the businesses do. We create the healthy environment for businesses to grow and employ people. Fact: we've reduced the small-business tax rate from 30 per cent to 27.5 per cent, the lowest level in 50 years, and we're reducing it further to 25 per cent. Our plan is to work with the 1.2 million more Australians in jobs since 2013. We're fixing the budget, with a \$4.1 billion surplus in 2019-20, the first since the Howard government. Fact: cumulative surpluses over the next four years will be \$30.3 billion, around double what was announced in last year's budget. That is the work being done by the government to enhance the budget and the economy. We are making sure that everyday Australians are benefitting from the strong economy provided by the coalition government.

Now let's look at Labor's facts—and I was here when they had the carbon tax and the mining tax, and what great winners for revenue they were! We know that Labor are going to introduce \$200 billion worth of taxes. I don't know how that's going to work for everyday Australians. They will impose a wages tax on Australian workers of \$70 billion by repealing the government's legislated personal income tax cuts; reimpose the budget repair levy, around \$7 billion—an acknowledgment that Labor never plan to deliver a surplus; and impose new housing taxes on your property, around \$32 billion, which will hit mum-and-dad investors. They will create a risk for the housing market with their negative gearing plan and increase to capital gains tax by 50 per cent. That will affect everyday Australians. They will introduce a

new tax on retirement savings, a \$55 billion retiree tax, by removing refundability of franking credits for 900,000 Australians. They will also impose a \$19 million superannuation tax. That is another fact that will affect everyday Australians.

As the previous speaker said: under a Liberal coalition government the economy will be strong; under Labor it will be weak.

Dr ALY (Cowan) (15:54): I'd like to start by posing somewhat of a rhetorical question: do you think it's fair and reasonable that citizens of a progressive and developed country should expect that their government provides them with the minimum standard of living? Is it reasonable that Australians should expect that their children have access to quality public education, that they have quality health care, that they get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, that they have a secure job and a decent pension and that they get to share in the economic prosperity of our nation? I think it's fair. I think, yes, it is reasonable and it is fair. It is the true mark of a good government that it delivers an economy that works for all Australians, for everyday Australians. When it comes to the living standards of everyday Australians, on every measure of what that means, this government has failed tremendously.

What are those measures? I'll start by saying that living costs have outstripped wages growth by 2.9 per cent. Since 2013, living standards have gone backwards by 1.2 per cent compared to a 7.6 per cent increase when Labor was last in power. Wages have been stuck at the lowest rates on record, growing at just 2.1 per cent since 2013 and by less than two per cent for much of the last couple of years. Real wages have increased by a meagre 1.3 per cent in the last five years to June 2018 compared with a nine per cent increase in the previous five years under Labor. And household debt is now above 120 per cent of the GDP, the second highest in the developed world.

I could go on with statistics and numbers and figures, but, to be quite honest, numbers and figures don't mean anything to the everyday Australian out there. Let me instead talk about what this means for the people of Australia and for the people in my electorate of Cowan. Occasionally on a Friday I like to head down to the local pub to have a tall glass of water and a chat with some of the people in the pub and ask them: 'What are the issues that matter to you? What's life like for you at the moment? What are the things that you're worried about? What are the things that you love about Australia and what are the things that you wish you could change?'—those key issues. Was it the legislating of Australia Day that they talked about with their mates around the barbecue? And what about the Prime Minister's announcement to fund his Captain Cook fixation? Neither of those were key issues, no. The first and most common response I get is, 'Who is the Prime Minister and what happened to the other bloke, Malcolm?'

What matters to them is that they have not been paid. As subcontractors, they have to try to make ends meet as they wait for late payments from builders and other people who have hired them. Many subcontractors have had to fold up their businesses and are now looking for work. What matters to them is that their penalty rates have been cut and they can't get secure full-time work. What matters is that everything costs more, but their wages aren't keeping up. What matters is that their standard of living has been deteriorating. They know it and they hold this government accountable. There's been a lot of talk about a shift away from the LNP government as a protest vote. Let me tell you, when I'm out there talking to the people of Cowan, it's not a protest vote because of the disruption and disarray that we've seen over the

past few months; it's actually because of this government's failed policies and their inability to deliver for everyday Australians.

But we here in Labor we take a different approach. While the five years of Liberal cuts have damaged the economy—and their instability has made it worse—we on this side want to grow the economy. We want to ensure that growth is inclusive, and that every Australian shares in our prosperity and feels like the economy is working for them. So we have a plan, and our plan is about fixing schools and hospitals and looking after low- and middle-income Australians—the kinds of guys that I go and have a chat with at the pub every now and then. We're making record public investments in early childhood, public schools and hospitals. Bigger tax cuts for middle-income workers will deliver them a \$928 injection every year. *(Time expired)*

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite—Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services) (16:00): We just heard the member for Cowan say that numbers and figures don't mean anything to everyday Australians. First of all, I'm not quite sure why she contributed to this MPI, which is all about the economy. Australians actually believe that the figures and the numbers do matter. I'll go through some of those figures and numbers. It's all about what our government is delivering for this economy. We are building a stronger economy. If we build a stronger economy, we can deliver the services that Australians need, we can grow the jobs, we can invest in record infrastructure, which we are doing, and we can invest in record health and education. That's what our government is delivering in spades.

Australians care about those numbers. Australians care about the budget. Honestly, it's a disgrace that Labor still will not say sorry to Australians after promising to deliver four surpluses and not ever delivering one. It is with great pride that we are moving into surplus in this budget, which is one of the fundamental tenets of our economy. This is the first surplus since John Howard's government because we have spent the last five years fixing Labor's horrendous economic mess. Labor threw a wrecking ball through the economy.

Let me reflect on some of the numbers and achievements that do matter to Australians. More than 1.1 million new jobs have been created over five years. We are now heading past 1.2 million jobs. In the last month over 20,000 jobs were created, taking unemployment down to five per cent. In many parts of my electorate of Corangamite unemployment is well below the national average. This is the lowest level in over seven years. That is a number that Australians care about. We have made a pledge of 1.25 million new jobs in the next five years. We care about jobs, and that's why we are working so hard, we are backing small business and we are driving down the corporate tax rate. Labor to a large degree opposed these measures. We had to bring the Labor Party kicking and screaming to support our measures to drive down to 25 per cent the corporate tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses.

We saw an absolute shambles on the other side of this parliament. As we know, the Leader of the Opposition has already declared that he wants a war on business. We're seeing that in spades with some of the horrendous industrial relations policies that Labor has planned if it were ever elected. We have seen what the Leader of the Opposition would do to this nation. One of the most fundamental tenets of growing jobs is backing businesses—small, medium and large. We have seen the Labor Party time and time again turn its back on those who employ nearly 90 per cent of Australians. No matter what you try to do in this parliament, we

will not stop talking about the horrendous attack on older Australians by abolishing tax refunds for excess franking credits. Every older Australian knows how Labor is going to destroy and undermine their future plans and those of their children.

The \$200 billion extra of higher taxes will cripple the economy. There will be \$200 billion in higher taxes on retirees, homeowners, renters, small business owners, electricity and capital gains. These supertaxes will drive our economy backwards. We cannot be complacent about the great achievements we have seen in this economy—the record jobs growth, the record investment in health, education and infrastructure, and returning the budget to surplus. Those are huge achievements. We are fixing Labor's mess. We are really proud that when you build a strong economy you're able to deliver the services that Australians rightly deserve, right across the whole economy. These are everyday Australians, and they care about numbers, they care about jobs and they care about achievements. That's why we're asking all Australians to back us at the next election.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (16:05): I'm going to give you some figures. The member for Corangamite wanted some numbers: 1.75 million people—that is a pretty big number, and that's the number of people who are unemployed or underemployed in Australia. I've got to tell you, those numbers show the economy is not working for all Australians. What about another number—2.1 per cent? That would be wages growth, the lowest it has been. We've had two per cent and 2.1 per cent growth for years. Those numbers show how the other side of parliament has failed, and we know those are the numbers that really matter.

The economy is not working for a whole variety of people—for a start, young people. Let's take a look at how this economy is working for them. It takes longer for them to find a job when they finish their studies. There are more of them who are unemployed. An RBA study shows that the weaker demand for workers is having the single biggest impact on those young people. They are bearing the brunt. They're bearing the brunt of employers being unwilling to take people on. They're hanging on to the staff they've got. They're asking them to drop hours, but they're not taking new people on as fast as they were in previous years. It increases the unemployment and the underemployment rates, which, for young people, are twice the rate that they are for the rest of the labour market. You can't tell me that's an economy working for people. Then, when they do get jobs, so often these young people are not full-time, pay-as-you-go tax earners. They are self-employed, on ABNs. They're having to send out invoices, wait for payment; sometimes that payment doesn't come. They are their own small businesses without necessarily ever intending to set themselves up in that way. It's just that they have no choice. They have no paid holiday leave and they have no sick leave. That's a group the economy is not working for.

What about women? The University of Sydney's Professor Marian Baird has found that any growth in the economy disproportionately works in men's favour. Women are less likely to get a pay rise and more likely to get a pay cut, especially from cuts to penalty rates. As Professor Baird says:

If you are at the top of the labour market and doing well, you will continue to do well under the policy regime because the tax cuts will favour you and you will have more employability and bargaining skills so you can also fend for yourself better in that system.

But when you are in positions which are less secure, you have less bargaining power and security and your skills probably aren't as valuable to employers, and employers can churn employees more easily.

And that's where women fit. They are much more likely to not get a pay rise or to have to take a pay cut. So it doesn't work for women. But, when I look across at the other side, I guess I'm not really surprised that they don't know that. It doesn't work for young people; it doesn't work for women. We've basically got a bunch of middle-aged blokes on the other side, by and large. There are a few exceptions, like the member for Corangamite. No wonder the majority do not have any idea that the economy is not working for huge groups in our society.

The other group that is missing out very badly in this economy is small business. Young people don't have money to spend, and women are struggling with the family budget. I don't know how many people remember what it's like to get kids back to school. Many of those on our side have just gone through that. It's a few years—a lot—since I was doing that. But I always remember that, as a small business operator, there wasn't a lot of work in January for my sort of business. My clients were all on leave. So, by the time back-to-school came, things were pretty tight, and it usually took me a couple of months to catch up on all those extra expenses. That's exactly what families right across Australia experience with kids going back to school. So the economy is not working for so many families. Their household savings have fallen to the lowest rates in more than a decade. That means they haven't got wiggle room. Once you get through Christmas, the school holidays and the back-to-school period, things are pretty tight. It also means small businesses are not seeing the cash flow in my local community, in the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains. People just don't have the money to spend. That's where we're seeing the economy is not firing on all cylinders.

The other group who have actually gone backwards in this economy is pensioners. There has been a tax on pension indexation, \$1 billion has been cut from pensioner concessions, and the seniors supplement has been under attack by this government—so pensioners are doing it tough too. (*Time expired*)

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (16:10): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on this MPI. I come from a background of small business. In fact, I was in small business for 30 years before I came to this place. I went through the highs and lows of business, like all businesses do. I've always had my staff as my No. 1 asset. You always look after your staff. There's nothing worse than replacing a good staff member with someone unknown to your business. It's very time-consuming and quite stressful for the person who has to do the job of hiring someone new into your business. That does take its toll. That's why you've got to keep a strong economy. Small business does very well—there are 5.7 million employees working for small businesses with a turnover of under \$10 million. It's important to realise that if your farming community is going well, your small business is going well; if your big business is going well, your small business is going well; and everyone benefits and profits if the economy is going well. Our job as a government is to make sure the economy is going well. We must give incentives to small business to prosper. If small business prospers, everyone prospers.

In my seat of Flynn I have large businesses—some of the biggest corporations in Australia including BHP, Rio Tinto and Glencore. I have SMEs. I have service industries and agriculture—people trying hard to make it on the land. They are the biggest gamblers I know. It costs so much to put a crop in and then you've got to wait for the rain to come or the rain to stop or the fires to abate. Those sorts of issues are all part of being a farmer. They are doing well in some cases, but what we're seeing in North Queensland now is total devastation. My

heart goes to out to those guys who have faced the drought for seven to eight years, looked after their breeding cattle and got them to a point where they were all still alive and well, and then had them drown in a flood. It's heartbreaking. My heart is really with those people at this very point in time. Where do you start? How do you rebuild? They will be asking themselves those very questions right at this moment. Fortunately, we've got government assistance for the property owners—from \$25,000 up to \$75,000. There are health workers on the ground, et cetera. It's very much needed. But we've got to keep the economy going so everyone prospers.

In my seat of Flynn I've had projects on the board that funding was approved for back for 2016, but will the state government get those projects going? No, they won't. Will the state government drop their prices for irrigation water or power prices? They aren't controlled by the federal government; they are controlled by the state government. In Queensland—I can only talk about Queensland—the Queensland government is ripping \$1.6 billion out of electricity prices, out of the consumers of Queensland, to keep their coffers going. They're not doing a very good job of that either, because Queensland has one of the biggest debts of all the states. We shouldn't have that debt. But someone has to pay for it and it's you, me, the taxpayers and the employees who have to pay for that debt. That just keeps on rolling down. I believe that the Northern Territory is not too good either, but that's the situation. So the state governments have to work well and then the economy works well. It's not happening in some states. This is the big issue. Why should the Queensland government take \$1.67 billion from electricity users? Cane farmers in Bundaberg can't afford to pump water onto their cane fields. Those are the facts. If the cane farmers can't produce cane, jobs are gone. They can't pay the wages. It's a very simple formula. *(Time expired)*

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (16:15): The member for Swan emphasised the importance of facts. The member for Corangamite talked about the importance of numbers. I agree. It's been 173 days since Scott Morrison became Prime Minister of this country. Here are some facts about the number 173. One hundred and seventy-three is an odd number; 173 is a deficient number; and 173, for those who like mathematical terms, is known as an odious number—odd, deficient, and odious. I think that's a pretty good description of this government's 173 days under Prime Minister Morrison.

The Australian economy is not working. Australians are, by nature, hardworking and entrepreneurial, but this economy under the Morrison government is failing people. People cannot get secure employment. People are facing the challenges of underemployment and unemployment. The government is failing weekend workers, who have had their penalty rates cut, and it is failing people who work in essential services. The only plan that this government has is a plan for cuts and chaos. Cuts of \$7.8 million to Royal Perth Hospital, which services my constituents, and, at times, services the constituents of the member for Tangney. Chaos: a health minister who is under siege by one of his own former colleagues, now on the crossbench. Cuts of \$1 billion to pensioner concessions. Chaos: four ministers for human services, and the current one, the member for Stirling, rushes to get out the door and away from this deficient, odious government. Cuts to the pension for around 370,000 pensioners by as much as \$12,000 a year by changing the pension assets test. And chaos, with Western Australia getting the worst, slowest and oldest technology rollout in the NBN. Cuts and chaos is not an economic plan.

But maybe this government just can't see these challenges because its members are too focused on their own economic interests. *The Australian*, always interested in economic matters, has been digging into the economic interests of the member for Moore, who used LinkedIn to promote his business—and I see one of the biggest proponents for LinkedIn here in the chamber: Ed Husic, the member for Chifley. Using LinkedIn to promote your own business interests on your parliamentary page is terrible. Using it to promote the sale of units in the member for Swan's electorate—

Mr Husic: Not mine; his!

Mr GORMAN: Yes—sorry. The member for Moore personally escorted business people to lobster businesses that pay his business a commission and he failed to disclose these on his register. He conceded he acted inappropriately, but he sits on the Privileges Committee. Is he a rule breaker or is he a rule maker? How can someone, with the oversight of the Privileges Committee, continue to behave like this? This is a symbol of the arrogant, out-of-touch activity we're seeing from the Liberal Party. It's an arrogant, out-of-touch party that voted eight times to not restore penalty rates for some 700,000 working Australians—a simple move that would have given some of society's lowest-paid workers just a little bit more in their pay packet each week and would have helped build an economy that would work for everyone.

I along with the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Burt and many of my Western Australian colleagues spent time with the workers of Alcoa last year during their 51-day strike—working Western Australians who were on strike simply to preserve their pay and their job security. Those 1,500 workers were also standing for fairer workplace laws—taking a stand to keep jobs here in Australia. But they shouldn't have to do that. Just as workers at Centrelink, delivering a public service to our community, shouldn't have to complain to the government—who they work for—that they can't continue to deliver the services people expect if it continues to outsource those jobs to people who are not given appropriate training. Many are not given the sort of job security that they deserve when they're delivering an important service to other Australians.

This government has funded some 2,750 private call centre jobs since 2017. Eight-five per cent of the staff working in Centrelink report that they are fixing issues resulting from poorly trained private call centre staff. That's not good enough. People delivering our social security safety net deserve fair working conditions and secure jobs and to be able to serve their fellow Australians appropriately. We need to build an economy that works for all Australians.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (16:20): The topic of this matter of public importance is that the economy is not working for everyday Australians, and I'm really struck wondering which set of economic indicators those opposite are looking at. Surely it's not the government's imminent return to surplus in the coming budget. Surely it's not the lowest unemployment rate since 2012, currently at five per cent. That's quite an achievement, and I have great hopes and expectations that we'll head even lower. Job adverts are up at the moment. Surely it's not the record number of people in work, 12.7 million, and the extra 300,000 in the workforce over the last 12 months. Surely not. Surely the economic indicators those opposite are looking at are not labour force participation of women, which has hit a record 60 per cent. And surely it's not the fact that we have had the lowest level of welfare dependency—I don't know, actually, for how long that is—for a very long time.

I look at those figures and think so many people in Australia are well served by the economy. We know that the greatest form of justice in a community, the greatest form of enablement, is to have a job. That's what this government is doing. It's got economic indicators set—or, as Paul Keating would have said, 'It's got the levers in the right place'—to create jobs, to create wealth and prosperity throughout the community.

I know they've been focusing on the level of wages growth. We would all like to see it a little higher. That would be fair to say. But it has been travelling at 2.3 per cent while inflation has been running at 1.8 per cent. That's half a per cent, real growth, year on year, and it's not to be sneezed at. Around the world, particularly in the Western world, in the advanced economies, we have seen slow wage growth. Australia is holding its head up well and, at the same time, growing the jobs market at a rate that we have never seen before. That is where fairness comes into our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker Hogan, as you well know—because you're a good Port Augusta lad—I represent 92 per cent of South Australia. Our unemployment rate is a little higher than the national average. I don't like that and we're working hard to bring it down. It's about seven per cent at the moment. The unemployment rate is highest in the Upper Spencer Gulf. That is where the government has been focusing its resources and attention, to bring about change in that area. I can tell people in that part of my electorate—in fact, all over the electorate—that the news is good. It's very good. Job opportunities are strong, perhaps stronger than they have been in a generation. In the Upper Spencer Gulf we're seeing record investment on renewables—wind, solar, pumped hydro, fixing up some of the mess that South Australia has found itself in—and battery installation. There are a number of projects going on and hundreds of people are employed.

At Carrapateena, Oz Minerals are kicking off a new mine. There'll be over a thousand jobs there. That will make a difference. BHP is expanding at Roxby Downs, at Olympic Dam. It's not the big hole in the ground we were going to see a few years ago. They are expanding and taking on a workforce. GFG Alliance, under Sanjeev Gupta, is on the cusp of a \$1.3 billion investment in the steelworks at Whyalla. And I just attended, with the minister, Senator Fawcett, an update on the expansion of the Cultana training facility. There have been \$41 million worth of projects undertaken. We oversaw this the other day. Of those, \$33 million have come from local tradespeople and businesses. That is a really good tick for the government.

We have put a \$20 million regional jobs and investment package into the Upper Spencer Gulf region. That should deliver 300 extra jobs. The Joy Baluch AM Bridge at Port Augusta is going to be duplicated at a cost of \$172 million to the federal government—\$200 million in total. Port Wakefield, a little further down the line, is getting dual lanes on the National Highway and an overpass on the northern side with \$72 million from the federal government. I continue to lobby for more. For Horrocks Highway, the Stiz, and the EP road network, we're doing good work; people have got jobs and they are prospering.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): I thank the member for Grey. The discussion has concluded.

BILLS**Defence Legislation Amendment Bill 2018**

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

CONDOLENCES**Scholes, Hon. Gordon Glen Denton, AO****Report from Federation Chamber**

Order of the day returned from Federation Chamber for further consideration; certified copy of the motion presented.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 9 December 2018, of the Honourable Gordon Glen Denton Scholes AO, a former Minister and a Member of this House for the Division of Corio from 1967 to 1993, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan) (16:25): The question is that the motion moved by the Prime Minister be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

BILLS**Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2018****Returned from Senate**

Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment or request.

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018**Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (16:26): I rise to support this bill and move:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

(1) notes that:

(a) this Liberal and National Government has spent the last five years trying to cut the pension and increase the pension age to 70;

(b) in every Budget, this Government has tried to cut the pension—including a plan to change indexation, which would have left pensioners \$80 a week worse off; and

(c) the Government did a deal with the Greens political party to change the pension assets test and cut the pension for 370,000 pensioners; and

(2) condemns the Government for spending years trying to cut the energy supplement to new pensioners"

The Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018 changes the way pooled lifetime income stream products are means tested. It increases

the amount of money pensioners can earn from employment, under the pension work bonus, an initiative from the Rudd Labor government. This bill increases the rate at which pensioners can draw down their assets under the Commonwealth's reverse mortgage program, the Pension Loans Scheme—a legacy of the Hawke Labor government—and opens up the Pension Loans Scheme to full-rate pensioners. This bill seeks to expand on important Labor legacies which expanded income streams for our pensioners.

To that end, Labor supports the changes to the work bonus. The work bonus provides an incentive for pensioners who are over pension age to participate in the workforce by allowing them to keep more of their pension when they have earnings from working. The work bonus functions by exempting a certain amount of income from the pension income test, above the pension income test free area. Currently the work bonus exempts the first \$250 of fortnightly employment income. This bill will increase the income exemption to \$300 per fortnight, with a commensurate increase to the work bonus income bank from a minimum of \$6,500 to a maximum of \$7,800.

The bill also expands eligible employment income to include self-employment. In 2009, as part of the Harmer pension review, the Rudd Labor government introduced the pension work bonus to replace the cumbersome Pension Bonus Scheme. Labor introduced the work bonus to encourage older Australians who are able to do so to stay in the workforce longer. This brings with it social and economic benefits, not just for individuals but also for our nation. Older Australians have incredible skills and experience. It is important that those who can and want to remain in the workforce on a part-time basis can do so without losing as much of their pension. This will also help Australians save for the future—something that is incredibly important to our ageing population.

Labor also supports changes to the Pension Loans Scheme, which is the government's voluntary reverse-mortgage scheme. The Pension Loans Scheme is a legacy of the Hawke Labor government to allow older Australians who own their own house to access additional income. In 1996 the Keating Labor government expanded eligibility to those who were previously ineligible by reason of the income test. So today, to be eligible for the Pension Loans Scheme, a person must (1) be of pension age, (2) own real estate in Australia and (3) receive a payment at less than the maximum rate of the age pension because of either the income or the assets test, but not both.

Currently only part-pensioners and self-funded retirees can access the Pension Loans Scheme. This locks many full-rate pensioners who own their own home out of the benefits of this scheme, and this is unfair. Labor welcomes the improvements to this scheme to open it up to full-rate pensioners. We also support the increase in the maximum fortnightly payment rate under the Pension Loans Scheme from 100 per cent to 150 per cent of the full pension rate. This will allow pensioners to enjoy a better standard of living by accessing the equity in their homes if that is what they want. Full-rate pensioners will be able to increase their income by up to \$11,912 for singles and \$17,958 for couples per year based on the current rates of the pension. While the take-up rates of the Pension Loans Scheme are currently low, it is an important option for older Australians, and this increase in the allowable rate of payment might just make it more attractive for more older Australians.

The changes proposed in relation to the pooled lifetime income stream products are very important to those considering putting their savings into this kind of product, which pays an

annual sum for a person's life. It is a difficult decision to make a trade-off between keeping savings and securing an ongoing income, and people need certainty. Importantly, anyone who has purchased a pooled lifetime income stream product under the current means test will be grandfathered—an important point—and there will be no changes for them. It is important not just that the proposed means-testing arrangements are fair but also that the products themselves are sound and that people will be protected from rip-offs and shonks.

Labor supports the smoothing of the means test, which is also supported by COTA Australia and other seniors groups. And we will be holding a blowtorch to the government to make sure that the right financial regulations and protections are in place to protect pensioners who are considering purchasing a lifetime income stream. We will be very closely monitoring the kinds of products that are offered and the protections that are in place to make sure that people understand all the consequences of the long-term trade-off that comes with purchasing a lifetime income product.

As the banking royal commission has exposed, too many financial products have been crafted in the interests of brokers and banks, not ordinary Australians, and Australians know that this government will do anything it can to protect the big banks. The Prime Minister and the Liberal Party cannot be trusted to implement the recommendations of the banking royal commission—and, as has been mentioned and will continue to be mentioned, they did vote against the banking royal commission 26 times and they want to give the banks a tax cut. We should be changing the laws straightaway to clean up banks, but the Morrison part-time parliament is sitting only 10 days in eight months. The Leader of the Opposition has written to the Prime Minister urging him to hold two extra sitting weeks so that the Prime Minister can start cleaning up the banks now. The Liberals tried to stop the royal commission from happening. They will now try to go soft on the banks and will go slow on implementing the reforms. They cannot be trusted.

The Senate inquiry into this bill identified particular concerns related to the government's go-slow on the comprehensive income products for retirement framework, including a need to finalise the disclosure regime related to legislation and ensure that people get proper advice that is in their interests before purchasing a lifetime income stream. We will ensure that adequate financial regulations and protections are in place to protect older Australians. We will monitor very closely the types of financial products that are offered, and ensure that protections are available, so that consumers are fully aware of the financial and broader implications of those products.

Labor welcomes these positive changes and improvements to Labor initiatives which were enacted to make life easier for older Australians. But, make no mistake, pensioners will not be fooled: cutting the pension is in the Liberals' DNA. The age pension will always be stronger and safer under a Labor government. For five years the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Liberal government has spent every budget attacking the age pension. The current Prime Minister has spent five budgets, including three as Treasurer, trying to cut the pension. He has spent five budgets, including one as the Minister for Social Services, trying to raise the pension age to 70.

In the 2014 budget, the government tried to cut pension indexation—a cut that would have forced pensioners to live on \$80 a week less within 10 years. This unfair cut would have ripped \$23 billion from the pockets of every single pensioner in Australia. In the 2014 budget,

they cut \$1 billion from pensioner concessions—support designed to help pensioners with the cost of living. In the 2014 budget, they axed the \$900 seniors supplement to self-funded retirees receiving the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. In the 2014 budget, the Liberals tried to reset deeming rates thresholds—a cut that would have seen 500,000 part-pensioners made worse off. In the 2015 budget, the Liberals did a deal with the Greens to cut the pension for around 370,000 pensioners by as much as \$12,000 a year by changing the pension assets test. In the 2016 budget, they tried to cut the pension for around 190,000 pensioners as part of a plan to limit overseas travel by pensioners to six weeks. In the 2016 budget, they also tried to cut the pension for over 1.5 million Australians by scrapping the energy supplement for new pensioners. The government's own figures show that this would have left over 563,000 Australians currently receiving a pension or allowance worse off. And over 10 years, in excess of 1.5 million pensioners would have been worse off. On top of this, the government spent five years trying to increase the pension age to 70. And they still refuse to adjust deeming rates for pensioners.

The Liberals still have cuts to the pension before the parliament. They want to completely take away the pension supplement from pensioners who go overseas for more than six weeks, which will see around \$120 million ripped from the pockets of pensioners. They still want to make pensioners born overseas wait longer before qualifying for the age pension by increasing the residency requirement from 10 to 15 years. Labor has fought these cuts tooth and nail; this is the only reason the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government has flip-flopped and given in. The truth is: no-one spends five years—including three as Treasurer and one as social services minister—trying to cut the pension and increase the pension age to 70 unless it is what they really believe in. This is why pensioners know they cannot trust Scott Morrison. There is one simple fact: no matter who leads the Liberal Party, cutting the pension is in the party's DNA.

Over the past five years, we've seen older Australians wait longer and longer and longer to receive their pensions under the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Liberal government. We have read, heard and seen that pensioners wait months for their pensions, pushed to the edge of their bank accounts and pushed to desperation, uncertainty and fear. We have heard of pensioners waiting for hours on the phone to Centrelink, desperate to speak to someone about the fate of their pension payments. All the while, the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Liberal government has cut Centrelink jobs and outsourced them to labour hire firms.

Australians will not be fooled, and they will not forget the Liberals' atrocious record and attitude towards pensioners and older Australians. The Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Liberal government has made it very clear that big banks, big business and the top end of town are its priority, not pensioners. The age pension will always be safer, stronger and more accessible under Labor.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Husic: The amendment is seconded.

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (16:40): This Liberal-National government takes the needs of older Australians very seriously. In the term of this 45th Parliament, as a government, we have delivered on a significant body of legislation that comprehensively improves both the financial security and independence of retirees and will ensure the highest-quality aged care for older Australians who can no longer manage on their own. And, while the previous Labor

government legislated the pension age to 67, the Morrison Liberal-National government has announced that the pension age will go no higher. It will remain at 67 years of age. Not only should this come as welcome news for hardworking Australians approaching retirement, but it should be noted that the government's ability to clip the pension age at 67 while ensuring a sustainable social security system is due only to the strong economy that a Liberal-National government delivers.

Beyond simply maintaining the pension age, the government's record of delivery for older Australians is unprecedented. We retained the energy supplement, and, notably, since the coalition was elected, pensions have increased by a touch under \$100 per fortnight for singles and almost \$150 per fortnight for couples. The Liberal-National government is also supporting older Australians to voluntarily stay in the workforce, thanks to a variety of measures—some of which are the subject of this bill—that also include the provision of wage subsidies of up to \$10,000 for employers who welcome older Australians onto their payroll.

While making the case that only a Liberal-National government will fully protect the security, independence and welfare of older Australians, I can't move to the substance of this bill without first touching on the flip side—that is, what this government won't do. We won't steal the income of more than 900,000 Australians who will lose an average of \$2,200 every year under Labor's retiree tax. We won't kick the floor under the property market and threaten the value of people's homes while simultaneously driving up rents by adopting Labor's disastrous policy of ending negative gearing and jacking up capital gains tax. We won't adopt Labor's plan to rip over \$200 billion in extra taxes from the pockets of everyday Australians and small businesses. We won't legislate an economy-destroying 45 per cent emissions reduction target by 2030 that, if imposed, would mean a new dark age not only for Australian jobs and industry but, quite literally, for millions of Australians, including many older Australians who would face the devastating twin impacts of skyrocketing electricity prices and rolling blackouts under Labor's policy. Nor will we tempt a recession or threaten Australia's AAA credit rating or risk the jobs of everyday, hardworking Australians by deviating from our plan for a strong economy that ultimately protects Medicare, puts more drugs on the PBS, secures the age pension, builds schools, builds hospitals and pays teachers and nurses. These are the responsibilities that concern our government, and we won't be swayed and we won't be distracted by the false constructs or voodoo economics of those opposite.

Second only to the primary aim of keeping Australians safe, it is a key objective of this Liberal-National government to help Australians live longer, healthier and more active lives. In last year's budget, the government announced a comprehensive package of measures to help achieve just that, especially for older Australians. Some of these measures are the object of this bill. The Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018 will give retirees more options and a better deal in their retirement. The bill aims to enhance the standard of living for older Australians by giving them more flexibility and choice when it comes to managing their finances in retirement, and there are three specific changes proposed by the bill to help achieve this.

Firstly, schedule 1 establishes new means test rules that better accommodate the development of new and innovative income streams for retirees that have resulted, and will continue to result, from changes to superannuation first announced in the 2016-17 budget.

These changes allow innovative pooled lifetime income stream products to qualify for tax concessions, provided they comply with requirements. Pooled lifetime income products, such as annuities, are financial products that effectively pool the contributions of multiple people to provide consistent income to surviving members for life. The existing means test rules were designed for simple income stream products, such as lifetime annuities, and would not be suitable for the wide range of more complex products that are expected to emerge in the near future, and, in the event of no action being taken, would leave the system open to exploitation and distort people's financial decisions. The new means test rules will apply to all pooled lifetime income products purchased on or after commencement, being 1 July 2019, and held by social security or Department of Veterans' Affairs income support recipients. Products acquired before commencement will not be affected by the new rules.

The new means test will only assess 60 per cent of payments from any pooled lifetime income stream and, by doing so, accepts that part of the payments from the income stream simply represent a return of the individual's initial investment and therefore should not be counted as income. The 60 per cent assessment will continue for a minimum of five years or until the person reaches their threshold day—which currently is when they reach 84 years—whichever is longer. Beyond this point, just 30 per cent of the purchase amount will be assessed. Schedule 1 also amends the rules for investment-type life insurance products to make sure they are consistent with the new rules for the pooled income products.

Secondly, schedule 2 of the bill increases the work bonus, being an income test concession for age pensioners and DVA pensioners over a qualifying age to encourage them to undertake work to supplement their pension. The proposed increase is from \$250 to \$300 per fortnight and represents the only increase since 2011. There is also a mechanism for pensioners that take advantage of the work bonus to accrue any unused portion of the current \$250 fortnightly exemption, up to a total of \$6,500, and use it to exempt future earnings from the income test. Schedule 2 will increase the maximum unused concession from \$6,500 to \$7,800, in line with the proposed increase in the work bonus amount. The work bonus will also be extended under the schedule 2 provisions to include all income from gainful work that involves personal exertion and, for the first time, will also include self-employed income, together with income from work as a contractor or as a consultant. As the work bonus currently applies only to employment income, this extended application improves both consistency and equity and, together with all schedule 2 reforms, will increase payments for more than 88,000 social security pensioners and extend eligibility to another 1,150 retirees.

Thirdly, schedule 3 of the bill extends the existing Pension Loans Scheme, otherwise referred to as the PLS, available through Centrelink to all older Australians with securable real estate, while also providing substantially improved access to the scheme. The PLS operates as a type of reverse mortgage where amounts borrowed are a debt payable to the Commonwealth, which is secured against real property owned by the retiree in Australia. The loan is subject to a compound interest rate set by the minister, which is currently at 4.25 per cent. The loan may be repaid at any time, with the debt usually recovered either following the sale of the secured property or from the person's estate after their death.

Schedule 3 amends all relevant legislation to allow any Australian, subject only to reaching age pension age or other relevant qualifying age, to participate in the PLS irrespective of their income or asset test assessment, including pensioners assessed at a maximum pension rate.

Those participating in the PLS can draw on the equity in their homes and effectively borrow to a new threshold of 150 per cent of the maximum fortnightly pension rate, inclusive of any special assistance or other supplements that may apply in their case. This measure will better and more comprehensively target the PLS to meet the needs of a diverse range of retirement situations, giving older Australians greater flexibility and more choice via an affordable government regulated scheme to support their standard of living in retirement while allowing them to remain in their own homes.

In summary, this bill provides for three technical reforms to better support Australians in their retirement. New means test rules will ensure a fair and sustainable assessment of newly developed income stream products. The increase and extension of the work bonus will mean that less income from work will be assessed for income testing purposes, allowing higher income support payments to be maintained for eligible veterans and pensioners. And the expansion of the Pension Loan Scheme, the PLS, will allow retirees, including for the first time maximum rate pensioners, to improve their standard of living by accessing the equity in their home as a government loan while still living there.

The reforms outlined in this bill will give older Australians more choice and greater flexibility in managing their finances, allow them to keep more of their pension when they work and allow retirees who own their home to receive more income. By leveraging these successful social security programs to better support the needs of retirees, this bill further delivers on the Liberal-National government's strong, ongoing commitment to older Australians and, thus, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (16:53): I rise to support the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018. It should come as no surprise that, as the representative of the oldest electorate in South Australia, I am more aware than most of the needs and concerns of older Australians.

There are two parts of this legislation that I would briefly like to touch upon: the increase in the work bonus and the expansion of access to the Pension Loans Scheme. The proposed increase to the work bonus from \$250 to \$300 is an imminently sensible step that recognises the value of not penalising pensioners for remaining active and undertaking small amounts of employment. For example, there are pensioners in my electorate who deliver local newspapers in order to keep active and healthy. There are retired teachers who do a bit of tutoring after school, helping children and earning a little extra money on the side for their efforts. We know that those pensioners have such a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I think it's critical that we encourage older Australians to keep their hand in, if they feel that they would like to do so, to teach and share with the next generation. The current level of the work bonus has been eroded by inflation to the point that it is now starting to penalise this type of piecemeal work. The pensioners in my electorate will be very pleased that this legislation is being progressed.

I also welcome the extension of the work bonus to apply to income and to work from personal exertion, such as through self-employment and contracting or consulting work. However, I would encourage the government to consider indexing the work bonus such that the balance of the bonus does not continue to erode over time. Otherwise, the parliament must periodically be required to raise the bonus every couple of years by slow legislative means.

Secondly, I welcome, albeit cautiously, the expansion of the Pension Loans Scheme so it becomes available to all Australians of age pension age. The Pension Loans Scheme is a voluntary, reverse equity mortgage that offers older Australians an income stream to supplement their retirement income. It is only fair that access to this scheme is universal to all Australians of age pension age and provides everyone with the same financial support and opportunity. However, I will keep a watching brief over the scheme to ensure that there are no unexpected adverse outcomes of its expansion.

I think it's also timely to talk about the inadequacy of the pension, particularly if you are single and renting. Half-a-million older Australians rely solely on the age pension for income. Almost a third of them are living in poverty. They suffer substantial deprivation—going without food and heating, ignoring the need to see medical specialists and skipping medications—to make ends meet. Some are missing food in order to ensure that they can manage a visit to medical professionals. The average fortnightly expenditure on housing for renters was over \$300, whereas homeowners spent less than \$40 on repairs and remaining mortgage payments. The difference is vast. Owning your own home if you are a retired and older Australian makes you \$240 a fortnight better off. These figures are from 2015, and we know that rents have increased and the pension has not kept in line with that.

So what gives? Last Friday, at the opening of my Victor Harbour permanent satellite office, I chatted with a gentleman who needs new dentures but can't afford them. Yes, he's on the state government list for public dental health, but it has been years. He's using a form of glue in his mouth to keep in the broken dentures that he has, and it is making him sick. It's causing him ulcers in his mouth. He was so distressed when I talked to him. No older Australian in our community should have to experience this. Older Australians on the pension are going without meals so they can have their medications and are going without heating so they can cover other bills, particularly those who are renting. It is important that in this place we do all we can to support every older Australian.

I believe that we need to increase the pension and provide those on the pension with a dental voucher, similar to the one the government provides to families who are recipients of family tax A. I believe that this is a policy that is needed—and needed so much that I've asked the Parliamentary Budget Office to provide a costing for the implementation of a dental voucher system for pensioners. I intend to share those Parliamentary Budget Office costings with the parliament in the hope that one of the major parties takes this up as an election promise. We know there is a strong correlation between poor oral health, and poor nutrition and poorer primary health outcomes. Helping pensioners to visit the dentist would improve health outcomes overall.

I would like to acknowledge the Benevolent Society for their work in the Fix Pension Poverty campaign. It is not something that makes front-page news, but it should be. We should be treating our older Australians better. Returning to this bill, and in closing, I welcome and support the speedy passage of this bill, which I believe will be of great benefit to older Australians, but I think we can do much, much more.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (16:59): Forty-six per cent of the people who live in my electorate of Fisher are over the age of 55. Twenty-nine per cent are already retired. For most of my constituents, the issue of how they are to support a healthy, long and active retirement is a live and critical question. In living on the Sunshine Coast, they have chosen to make

Australia's most beautiful and welcoming lifestyle destination their home. However, they have chosen also to make their home in a location where the cost of living can be a challenge for many. According to the well-known cost-of-living comparison website numbeo.com, consumer prices in Sydney are 21 per cent higher than those on the coast, but the average purchasing power in Sydney is 46 per cent higher. Relatively speaking, for many it is as difficult—if not more difficult—to get by in my community as it is in our nation's most expensive city.

Many of my constituents, especially many of those who are older and retired, are finding it hard to make ends meet. They are not alone. According to a December 2017 OECD report, 26 per cent of Australian retirees are living below the relative income poverty line, which the OECD defines as half of the national average wage. The coalition has listened to the concerns of older Australians, and this bill is part of our suite of measures to help.

In my own electorate, I have convened the Fisher Seniors Council. This group of older residents living in my community gathers three or four times each year to discuss the issues that they face on the Sunshine Coast and to give me feedback on our government's policy ideas. When it comes to the cost of living, one of the messages that this group have given me loud and clear is that older people in Fisher want more flexibility in retirement. One of the members of the Fisher Seniors Council, Mr Frank Gower, continues to press me to ensure that we have an age pension that keeps up with the rising cost of living. This government has delivered that with an increase of more than \$100 a fortnight since the coalition's election in 2013.

Most of all, seniors in my electorate don't want more handouts. They have worked to support their families all of their lives, and they want to continue to live independently. Seniors on the Sunshine Coast want the flexibility from government that they need to help support themselves. That flexibility to use their skills and their assets to support themselves is exactly what this bill delivers in two key areas.

Firstly, schedule 2 of this bill increases the work bonus to allow retirees to work more hours and earn more money without impacting their other entitlements. As people live longer and healthier, many are finding that they do not want to give up work entirely. I'm sure many of us in this place employ retired members of our community in our offices on a part-time basis, just as I do. They bring a wealth of experience and an unrivalled knowledge of our local areas that can be invaluable in any parliamentarian's team. In a great many sectors of our economy, from retail to agriculture, the experience of decades, the old-fashioned work ethic and the calm wisdom that many of our retirees can contribute would be welcomed by employers. My Fisher Seniors Council consistently tell me that they want the choice to work more to supplement their income but that the resulting reduction in their other entitlements is a substantial disincentive. This bill reduces that disincentive by increasing the work bonus to \$300 earned per fortnight.

Further, this bill provides flexibility in responding to the changing nature of work. For retired people, self-employment or contract work can be particularly appropriate, allowing them to fit their employment around their other family and often, as is the case, their volunteer commitments. However, until now none of that work was covered by the work bonus. This does not reflect the nature of the modern workforce nor of the particular needs of working seniors, and this bill rectifies that situation.

This bill also addresses one of the issues that my older constituents most often bring to my attention. Many older residents of Fisher are relatively asset rich but income poor. The government has already taken steps to provide more flexibility for these constituents by allowing them to make a non-concessional contribution of \$300,000 into their superannuation from the proceeds from downsizing their homes. But this bill goes further, giving more seniors another option of releasing equity from their homes and increasing their income in retirement.

The Pension Loans Scheme allows older Australians who own their own home to, in effect, take out a type of reverse mortgage with the Commonwealth government. Existing part-rate pensioners and self-funded retirees who are currently precluded from the pension by the asset test have the option to receive additional payments, up to the maximum rate of the full fortnightly age pension, by progressively borrowing against the value of their home from the Commonwealth at a competitive rate of interest, which is currently set at 4.25 per cent. This debt can be repaid at any time, and is usually repaid from the individual's estate.

However, there are many retirees who are not currently able to benefit from this scheme. Schedule 3 expands the Pension Loans Scheme to include those who are already receiving the maximum rate of pension and self-funded retirees who do not have sufficient assets to preclude them from the age pension. The bill also increases the total amount which can be borrowed under the scheme to 150 per cent of the maximum fortnightly pension. This will give flexibility to those who need a higher income to support their active retirement. Just a few days ago I spoke with a constituent in my electorate, Mrs Margaret Little, about how she would dearly love to have taken advantage of just this sort of a scheme but previously hadn't been able to access it. Now, as a result of these amendments, she will be able to. So that is, indeed, very good news for Mrs Little and people like her.

With this bill, the coalition is listening to senior Australians and providing them with more options for increasing their income and security in retirement. It is only the latest in a series of decisions made by this coalition government to support older people to live longer, healthier and more active lives. Since the coalition government was elected in 2013, pensions have increased by \$107.90 a fortnight for individuals and \$162.60 a fortnight for couples. We've used the proceeds of the strong economy that this government has helped to build to avoid the need to increase the qualification age for the pension to the age of 70. That same strong economy has allowed us to avoid repealing the energy supplement, thereby ensuring that individual pensioners have another \$366.60 more in their pockets every year.

All of this could not stand in more stark contrast to the policies of the Labor Party. I met a man in my electorate office recently—his name is Adrian—who, like me, was a builder. He came to Australia from his native Italy with very little, and he has worked extremely hard ever since he came here. Adrian is a perfect exemplar of the benefits that Australia can derive from ambitious people born overseas who want to come to our country to get ahead and to help build our community. Adrian worked hard, and he invested the money that he earned to create a secure retirement for himself and a future for his family. Some of his investments were successful; some were not. But, when times were tough, Adrian got back on the tools, and he's worked his way back like many migrants and small-business people in this country. Throughout his life, everything that Adrian had he had earned for himself. He's rightly proud of that achievement and he rightly expects to enjoy the modest fruits of that labour in his

retirement. He, like so many Australians, has saved enough to give him a comfortable but by no means extravagant income in retirement. But when Adrian came to my office, he was furious about what the future may hold for him and his family under a Shorten Labor government.

Adrian had looked into the Labor Party's retiree tax. He'd explored what their proposal to end retirees' dividend imputation credits, pulling the rug out from under millions of hardworking Australians, would mean for him. For Adrian, the ill-judged, punitive policy of members opposite would result in the loss of 60 per cent of his income. It would take him from a secure retirement to a life filled with doubt and uncertainty about the future. Adrian knows what all Australian seniors know—that this huge, new retiree tax proposed by Labor is fundamentally unfair. It constitutes a massive cash grab by a Labor Party so desperate to fund its unsupportable, fantastical spending promises that it is willing to take the livelihoods of some of society's most vulnerable people to do it, because it's not simply Adrian who would be affected by Labor's retiree tax. Nationwide, around 900,000 Australians stand to lose an average of \$2,200 every year. Australians with self-managed super funds are set to lose an average of \$12,000 every year. Labor's tax will affect Australian shareholders who are on incomes of less than \$65,000, self-funded retirees, self-managed super fund trustees, small APRA-regulated funds, large retail APRA-regulated funds and retired small-business owners alike. Interestingly, yet unsurprisingly, it will not affect the industry super funds.

Labor's tax will cost retirees and small businesses almost \$5 billion per year and, in total, will rip \$45 billion out of our nation's hard-earned savings. In my electorate alone, 7,200 older Australians will be directly and immediately affected by Labor's tax. Thousands more of my constituents who have not yet reached retirement age will have their potential income in retirement slashed by this extra taxation. Contrary to the misleading statements of the Leader of the Opposition, the hardest hit will be those on the lowest taxable incomes. Eighty-four per cent of the hundreds of thousands of people who will be hurt by Labor's policy have a taxable income of less than \$37,000. This tax will hurt hundreds of thousands of ordinary people who have done the right thing and saved just enough for their retirement.

Like many others in my electorate, Adrian is passionate about trying to do something about this unfair and ruinous new tax. He's determined to do what he can to stop the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party from bringing about this disastrous new reality for Australian seniors. Members opposite should take note: if they continue to insist on this damaging tax, they will find themselves facing passionate opposition from some of our society's most experienced, engaged and active citizens. For their own good, let alone for the good of the people of Australia, I would counsel them to beat a path to the Leader of the Opposition's door and convince him to abandon this unjust assault on our older Australians.

This legislation demonstrates once again that it is the Liberal and National parties who respect the contribution of Australia's older people and who will put forward the measures they need to support an active and fulfilling retirement. It will make a difference to thousands of senior Australians. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (17:14): The Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018 makes some positive changes for our pensioners. It was less than a year ago that I met with a Townsville pensioner named Tom. Tom, although retired, was still very active and was still able to work part time. Tom would rebuild broken

bicycles and do paid handyman jobs here and there. Clearly, Tom's work schedule and pay would fluctuate. The difference would often be minuscule, but it would be enough to affect Tom's pension. This is where the system was very difficult for him. Tom still wanted to be able to work and earn a bit of cash, but he certainly required his pension. A few dollars here or there, when the limits were already so incredibly small, would affect Tom's pension. It did. This bill seeks to make changes to help pensioners like Tom.

This bill changes the way pooled lifetime income stream products are means tested; increases the amount of money pensioners can earn from employment under the work bonus before their pension is reduced; increases the rate at which pensioners can draw down their asset under the Commonwealth's reverse mortgage program, the Pension Loans Scheme; and opens the Pension Loans Scheme to full-rate pensioners.

The changes to the work bonus in particular will assist people like Tom. The bill will increase the income exemption under the work bonus from \$250 per fortnight to \$300 per fortnight, with a commensurate increase in the work bonus income bank from a maximum of \$6,500 to a maximum of \$7,800. Also, the bill will expand eligible employment income to include self-employment. These are positive changes that will encourage older Australians to stay in the workforce longer, with all the social and economic benefits that brings not just for individuals themselves but for the nation as a whole. Older Australians have incredible skills and experience, and it is therefore important that those who can and want to remain in the workforce on a part-time basis can do so without the losing as much of their pension.

The changes to the Pension Loans Scheme will also provide great assistance to our pensioners. The purpose of the Pension Loans Scheme is to allow older people who are asset rich but cash poor to access an income. Currently, to be eligible for the Pension Loans Scheme a person must be of pension age; own real estate in Australia that can be used as security; receive a payment less than the minimum rate of the income or assets test but not both—this test can apply to a partner; and meet age-pension residency requirements. Currently, only part-pensioners and self-funded retirees can access the Pension Loans Scheme. This locks out many full-rate pensioners who own their own home from the benefits of the scheme. This is unfair, and Labor welcomes the government's changes to open the scheme to full-rate pensioners.

I also support the increase in the maximum fortnightly payment rate under the Pension Loans Scheme from 100 per cent to 150 per cent of the full pension. This will allow pensioners to enjoy a better standard of living by accessing the equity they may have in their homes. Full-rate pensioners will be able to increase their income by up to \$11,912 for singles or \$17,958 for couples combined, per year, based on the current rates of the pension. While the current take-up rates of the Pension Loans Scheme are very low, it is an important option for Australian pensioners. The increase in the allowable rate of payment might make it more attractive to many more older Australians.

Then there are the changes proposed in relation to the pooled lifetime income stream products, which are complex. It is important not just that the proposed means-testing arrangements are fair but also that the products themselves are sound and that people will be protected from rip-offs and dishonest operators. That is why Labor supports the smoothing of the means test, which is also supported by COTA Australia. But we will be holding to account the Morrison government to make sure that the right financial regulations and protections are

in place to protect pensioners who are considering purchasing a lifetime income stream. I want assurances around the kinds of products that are offered and the protections in place to make sure people understand all of the consequences of the long-term trade-off that comes with purchasing a lifetime income product.

As the banking royal commission has exposed, far too many financial products have been crafted in the interests of brokers and banks and not ordinary Australian citizens. Australians know this government will do anything it can to protect the big banks. The Prime Minister and the Liberal Party cannot be trusted to implement the recommendations of the banking royal commission, because they voted against that banking royal commission 26 times and they wanted to give big banks a tax cut. We should be changing the laws straight away to clean up the banks, but the Prime Minister's part-time parliament is sitting only 10 days in eight months and that makes it a bit difficult. Given these facts and the fact that the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, is a good friend of the banks and not the Australian people, I am sceptical and will be holding them to account if they allow financial institutions to run riot under the changes in this bill.

The Senate inquiry into this bill identified particular concerns related to the government's go-slow on the Comprehensive Income Products for Retirement Framework, including the need to finalise the disclosure regime and related legislation and ensure that people get proper advice that is in their interests before purchasing a lifetime income stream. Clearly, the LNP government's go-slow approach on this framework, as well as the recommendations from the banking royal commission, potentially allow for unscrupulous behaviour. Enough damage has already been done by the Morrison government delaying the banking royal commission that I call on them to not use the same approach for this framework.

Although there are positive changes in this bill, pensioners won't be fooled by this LNP government. Cutting the pension is in the Morrison government's DNA. They have tried in every single budget—including in three budgets where the current Prime Minister had the job of Treasurer—to cut the pension and to increase the pension age to 70. In the 2014 budget they tried to cut pension indexation—a cut that would have forced pensioners to live on \$80 a week less within 10 years. This is unfair and unjust. It would have ripped \$23 billion from the pockets of every single pensioner in Australia. In the 2014 budget they cut \$1 billion from pensioner concessions—support designed to help pensioners with the cost of living. In the 2014 budget they axed the \$900 seniors supplement to self-funded retirees receiving the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. In the 2014 budget the Liberals tried to reset the deeming rates thresholds—a cut that would have seen 500,000 part-pensioners worse off.

In 2015 the Liberals did a deal with the Greens to cut the pension of around 370,000 pensioners by as much as \$12,000 a year by changing the pension asset test. In the 2016 budget they tried to cut the pension of around 190,000 pensioners as part of a plan to limit overseas travel for pensioners to six weeks. In the 2016 budget they also tried to cut the pension of over 1.5 million Australians by scrapping the energy supplement for new pensioners. The Morrison government's own figures show that this would have left over 563,000 Australians currently receiving a pension or allowance much worse off. Over 10 years, in excess of 1.5 million pensioners would have been worse off. On top of this, they spent five years trying to increase the pension age to 70. They still refuse to adjust the deeming rates for pensioners.

I feel as though I need to take a breath after going through that long list of LNP cuts to pensioners, but the sad fact is the cuts don't stop there. The Liberals still have cuts to the pension before the parliament. They want to completely take away the pension supplement from pensioners who go overseas for more than six weeks. This will see around \$120 million ripped from the pockets of pensioners. They still want to make pensioners born overseas wait longer before qualifying for the age pension, by increasing the residency requirements from 10 years to 15 years.

Labor has fought these cuts tooth and nail. No-one spends five years, including three as Treasurer, trying to cut the pension and increase the pension age to 70 unless it is what they truly believe in. This is why pensioners know that they cannot trust Prime Minister Scott Morrison or his government. There is one simple fact: Prime Minister Scott Morrison was the architect, the designer, the engineer, the craftsman and the builder behind every cut and every attack on Australian pensioners. Pensioners know that with another term of a Morrison government, there would be more cuts on the way which will impact on them. It is only Labor that has fought against every single cut to pensioners, and it is only Labor that will look after Australian pensioners.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (17:24): I want to make three points about the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018: firstly, to talk about the things in this bill that we are quite open to supporting; secondly, to talk about the context in which this bill is being considered and some of the history behind some of the things that led us to this point; and, thirdly, to raise my concerns about the way in which pensioners today are being treated or, I might say, mistreated by this government through the failure to deal with pensioner concerns and the way in which pensioners are being treated when they interact with the government.

At the outset, we have said that we certainly are open to some of the measures that are being put forward in the bill itself. The bill changes the way pooled lifetime income stream products are means tested and increases the amount of money pensioners can earn from employment under the pension work bonus. This was an initiative introduced by the Rudd Labor government. The bill itself increases the rate at which pensioners can draw down their assets under the Commonwealth's reverse mortgage program, the Pension Loans Scheme. I think it is important to point out that that this scheme is a legacy of the Hawke Labor government. The bill also opens up the Pension Loans Scheme to full-rate pensioners and seeks to expand on important Labor legacies which expanded income streams for pensions.

On the work bonus, I must say, I am particularly supportive of this element, which is allowing, in particular, for pensioners over the pension age to keep in contact with the workforce. That allows them to keep more of their pension while they're having earnings from working. It functions by exempting a certain amount of income from the pension income test, above the pension income test-free area. Currently, the work bonus exempts the first \$250 of fortnightly employment income. This bill will increase that to \$300 a fortnight. There is also an increase in the work bonus income bank from a maximum of \$6,500 to a maximum of \$7,800. These things are important in an environment where many industries are experiencing skills shortages and where skills shortages may be an increasing concern.

Given some of the changes that we are seeing in the labour market, finding a way to keep people who have built up expertise and experience through their work life and keeping them

engaged in some way in the workforce is good for the individual. It is also good for the country to have that expertise put into place. If we can also quite strongly deal, as a nation, with some of the perverse age discrimination that occurs in our workplaces—at a time when those same workplaces are crying out for more workers—I think that is an important thing.

We do know that the nature of work in this country is changing and that there are some people who will find, through the process of firms applying new technology in their workplaces, that automation may have an impact on jobs. We need to find new ways to retrain people and to get them new roles as well. There will be older people who still want to maintain contact with the workforce. We also need to ensure that their skills are up to date and that we provide adequate, strong and practical training platforms that allow for older Australians to maintain contact with the workforce.

We have to make sure that we don't have disincentives in place that mean that people who are accepting a pension feel that they can't work in the workforce, they can't contribute to the workforce or they can't, in some way, reduce the skills shortages that exist. The rules that we've set around their pension might mean that they feel that if they work too much then they are going to lose some of their pension. These types of changes that we're talking about in here are really important. We are certainly happy to support some of the changes that have been put forward. My colleague the member for Barton, the shadow minister for social services, has spoken at length about some of the other elements to this bill that we're quite open to—in terms of the Pension Loans Scheme and the pooled lifetime income streams—and has canvassed those at length.

I did say that there were two other elements to my contribution today that I wanted to make. The next one is about the context in which this occurs. As much as I and my other colleagues have expressed support for some of these initiatives, this has not been developed by a government that has been friendly to pensioners. We suddenly hear, as the member for Gorton and I have been subjected to in this place and elsewhere, this found devotion for post-retirement incomes by those opposite. We heard all the campaigning, the quite disgraceful campaigning, that was waged by the member for Goldstein in his role as the chair of a parliamentary committee that should not be so blatant in its politicking and its fundraising—using a parliamentary committee to do all these things. At no point have we seen these people stand up for pensioners in the same way that they want to stand up for people who are getting franking credits in excess of what they need; those people are given large amounts of government money. Those opposite have suddenly said, 'This is an unfair thing to even think, taking away these excess credits.' But, when you consider all the things that were being proposed by this government to impact people on some of the lowest incomes in the community—older Australians who are pensioners—you've never seen them stand up for pensioners in the same way.

Look at the way in which the coalition has sought to attack pensioners. For the five years of this government, the current Prime Minister spent five budgets, including three as Treasurer, trying to cut the pension and one as the Minister for Social Services trying to raise the pension age to 70. In the 2014 budget, they tried to cut pension indexation, which would have meant pensioners would be forced to live on \$80 a week less within 10 years. It was an unfair cut that would have ripped \$23 billion from the pockets of every single pensioner in

Australia. We never hear them talk about that. They all signed up to it; they were all happy to see this happen to pensioners.

In 2014 they cut \$1 billion from pensioner concessions—\$1 billion in support designed to help pensioners with the cost of living, and they cut it. Again, none of them turned up to parliamentary committees and none of them set up those dodgy websites where they think they can score a political point. They're never there to back in pensioners. In 2014 they axed the \$900 seniors supplement to self-funded retirees receiving the Commonwealth seniors card. In 2014 they tried to reset deeming rate thresholds, which would have seen 500,000 part-pensioners made worse off. Where were these people in standing up for people? They were nowhere to be seen. They all filed, one after the other, to back in these impacts on older Australians.

In 2015 they went at it again. They did a deal with the Greens to cut the pension of around 370,000 pensioners. Mind you, the Greens in the Batman by-election suddenly thought that they were going to stand up for older Australians and said they wouldn't support Labor's campaign to reform franking credits. This is the same party who sidled up to that party over there to rip off older Australians. As I said, 370,000 pensioners would be affected by as much as \$12,000 a year by changing the pension assets.

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

Mr HUSIC: If they don't have a good memory—my friend the member for Gorton points out the need for memory—we will remind them every single day. We remember absolutely what they tried to do to older Australians.

In the 2016 budget, not content with all those other changes, they then tried to cut the pension of around 190,000 pensioners as part of a plan to limit overseas travel for pensioners to six weeks. How dare they want to stay in contact with family members overseas and leave the country! So they decided they would go in there and rip off the pension even more. In the 2016 budget they also tried to cut the pension for over 1.5 million Australians by scrapping the energy supplement for new pensioners. Now they are getting up and saying, 'We saved the energy supplement.' They wanted to get rid of that energy supplement time and again. It was only through a sustained campaign led by the member for Jagajaga to maintain the energy supplement that they buckled and, at the last moment, relented and refused to cut out the supplement that in their heart of hearts they have tried to rip off for ages.

Scrapping the energy supplement would've left over 583,000 Australians who are currently receiving a pension or allowance worse off and, over 10 years, that would have been in excess of 1.5 million pensioners. Where were you when this was being done—through the chair, if you don't mind me saying in general terms, where were those opposite when this was being proposed?

On top of this, they spent five years trying to increase the pension age to 70, which would have been the highest in the OECD, and still refused to adjust deeming rates. They want to completely take away the pension supplement from pensioners who go overseas for more than six weeks, and they still want to make pensioners born overseas wait longer before qualifying for the age pension. That is what those opposite do.

If that's not bad enough, they make older Australians wait longer to access the age pension. They've changed the goalposts on when they'll deliver a decision for older Australians. It used

to be, roughly, 36 days. Now it's up to 49 days. When they delay the decision to grant older Australians the age pension due to them, they say, 'It's not our fault; it's the fault of the average Australian making the claim. They should have done it earlier.' What a joke, a government that can't get its act together to determine whether or not a person eligible for the age pension should get it. It's not that they can't do it; it's that they won't. They are holding back money to older Australians because they refuse to pay out the age pension. They put up every type of excuse possible, but they will not pay out the age pension to those who deserve it.

They have cut jobs from the Department of Human Services. They make you wait for ages when you're on the phone trying to get help. They make it near impossible to turn up to a Centrelink or Medicare office to get service. They're always trying to take you to a website or, failing that, a phone call, but they don't provide support to make sure those things operate efficiently. The government continually blames the average older Australian for things that they should be accountable for or, as the member for Gorton said, that they should accept responsibility for. They refuse to do it. When you look at the number of jobs they've cut, when you look at the number of contractors they've put on and when you look at the way complaints have soared it is no surprise you are getting this outcome.

For what they are putting forward we have said: 'Enough's enough.' Our side of politics has said we will invest in better service and we will invest in a new workforce and we will put 1,200 people into DHS to make sure people get the help they need and at the time they need it most. I am very proud that we announced 50 new jobs in the seat of Longman over the course of last year. We announced 50 jobs in Braddon. I'm particularly proud that in our decentralisation push we announced, for the seat of Herbert, 200 DHS jobs in Townsville, and we announced 100 jobs for the seat of Leichhardt. This is to make sure that people get help when they need it most. It's to see good jobs go out to the regions instead of being stuck in one place. It delivers on a decentralisation agenda. Those opposite talk about it but fail to deliver. It's up to us to make sure that it happens.

You don't hear the Minister for Human Services commit to these jobs or stop the job cuts. Instead, he's out there defending the contractors and saying he'll do more contracting out. It's a continued recipe for failure, given the way complaints have soared under this government. Instead of backing in better service, backing in full-time jobs, recognising that people want that work, recognising that the public want better service, he says to us, 'What are you going to do about the contractors?' It's like he's a member of a government that's cut jobs but has discovered a commitment to job security, all of a sudden! That is patently false. What they are committed to is an ideological obsession with contracting out, with reduced employment standards and reduced commitment to service—at a time when older Australians depend on that service.

While there's a lot to be said in favour of this bill, it is done against a backdrop of declining service, under this government's watch, a failure to deliver the service Australians expect. I expect the next member who gets up can defend all the rip-offs of pensioners that he has been an accomplice to! (*Time expired*)

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (17:39): I very much enjoy following a contribution from the member for Chifley. It's always full of euphemisms, and it certainly gives me the opportunity to compare and contrast our policies with those of the opposition. I must say to the member for

Chifley: welcome aboard the decentralisation bus. I think you should take a bit of time to speak to your colleagues about it, because I'm fairly confident that they haven't supported it for some years, in fact decades. I'm pleased to see that, finally, someone over there supports the decentralisation of the Public Service into the regions, and I'm very supportive of what the member for Chifley had to say in regard to decentralisation.

But, of course, I rise to speak on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018. This bill implements measures announced as part of the 2018 budget to give retirees greater choice and flexibility when it comes to managing their finances in retirement. Why should that happen? Well, because they deserve it. Over a lifetime they garner experience that matters, that is invaluable, that can be passed on, that can be utilised, that can be transferred to those in need. So I think this is a great opportunity not only for them, not only for those others who are in the workplace, but also for us, because it is incredibly important that we can transfer the skills of those older Australians to others in need. I thank them all for their contribution. Certainly without that age bracket working as volunteers right around our country we would not be able to support as many things as we do. The time that they give freely is, I think, invaluable.

There are three main changes in the bill to support Australians in retirement. There's an expansion of the Pension Loans Scheme, an increase and expansion of the pension work bonus and a new means test rule to encourage the development and take-up of lifetime retirement income products. The member for Chifley said that we have found a sudden devotion to those on the pension, those who are older and more senior Australians, and those who are more experienced. That is absolutely not the case, especially in my electorate. At the 2016 census, the median age of people in the electorate of Hinkler was 46 years, which is about 10 years above the state average, and 25.4 per cent of them were aged 65 years and over—36,346 people. Approximately 20,500 of them, about 14 per cent, were aged between 55 and 64. As at June 2018, a total of 27,860 people were receiving the age pension in Hinkler. So for me, as a local member, they are an incredibly important sector of our community. We must stand up for what they need, and this bill makes changes that are good for them. They are good opportunities.

Let's compare and contrast what we are doing in the bill before us with the proposals from the opposition. I'll quote from the front page of *NewsMail*, my local newspaper: 'Hip-pocket hit for 5500 retirees'. There will be a hip-pocket hit for 5½ thousand retirees. That is an enormous number of people. But this is the proposal from those opposite. They want to go to them and take away some of their meagre returns at tax time. In fact, on average, it's just \$2,200 a year. Those opposite put forward that they haven't paid tax. I'm not sure how they worked that out. People own a share in a company. It's their part of the company. It has paid tax. It's on their behalf. If they are a low-income earner, they're entitled to a tax refund like every other Australian. Every other Australian is entitled to that tax refund, but not according to those opposite. In fact, the local candidate for the Labor Party dug a pretty big hole for himself when he said:

Make no mistake, this is an unfair loophole that over-whelming benefits the wealthy.

Most people in Bundaberg have never heard of franking credits or know how to access them ...

It's just outrageous. How can you suggest to these people who make their claim every year that they don't understand it, that it doesn't apply to them and that they are rich? They

absolutely are not rich. The refund on average is \$2,200. That might not make a lot of difference to a Labor Party organiser who is the candidate in Hinkler—I'm sure the union has plenty of money to pay his wages—but \$2,000 for people on low incomes helps them with their rates bills and electricity bills. It helps them pay bills that they would otherwise not be able to pay.

Mr Christensen: Medical costs.

Mr PITT: As the member for Dawson says, it helps them with their medical costs. It helps them with their day-to-day living. This is a source of income for them. They are entitled—they are entitled—to get that refund like every other Australian. What are they suggesting? That people should give up all the things they've worked hard for and invest in something else, which they're then entitled to get a tax return on because those opposite want to take a massive \$200 billion tax grab from the Australian economy and take a hammer to the Australian economy. I think this is just outrageous.

The candidate for the Labor Party in Hinkler has doubled down. He has gone out on social media and said that Labor will end this tax loophole. It isn't a tax loophole; these people are entitled to a rebate. It is the same for every single Australian. The comebacks on Facebook have been pretty solid. I looked at what's been put forward by Mr Jesse Zielke. I know Jesse. Jesse is a local builder and he's told me outright that he supports a different side of politics. And he's entitled to: this is a democratic system and you can vote for whoever you like. But I think what he says is important as a response to what the Labor candidate has put forward. He says:

To put it even more simple, it's the same as an employer paying an employees tax on their behalf. I'm no where near retired and think this is just plain wrong, the shareholder is paying tax and the same shareholder is a retiree who's managed to make some good decisions in life and reduce the burden on claiming a pension which actually saves a lot of money. Happy to support good policy, but this is just wrong.

And it goes on. There are endless letters to the editor, including one from Brian Reynolds. He's pretty straight up and down. He says:

Labor's tax on the vulnerable is ridiculous, unfair, infantile, stupid and unsustainable.

In fact, he suggests:

... Labor shows a complete lack of understanding of financial matters.

He goes on:

If Labor will steal from the elderly and most vulnerable Australians, they will have no problem keeping tax returns from others in the future.

I've got to say that I continue to be surprised that Labor haven't changed their minds and backed off, because this is taking money from the people who desperately need it, who are entitled to it, who get the return and have set up the structures for their retirement many years in advance, and Labor simply want to rob it from people's pockets. That's it—\$2,200. What does the Labor candidate think? He thinks they're rich and they've come from capital cities—and I say shame on him. That is very, very ordinary.

Getting back to the bill, the Pension Loans Scheme provides fortnightly income payments at a reasonable rate of interest to people who have receive a reduced rate of income support pension or do not receive any income support pension because of the income or assets test.

Payments are made for a short period of time while the person's income and assets are being rearranged or may be made for an indefinite period. A loan under the Pension Loans Scheme can be repaid in full or in part at any time. The full amount of the loan plus interest owed at the time of the death of the person will be recovered from the person's estate. There is quite a lot of detail in the bill, of course. I don't intend to stand here and regurgitate all of that.

The legislation increases the work bonus threshold from \$250 to \$300 per fortnight for those individuals who choose to do some more work. I look at my own family. My father is 74. They still run an extensive harvesting contract business. They've reduced their farming operations, but he goes to work because he enjoys it. I think that the opportunity for those individuals to put a little bit more in the tin is very helpful for them, and I think it's in the best interests of all. This also means that the first \$250 of fortnightly employment income is not counted under the pension income test. The legislation amends the current rules for lifetime income stream to create fairer, more equitable means test outcomes. Once again, this is well supported across the parliament and makes a very, very reasonable contribution to those older Australians who have certainly done a lot for us. They have been stoic. They have dealt with incredibly difficult times throughout their lifetime, whether those are world wars, local wars or difficult times through floods and droughts. They have contributed to Australia. They have made Australia a better place, and we should look after them and provide them with opportunities.

I note that the member for Dawson is in the House and is very keen to make a contribution. I say again to the Labor candidate for Hinkler: 'You should change your mind on this. You have a dug a hole for yourself. You have not only called those people in my electorate rich but said they are trying to dodge taxes through a tax loophole without getting a small and meagre return that helps them to pay their bills.' I think it is an outrage and he should be called out for it. I thank you, Deputy Speaker Hastie, for the opportunity to make a contribution. I support the legislation.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (17:49): I rise to speak on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018. This bill makes a number of changes announced in the budget last year. These changes are to help support incomes for Australians in retirement.

The first change outlines how pooled lifetime income streams will be assessed for social security means testing. The new rules taking effect from 1 July from next year will mean that 60 per cent of payments for a pooled lifetime income stream will be treated as income and 60 per cent of the initial purchases amount will be assessed under the assets test. After five years, or when the person reaches the life expectancy of a 65-year-old male, currently 84—whichever is longer—the assets test will assess only 30 per cent of the initial purchase amount.

A second change this amendment will make refers to the work bonus. Currently pensioners can supplement their pension by up to \$250 a fortnight without affecting their pension. This amendment raises that threshold by \$50 to \$300.

The third change extends the Pension Loans Scheme to all older Australians with securable real estate. The current scheme, which is effectively a type of reverse mortgage, is only available to part-rate pensioners and their partners and some self-funded retirees.

But while these are positive changes, pensioners, especially self-funded retirees, have a very uncertain future ahead of them if the government changes. That's because they would face the threat of Labor's retirement tax if Labor were to form government next year. Earlier this year, some genius in the Labor Party dreamt up a new way to steal people's money. They figured out that pensioners and self-funded retirees had it too easy, apparently. The party thought they weren't being taxed enough, so they created this special tax for older people, a retiree tax. What they've designed is blatant theft. Labor promised to raid \$59 billion on imputation credits that retirees earn on their savings.

Most people are not across how imputation credits work, so Labor is trying to pull the wool over their eyes by dressing it up as something that it is not. Labor claims that the government is handing out money to retirees. They are saying we are handing out money to retirees. The truth is the government is simply returning money that it has already taken off retirees that it should not have taken off them. The truth is the government accepts that they have taken too much money off those retirees. They have taken more tax than those retirees have to pay and are liable to pay. Imputation credits are a means of avoiding double taxation. They are an acknowledgement that tax has already been paid and if too much tax has been paid, more than required by the law, then the excess amount is returned to the individual. That is what we do for all individuals who lodge a tax return and are found to have paid more tax than what they were required to. But Labor wants to put a stop to those returns going to retirees.

When you see Labor going after money like that, it should be a concern to any voter who earns a wage and pays taxes, because if your employer deducts more tax than they should, or if you claim deductions in your tax return, Labor has flagged that they don't want to give you your money back. Once they've got your money in their grubby little hands they will never give it back. It doesn't matter if are you a worker or if you are retired, Labor will find a way to steal your money. Australians will need to ask themselves a question at the next election. Retirees will need to ask themselves, 'Will my vote enable Labor to steal money from me?' Workers should ask if their vote will help Labor steal money from mum and dad's retirement incomes. Young Australians should ask themselves if their vote will help Labor steal from nanna or pop.

I hear laughter over there. The Tasmanian member laughing should know that 20,000 Tasmanians are going to be robbed of money. Twenty thousand Tasmanian retirees will be robbed from this tax. He shouldn't be laughing. He should be hanging his head in shame for trying to rob 20,000 Tasmanian retirees. If an individual robbed nanna or pop they would go to jail and they would be reviled by the community for such a disgusting, low act.

With the bill that we are debating today the government is working to support the income of retirees. We're trying to ensure that retirees have enough income to pay for the necessities of life. The Liberal-National government understands that many retirees are often on low incomes and those incomes are fixed incomes, because of retirement plans they've put themselves in. Despite presenting themselves as a party that helps people on low incomes, and they are anything but, the Labor Party is actually promising to rob low-income retirees with this retiree tax that they are proposing. They want to force our seniors below the poverty line. The Labor Party wants to see the 20,000 retirees and pensioners in the electorates in Tasmania making tough decisions like whether to pay the power bill or whether to eat every night. They

are the kinds of decisions they want. They want seniors to give away their pets, because they can't afford the pet food and they can't afford the vet.

I met with a constituent in my electorate, Mr Arnold Fanning, who is very worried about how he and his wife are going to survive under a Shorten Labor government. The Fannings have worked hard all their life. They've saved for their retirement, with fixed plans. As a result of the sacrifices that they've made their entire life, they've funded their own retirement; they do not rely on government support. In fact, they pay private health insurance to avoid being a burden on the taxpayer. However, if Labor's retiree tax came into play then the only way the Fannings could make ends meet would be to dump their private health insurance. The consequences of that decision for the government and for taxpayers would be another elderly couple accessing the taxpayer-funded public health system. There would not be a net benefit to the government under that scenario—quite possibly the opposite. With their retiree and pensioner tax, Labor would rob seniors of their dignity and of their freedom to choose their health providers.

I refer to this unfair policy of Labor's as a retiree and pensioner tax because it will affect both. The initial backlash to this ill-thought-out plan caused Labor to exempt pensioners, apparently. But what they've actually done is exempt only the people who were pensioners at that moment in time, because they wanted to take away the sting. But others who began or will begin accessing the age pension after that announcement will be subject to the same robbery and theft as self-funded retirees are going to go through. So, pensioners, make no mistake, Labor will tax pensioners under this retiree tax. After exempting some pensioners from this unfair tax, Labor now tries to paint the victims, as the member for Hinkler just said, as 'typically wealthy retirees', but almost all, 97 per cent, of the elderly victims of this retiree tax will be individuals who have taxable incomes below \$87,000; 84 per cent of the potential victims of this retiree tax are on taxable incomes below \$37,000; and more than half of them have taxable incomes of less than \$18,200.

Mr Brian Mitchell: Taxable incomes.

Mr CHRISTENSEN: Taxable incomes. He says 'taxable incomes'. What does he want to be on—the Labor Party's imaginary income thresholds? The member who is interjecting needs to think long and hard about the 20,000 Tasmanians that are going to be affected, and he should be talking to them. The victims of this retiree tax proposed by Labor will be pensioners, part-pensioners and self-funded retirees. They have done the right thing their whole life. They've worked hard, scrimped and saved to support themselves in retirement. They've done this nation a great service by removing some of the burden on the government and on the taxpayer. They've worked hard—they've built this country—and Labor wants to reward them by stealing their hard-earned money.

I met with one of the potential victims of Labor's retiree tax in my electorate earlier this year. Jolien is 88 years old. He and his wife, Enid, are self-funded retirees. They've worked hard their entire lives and paid all their taxes—a lot of tax. They've never relied on any support from the government. In the process, they saved for their own retirement. Saving means sacrificing. Instead of spending money having a good time, going on holidays or going out every night, Jolien and Enid chose to save money so they could support themselves in their later years. That hard work and saving enabled them to do just that. They're self-funded retirees who do not receive any pension from the government.

If you believe Labor's spin about 'typically wealthy retirees', you probably think that they're living the high life, dining on caviar and champagne every night. But Jolien told me, 'Our gross income, between the two of us, is less than the current average weekly wage'—less than the current average weekly wage. He said that, under the planned retiree tax by the Labor Party, their income would be reduced by more than \$10,000 a year. He said, 'On part of my personal income, it will be 64½c in the dollar on the excess imputation credits.' Corporate fat cats and bank CEOs—banks themselves don't pay 64½c in the dollar on any part of their tax. Jolien is just one of the many retirees in my electorate who have voiced their concerns about their financial future under a Shorten Labor government. They can't believe that the lifestyle for which they have worked and saved, scrimped, for decades will be pulled out from under them with the stroke of a pen.

If we really want to support retiree incomes in Australia the most important thing we can do is to stop the shifty Leader of the Opposition from ever becoming Prime Minister. We can legislate measures like we're doing in this bill today, but all that and more will be undermined if Labor's retiree tax, their attack on seniors in this country, means that investment dividends are no longer protected from double taxation. It is hard to believe that in September 2017 the Leader of the Opposition stood up in Townsville and said:

I think Australians pay enough tax at the moment. I don't believe that another tax is going to be what Australians need or want at this stage.

It is very hard to believe that. It's very hard to believe that he said it with a straight face, because Labor is now promising to tax everything that moves and impose levies on anything that doesn't.

As well as stealing money off more than one million individuals with their retiree tax, they will also hit around 40 per cent of self-managed super funds and retirement savings that are held in about 3½ million super fund accounts. They did, however, very conveniently allow hundreds of millions of dollars in franking credits to be refunded to tax-exempt organisations, also known as trade unions, that donate to the Labor Party.

The truth is that no amount of support for retirement incomes will make up for what would lie ahead in the unfortunate circumstances of having a Shorten Labor government. They would not only impose a retiree tax; they would hit them with a housing tax, with a carbon tax, with higher electricity bills and even, as the unions want, with a death tax. They are proposing to raise more money from new taxes—more money than the actual GDP of New Zealand—because they would have to pay for their waste, for their profligate spending and for their inability to run a budget. It's like the Labor Party has employed two innovation professionals: one to dream up ways of how to throw around money and win votes, and the other as some kind of grim reaper tax officer dreaming up ways to hurt people and searching for new ways to hurt them even more. This time around it's going to be older Australians. How disgusting. How disgusting to attack people in our society who have worked hard to build up this country and some of the most vulnerable in our society.

It is no wonder there was white-hot anger in Townsville recently at the House economics committee, which was conducting a public hearing for their inquiry into the implication of removing refundable franking credits. There was quite a turnout for that meeting. Many of them drove in the rain as the floods started. They drove through the rain to get to that meeting. They wanted to have their voices heard. And didn't Labor hate it that self-funded retirees and

pensioners actually had their voices heard through that platform? They tried to discredit that inquiry to sweep the problems under the carpet.

They have the audacity to come in here and tell those self-funded retirees and pensioners to just not vote for them. Actually, that's the best thing I've heard. I concur with that advice from the Labor Party. The best advice for seniors right now is to not vote for the Labor Party, because they are going to come after you. Regardless of the changes we make through this bill to support the incomes of Australians in retirement, it will all come to nought if a Shorten Labor government comes to power.

Pensioners and retirees will be taxed. Seniors will be far worse off under a Labor government. It will be a case of three steps forward under this bill, and a Bondi tram one mile back. There's one thing that we've learnt about Labor: when they run out of their own money, they come after yours, they come after mine, they come after everyone's. If you're a senior, there's one thing as sure as night follows day, and day follows night: they're coming after your hard-earned. It's absolutely disgusting that they would try to rip off and steal the hard-earned of our senior Australians—people who built this country, people who are some of the most vulnerable, people who are on fixed incomes, people who are on low incomes.

I say to the Labor Party: think again, and if you don't think again you are going to be punished at the ballot box. Those 20,000 Tasmanians who receive these funds—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr CHRISTENSEN: are going to come for you, mate; they're going to come for you. They're going to come for every single one of these Labor people. They're so smug, walking around like they've won this already. Well, I've got news for them, and so have the seniors around this country: they're going to punish Labor at the ballot box for disgracing themselves with this policy.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Families and Social Services) (18:04): I thank all members for their contributions to this debate, and I'm now pleased to sum up. Let me commence by tabling a replacement explanatory memorandum to correct a minor error. The Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Supporting Retirement Incomes) Bill 2018 implements measures announced in the 2018-19 budget to enhance the living standards of older Australians. The bill provides for three changes to support Australians in retirement, including new means test rules to encourage the development and take-up of lifetime retirement income products, an expansion of the Pension Loans Scheme and an increase and expansion of the pension work bonus. All three changes will commence on 1 July 2019.

The new means test rules for pooled lifetime income streams pave the way for the development of retirement income products that support greater choice and flexibility for Australians in retirement. They apply to all pooled lifetime income products held by social security or veterans affairs income support recipients that are acquired or purchased on or after 1 July 2019. Products purchased before 1 July 2019 will not be affected by these new rules. The rules will not change for account based income streams—the most common retirement income product. Under the income test, the new means test rules will assess 60 per cent of payments from a pooled lifetime income stream as income. Under the assets test, the new means test rules will assess a proportion of the total purchase amount for the pooled lifetime income stream. At the time of purchase, 60 per cent of the purchase amount will be

assessed. This will continue for a minimum of five years or until the person reaches the life expectancy of a 65-year-old male, currently the age of 84, whichever is longer. After this point, 30 per cent of the purchase amount will be assessed. In situations where an income stream is sold outside of superannuation, the new rules have some additional provisions to make sure that this is factored into the means test assessment. Stakeholders in the financial product and retirement income industries have been consulted throughout the development of the new means test rules, and the new rules take into account their feedback. The new means test rules are estimated to cost \$20.2 million over four years.

Secondly, this bill increases the pension work bonus by \$50 to \$300 per fortnight and extends the application of the work bonus to income earned from self-employment. The work bonus is an income test concession for pensioners of age pension age and veterans affairs pensioners over qualifying age that encourages pensioners to undertake work to supplement their pension. The work bonus was set at \$250 per fortnight when the current scheme was introduced in 2011 and has not been increased since. Increasing the work bonus amount to \$300 a fortnight will allow pensioners to retain more of their pension when they receive income from work. Because the work bonus operates in addition to the standard pension income test free area, which is currently \$172 per fortnight for a single pensioner, the increase in the work bonus to \$300 a fortnight will allow, for example, a single age pensioner with no other income to earn up to \$472 a fortnight from employment and still receive the maximum rate of age pension. The work bonus income bank limit will also increase to \$7,800 under the changes. Pensioners will be able to build up any unused amount of the \$300 fortnightly exemption to a total of \$7,800. This amount can be used to exempt future earnings from the pension income test, so the changes will mean a pensioner could earn up to \$7,800 a year extra without it affecting his or her pension. Extending the work bonus to the self-employed will improve the consistency and equity of the work bonus. It is fair that self-employed pensioners who earn income from engaging in work should be able to access the work bonus in the same manner as pensioners who are employees. Overall, the changes to the work bonus will increase the payments of about 88,750 social security pensioners and 1,000 allowance recipients from 1 July 2019. Approximately 1,150 people will become eligible for a social security pension for the first time. Approximately 3,000 veterans affairs pensioners will also benefit. The changes to the work bonus are estimated to cost \$227.4 million over four years.

The bill also expands the Pension Loans Scheme. The Pension Loans Scheme is a voluntary reverse mortgage type loan available through Centrelink to part-rate pensioners and some self-funded retirees who own real estate in Australia. Under this scheme, a person of age pension age can nominate to receive an amount up to the equivalent of the full rate of the pension, with the payment accruing as a debt secured against real estate owned by the person. The debt accrues compound interest, with safeguards ensuring that the amount of the maximum loan that can accrue is limited. The expansion of the Pension Loans Scheme will mean that the available Pension Loans Scheme fortnightly loan plus pension amount will increase to 150 per cent of the maximum rate of fortnightly age pension, including the pension and energy supplements and rent assistance where applicable. This will allow, for the first time, maximum-rate pensioners with securable real estate in Australia to access the scheme. Current arrangements that prevent some self-funded retirees from participating in the scheme will be removed. The change will also allow existing Pension Loans Scheme recipients to increase their existing pension plus loan amount up to the new threshold of 150

per cent of the maximum fortnightly rate of pension. The changes will give older Australians more choice to draw on the equity in their homes to support their standard of living in retirement. Around 6,000 eligible pensioners of age pension age are expected to take up a loan under the expanded scheme over the next three years. The changes to the Pension Loans Scheme are estimated to cost \$11 million over the forward estimates.

The bill also includes technical amendments to confirm that income support recipients of age pension age qualify for the employment nil rate period, which enables pensioners with work to remain connected to the pension system for a 12-week period, allowing them to retain their concession cards and immediately return to the pension if their work ceases.

Overall, this bill will give retirees greater choice and flexibility when it comes to managing their finances in retirement. It will support home-owning retirees to receive more income in the form of a loan, and it will allow older Australians to keep more of their pension when they work. In the best interests of senior Australians, I seek the support of the parliament for the passing of this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hastie): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Barton has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is the amendment be agreed to.

Question negatived.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Families and Social Services) (18:13): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Foreign Investors Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2018

Income Tax (Managed Investment Trust Withholding Tax) Amendment Bill 2018

Income Tax Rates Amendment (Sovereign Entities) Bill 2018

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes:

(1) the then Treasurer's shock decision on 14 September 2017 to ban the build-to-rent sector, which had multi-billion dollar ramifications for the Australian property market;

(2) the then Treasurer's failure to reverse the decision, seeing significant damage to Australia's build-to-rent sector before finally capitulating on 26 July last year;

(3) that the same incompetent approach to policy-making saw snap rule changes affecting investors in student accommodation; and

(4) that failure to address the Government's mistakes in student accommodation could see more international students competing with Australians in the rental market."

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hastie) (18:14): Before the debate is resumed on this bill, I remind the House that it has been agreed that a general debate be allowed covering this bill, the Income Tax (Managed Investment Trust Withholding Tax) Amendment Bill 2018 and the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Sovereign Entities) Bill 2018. The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Fenner has moved as an amendment that all words after 'that' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (18:15): I'm speaking in support of these bills subject to the second reading amendment moved by the member for Fenner. These bills deal with stapled structures and tightening tax concessions for foreign investors. The bills do four things. They increase the managed investment trust withholding rate on fund payments that are attributable to non-concessional managed investment trust income to 30 per cent, they modify the thin capitalisation rules to prevent double-gearing structures, they limit the withholding tax exemption for superannuation funds for foreign residents and they codify the limits and scope of the sovereign immunity tax exemption.

In respect of stapled structures, according to the government, the measures in these bills are designed to improve the integrity of tax laws relating to stapled structures. Prior to the introduction of the managed investment trust regime in 2008, profits made by stapled entities had a similar tax burden to companies. The MIT regime is aimed at increasing the attractiveness of certain funds to mobile foreign investment, lowering withholding taxes deducted from certain distributions from foreign investors. That rate is generally at 15 per cent. That means that foreign investors investing through stapled structures don't pay the company tax rate. The unintended consequence of the system is that we have foreign institutional investors being taxed anywhere between zero and 15 per cent, versus the company tax rate of 30 per cent. Obviously, that's an anomaly that we wish to clear up through these provisions.

In terms of the thin capitalisation rules that prevent double-gearing structures, these rules apply to foreign controlled Australian entities, Australian entities that operate internationally and foreign entities operating in Australia. Generally, they broadly deny deductions for debt-financing expenses if the entity's debt exceeds certain limits. Foreign investors have been entering into double-gearing structures that allow them to convert more of their active business income into interest income, which is subject to a 10 per cent interest withholding tax, or less in some cases. The explanatory memorandum states:

Double-gearing structures involve multiple layers of flow-through holding entities (trusts or partnerships) that each issue debt against the same underlying asset. This allows investors to provide a

greater proportion of their capital as investor debt and gear higher than the thin capitalisation limits allow. As a result, investors are able to maintain and deduct higher levels of debt financing expenditure.

Currently, it goes on:

For the purposes of determining associate entity debt, associate entity equity and the associate entity excess amount under the thin capitalisation provisions, a trust ... or partnership that is an associate of the other entity referred to in the relevant provisions will be an associate entity of that other entity if the other entity holds an associate interest of—

50 per cent or more in that trust or partnership. Schedule 2 of the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Foreign Investors Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill lowers that associate entity threshold from 50 per cent to 10 per cent. The explanatory memorandum states:

In addition, in determining the arm's length debt amount, an entity must consider the debt to equity ratios in entities that are relevant to the considerations of an independent lender or borrower.

It's good to see that the government has adopted this. It's similar to a measure that Labor has proposed in our nearest reforms—if we're elected—associated with thin capitalisation rules and cracking down on multinational tax avoidance.

This proposal that we're dealing with here today in these bills doesn't go as far as Labor's proposal, but it is a step in the right direction. We would urge the government to give further consideration to Labor's proposal, which will provide greater integrity and efficiency to our tax system and ensure that we get a fairer share from companies that have had a history—in particular, those larger companies—of using thin capitalisation rules to transfer debt to other countries.

The previous Treasurer and now Prime Minister unilaterally announced, on 14 September 2017, that managed investment trusts would no longer be able to acquire residential property, other than affordable housing. This did take the property and construction sector completely by surprise, putting the potential billion-dollar build-to-rent market in Australia at risk. After more than 10 months of uncertainty and confusion, the former Treasurer, the Prime Minister, finally backflipped and changed that, allowing MITs to invest in residential housing that is held primarily for the purpose of deriving rent.

Distributions attributed to investments in residential housing that are not used to provide affordable housing will not be concessional MIT income that is subject to a final MIT withholding tax rate of 30 per cent. The Property Council supports this element of the legislation, saying that the presentation of these bills is another step towards providing greater certainty around the rules for institutional investment in real estate, benefitting millions of Australians and their retirement savings. Tax justice advocates are supportive of this measure.

A report on the use of stapled structures has led to a Senate inquiry, chaired by Senator McAllister, that looks at the for-profit aged-care sector and stapled structures. Some sovereign wealth funds and institutional investors have criticised the package for not being fully prospective and have said that the measures will create a disincentive to investment in large-scale Australian projects, including infrastructure. The Financial Services Council has opposed much of that package.

The Tax Institute has raised the issue of why the Australian Taxation Office doesn't simply use Part IVA, the general anti-avoidance rule, to target the recharacterisation of active income

to passive income, to exploit low withholding tax rates designed for passive investor income. It welcomes the transitional arrangements for infrastructure as a second-best option. But some stakeholders have raised the medium-term effect on horizontal fiscal equalisation. In particular, the package largely removes the ability for states to promote the use of stapled structures to inflate asset prices for the purposes of privatisation, and state governments of various political situations have championed the use of these stapled structures to increase the sale of assets for privatisation purposes. That's something the Labor Party has had some difficulty with in previous years, particularly the sale of essential assets associated with electricity that have led to some of the massive increases in electricity prices that we've been seeing for some years.

In conclusion, Labor supports the passage of these bills. While there are measures in here that go some of the way to closing some of the tax loopholes in Australia, particularly those around managed investment trusts and changes to thin capitalisation rules, in our view the reforms do not go far enough. The government should look at the proposals Labor has put in place around a fairer multinational tax system and some of these entities that are being used by big corporations to not pay their fair share of tax in Australia. It should look at implementing the very sound recommendations that have been put forward by Labor that would be fair dinkum about closing some of these tax loopholes for multinational corporations.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (18:24): It's my pleasure to rise in this House and speak about another package of tax measures that this government is seeking to introduce to ensure that everyone in Australia pays their fair share of tax—the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Foreign Investors Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2018, the Income Tax (Managed Investment Trust Withholding Tax) Amendment Bill 2018 and the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Sovereign Entities) Bill 2018. This is important because we need people to pay their fair share of tax to ensure that we have the funds in the budget to provide for our infrastructure, our schools and our essential services that all Australians expect and deserve. The current concessions and loopholes have leaked hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, and it's important that we seek to close those because we can't afford to leave those loopholes and concessions unaddressed.

These bills aim to address the unintended loopholes while tightening some broad tax concessions, including, as the member for Kingsford Smith outlined, stapled structures that currently allow foreign investors to get a very low rate of tax and, in turn, get a competitive advantage over Australian investors by paying little, if any, tax. Foreign investors have been taking advantage of this system by converting trading income into more favourably taxed passive income in land-rich sectors such as infrastructure. That these tax benefits are available only to foreign investors places Australian investors and businesses at a competitive disadvantage. That these concessions are available only to foreign investors results in a two-tiered tax system that has the potential to distort investment decisions and biases investments towards those structures I outlined before. As we look across our economy, it's important that, irrespective of your structure and your business, everyone pays the same rate of tax to ensure that we have the necessary revenue for the services that we need to provide. This bill will stop double gearing so that foreign investors will be unable to shift profits to avoid tax. It will stop foreign investors getting tax concessions on their stapled structures to achieve tax rates well

below 15 per cent on their Australian business income or, in some cases, be tax free. That's in stark comparison to Australian entities, who pay a corporate tax rate of up to 30 cents in the dollar.

But, importantly, these bills are the latest in a range of measures that this government has sought to introduce over the past few years that are resulting in some of the strongest taxation integrity rules in the world. However, these stapled arrangements and the broad tax concessions provide an opportunity to avoid or minimise tax, and that poses a risk to the integrity of our tax system, and these bills seek to reduce or close those loopholes. One of the loopholes that we're closing concerns trading income that is presently converted to passive income—income from agricultural land and residential housing, other than affordable housing. We will see this income taxed at the corporate tax rate for foreign investors, which will improve the outcomes for all Australians across the housing spectrum, particularly those most in need of home ownership. The proposed reforms will, again, prevent foreign investors from double gearing these investments to generate more favourably taxed income. These measures address risks to Australia's corporate tax base posed by this range of structures.

Schedules 1 to 5 of the bill amend the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997, the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 and the Taxation Administration Act 1953 to improve the integrity of the income tax law for these arrangements, including foreign investors using managed investment trusts and the income that flows through those. Increasingly, we've seen businesses in a broad range of sectors seek to use tax structures to minimise the tax that they pay, and, with the managed investment trusts concession being used through stapled securities and similar arrangements, we've seen the conversion of active income into passive income. Further, some foreign investors have entered into arrangements that generate debt greater than the prescribed thin capitalisation debt limits by using double-gearing structures, leading to the ability to claim greater tax deductions than were otherwise available to Australian investors and therein create, as I outlined before, a two-tiered tax structure and a commercial advantage for many of these entities.

Several of these measures are specifically designed to address housing affordability for members of the community earning low to moderate incomes by providing incentives for investors to increase the supply of affordable housing. As a result, managed investment trusts will be able to invest in residential housing that is held primarily for the purpose of deriving rent. However, distributions that are attributable to investments in residential housing that are not used to provide affordable housing will be non-concessional managed investment trust income and subject to a final withholding tax of 30 per cent.

Schedule 2 improves the integrity of the income tax law by modifying the thin capitalisation rules to prevent double-gearing structures. This schedule will apply in the income years commencing on or after 1 July 2018, with no transitional period, as the amendments close a clear technical loophole in the law. The thin capitalisation rules will bring in about \$400 million in revenue over the forward estimates, while helping to put Australian investors on a more equal footing by removing lower and unintended tax rates currently available to foreign investors. Foreign investors have increasingly entered into these structures that allow them to convert active business income to interest income with lower withholding tax rates.

This is just another example, as I said before, of the government seeking to address a range of issues to ensure the integrity of our tax system. Importantly, the measures that have been put in place over the last few years create a tax system that is much stronger in its tax integrity than many others around the world. And as a result, under this government, Australia is a global leader in the fight against multinational tax avoidance. Some of the measures that have been introduced have resulted in approximately \$7 billion in liabilities being raised against large public groups and multinationals and around another \$7 billion in sales being returned to Australia each and every year. That results in hundreds of millions of dollars of additional GST revenue, which is a direct benefit to the states.

Once again, this is a demonstration that this government is focused on making sure foreign investors pay their fair share of tax as part of their social licence for operating in Australia. This in turn ensures that we have a strong economy, resulting in more jobs and opportunity for hardworking Australians, who are looking to build and grow the wealth for their future and for their families and, importantly, ensuring that their government can provide and fund the essential services that Australians expect and rely on. It's pleasing to see that progressively over the last few years we have continued to strengthen the integrity of our tax system to ensure that everyone, whether foreign or domestic, is paying their fair share and allowing us to generate the revenue necessary to provide the services that every Australian expects. I commend these bills in their original form to the House.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (18:33): Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that you will be riveted to hear that the implications of this bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Foreign Investors Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2018, as part of the coalition government's historic program of tax reform, are both practical and profound. People who live in my electorate of Fisher who want to invest in Australia's future will see the day-to-day benefits of the bill in the form of a level playing field, beginning on 1 July this year. But the values and beliefs that underlie this bill and our tax reform policies in general are fundamental to the weighty choice that will face all Australians at the coming federal election. It is a choice between two visions for the future of our country and between two contrasting beliefs about the success that Australians deserve.

The Liberal-National coalition want to keep tax rates as low as possible to allow people to keep more of their own money. Labor, on the other hand, want to take \$200 billion more from Australians' back pockets. The coalition want to reward aspiration and ensure that hard work is not punished. Labor believe that, the harder you work, the more the government should take from you. The coalition want to encourage Australians to invest in their future and in the future of our country. Labor want to punish investment and discourage Australians from saving for their future because Labor want more Australians to be reliant on the public purse. The coalition want a tax policy which helps grow a strong economy and allows us to pay for the services that Australians need. Labor will weaken that economy with an onerous, unaffordable tax burden that will eventually drag all of us down. Our government wants a level playing field. We want to ensure that the tax rules are the same for everyone, regardless of wealth, size of corporation or geographical location. Labor want different rules for different people, unfairly targeting retirees or hardworking families who own an investment property.

That is the contrast between the coalition's historic tax reforms and Labor's shameless tax grab. That is the context of this bill and the tax reform program in which it fits. In particular,

it is an encouraging domestic investment in ensuring a level playing field where this bill will have its impact. Schedule 1 of the bill will ensure that a foreign investor cannot take income they derive from trading in Australia and avoid paying the full rate of tax on it by converting it through what is known as a stapled structure into passive income from agricultural land or residential housing. Until now, these stapled structures have allowed foreign investors, and only foreign investors, to achieve effective tax rates of less than 15 per cent, far lower than what Australians would ordinarily pay. It has also allowed them to get an unfair tax advantage over Australian citizens who want to invest in our domestic, agricultural or residential property. The coalition government encourages foreign investment in Australia. However, we believe that, if you earn an income in Australia, you should pay the same tax on that income that an Australian must pay.

Schedule 2 of the bill prevents foreign investors from creating layers of trusts which can convert the active business income that investors have gained into interest payments taxed at a much lower rate. The bill would group these trusts together, apply the same so-called thin capitalisation rules to them as apply to other entities investing in Australia and thereby ensure that they cannot be used to create large debt deductions and reduce the tax owed to Treasury.

Finally, schedules 3 and 4 would reduce the tax exemptions enjoyed by foreign pension funds and sovereign wealth funds. While the government want to encourage overseas pension funds to invest in Australia, currently our tax incentives to do so are far more generous than most equivalent countries afford to Australians. We need to redress the balance and ensure that our investors are not comparatively disadvantaged by the excessive concessions that we grant to overseas funds.

Importantly, however, the government recognises that there are high areas of need in Australia where additional tax incentives for foreign investment are in fact appropriate. With a rapidly growing population, we face a considerable need for new infrastructure and more affordable housing right across this country. As such, the government has built in, for example, a pragmatic exemption to schedule 1 of this package for 15 years for nationally important infrastructure projects and has included in the bill further support for affordable rental housing. It's ensured that these measures were developed in close consultation with industry groups, businesses, investors and other tiers of government across two years of discussions. We have ensured that there are transition arrangements built in of between seven and 15 years in the case of existing arrangements to make sure that no-one is unfairly disadvantaged. These reforms are targeted and pragmatic, ensuring a level playing field without discouraging the investment that we so badly need in this country.

In total, closing these loopholes will ensure that Treasury recoups around \$400 million over the next four years in taxation which foreign investors would otherwise have avoided paying. That's \$400 million in unfair advantage negated, and \$400 million that the government can put towards the services on which Australians rely. If left unchecked, this loss of revenue could have grown into the billions, as more foreign investors would seek to take advantage of the loopholes, to the serious detriment of Australian domestic investment.

Overall, as I've sought to describe, this bill is an essential element of the coalition's wider taxation reform package, helping to ensure a level playing field, enforce the same rules on all and encourage domestic investment. In assessing the merits of this bill in its wider context, the House should consider what the coalition's taxation reform package has already delivered

for all Australians. Sixty thousand people in my electorate of Fisher, for example, are already better off because of the coalition government's tax reforms. Working Australians who live in communities like Caloundra, Beerwah, Maleny or Mooloolaba are seeing up to \$530 more in their pay packets every year. Ordinary families in those communities, in towns like Kawana, Alexandra Headland, Beerburum or Landsborough are getting up to \$1,060 back from this government. We've passed further reform which ensures that 94 per cent of Australians, including residents of Fisher, will never have to pay a marginal tax rate of more than 32½c in the dollar.

We believe that if you choose to put in the effort to succeed, you deserve to enjoy the fruits of that aspiration. At a time when wage growth is low and when bills for electricity and housing are high, the coalition government has acted responsibly and pragmatically, and said to people in my electorate, 'We are not going to take any more of your money than we absolutely have to.' Small businesses in Fisher that are creating the industry and jobs of our future are already feeling the practical benefits of the coalition government's policies. Companies like Helimods at Caloundra Airport, Enquest in Bells Creek and APAC Infrastructure in Caloundra West are already investing in new products and offering new jobs in the knowledge that the return on those investments will be greater under the government's corporate tax cuts. Day-to-day businesses on which local residents rely, like CK Whole Foods in Mooloolaba, Maleny Jewellers, and Peachester Fuel and General Store, have been given greater confidence that they can earn, employ locals and invest for the future, because this government is taking less of their income every year.

We all see the benefits in thriving shopping districts and a low unemployment rate across this country. The bill we are considering today will further encourage that sort of confidence and that investment by ensuring that overseas investors are not receiving an unfair advantage which increases their returns and makes it harder for domestic businesses to compete. The people of Fisher and its local businesses are already experiencing the positive practical impact of the coalition government in their pay packets and on their balance sheets. This bill will support them further.

Under Labor, my constituents would receive none of these practical benefits. Labor voted against our personal income tax plan. They voted to take \$70 billion more from taxpayers, including from the back pockets of 60,000 working Australians in Fisher. Labor have promised to repeal the coalition government's company tax cuts and undermine the investment decisions taken by tens of thousands of businesses in my electorate. Labor have promised more than \$200 billion in other new taxes on housing, electricity, small business, investment, income and even pensions. Every day, whether you're a working Australian, whether you're an Australian investor or a small business owner or a retiree—it doesn't matter—you'll be better off under the coalition than you would be under Labor.

But the debates over taxes that have taken place in this parliament reveal something more fundamental about our competing visions for Australia. Members of the Liberal-National coalition believe that the success that Australians want is a success built on hard work, investment for the future, and personal responsibility. We believe that Australians want the satisfaction of knowing that they have earned what they have, that they have provided for themselves and their loved ones, and that they've helped to build Australia's future. Labor have fought tooth and nail to stop us implementing our historic tax reforms at every stage,

because Labor don't believe in aspiration; some of them don't even know what it means. They don't understand it. Labor don't believe in rewarding hard work and investment for the future or celebrating the success of ordinary people. For them, the more you work, the more the government should take. Labor demonise achievement. They punish hard work and they penalise investment, because Labor believe that the only success Australians deserve is the success that the government hands out.

That is the choice that faces the people of this country: opportunity and prosperity under the coalition, or Labor's politics of envy. I know which Australians will choose. I encourage this House to do the same by supporting this bill and helping us progress the vital work of tax reform today.

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (18:46): I rise to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Foreign Investors Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2018. This bill addresses unintended loopholes and tightens some of the broad tax concessions that allow foreign investors to get a very low tax rate and a competitive advantage over Australian investors. But while I'm on my feet, we should look at a few things in terms of comparison with those opposite, because we've heard over many years their shrill screams about multinationals and companies in Australia that haven't paid any tax. Well, I've got news for those opposite. There are some rules around taxation in this country—some very important rules. And I think the first one is this: if you don't actually make a profit then you don't pay any tax. Those opposite have made calls about Australian companies who haven't paid tax for a particular year. Mr Deputy Speaker Goodenough, I know you've been in business yourself, and the minister at the dispatch box is probably in a similar position, and the member for New England in front of me—you have had experience in employing people and setting up business structures and companies, paying tax to the Australian government. But those opposite certainly have it wrong.

There are things that happen to companies and businesses in this country that mean that they don't make a profit. I was in business for more than 15 years before I came into this place. There were years when I didn't have a tax bill because I made a loss. At that time, you dip into your overdraft or you dip into your savings or your previous years' earnings, and you use that to keep your business going, to pay your wages and to keep your staff in their jobs. They are the things that companies in this country do. So, I think these shrill screams about multinationals and for more tax to be paid by companies in Australia need to be tempered by the reality of what happens in business. It is one day of the year when you assess your position, on that day, for your taxation responsibilities to the Australian government, and if you owe them you pay them. It is very straightforward.

In terms of profit shifting for multinationals, we've already cracked down on that, and the proof of the pudding is in the eating: more than \$5 billion has been recovered. That is an enormous amount of hot dogs down the road for those who might be looking for support. And can I say, we know that those opposite do know something about taxes. They know that they like to hand them out. The proposal that they are taking to the next election is a tax hammer to the Australian economy: \$200 billion in additional taxes and costs.

I know, as a previous owner of a business, that you make decisions based on a couple of things. You make decisions based on forecasts and you make a decisions based on confidence and your bottom line. The stronger your bottom line is the more likely you are to invest, to

take calculated risks and to employ more Australians. We've been successful over the past six years. More than a million jobs have been created in this country. I think that has been incredibly beneficial. We have at the moment one of the lowest unemployment rates for many years. It comes down to the structures we've put in place to help businesses be successful, because at the end of the day a profitable business employs Australians in this country—and they all pay tax. But we know that that is not enough for those opposite. They want more money to spend on the things that they want. The difference between us and them is that we want Australians to keep more of their money to spend where they want it, so they can make a decision about where their kids go to school, not necessarily pour it into government coffers for Labor's ideology.

We know what will happen to running costs. One of the things that I was surprised—in fact, absolutely gobsmacked—about during my period in business was the increase in the cost of electricity. Without a word of a lie, I started with an irrigation tariff of around 12 cents a kilowatt hour. It is now in the high 20s. If you were in business, your electricity bill was not in the top three costs for your operation unless you were a large energy user. It is now in the top two. Minister Angus Taylor and I met with a small-business man last week. Electricity is now his third highest cost after wages and rent. This is a coffee shop. It is not a huge operation that requires enormous amounts of energy. It is unsustainable. You cannot continue to have such high energy costs. Yet, those opposite want to increase it again. They want to implement a 50 per cent renewable energy target, with intermittent wind and solar. We know exactly what would happen. You can go to South Australia. It has the highest electricity costs in the world. What would that mean for regional Australia? It's pretty straightforward. It would mean a loss of jobs and businesses.

Minister Taylor and I attended the Bundaberg Foundry in recent weeks. They have been in place for 130 years-plus on the Burnett River in Bundaberg, providing training and services. They employ over 100 people and have done for a very long time. On 30 June next year, when their existing energy contracts expire, their costs will go from \$1 million to \$1.7 million in one year. For a business with a turnover of \$40 million—and I know all of those in the House at the moment who have ever had a business know what the margins are—\$700,000 is a very substantial amount off your bottom line, and the question will then become one of viability. So I say to the Queensland government, because they are solely responsible: you need to take action. We have called for years to make changes to tariffs. In fact, the tariffs that they are suggesting is 48 cents a kilowatt hour for a commercial business. Forty-eight cents! That is just unsustainable.

I do not want this business to leave my local district. They have trained literally thousands of people—apprentices, trainees—over more than 100 years. We need them to stay because they are a mainstay of what happens in regional Australia. But we need to ensure that our taxation system is fair, so we are reducing the taxation rate, particularly for small business. Those opposite want taxes to increase. We want people to be competitive. We want their businesses to grow. Those opposite want to take more off them to subdue what they do, every single day, week, month and year, to ensure that their life is more difficult and their business is more difficult to operate.

This is a pretty straightforward contest. On that side, they want to take more taxes from every Australian. On this side, we want them to have more in their pockets, so they have more

reliability and more money on the bottom line, and so they employ more Australians so our economy continues to grow. It is very straightforward. Taxation for them means changes in negative gearing. The stated goal of those opposite is to drive down the value of every Australian's home, to drive down the value of their home. The silence is deafening. I admit there are only a couple of us in here, but how is it possible for them to go to every Australian home owner and say: 'We want the equity in your house to deteriorate. In fact, we want it to go so low that the bank will come and take it off you'? That is just outrageous. These people have invested at a time when they could. They saved their deposits. They work hard. A potential Labor government change in taxation policy that would take their houses away from them is not in the interests of anyone. It's not in their interest. It's not in the nation's interest. It's not in the economy's interest. We are deadset against those changes. We need to ensure that a Labor government is never elected in this country, because they will destroy our economy.

You only have to look at what we are doing with the tax offset. My electorate are not high-income earners. In fact, their average every year is around \$34,000. It is just \$34,000 for their median income. For them, it's approximately a \$500 change. Some 49,000 individuals in my electorate will gain the tax offset of around \$500 after the end of the financial year in 2019. That makes a big difference to them. Once again, in comparison, we know the retiree tax from those opposite will take, on average, \$2,200 from 5,500 retired Australians in my electorate. They use that to pay their rates bill, they use that to pay their electricity bill and they use that to pay their everyday costs of living. It is not a lot of money. They are entitled to it. Those opposite suggest it is a loophole for someone who hasn't paid tax. Well, they have clearly paid tax. That's how they got a return. When they lodged their return on 30 June, their income is either less than the threshold or less than the rate and they get a return on the taxation paid on their behalf through shares. It is very, very simple and very, very straightforward.

The legislation before the House is very straightforward. It is intended to stop double gearing so that foreign investors can't shift profits to avoid tax. It is about stopping foreign investors from getting tax concessions on stapled structures to achieve tax rates of 15 per cent or less or, in some cases, being almost tax free for Australian business income. We need to ensure that every Australian company has the same advantage as those who want to come from overseas to invest here. Let me be very clear: we need foreign investment. Our country is built on foreign investment. But that foreign investment needs to be fair and should not disadvantage Australian companies, Australian businesses and, in particular, Australian superannuation funds.

While I'm on my feet, I will again put out a call to the Australian superannuation funds: take Australians' money and invest it in the Australian nation. It can be in infrastructure, housing, hotels or agriculture. To be pretty damn frank and blunt, I don't care where it is as long as it is Australian super invested in this country for every Australian's benefit. In fact, if superannuation funds went to their members, put a check box on those forms that they make you fill out every single year and asked them their members they wanted more investment in Australian infrastructure or in Australian agriculture, I think it would be overwhelmingly a yes. For the life of me, I can't understand why Australian super funds are so hell-bent on investments in agriculture and infrastructure in the United States, in Canada or in other

countries, but they are not as interested in investing in this country. I've called for Australian investment before, and I will call for it again.

While we are talking about it, the changes to the bill include taxes on foreign investors' income from Australian agricultural land and Australian residential property other than affordable housing, disability accommodation and management investment trusts at the top corporate tax rate. It provides transitions for periods of seven to 15 years for existing investments. It allows for a 15-year concessional rate for investments in new nationally significant infrastructure, as determined by the Treasurer, and implements the government's budget commitment to support affordable rental housing by providing a 15 per cent tax rate. As I said earlier, we have already made changes to those multinationals who might be looking to avoid tax in this country. That has resulted in \$5.6 billion of additional income from those now taxpayers to the Australian government, which can be used for many, many things that are helpful and beneficial to the Australian people.

In the short time I have left, I want to again put out a call to the Queensland Labor Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk. Premier Palaszczuk has been sitting on her hands for months when it comes to the national health agreement. Why is it important? Because the health minister has \$8 billion on the table for Queensland's public hospitals. This is not fiddlesticks; this is \$8 billion. Can you imagine the nurses, the doctors, the support and the surgeries that can be conducted with \$8 billion? Yet she flat out refuses to sign the agreement and even has the gall to say that there have been reductions from the federal government for funding for public hospitals in Queensland. It is an absolute nonsense. In fact, for the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service area, our funding is up 37 per cent— that's federal funding. The reduction that is in there came from the state government. The Labor state government dropped \$16 million out of my area and tried to claim that it was the feds. Well, this is rubbish.

I say again to Premier Palaszczuk: get out your pen, sit down at your desk, sign the national health agreement and deliver \$8 billion for the people of Queensland to support their health, because, quite simply, they need it. And while she's at it she should sign the Skilling Australians Fund—\$240 million just for Queensland. It will deliver 50,000 apprentices and trainees. Anyone who lives in Queensland, anyone who lives in the regions and anyone who lives in the cities knows that we need more apprentices and trainees because we need to deliver those skills into our economy. And there is no more important part of the Australian economy than the regional economy. We have had massive reductions in the number of apprentices and trainees who are coming through the system.

I'm the beneficiary of an Australian apprenticeship. I'm an electrician by trade. I was fortunate enough to land an apprenticeship at a local sugar mill, but that sugar mill is now closed. It is not there anymore. So I say again to the Labor Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk: sign the national health agreement and sign the Skilling Australians Fund. The sarcastic side of me thinks that she is not signing up only because there is a federal election on the horizon and she wants to stand up with the Leader of the Opposition and complain about how hard done by the Queensland state has been. Sign the agreement. We will deliver the money that is necessary and it will be delivered now. It is ready now. The Minister for Health is ready to put forward \$8 billion just for Queensland, on top of what's already there. This is a massive increase and it is necessary.

The changes to the Treasury laws make substantial and necessary changes that are to the benefit of the Australian country, the Australian people and the Australian nation. Of course, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (19:01): It's always such a privilege to follow the member for Hinkler. The member for Hinkler represents his constituency incredibly well. He is a doughty advocate for them. He and I are neighbours in terms of our offices being next to each other. He also sits next to me in the joint party room. He provides lots of good pastoral care for new members like me. And, as people listening to this debate will have recognised, he is a tremendous voice for his community in Queensland—a community very different to mine in Berowra but whose values are very similar, and Berowra is a community that would be concerned, like his community, about ensuring people pay their fair share of tax in Australia.

Like the member for Hinkler, I have a bias in favour of foreign investment. Foreign investment has helped build this country. First we had British investment in Australia, and we had the Americans. In more recent times we've had the Japanese and now we have the Chinese and the Indians. We have a range of different foreign investors, and foreign investment is always a good thing for Australia because this country simply doesn't have enough capital to build the things that we need to build here.

But Australians, rightly, ask questions about foreign investment where they feel that the playing field is not level. The purpose of these laws, in this cognate debate, is to level the playing field to make sure that foreign investors are paying their fair share of tax here, to ensure that they're not hiding behind particular structures and getting particular advantages that they might not otherwise get and to ensure that markets are not distorted. This is a fundamental principle of what we're trying to do as a government.

The performance of the Australian economy has relied on foreign investment. When you think about Australia's economic performance over more than a quarter of a century now, we are the envy of so many countries for the duration of our economic growth—and the 1.2 million jobs that we've created in the five years since we've come into government. With a growth rate of 2.8 per cent, we are second only to the United States in terms of growth rates in the OECD. Our unemployment rate has fallen to 5.1 per cent, which is just extraordinary. Our levels of welfare dependency as a country have fallen to 14.3 per cent, the lowest rate of welfare dependency in 30 years. That's just extraordinary. This only occurs if you've got the economic settings, investment settings and tax settings correct and if you've got a government that's focused on these things. That's why I was so pleased to hear the Prime Minister announce his plan for 1.25 million new jobs.

So what role does this bill play in strengthening the Australian economy, levelling the playing field and ensuring that investment continues in an orderly and helpful way? In the second reading speech, the Assistant Treasurer made a number of key points, and I might just pull out a couple of those points about this bill which I think are very important. The bill implements measures that the government announced to protect the integrity of our corporate tax system. As we know, taxpayers in the main comply with Australia's tax rules and pay their fair share of tax here. I've sat on the House Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue for the duration of this term, and Australia has an interesting statistic, an interesting fact: more than 75 per cent of Australians use an accountant to comply with their tax obligations. That, I think, helps the quality and the level of compliance with our tax laws generally.

But we know some foreign investors have been using complex arrangements which are known as stapled structures and other tax concessions in order to get profits from Australian businesses basically at a tax-free level, and that just can't continue. The way they do this is by taking trading income and putting it into more tax-favourable passive income, and they do this in land-rich sectors like infrastructure. When you take that and you combine it with the existing concessions for foreign pension funds and sovereign wealth funds, some foreign investors can achieve tax rates well below 15 per cent on their Australian business income and in some cases are almost tax free. Hardworking Australian families who are paying their fair share of tax look askance at some of these arrangements, and they say: 'Well, I'm a citizen of this country. I'm a taxpayer of this country. I'm abiding by the rules. Why are these foreign companies able to get away with doing this sort of thing?' These tax benefits aren't available to Australians; they're only available to the foreign investors. So it places not only Australian individuals but also Australian businesses at a competitive disadvantage because these things are only available to foreign investors. What we end up with is a two-tiered tax system which effectively means that we get distorted investment decisions. It effectively says to people: 'Invest in land-rich things. Don't invest in companies. Don't invest in things that are actually growing the economy more broadly.'

Stapling and the broader tax concessions pose serious threats to the integrity of our corporate tax system, and use of staples has become quite widespread in infrastructure, in property, in renewable energy and in agriculture. Meanwhile, access to concessional withholding tax for foreign investors has spread much, much further than it was ever intended to, and this is particularly the case in the agriculture and residential housing sectors. We know how strongly Australians rightly feel about Australian ownership of agriculture, because agriculture is obviously an important industry for the country economically but it's also important culturally. Australia has always had a very strong agricultural sector. It's one of the things that we are best at in the world, it is one of our key economic strengths, and it's something that Australians feel deeply connected to even if they have no personal connection to farming and agriculture more generally. They want to have a sense that Australians will continue to own agricultural produce. I know that in my own electorate, where we've got some small semirural areas producing things in the horticultural sector, particularly large horticultural production, people feel very proud that there's such a strong sense of Australian ownership of the horticultural sector.

The other issue in relation to different tax structures, besides the fairness as between Australian companies and individuals and foreign companies, is large amounts of revenue forgone. There are estimates up to hundreds of millions of dollars, and it could be as much as billions of dollars that Australians are not getting as a result of these arrangements that the foreign investors make. This means that ultimately there are fewer opportunities for governments to spend more on infrastructure, to spend more on health and education, to spend more on our defence and securing our borders—all the key things that Australians want us as a government to spend money on. If we were able to pass this important legislation, we would have more money coming into revenue that is not being raised from Australians but being raised from foreign investors who heretofore have sought particular structures in order to minimise their tax.

We've got some of the strongest tax integrity rules in the world, and I think we should be very proud of them. We talked to the tax commissioner on the House Committee on Taxation and Revenue. This is a point that he regularly makes. It's important to note that this suite of legislation is part of a whole range of legislation that the government has already introduced, including multinational anti-avoidance laws, the diverted profits tax laws and country-by-country reporting, which has been very important in further bolstering the integrity of the tax laws in this country.

The measures in the bill build on the government's work in protecting the integrity of our corporate tax system. It is absolutely fundamental that we all pay our fair share of tax to ensure that the government is able to continue to provide the services that Australians want and that they deserve, whether it's schools and hospitals or whether it's infrastructure like NorthConnex in my electorate, a \$3 billion road that connects the M1 to the M2. The federal government's contribution to that road is \$412 million. But that money has to come from somewhere, and it comes from the taxation receipts of the Commonwealth. At the moment, the foreign investors haven't been paying their fair share of tax. These bills are designed to level the playing field to ensure that they can't take unfair advantages that are not available to Australians.

The bill neutralises the tax benefits delivered by staples by ensuring that active business income is taxed at the top corporate tax rate for foreign investors. The government's intention in introducing this package is so that active income that is converted to passive income shouldn't have access to concessional rates. The Australian Taxation Office will continue to closely monitor this area to ensure that that is actually happening and will take strong action. I know Commissioner Jordan and will take that action if it's necessary. Consistent with the Australian Taxation Office's taxpayer alert, the government expects that our anti-avoidance tax laws—known as part IVA of the tax legislation—are well understood and a litigated part of the tax law. It's fair to say they will continue to apply to egregious tax-driven arrangements such as royalty staples. This is very important. This bill delivers on our promise as a government to protect Australia's corporate tax integrity. That's what we have to do to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent prudently.

One of the things that I note in the amendments that particularly pleased me is what is happening in relation to student income. The amendments to schedule 1 of the bill remove provisions of the bill that meant all tertiary student accommodation—for example, a purpose-built student accommodation development—would have been subject to the 30 per cent managed investment trust withholding tax. This amendment has been in response to some key views that were raised by some stakeholders at the Senate Economics Legislation Committee that looked into the parliamentary minutes to the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Foreign Investors Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill.

Student accommodation is very important. Prior to my becoming a member of parliament, I spent four years working in the higher education sector. Student accommodation is particularly important at our universities right across the country because, without adequate student accommodation, we don't have adequate places for not only overseas students but also students from rural and regional parts of Australia. There is a great deal of importance in encouraging and enabling more students in rural and regional parts of Australia to enter the higher education market.

I note that the Minister for Education is the minister at the table. He represents a rural and regional constituency in Wannon. He has been doing a terrific job implementing the recommendations of Professor Halsey in his review and knows well the difficulty that regional and rural families face in getting and paying for student accommodation in universities that are outside the areas in which they live. That's such an important thing, so I was particularly pleased to see the government looking at this important question. I commend both the Assistant Treasurer and, importantly, the Minister for Education on the work they are doing. I'm proud to be the chair of his government members committee in that regard.

This bill is an important integrity bill. In order to ensure the bill's safe passage, there won't be specific rules for managed investment trusts for tertiary student accommodation, and I think that's an important thing. Instead, consistent with all other premises, the application of the higher withholding tax rate treatment outlined in the bill will now depend on whether a tertiary student accommodation development is considered to be a residential dwelling asset, under the general definition considered in the bill. This amendment doesn't affect our clear intent that other residential property, such as houses, apartments and build-to-rent developments of which we see so many now, will be subjected to a managed investment trust withholding tax rate of 30 per cent. But it does acknowledge that student accommodation is in a completely different class and that there is a public good as a result of that student accommodation.

The amendments also provide that premises used primarily for the provision of disability accommodation under NDIS or regulations yet to be made can receive concessional managed investment trust taxation treatment, despite being residential premises. I note that the minister at the table had responsibility for the NDIS before he became Minister for Education, so he will understand these issues of disability accommodation very well. People with disability are often at a real disadvantage, in terms of finding quality accommodation, and so the provision of more accommodation—and more accommodation that is fit for purpose for their needs—is absolutely vital. The amendments also don't change the requirement that a managed investment trust investing in land must invest for the primary purpose of deriving rent, and that seems to be a fair and reasonable integrity measure.

I think the government's bill here is good. Some of the amendments it's brought forward are very useful, and I encourage all members to support the government's program, in making sure foreign investors pay their fair share of tax.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (19:17): I'm very happy to rise and speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Foreign Investors Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill. As the previous speaker said, what we want to see as a government is foreign investors and Australians pay their fair share but—particularly for Australians—that they don't pay more than they need to. We're just asking that everyone pay a fair amount so we can continue to deliver those essential services. We've seen massive economic growth over the last 5½ years of the coalition government, with some 1.2 million jobs created and a target to create another 1.2 million over the next five years. We've seen unemployment at five per cent.

As the economy continues to grow and strengthen we're able to reduce taxes for many Australians, which is really important as well. We want to make sure, and I want to make sure as the federal member of parliament representing the seat of Petrie, that foreign investors pay

the right amount of tax. It's a privilege for them as non-Australians to be able to invest in Australia, but it's important to make sure they pay their fair share. This bill addresses unintended loopholes and tightens some of the broad tax concessions that allow foreign investors to get a very low tax rate and a competitive advantage, in some cases. Current concessions and loopholes are leaking millions in revenue that could turn into billions, if left unchecked. That's why the government is putting this amendment in place now.

The legislation stops double gearing, so foreign investors can't shift profits to avoid tax. It stops foreign investors getting tax concessions on stapled structures to achieve tax rates of 15 per cent or less or, in some cases, almost tax free on business income. As you know, we've had a debate in this place, over the last term, about company tax and lowering the company tax rate to 25 per cent, which we've been able to do for SMEs, small and medium enterprises, with a turnover of up to \$50 million. For companies above that, their tax rate is 30 per cent. But what we're seeing with this loophole is that some are able to pay a lot less, so this step will tighten that up. I say to everyone in my electorate of Petrie that this is an important step. Stapled structures were historically used to facilitate complementary, but separate, trading business being carried out in a company and in a trust. They've been able to basically split it so the tax rate is only 15 per cent, rather than 30 per cent, which is what we want to see them pay.

This bill also taxes foreign investors' income from Australian agricultural land and Australian residential property in managed investment trusts at the top corporate tax rate. It does provide transitional periods for existing investments. We know that foreign investment is important, and we want to make sure that Australians can also invest overseas, so it's important to have a reciprocal arrangement. Some foreign investment is important, but I also know that not everyone in my electorate likes foreign investment, so they'll be pleased to know that we are acting on this.

As part of the government, as a member of parliament and as a member that represents the seat of Petrie, I want to see lower taxes for the people I represent. I really want to see lower taxes. At the moment everyone in my electorate, whether it's myself, a doctor, someone who works on the council, someone who works at the local cafe or someone who is 68 and has a part-time job—whoever it is—gets \$18,200 tax free. You get the first \$18,200 tax free. After \$18,201, up to \$37,000, people pay 19c in the dollar. That means they get to keep 81c of everything they earn, which I think is fair. It's good. We then have a 32½ per cent tax rate—a third of what you earn, you pay in tax—for \$37,000 and above. It used to cut out at \$80,000; the federal coalition government this year has raised that up to \$90,000. The benefit to the people in my electorate earning up to \$90,000 over the last few years is that, on the \$10,000 worth of money that they're earning, they're paying a 32½ per cent tax rate rather than a 37 per cent tax rate. That means that they're saving, effectively, 4½c in every dollar on \$10,000, which is important if they're saving for a home loan, they're putting kids through school and they have school expenses, they just want to save for a family holiday or they're a young couple who are about to get married and are trying to get a deposit together—they can both save that extra money.

We have gone further. Because the economy is growing and because we believe in lower taxes, we've now legislated right up to \$200,000 that you can only pay 32½c in the dollar, so you'd actually keep 67½c. I think that's really fair. It provides incentive for people to work

harder and not be taxed at 37 per cent or 45 per cent, plus the Medicare levy. That's a great incentive, and, with a strong economy, we can continue to do that. We can continue to lower taxes. We can come back to surplus—which is what we'll see when we deliver a budget on 2 April of this year—for the first time since way back when John Howard and Peter Costello delivered the last budget surplus. That's very important. We can continue to invest in social services, roads, infrastructure, sporting facilities and all the things that are important to the people in my electorate.

We know that foreign residents pay 32½c in the dollar from the first dollar they earn, and I think that's fair. As Australians, we get a benefit of \$18,200 tax free and then the lowest rate of 19c, but if you're a foreign resident you'll pay up to 32½c this financial year for up to \$90,000.

This is in stark contrast, of course, to those opposed to what we're trying to do here: the federal opposition. They want to see higher taxes for people in my electorate. They want to see higher income taxes. I say to those living in my electorate that this is the wrong time to do that. We've got a strong economy; the economy's growing. I want to see lower taxes; the opposition want to see higher taxes. They don't want to see 32½c right up to \$200,000; they want to tax people living in my electorate at 45 per cent and 37 per cent, killing incentive. Considering, as I said a moment ago, that this will be the first time that we've come back to surplus in a long, long time, this is absolutely the wrong time to do it.

Labor actually have a policy that they're going to take to the election this year of not just increasing income taxes which have been legislated and reduced but increasing taxes right across the board—some \$200 billion over the next 10 years. I say to people that that will be bad for the people of Brisbane and Moreton Bay. That will be bad because it's not just about income tax rates; the opposition want to see higher taxes on businesses. They voted so many times, over and over again in the last term of this parliament, to keep taxes on small and medium-sized enterprises in my electorate at the higher rate of 30 per cent. As I said, we've managed to get it through at 25 per cent, but they voted to keep it at 30 per cent for places in my electorate, whether it's a local cafe or a local restaurant, or perhaps East Coast Bullbars in my electorate, or all the businesses in the Narangba business district and the Clontarf business district, which employ a lot of people. They voted for higher taxes. They just don't understand that business actually employs so many local people in my electorate. That's why I want to see lower taxes: so that there are more jobs and there is more investment locally.

I'm also terribly concerned about a part of the new taxes that the opposition want to bring in and the effect that they will have on retirees who have saved for their retirement. Effectively, Labor's retiree tax will mean that retirees will no longer receive an \$18,200 tax-free threshold, because, if they're receiving their income through shares that they bought to save for their retirement and they're not on the pension—or they might be part-pensioners in the future—they will actually pay a rate of 30 per cent, which I think is really the wrong way to go. I stand for lower taxes. The government stand for lower taxes. We have a plan to continue to create jobs, which will mean that we can continue to offer those lower taxes, whereas those opposite don't.

I quickly want to talk about superannuation too. People in my electorate can put money into super and only be taxed at a rate of 15 per cent, which is really important. The government have introduced the First Home Super Saver Scheme, so I say to anyone reading

this in my electorate: basically, you can put \$10,000 worth of gross income in the bank and you'll only end up with \$6,750 because you're taxed at a rate of 32½ per cent—whereas, if you salary sacrifice that money into your super fund, you'll end up with \$8,500 because you're taxed at 15 per cent. That's an important change. As I said before, if a young couple is saving for their retirement, then they will end up some \$6,000 better off, which they can put towards their first home. That certainly is an important change.

I'll continue to support people in my electorate, and I will continue to vote for lower taxes because I want people to keep more of their own money and get ahead. The amendment in relation to foreign investors is an important amendment which I support, and I know that my electorate will support it as well.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (19:29): It being almost 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Holt Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (19:29): Tonight I rise proudly to talk about an exceptional group of people and organisations that I honoured recently on Australia Day as part of the 15th annual Holt Australia Day Awards. At the Cranbourne Community Theatre, with about 200 people, including friends and family of the award recipients, we came together and we celebrated people, organisations and what they do, which gives a window into what makes this country great. But that couldn't have been done without the support of my Holt Australia Day Awards Committee: Barry Rogers, Chris Drysdale, Judy Owen, Leanne Petridis and Mladen Krsman. I would like to thank them for the work they did so that we could honour these people.

Australia Day is the perfect day to recognise people that unobtrusively and in a very Australian way contribute to their community—not seeking awards and honours; they just do it in an Australian way. I wanted to read their names into the record of this parliament so that they could be remembered and honoured. The people and the organisations that I awarded the Australia Day awards to include: Alex and Vianney Clark, Aladin Berari, Anthony Tassone, Bill McMartin, Bradley Scicluna, the Cranbourne Food Truck volunteers, Cranbourne Little Athletics Centre, Danielle Johnson, David Haynes, the Doveton Drought Relief Fundraising Committee, Hampton Park Community House, Jeff Weir, Joel McQuie, Lions Club of Hampton Park, Loc Huu Lam, the Malayalees of Melbourne, Maleuth Dot Mac Anyar, Marlene Hargreaves, Mary-Ann Spencer, Michelle La-Brooy, Mohammad Nabi Esakhil, Narre Warren & District Family History Group, Sabesan Sanmugam, Sakatter Singh, Sepal Patel, Shirley Aolei, Simon Stafrace, Spinal Muscular Atrophy Australia Inc, Stacey Herring, Stephanie Panza, Stuart Merrick and Sukhwinder Kaur. They're names and they're organisations, but they're people, and they're people who did wonderful things.

I wish we had the time to be able to talk about why these people were awarded the Australia Day award, but to give just a quick insight into a couple of people and organisations that were awarded, to give you a flavour of why they were awarded, I wanted to mention Jeff Weir, who also received an Order of Australia on Australia Day, so congratulations to him. He was awarded this for his marine conservation work. Jeff is currently the executive director of the Dolphin Research Institute and has a great passion for marine biology, especially in

Western Port Bay and Port Phillip Bay. One of Jeff's great success stories is helping to create the 'i sea, i care' marine ambassador program, designed for students in years 5 and 6. Through the 'i sea, i care' program, students get to learn about what lives in our bays and waterways and the many issues that face them.

Also amongst the award recipients were the Cranbourne Food Truck volunteers. A team of about 60 volunteers provide free food and fellowship to the needy and disadvantaged in the Cranbourne area. The food truck is owned and run by the Cranbourne Regional Uniting Church. It provides about 20 to 25 meals a night; that's over 3,000 meals a year.

In particular, I wanted to mention a very worthy organisation, a group called the Malayalees of Melbourne. The Malayalees of Melbourne were a group of people that came to this country from the state of Kerala. They were formed as a collective in response to the disastrous flooding that happened in the Indian state of Kerala in August 2018. The southern state of India—and they will want me to say this—is known throughout India as God's own country, but it faced one of the worst calamities in its history when a once-in-a-century flood killed 483 people and forced over one million people to flee to safer, higher ground. The floods damaged the entire infrastructure of the state. Many of its roads were destroyed, as was its agricultural land and its electricity generators. But what this fine group of people did to help the people in their state of Kerala and also drought-affected farmers is hold a fundraiser on 5 October at Bunjil Place, which over 600 people attended. They were entertained by performances by a musical maestro called Ouseppachan. They raised \$45,000, of which \$44,000 was presented to the Chief Minister of Kerala on behalf of the Malayalees of Melbourne and \$1,000 went to the drought relief fund in Doveton. People who come from a different country, who make this country their home and make Australia great—congratulations to the Malayalees of Melbourne and all the other award recipients on the day.

Queensland Government

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (19:35): I rise to talk once again about the HMAS *Tobruk* which is now a fabulous dive site off the coast of my home electorate of Hinkler between Bundaberg and Hervey Bay. It has taken a long time—many years, in fact. It was a national fight to deliver the ship, and, as many of the people in this place know, unfortunately, they muffed it at the last stroke of the pen, and HMAS *Tobruk* ended up on her side in 30 metres of water. I've spoken many times in this place about the benefits it will bring, about the potential for divers and about the addition to our economy, and all of those things are still true.

However, as I said in this place on 16 October, the state Queensland Labor government did not deliver what was intended, what was expected and what was asked for. However, the ship is in place and they have made changes to allow experienced divers to enter. It will still be a great boon for our local tourism economy and for divers who want to look on the great workhorse, the Navy ship Ex-HMAS *Tobruk*. However, the state minister for the Queensland government, Leeanne Enoch, simply can't help herself. In the local paper on 12 February, the minister told local MPs, such as the Liberal-National members of parliament, that they are only interested in trashing the *Tobruk* and are actively encouraging people to stay away. What nonsense!

In this place on 16 October, I called on the minister to answer serious questions and to be transparent. It had nothing to do with the standard of the dive or the ship itself, but quite simply that we had negotiated for \$2 million of ratepayers' money to be delivered as part of

this project. What was called for and what was expected was not delivered. If it had cost less than expected and if there was a possibility of a rebate, then that rebate should go back to our local residents and ratepayers. No-one else got up and called for that. It was me and me alone. The local mayors certainly didn't want to get involved, but, lo and behold, they have recovered from the Labor state government hundreds of thousands of dollars that they contributed to this project. So I say to the minister: 'We need to get on with this. You've done the right thing by returning the money to those residents and ratepayers that contributed. The ship will still be a great boon for tourism and we'll continue to work with it.'

While we are talking about the Queensland Labor government, I would say to Minister Enoch, 'Get in the lift, go up and see Premier Palaszczuk and get her to sign three things this week.' The first one is the national health agreement, which will deliver \$8 billion in additional funding for Queensland hospitals. The second one is the Skilling Australians Fund agreement, where there is \$240 million for Queensland alone for up to 50,000 apprentices and trainees—the Queensland Labor government, would you believe, has refused to sign, not once, not twice, but for many, many months. In my electorate, we have difficulty with employment. Our unemployment rate is unacceptably high. Our youth unemployment was as high as 27 per cent. It dropped by seven per cent in the last quarter, which is good news, but it is still unacceptably high. There is \$240 million on the table from the federal government to deliver up to 50,000 apprentices and trainees, and the Queensland Labor government won't sign. They won't play ball; they won't participate. And the third thing is our regional deal. We negotiated a regional deal for our area, one of only two in the entire country, because of the economic challenges and to go hand in hand with the tough social policy that is the cashless welfare card, but, at the moment, the statement of intent is still unsigned. We are working closely with the local government, the state government and, of course, the bureaucrats through the department of infrastructure. I am hopeful that this deal will be struck very soon, but I am concerned.

I am concerned that the Queensland Labor government may look to play politics. There is an election on the horizon. I am concerned that, with all of these issues, they may simply wait for a May election. That is no good for anyone. It is no good for the people I represent, it is no good for those who are looking for employment, it is no good for businesses that are looking to invest, and it is certainly no good for those who are trying to put together a regional deal—one of the first of its type in the country—to deliver a stronger local economy and more local jobs. Who could possibly not agree with that? However, we are having some challenges with the state Labor government, and I would say to both Premier Palaszczuk and Deputy Premier Trad: 'Sign the deal. Let's get on with this. Let's deliver.' We need to be able to discuss this at all levels of government, because, if we work together, we will get the best outcome for our people. They are in desperate need. We have an unacceptably high unemployment rate. We have the lowest per capita income in the country and have had for two decades. As the local member, I want that to change.

Middle East

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (19:40): From a young age, my upbringing caused me to know that the Jews have historically been a much persecuted people. For this reason, I've always supported the right of a Jewish state to exist. However, I've

become increasingly concerned about the hostilities in the Israeli-occupied territories, as well as the lack of progress being made for the creation of a Palestinian state.

Palestinians, too, have the right to exist and enjoy statehood. Last month I had the privilege of visiting Palestine as part of a cross-party delegation led by the member for Calwell. For the most part, the visit centred around the Israeli-occupied areas of Palestine and the need for greater efforts by the international community to break the stalemate in the peace process so that a two-state solution may become a reality.

Entering Palestine via Jericho, I saw the profound impact that the settlements were having on local Palestinian communities, including critical elements concerning access to water, land, roads, infrastructure and their effect on local economies. Apart from being significant violations of internationally recognised human rights, these issues are an affront to humanity. Discussions must be about ending the occupation based on the 1967 territorial borders. Labor has already determined that, unless genuine efforts are made in this respect, a move to recognise Palestine is inevitable.

My visit to Palestine reinforced the need for a renewed commitment to security. Recognition of Palestine is not a rejection of Israel but rather a recognition of the rights of the people of both Israel and Palestine to live in peace and security. During my visit, I had the opportunity of speaking to Breaking The Silence. This organisation comprises former military members of the Israeli Defence Force who served in the occupied territories. It offered a confronting perspective of the methods and rules of engagement of the IDF, including the strong relationship between settlers and the members of the IDF in the West Bank.

I was told that Israeli settlers are regularly involved in operational activities that involve carrying out violence against Palestinians and their properties. These courageous Israelis who spoke out did so because they are patriots. They strongly believe that Israel's future security can be guaranteed only by living in peace with their Palestinian neighbours. They emphasised the importance for Israel to negotiate in good faith with the Palestinians to reach a two-state solution, noting the implications for peace, democracy and security if a just solution is not achieved.

The nature of the Israel-Palestinian conflict was certainly highlighted in Hebron, where I was taken to visit a number of Palestinian homes. It was particularly disturbing to see that for some the only access they had to their houses was through a back entrance or via an adjacent property of their neighbour's due to the segregated areas and Israeli-only streets. As Australians, we cannot contemplate this type of discrimination or this level of separation, control and restriction of movement.

While the Labor Party has held off recognising Palestine, believing that this is an issue that should be properly part of the final negotiations, the recent escalation of violence and the growth in settlements have seen the balance of power shift disproportionately in favour of the Israeli government, which now seems to lack a genuine commitment to a just settlement. It is very hard to understand how a country based on religious belief can lack such compassion for the rights of others. My visit reiterated the fact that this issue is not one of religion but rather one of human rights.

We must continue to ensure that the plight of Palestinians remains firmly in the focus of the international community if we are to work towards progressing lasting peace between these two great states. In the words of Pope Francis:

The time has come for everyone to find ... the courage to forge a peace, which rests on the acknowledgment by all of the right of two States to exist and to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Volunteers

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (19:45): Their work is done day in and day out, week in and week out, every month of every year, without asking for recognition or special awards. They do not seek any benefits other than knowing that they have made a positive contribution to our community. I am talking about volunteers. Volunteers turn a suburb into a community. However, the vast majority of our volunteers rarely seek acknowledgement for their services and are often amongst our most humble and modest citizens. I take this opportunity to thank and pay tribute to all of our volunteers. Please know that we do notice your efforts and your communities do recognise the invaluable role you play to make others' lives richer and better. In Queensland, 18.8 per cent, or more than 714,000 Queenslanders, volunteer. Contributing more than 133 million hours of work annually, it is estimated that Queensland volunteers' worth to the state's economy is more than \$11 billion. But it's not all about the money. Many volunteers feel what is colloquially known as a helper's high when directly helping others.

In my electorate of Ryan, I have always been delighted to participate in a diverse range of volunteer organisations that all add to our community cohesion. Take, for example, the many volunteers who make Scouts Queensland the success it is today. As chairman of the Brisbane North Region Scouts, I take great pride in the efforts of everyone who involves themselves to make this such an outstanding movement. I pay particular appreciation to the Queensland commissioner, Daryl Scott, who is always prepared to go that extra step to ensure that this nurturing organisation continues to train and prepare our future leaders. Let me also mention the work of volunteers at our many RSLs. From their advocacy services to their camaraderie and their reach into the wider community, I know that my local RSL members are aware of the deep appreciation we have for their continued work.

Local environmental groups throughout the Ryan electorate remain pivotal to the success of so many community programs. I regret that I don't have more time to attend all of the various activities. Many thanks must go in particular to the Brisbane West Conservation Network, Save Our Waterways Now, THECA and the Cubberla-Witton Catchments Network. There are too many environmental groups for me to thank in one speech, but I can say to all of them: congratulations and thank you for greening and protecting our local community. Rotary, Probus and the CWA are volunteer groups which continue to achieve both internationally and locally for those who are less fortunate. I would also like to acknowledge the work of my Zonta club, which continues to pursue our goal to empower women worldwide through service and advocacy. The Zonta Club of Brisbane North celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2018. I know that it will remain a leading advocate for women's rights and ensure equality and a life free of violence for all women for many years to come. Sadly, there is still so much to overcome.

Approximately 15,000 volunteers in Queensland deliver 1.9 million meals a year to more than 11,500 people, with a wide variety of support needs, through Meals on Wheels.

Independence is something we all value and is made all the more possible for many through this wonderful service. I want to recognise and say thank you to all the volunteers who make it more than just a meal.

Whether it is a flood, a fire or a cyclone, Australians are the best in the world for volunteering in trying and challenging times. We all know of the vital and important community support provided by our police, fire and ambulance services, and for this we are truly grateful. But I would like to pay tribute and thanks to our Queensland State Emergency Service, the SES. With approximately 6,000 unpaid active members, the SES empowers people to help themselves and others in their communities during times of emergency and disaster, a concept of self-help and mutual assistance. Too often we hear of an SES volunteer who has lost their own property to fire or flood while they were always helping others. It is this selfless determination to assist others during testing times that defines the principles of what it takes to be a volunteer. We are all guilty of being time-poor. However, I encourage everyone to consider their potential to volunteer. Everyone can make a difference.

Western Australia: Bushfires

Burt Electorate

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (19:50): Last week an out-of-control bushfire started near Tonkin Highway in the City of Armadale, causing the evacuation of hundreds of residents across Forrestdale, Harrisdale and Piara Waters, closing schools, and burning more than 150 hectares of land. I'd like to thank the around 200 volunteer and career firefighters who worked in very challenging conditions for days to get the fire contained and controlled. It is from your hard work in the hot and windy conditions that no lives or homes were lost. Thank you also to everyone from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the SES, the Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Communities, the Salvation Army, and the fantastic City of Armadale for keeping everyone safe and informed as the fire took hold—and for the amazing generosity of locals who provided refuge not only for displaced people but for pets and livestock.

I visited the evacuation centre and saw firsthand the impressive coordination of emergency services with local government. I commend Mayor Henry Zelones for the fire action plan he helped to coordinate for the community following the catastrophic Kelmscott fires in 2011. The Kelmscott fires remain fresh in the minds of everyone in my community, including my own family. Last week's fire certainly provided an unwelcome flashback for many. The work of all of our emergency services and our community coming together last week shows we've learnt so many lessons from that tragedy, and I commend everyone who contributed to the fire efforts.

The community of Burt is one that is resilient, diverse and ever-evolving. While some people, like my family, have lived in the area for a number of generations, much of our community is made up of new citizens of Australia. In fact, the population of the electorate of Burt has encountered unprecedented growth in recent years. Many suburbs that exist today were mere paddocks when I was a child. Indeed, some housing developments weren't even there when I was elected, only 2½ years ago. This means that many individuals that bore witness to last week's fires may have never encountered such a situation in the past. While families like mine are accustomed to fires in the semi-bush area of the Hills, many new

citizens and many people new to the area who live in these housing estates would never have considered the potential for a raging bushfire to have appeared on their doorstep.

So a lot can happen in 2½ years, a lot can change and a lot can be achieved. I was honoured to be elected the very first member for Burt in 2016, and I have been working to build a better Burt ever since. In fact, many of the projects we've achieved are ones that I've been working on since long before my time in parliament. With the support of the WA Labor government, we've secured federal funding to fix the Denny Avenue level crossing. This is a project that I've been working on since my days at the Armadale Redevelopment Authority nearly 20 years ago. After calling for it in mid-2015, we've secured funding to widen Armadale Road and build a new bridge over the freeway. Also, work is now underway to widen the freeway to make the commute from Burt to the Perth CBD and beyond faster and safer. We've also secured funding, alongside the state government, to extend the Thornlie rail line, with two new stations in Canning Vale and with the line to connect through to Cockburn Central on the Mandurah line. These projects amount to an injection of more than a billion dollars and almost 3,000 jobs for our community.

Growing up in Armadale, I've always had close ties to the Burt community, and so I'm proud to be able to support our community now as an MP and to continue to enhance our growing south-east corridor. As a former chair of Starick Services, I've been pleased to lobby successfully for the reinstatement of Safe at Home funding for victims of domestic violence. I have also promoted and participated in the great work of the Armadale Youth Intervention Partnership, which demonstrates how a targeted, collaborative and place-based approach with purposefully resourced backbone leadership can support better outcomes for young people with complex needs in our community. It makes sure that children who are at risk of committing crimes are identified prior to this taking place and helps them change their story.

I've also secured funding of more than \$300,000 for community organisations, but there's so much work to do—so much that can't be achieved merely from opposition. For example, if elected, a Labor government would deliver over \$33 million to the schools of Burt over the next three years and restore the over \$2 million of funding cut from Armadale Hospital. The people of Burt need a change of government now, because only a Labor government will continue to change the story for the better for the people of Burt.

Grey Electorate: Dingo Fence

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (19:54): The national dingo fence was established in the 1880s. At 5,624 kilometres long, it is the longest continuous fence in the world. It is essential for the development and protection of livestock industries in the south-east of Australia. Two thousand two hundred kilometres of the fence are located in South Australia and are largely the responsibility of the state government, which provides dollar-for-dollar support to match the grower and producer levies, but it is becoming increasingly hard to maintain. Coupled with the current drought conditions in the north, kangaroos, emus and dogs are all pressuring the 1,800 kilometres of fence, which is 100 years old, or older, in South Australia. The netting is brittle and the number of breaches is rising. As these animals hit the fence, the netting is breaking open, so the fence needs replacing.

In recent years, the numbers of dogs—dingoes, this is—south of the fence have been climbing and they are breeding inside the fence. Some properties close to the fence are shooting hundreds of dogs and losing hundreds, if not thousands, of livestock. Sightings have

been reported further and further south, hundreds of kilometres even from the fence. The new South Australian government has hired two extra doggers to try and manage the problem.

In October I invited the ag minister, David Littleproud, to open the Jamestown show—the fantastic Jamestown show, I must say. I also convened a meeting at that time of northern pastoralists and Dog Fence Board members in light of the Commonwealth's contribution to pest and weed control and management in drought areas. I asked for some assistance. As you would be aware, in Queensland a lot of money has gone into what they call cell fencing, which is keeping the dingoes out, and it is actually providing an enormous economic benefit to the state, to the growers and to Australia. To the minister's great credit, he got the point. We don't want cell fencing in South Australia; we want the fence replaced. It has worked well for 100 years. It is time to do the job.

I contacted the state minister for agriculture, Tim Whetstone, and convinced him that the time was right to do a deal, and here we are nearly five months later. The South Australian department has costed some options, and I was a little horrified by some of them. I sought some quotes from private fencing contractors. We now have a pretty reasonable figure, I think. We understand the per kilometre cost of replacing this fence. The South Australian government has proposed a three-way deal to the Commonwealth.

Money is never as plentiful as we would like, and I understand that, particularly as we strive in this parliament to deliver the first surplus budget for Australia in 10 years, but I think there are projects that actually provide a long-term intergenerational benefit, if you like. This fence has served south-east Australia well for 100 years, and we could invest in something now that will serve Australia well for the next 100 years.

While Australia may not ride on the sheep's back any longer, it is in fact a very productive and helpful enterprise not only for Australia but for the growers and all those people concerned. We are riding on a high, if you like, with high meat prices and high demand for wool. I know that we have these surges in the market, but it is difficult to really see it coming back off in a world that is increasingly looking for quality products.

A lot of the land this fence protects is not suitable for anything else, so it's a really good win-win situation. As I said, I will be working with the minister for agriculture. I thank him for hearing us so well and I'm hoping for consideration in the budget. I can tell you, the parliament, and the people of South Australia that I will be working for a good result right up until the time we close that budget down. I will be trying to make sure that we can protect and foster this industry for the next 100 years.

House adjourned at 19:59

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Dutton: to present a Bill for an Act to amend various laws relating to child sexual exploitation, and for related purposes. (*Combatting Child Sexual Exploitation Legislation Amendment Bill 2019*)

Mr Dutton: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Customs Act 1901* in relation to tobacco, and for related purposes. (*Customs Amendment (Immediate Destruction of Illicit Tobacco) Bill 2019*)

Mr Hunt: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the *National Health Act 1953*, and for related purposes. (*National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Bill 2019*)

Mr Hunt: to present a Bill for an Act to establish the National Sports Tribunal, and for related purposes. (*National Sports Tribunal Bill 2019*)

Mr Hunt: to present a Bill for an Act to deal with consequential and transitional matters arising from the enactment of the *National Sports Tribunal Act 2019*, and for related purposes. (*National Sports Tribunal (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2019*)

Mr D. J. Chester: to present a Bill for an Act to provide for the recognition of veterans, and for related purposes. (*Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Bill 2019*)

Mr D. J. Chester: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*, and for related purposes. (*Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Single Treatment Pathway) Bill 2019*)

Mr D. J. Chester: to present a Bill for an Act to provide for treatment for eligible Australian civilians, and for other purposes. (*Treatment Benefits (Special Access) Bill 2019*)

Mr D. J. Chester: to present a Bill for an Act to deal with consequential and transitional matters arising from the enactment of the *Treatment Benefits (Special Access) Act 2019*, and for related purposes. (*Treatment Benefits (Special Access) (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2019*)

Mr Irons: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Governor-General Act 1974*, and for related purposes. (*Governor-General Amendment (Salary) Bill 2019*)

Wednesday, 13 February 2019

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan)** took the chair at 10:00.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Morrison Government

Citizenship

Mr HILL (Bruce) (10:00): The largest pile of paperwork in my office now is the pile of letters waiting for temporary ministers to respond. Ministers have given up writing back. They've given up pretending to govern. This government is disappearing up its own black hole.

The most common letters that I have are from Australian permanent residents waiting for their citizenship applications to be processed. But finally, on Monday, the truth of what is happening was revealed by the Auditor-General. The government's claims have been exposed as lies. In an utterly scathing, damning report, it was revealed that 244,000 Australian permanent residents are now stuck waiting. That's a 771 per cent blowout. There's no need for colourful phrases. The report speaks for itself:

Applications for citizenship by conferral have not been processed efficiently by the Department of Home Affairs.

It says:

Applications have not been processed in a time-efficient manner.

And:

Applications have not been processed in a resource-efficient manner.

There is 'an underlying decline in processing performance', and:

Significant periods of inactivity are evident ...

There are literally piles of paper sitting around the department for years, not being looked at.

I say to the permanent residents of Australia and your families: you are right to be angry. Many in your families are citizens already, and this is a shocking lapse in administration. It's careless and deliberate. The government's claims are untrue. The Department of Home Affairs have been caught blatantly misrepresenting the facts to the parliament. In October 2017, they advised Senate estimates:

... the case load complexity is rising as we are seeing a flow-through of previous humanitarian entrants.

Well, the Auditor-General found:

... the ... complexity of the applications lodged has decreased. Growth in demand for citizenship in recent years was driven by people with good supporting documents who arrived in Australia on a skilled visa.

The Liberals have also tried to claim that the delays are because of a surge in applications, which has also been exposed as rubbish. In fact, lodgement rate has been steady, but 'the rate of decisions taken has been declining, falling far behind the lodgement rate'.

The government's ridiculous claim that delays are caused by boat arrivals has been exposed as a lie. The Auditor-General found that, in fact, applications from the humanitarian stream 'decreased by nine per cent' over four years from a low base. Indeed, 'former illegal maritime

arrivals'—their language—account for only 0.7 per cent of lodgements in 2017-18. The 'boat people' claim is as ridiculous as the minister's claim that this is about national security and saving us all from criminals. If these people are so bloody dangerous to our community, why are they permanent residents of this country already?

The report also reveals the ongoing risk of the Department of Home Affairs breaking the law by unreasonably delaying applications. The Federal Court found in December 2016 that the department had broken the law in this way, and nothing has changed. The assessment revealed that there have been applications sitting around for 25 or 26 months with nothing done.

Youth Insearch

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Assistant Minister for Children and Families) (10:03): Today marks the launch of the Youth Insearch Blue Heart campaign. For those not aware: Youth Insearch is a multi-award-winning charity organisation dedicated to helping young people through peer group support. Founded in 1985, Youth Insearch has helped over 31,000 youth turn their lives around, including thousands at risk of suicide.

As the Assistant Minister for Children and Families, I have had the privilege of engaging with stakeholders across the country, including organisations that are working to address the many issues that our young people face on a day-to-day basis, whether it be trauma, family separation, loneliness, alcohol and drug addiction or anxiety. The work undertaken in the early intervention and prevention space is vital to keeping Australia's youth free from harm.

It is alarming to learn that youth suicide is the biggest killer of young Australians and, tragically, is at the highest level it has been for over a decade. Not a single suicide of a child should happen. More work needs to be done to reduce this horrifying statistic, and Youth Insearch is doing just that. In 2018, there were over 1,000 attendances in the Youth Insearch program. Of these, 60 per cent were feeling suicidal and 44 per cent had attempted suicide. Thankfully, 75 per cent were no longer suicidal after participation, with all receiving ongoing follow-up support.

One such Youth Insearch participant is Megan. Megan says, 'A few years ago, I never saw myself making it to my 18th birthday. I was sexually abused and have been through a lot of grief and was bullied most of my life. I was self-harming every day for years. But I haven't cut in more than six months, thanks to Youth Insearch. Every camp I go on, my trust and support for others grow. The love for myself rises. I am so proud of how far I have come and I have Youth Insearch to thank.' Megan's story is just one of many.

Youth Insearch's Blue Heart campaign aims to create awareness and equip young people and those around them to talk about how they are feeling and to reach out for help. Our youth are our future and we must do all that we can here in this place to ensure we are supporting programs that are evidence based and combat the biggest killer of young Australians. I commend the work that Youth Insearch is doing to prevent youth suicide and I implore everyone who hears this speech to support this campaign. Let's spread hope, one heart at a time.

Fowler Electorate: Lunar New Year

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:06): Last week I had the pleasure of attending, along with hundreds of Vietnamese families, the midnight celebration at the Phuoc

Hue Temple in Wetherill Park to welcome in the Lunar New Year of the Earth Pig. The following day I also had the opportunity, with many of my Chinese families, to attend the Mingyue Lay Temple for their ceremony welcoming in the Golden Pig. In that respect, I'd particularly like to acknowledge the contributions of James Chan and Vincent Kong of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society for their service to our community.

Lunar New Year is one of the most important cultural aspects on the multicultural calendar in our community in Western Sydney. It is a time for families and friends to spend time together, a time for personal reflection, a time in which the community can take a moment to remember and pay respects to elders and ancestors. The Year of the Pig also is traditionally associated with good luck, fortune and prosperity. I suppose in my community it is something to do with a healthy appetite, as well! In accordance with Buddhist tradition and as part of our Lunar New Year festivities, I, along with many of my Buddhist colleagues, attended another eight temples in both the Chinese and Vietnamese traditions.

Over the weekend, I attended the annual Vietnamese Tet Festival held at the Fairfield showground. Tet is effectively Lunar New Year. It is one of the most popular festivals in our multicultural calendar, attended by over 40,000 people. I congratulate Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW Chapter for all the hard work they have invested in organising this very much anticipated event. The lion dancing, traditional costumes, fantastic Vietnamese cuisine, the fireworks and the carnival atmosphere are all highlights for local families who come together to experience this marvellous showcase of Vietnamese culture. I would like to thank the President of the VCA, Paul Huy Nguyen, and his executive team for their tireless efforts in preparing for this event.

Tet, or Lunar New Year, is also a time for all Australians to celebrate the success of our multicultural society and also to appreciate the exceptional contribution made by the Chinese and Vietnamese communities to our great nation. I feel most privileged to be part of this colourful, vibrant, diverse community and wish Vietnamese and Chinese Australians a harmonious and prosperous Year of the Pig. To my Vietnamese constituents, chook mung num moi, and to my Chinese constituents, gung hay fat choy.

Dunkley Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr CREWETHER (Dunkley) (10:09): I am honoured to speak today about the constituents in my electorate of Dunkley who received Australia Day honours and awards. Firstly, I want to acknowledge those who received the OAM and AM. Mr John Willem De Wijn QC of Mount Eliza, who became a member in the general division of the Order of Australia, received an AM for 'significant service to youth through Scouts, at the state and national level, right through to taxation law'. He has been, for example, through Scouts Australia, the national vice-president currently, a member of the World Organization of the Scout Movement and he has also been involved with the Tax Institute, the Victorian Bar, the Village Church Uniting Church in Mount Eliza and much more.

Secondly, Mrs Anne Margaret Connan of Frankston South received an OAM for her amazing service to children. She has been a leader with the Kids of the Uniting Church in Australia program since 1986. She has also been involved in the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women and a range of other services locally and across Australia.

Thirdly, Mr Jeffrey William Weir of Frankston received an OAM for service to marine conservation. He has been involved for many years with the Dolphin Research Institute and has been executive director since 1997. He has been involved in the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation and much more.

Next I would like to acknowledge those in the Frankston City Council and Mornington Peninsula Shire who received citizen of the year and other awards. Firstly, Lauryn Hornby, 37, of Frankston, who received Citizen of the Year in Frankston City Council, not only runs an art based program and meals for the needy with Life-Gate but has been with Life-Gate for over 10 years doing a terrific service. John Dickman, 76 years old, of Frankston, who received Senior Citizen of the Year, served as a surgeon lieutenant with the Navy and worked as a GP for 45 years assisting other veterans with health issues. Thirdly, Alicia Goldsworthy, Young Citizen of the Year, a former student of John Paul College, created the Knowledge is Power program for students and parents to combat bullying.

Across the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Citizen of the Year Josie Jones has been passionate about protecting the bay and marine life for many years and has collected more than five tonnes of rubbish across local beaches. Young Citizen of the Year Kayla Shelbourne, 23, of Somerville, established a not-for-profit organisation, For Kids, By Kids, in her teens and has worked to break down stigma across youth mental health and prevention of suicide in the community. There are a number of other award winners across both the council areas I'd like to acknowledge as well. Thank you very much for all your service to our local community.

Dividend Imputation

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (10:12): Mayo is the oldest electorate in South Australia and, while the demographics vary from community to community, I'm not at all surprised that there has been great concern in our region about Labor's recently announced dividend imputation policy. This is a policy that targets self-funded retirees and would wipe off cash refunds on franked dividends from individuals and superannuation funds. There is no legislation before the parliament to examine in detail, so I have to rely on Labor's statements.

Originally, this policy was going to affect more than 300,000 low-income retirees who receive the pension or part pension. Understandably, there was a backlash to this, and so Labor amended the policy to exempt people who receive the age pension, disability support pension, carer payment, parenting payment, Newstart and sickness allowance. Labor also intends to exempt the self-managed superannuation funds of recipients of these payments. However, this still leaves 60,000 retired Australians who are likely to be affected by this policy—people who rely on the additional income from dividend imputation credits to both stay off the pension and enhance their quality of life in retirement.

Many retirees and soon-to-be retirees have structured their financial affairs for many years around the current dividend imputation arrangements—long-term financial decisions made to structure savings so that, upon leaving the workforce, people do not rely on a pension payment. I want to put on the record that I and my Centre Alliance Senate colleagues will not support any legislation that will leave retirees worse off. We also take a dim view of supporting any legislation that is retrospective. People make long-term decisions in good faith based on the laws of the day.

There are further potential consequences of this proposal that I think we must consider in this parliament, and a very important one is regional Australia. Self-funded retirees are contributing significantly to regional tourism in this country. They are known as the grey nomads. They are spending their money in our regional communities, and I thank them wholeheartedly for that. I do not want to see this opportunity for regional Australia and for regional Australian tourism to diminish.

I'd also like to make the point that such a proposal leaves my generation, generation X, quite nervous. If we have a precedent where legislation is made retrospective and changes the long-term planning of people for their retirement, I think our generation will be less inclined to invest and save very hard for our own retirements and to be self funding. This will increase people's draw on the pension from the Commonwealth as many self-funded retirees end up also needing to draw a pension. I would like to conclude: Centre Alliance will not be supporting any legislation that will make retirees worse off.

Ngallametta, Mrs Waal-Waal

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (10:15): Waal-Waal Ngallametta transcended incredibly in her lifetime. She exhibited in her own way the immense contemporary values and contributions that Aboriginal people bring to our world. It is with the deepest sadness that I say: Waal-Waal passed away on 28 January 2019 in her Aurukun home, on country and surrounded by her family, as she had wished.

Born in the coastal community of the Kugu people around the Kendall River, south of Aurukun, Cape York Peninsula, Mrs Ngallametta—her maiden name was Marbunt—was a senior elder of the Putch clan and a cultural leader of the Wik and Kugu people of Aurukun. Despite growing up in the harsh reality of the Aurukun Mission dormitory, she maintained close links with her family and was taught traditional weaving and basketry skills by her elders. Developing as a strong culture woman, she first became acknowledged for her weaving mastery and renowned for her dramatic use of natural colours and asymmetrical creations. Many of her woven works, some using traditional materials and others using recycled abandoned driftnets and marine debris, have entered into public and private collections.

In 2008, while attending a workshop at the Wik and Kugu Art Centre, run by Gina Allain, she began painting. Initially she painted her country in smaller canvases. In 2011, she started to work on much larger canvases. It was these vast and astonishingly detailed paintings that forged Mrs Ngallametta's reputation as one of Australia's great artists. Distinguishing features of the different seasons—the bushfires that parch the land at the height of the dry season, the flowers that bloom in the billabongs, the migratory birds that return to Far North Queensland at certain times of the year and the wading birds that populate Aurukun's shoreline—were depicted in Mrs Ngallametta's paintings in huge scale. Painting with traditional ochres and clays that she collected and prepared herself, the works were rich in colour and imagery.

Since 2011, she created a total of 46 monumental paintings. In 2013, she won the Telstra General Painting Award. In 2018, she received the Red Ochre Award, the Australia Council's distinguished award for a lifetime of achievement. Fittingly, her last two paintings were acquired by the Queensland Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art and the National Gallery of Australia. Mrs Ngallametta will be the subject of a major retrospective at the Queensland Art Gallery from 28 March to 23 August 2020.

Her unique talent and gentle nature will be sorely missed. She was a wonderful lady. She was a wonderful icon to Aurukun. She really showcased everything that was very special about the community to which she was born into. She now is resting.

Fuel

Mr HART (Bass) (10:18): Under the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government, cost-of-living pressures are rising, yet we see on a regular basis record company profits and CEO bonuses with absolutely no relief for workers, with real wage increases consigned to the never-never. People in my electorate are crying out for a government that shows leadership on issues that matter to them—a government that can deliver relief to hardworking Tasmanians. That's why, under a Shorten-led Labor government, if elected, the majority of people in Northern Tasmania will see their tax burden reduced, particularly those on lower incomes, who will receive Labor's bigger, better tax cut, giving some initial relief to the rising cost-of-living pressures.

One group in my electorate decided to take action rather than simply complaining. They started the group Launceston Smart Fuelers, who aim to put downward pressure on petrol prices by working together through collective action. This is a fantastic grassroots community initiative. I applaud the group and its leaders for taking this issue on.

I've been speaking to David McCormick from the Launceston Smart Fuelers, who have already written to the ACCC and have asked why they've not acted on their very real concerns about price gouging at the fuel pump. David has told my office that, despite being told he'd receive a response to this inquiry within 15 days, he's heard nothing. David has also been directly speaking to the fuel companies, who, it seems, simply aren't interested.

In this incompetent government's first term, it sacked 10 per cent of the staff of the ACCC, undermining the ability for it to regulate some of the most powerful corporations in Australia, including the banks and the petrol companies. We all heard during the banking royal commission that unregulated big corporations have taken advantage of Australian consumers in the absence of proper regulation.

For everyday Australians like David and the over 10,000 consumers who've joined or have indicated support for the Launceston Smart Fuelers group, Labor wants to see more power for the ACCC so it can take action against fuel retailers who take advantage of their customers. One of the biggest problems is that regulators need more than the power to act. They also need a budget to act. Labor's plan, if elected, is to give the regulator more powers, to make sure that there are tougher penalties and to ensure that regulators have a budget and the ability to enforce them.

This is about giving the regulator real power to take action against anticompetitive behaviour. Governments can't and shouldn't regulate fuel prices. Proper competition amongst retailers and wholesalers is the best way to drive down prices. Labor will increase penalties for anticompetitive and anticonsumer conduct, double the ACCC's litigation budget and give the ACCC an independent market studies function so it can explore public interest issues including this vital issue.

Brisbane Electorate: Small Business

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (10:21): Last year the Brisbane community came together to campaign to Love Our Shops and to fight for some capital improvements to help some key

local shopping strips around Brisbane that are in need of some love to help them remain attractive, special and unique places to visit for both local residents and interstate and international visitors. These are places that are at the heart of our local community, where locals come together for a coffee, a family meal or a special occasion. They buy their groceries and other products there. They get a haircut there. And they attend a host of local community events there. These shopping villages are also the economic heart of our local communities, home to scores of small businesses which do so much to provide the character and identity of each local area, in addition to the services they provide and in addition to giving many young local people the very first job experiences that they'll have—the first foot in the door of the job market.

My background in small business means that I appreciate just how hard small businesses work and how important they are to the success of our local communities. So it was heartening to me that there was such an overwhelmingly positive response from local residents and groups to the campaign to support our local shops. Locals made it very clear that they want to support their local shopping strips and that they greatly value the direct and indirect roles they play in our community.

I was therefore very pleased in recent weeks to be able to announce that the campaign ultimately has been successful. The government's committed a total of \$550,000 towards capital improvements for the urban renewal of local shopping strips along the Paddington terraces, the Wilston shops at Kedron Brook Road, and the iconic Racecourse Road precinct in Hamilton and Ascot. This is a big win for local communities in these areas of Brisbane's inner north.

I want to congratulate the local business groups who've worked with me and have proven to be strong advocates for this campaign and for their local communities. They'll serve on the steering committees to deliver these capital improvements, working in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council. I'm talking about the Paddington 4064 business group, the Racecourse Road Business Group and the Kedron Brook Business Group. Similarly, I want to congratulate local councillors Peter Matic, David McLachlan and Andrew Wines for their strong support. Their support and collaboration were an essential part of securing this campaign outcome.

It is really important for different levels of government to be able to work together ultimately to deliver real outcomes for our local communities. These are the kinds of local infrastructure projects that are needed if we're to continue to boost economic growth, create jobs and improve local facilities community by community across our electorates. I look forward to seeing the completion of these projects in the months ahead and the positive impact that they'll have both for local businesses and for our community.

Solomon Electorate: Community Organisations

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (10:24): Like all honourable members, I was recently asked by the Minister for Families and Social Services, Paul Fletcher MP, to give my input on the worthiness of organisations in my electorate who have applied for volunteer grants. I appreciated the opportunity to give feedback and I have written to the minister. Anyone who lives in the NT knows that all of the organisations that have applied for funding make incredibly important contributions to our community and are deserving of federal assistance. Particularly in Darwin, as the capital city of the Northern Territory, many organisations have

applied for a few thousand dollars to help them with their volunteer programs. They provide services not only in my electorate of Solomon—Darwin and Palmerston—but also throughout the Northern Territory. We are not talking about large amounts of funds, but the funds made available by the minister to these community organisations will make a huge difference.

We had a great response to the call for applications for the volunteer grants. Some of the organisations that provide services throughout the Northern Territory are Anglicare NT, AMRRIC—Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities—Asthma Foundation Northern Territory, Australian Breastfeeding Association Northern Territory, the Australian Japanese Association of the Northern Territory, Carers NT, Chinese Community of Northern Australia, Duke of Edinburgh NT Division, Girl Guides NT Inc, Multilingual Broadcasting Council of the Northern Territory Inc, Northern Territory Hong Kong Club, Sikh Association Northern Territory, Sports Medicine Australia NT, Sri Lanka-Australian Friendship Association NT, St John Ambulance Australia NT, St Vincent de Paul Society NT, STEPS Education and Training, SIDS Association of the Northern Territory, the Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory, the Variety Club of the Northern Territory, Triathlon NT, United Nations Youth NT and Vietnamese Community in Australia—NT Chapter Inc. Many other volunteer organisations are doing great work in my electorate, but I wanted to let people know that I've written to the minister to support all of these organisations.

National Security

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (10:27): Yesterday we witnessed Labor prematurely letting the cat out of the bag. Joined by the Greens and left-wing Independents, Labor began their dismantling of Australia's border security by voting to hand control of our borders to a few doctors. The doctors they want in control of our borders are people who believe that sending illegal boat arrivals to Nauru is worse than sending Jews to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. The Australian Medical Association representative, Paul Bauert, backed by dozens of similarly minded doctors in Canberra, declared that illegal boat arrivals on Nauru were a worse situation than Jews in Auschwitz because people who knew that they were going to be gassed by Nazis:

... found some sense of relief in knowing what was happening.

That's disgusting. I don't remember reading anywhere in the history books that the Jews were offered free flights home anytime they wanted. Not all doctors hold those radical beliefs, and most don't, but these are the people that Labor and the Greens want put in charge of our borders, and they voted to do so as law yesterday. If anyone on Nauru—a convicted terrorist, a rapist, a petty criminal—tells two doctors with those beliefs that they have an earache, a tummy ache, a bad back or whatever, they'll be flown to Australia under Labor's law, where they can launch legal proceedings and never ever have to return home.

Labor claims that the law is needed because there is insufficient medical assistance on Nauru, which is an insult to anyone living in regional Queensland. There are 60 doctors and other health professionals on Nauru for a population of 400 people. Gee, I wish we had that in some places up north! Where is their concern for places like Alligator Creek, south of Townsville, for Bloomsbury, south of Proserpine, or for Calen?

These places have a similar or even larger population and I can assure you that none of them have 60 health professionals on hand—the only place in Australia that would have a

comparable ratio would be the Palazzo Versace on the Gold Coast during an AMA convention—and the same is the case even for the larger regional centres in my electorate like Mackay, the Whitsundays, Bowen, Burdekin and Townsville.

The question that these guys in the Labor Party need to answer is: where does the local Labor candidate stand on this issue? She needs to declare now whether she supports the weakening of Australia's border laws that her party voted for only yesterday. She needs to declare whether she will support the further dismantling of Australia's border security laws that will happen under a Labor government. They have let the cat out of the bag. They have weakened our borders. It's disgusting. The people of North Queensland know that they can count on me to put their interests first, to stand up for North Queensland and to protect our borders. That is what is most important.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Laundry) (10:30): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Scholes, Hon. Gordon Glen Denton, AO

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 9 December 2018, of former Member (the Honourable Gordon Glen Denton Scholes) AO, a former Minister and a Member of this House for the Division of Corio from 1967 to 1993, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Mr MARLES (Corio) (10:31): In 1939, at about the age of eight, a young Gordon Scholes stood outside the window of the Newmarket Malvern Star bike shop. Inside, Hubert Opperman, Oppy, the famous international cyclist, one of Australia's greatest sporting heroes, was doing a demonstration. He was riding a bike on rollers, so the bike was in fact stationary. You might have seen a contraption of that kind if you've seen the cycling on TV. It is how the cyclists warm up. Oppy was there in the window and all the kids, including Gordon, were there having a look, and then suddenly the tyre on Oppy's bike burst and Oppy went flying. It was a big deal. Soon after that, Gordon was given one of his first bikes. It was a Preston Star, and he—like a lot of eight-year-olds that I know—was actually a little bit disappointed at that moment because it wasn't a Malvern Star. A Malvern Star was the bike that Oppy rode. Oppy was one of Gordon's absolute heroes, and it spoke to the fact that, from a very early age, Gordon loved sport.

Fast forward to 1966 and Gordon Scholes is the pre-selected Labor candidate for the seat of Corio and is contesting it against the sitting member, Sir Hubert Opperman, who was then the member for Corio. It is one of those ironies in life that, the first time Gordon sought public office, he found himself contesting it against that very hero who he had first seen back in 1939. He lost in that election but, not long after, in 1967, after Oppy had retired and became Australia's first High Commissioner to Malta, Gordon, in the by-election which ensued, achieved an 11 per cent swing and was elected the member for Corio, a post he held until 1993. Until this time, he has been the longest-serving member for Corio.

His had a distinguished career in this place. He was, in the first term of the Hawke government, between 1983 and 1984, Australia's Minister for Defence. In the second term, from 1984 to 1987, he was Australia's Minister for Territories. But he is perhaps most

remembered in these halls, and commemorated in the really beautiful portrait which hangs in the Member's Hall, for the fact that, between 1974 and 1975, he was the Speaker of the House of Representatives—and he was the Speaker of the House of Representatives on that famous day, 11 November 1975.

The facts of that day are well known: the no-confidence motion; the waiting outside Government House that Gordon did with the outcome of that motion seeking to see the Governor-General; and, of course, the election which then ensued. It was, perhaps, the moment when our democracy was stretched and strained the furthest since Federation. It was a very difficult day for this place and for the Australian parliament. But what's important is not so much, in the context of Gordon, the outcome of those events but what people on all sides said about Gordon's conduct as the Speaker on that day. I've spoken to many senior conservatives—former prime ministers—who were there on that day and made the point that, during all of that, Gordon kept his head when others were losing theirs. He was cool and he was calm. That fact alone, on that day, means that all of us owe Gordon Scholes an enormous debt of gratitude.

For my part, on my becoming the member for Corio, Gordon was incredibly generous to me in terms of the advice he gave and welcoming me into the role that I now hold, and it is an honour for me, being the member for Corio, to be in that line of succession which has Gordon in it.

His interests went well beyond politics. He was, as I mentioned, a keen sports fan but also a keen sportsman. In 1949 he was the Victorian amateur heavyweight boxing champion. He played golf off a handicap of six at the East Geelong Golf Club, a golf course which is right next to where I live now, and I'm very familiar with it. If you go up to the pool room here—a room that some members never discover—you'll find there an honour board which notes that Gordon Scholes was the parliamentary snooker champion on many occasions. This was obviously a guy who had talent in his hands and his fingers, and he was a very keen sports fan. I spent yesterday with his daughters, Kerry and Anne, who talked about the fact that, whenever he watched boxing on TV, he'd be in his chair and he would be doing the moves. He was right in that ring with whoever was on the TV. He loved it all. He was a devoted Cats fan, I'm sure encouraged by his very close friendship with Neil Trezise, who was a state member in the Geelong region, across a couple of seats, and was the Victorian minister for sport during the Cain government.

He was a keen photographer and took many photos around Melbourne during the 1956 Olympics. He was a prodigious stamp-collector, such that in his last house—Kerry and Anne said to me today—which was a small house that only had two rooms, one of them was the room that Gordon lived in and the other room was where his stamp collection was. He was an honorary life member of the Geelong Philatelic Society. Kerry and Anne, his daughters, talk about the enormous number of boxes that they now have full of Gordon's memorabilia, and they were seeking my advice yesterday as to what to do with them. I had no advice to give.

He was clearly a really devoted family man. You really get the feeling of that when talking with Kerry and Anne. I'm sure that were his wife, Della, alive today she would attest to that as well. There is the wonderful story of how, as a train driver—and that's what he was before he entered parliament—when he was driving the train through Breakwater in Geelong, which is near where their family house was, he would do nine bursts on the whistle to let his daughters

know that this was a train which he was aboard. He would make regular phone calls from Canberra. He would do his shopping at Corio Village—something I grew up doing—with his children, although they said that they would often try to pretend they had nothing to do with him! Of course, my recollections of Gordon are at a later age, when I was doing street stalls around Geelong at various markets, and he was a regular attender of those markets till his last days.

He, like all of us in this building, I think, felt the constant dilemma of trying to balance family with political life here. It's undoubtedly the hardest part of the life that we live. When you speak with Kerry and Anne, in painful ways you can see how that battle played out from the perspective of his children—those calls that were made on Christmas Day that took him away from a conversation at the family table. But what's clear in those recollections from Kerry and Anne is that that battle to find a place for family in the midst of living a political life at the most senior level was a battle he fought day in, day out. They made the point that he was deeply engaged in the household, that all the decisions that were made were decisions that he talked through with his wife, Della, and he was completely devoted to Kerry and to Anne. You can absolutely hear that in their reminiscences today.

Perhaps the most significant thing, though, about Gordon was his life's journey. He went to 16 different schools by the time he was 17. He did not complete his schooling. He was a train driver, working very much at the shop floor. He was a very proud unionist and became the president of the Geelong Trades Hall Council in 1965 and 1966. He was a local councillor in the then City of Geelong between 1965 and 1967, and it was an issue about the potential closing of a kindergarten in central Geelong which particularly animated both him and Neil Trezise such that they decided that they would really take the next step, run for public office and seek to enter public life. From there, he contested Corio in 1966, won it in 1967 and the rest is history.

From the shop floor, Gordon rose to being the Speaker of Australia's House of Representatives, to being a member of Australia's cabinet; in the image of Ben Chifley, this is a journey that Labor legends are made of. But through listening to Kerry and Anne describe their father, what that journey took and how remarkable a man he was, it becomes so clear how extraordinary an achievement it is for Gordon Scholes, given the cards he was dealt with in life, to have reached the high office he ultimately did, in what must be one of the most remarkable journeys in Australian public life. Vale Gordon Scholes; we will miss him dearly.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite—Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services) (10:41): I too rise today to pay tribute to the Hon. Gordon Scholes AO, who died on 9 December 2018. It was my great honour to attend his funeral in Geelong on 18 December 2018 representing the Prime Minister. I had the opportunity to convey my condolences to his daughters, Kerry and Anne, and, of course, convey our condolences as a parliament and on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Across the political divide, I want to put on record: Gordon Scholes was much loved and respected. He was well known to my parents. Michael, my father, was in local council. My mother was a member of parliament in the 1990s. Gordon was, for many, many years, a leading figure in our community. Of course, we have just heard from the member for Corio. As the other federal member representing Geelong, along with other parts of the Corangamite

electorate, it's very important that I also stand here today and say thank you for everything that he did for our community.

It was very moving at his funeral service to hear from the former Geelong state member of parliament Ian Trezise, a very close friend of Gordon Scholes, about the contribution that he made to our community, including Gordon Scholes's involvement in bringing Deakin University to Geelong, which, according to Ian Trezise, was one of his greatest highlights. He said that we owe a great deal to the involvement of Mr Scholes, who understood the power of education and the importance of strong regional growth.

Gordon Scholes is widely remembered as a loyal and respected man who fought very hard for the people he represented from 1967 through to 1993. He was re-elected 10 times—no mean feat. He loved his constituents and he went into politics for all the right reasons. He was very disappointed with the prospective closure of a local kindergarten, and he took up the fight. As a result of that fight, he decided to enter politics. He made us all very proud in our community, and I put all politics aside. He made us very proud. We didn't always have to agree with everything, of course, that he stood for as a member of the Labor Party, but, as a force to be reckoned with and as a leader in the Geelong community for such a long time, as I say, he was widely loved and respected.

Gordon Scholes was a member of the Australian Labor Party. He joined in 1955. He was President of the Geelong ALP branch from 1962 to 1964 and President of the Geelong Trades Hall Council from 1965 to 1966. He was also a Geelong councillor from 1965 to 1967. He loved the parliament, as we heard yesterday from the Prime Minister, and he served in a number of very distinguished roles. After the election of the Hawke government, he served as the Minister for Defence from 1983 to 1984 and as Minister for Territories from 1984 to 1987. He was also the Speaker from 27 February 1975 to 16 February 1976, a period which encompassed the dismissal of the Whitlam government—the most tumultuous time in our country's political history, I think it is fair to say. He was a stable force in the tide of great unrest at that time. Gordon Scholes was well recognised as someone who did a very good job in the seat of the Speaker at a very difficult time in our nation's history. Again, I convey my condolences to Kerry and to Anne, to his family, and I say: vale, Gordon Scholes. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Laundry): I thank the member. I understand it is the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the Chamber.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite—Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services) (10:46): I move:

That further proceedings be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

Neville, Mr Paul Christopher, OAM

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (10:47): I have to say, over the Christmas break it was really sad news for me to hear of the passing of Paul Neville. I wanted to say some words in this Chamber. I worked closely with Paul for many years on the transport committee and I was

very pleased to call him a friend. I think it's fitting that this parliament record his service to the nation, to this parliament and to the area that he loved.

Paul was the chair of the transport committee, in its various iterations, while his side of politics was in government, and then, when Labor was in government, I was the chair. We had this ongoing relationship as chair and deputy chair. From working with Paul on committees, I found him to be a person with an extraordinarily deep understanding of the transport policy area and a profound respect for the people who worked in the transport industry—we did a number of inquiries around the safety of road transport, air transport and so forth. Indeed, he was sometimes a bit of a thorn in his own government's side, because he was very passionate about these issues. He had no hesitation in holding any of us to account when he felt that we weren't measuring up on good economic policy through the transport part of our economy to make sure that the regions in particular were serviced and developed. I think that came out of his profound love for his own region. He was of course the chair of the committee when we did *The great freight task* report, and I think that report is testimony to the comments I've made about his policy work. It has stood the test of time as one of the most seminal, significant reports that has been done on freight transport in this country. I currently again sit on the transport committee, and the report is a reference point from which further reports and reviews have been conducted, and actions have been taken by governments of both sides around the very solid work that he, as chair, led in that report.

I have to say I well remember Paul was always very, very keen for us to visit his own seat as a committee! He was extraordinarily proud to show off the port, road and rail infrastructure, and also, I have to say, many of the excellent restaurants. He was very keen that the committees he was involved with carried that old tradition—which probably sadly is dying a bit in this place—of collegial work, getting together at the end of the day's inquiry, having a dinner together and sharing a respect for each other as parliamentarians, even as we may have debated the issues.

I always smile when I think of Paul. I just remember what a joy he was to be around as a person, even when you were having a bit of a debate about a policy area. He just had an abiding respect for people and a joy in everyday life. I will never ever forget the day he had a question in parliament and somebody—some evil comrade sitting next to him—said something like, 'Tell the frog joke,' or something like that, and poor old Paul got the giggles and the whole chamber was held up because every time he'd get control of it and try to ask the question again, the giggles would break out again. In fact, the whole chamber was laughing along with him at that point. It was a moment of that pure humanity and joy that I think he encompassed and that all of us in the chamber could feel in that moment. So it was a small moment, but I think it sort of encapsulated why so many people across all sides of the chamber really respected Paul, enjoyed his company and saw him as a great example of that old style of parliamentarian; the great respect for this place and the work of all members showed in everything that he did.

I know he profoundly loved his family. The other thing besides boasting about the seat—which the current member would know—was talking about how much he loved his family and how proud he was of them. I extend my sympathies on this occasion to his wife, Margaret, and to his children, Gavin, Gaye, Sally, Peter and Paul. Because Paul and I did so much committee work together, I also did a lot of work with his former staffer, Kate Barwick.

I'm sure that she was a great support to Paul in his work, and I also found her to be a really valuable contact person, someone who worked very constructively to see that Paul's work in the committee was successful.

Paul retired in 2013 before that election. I am absolutely convinced that Paul would have squeezed every bit of joy out of every day of his retirement, and I'm glad that he had those years and I'm just really, really sad that he didn't have more, because he certainly deserved them after his years of service. My deepest respects to Paul and his family.

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (10:53): I rise to speak for Paul Christopher Neville, former member for Hinkler. He was born on 28 March 1940 and passed away on 1 January 2019, aged 78 years. I'm sure those who speak after me will talk about Paul's achievements and the great things he's done in this part of the parliament. I really want to try to convey some of his character.

Paul passed away peacefully on New Year's Day after declining health over a number of months. He was a man of faith; he was at peace with his fate and certainly faced that fate with tranquillity and grace. He was the beloved husband of Margaret, father and father-in-law of Gavin, Gaye, Sally and Earle Griffen, Paul and Caitlin, and Peter and Joelle; and of course the loving and adored grandfather of Amy, Micaella, Georgia, Angus, Hugh and Ava. He was the loved brother and brother-in-law of Gillian and John Nyhof, and Michael and Lisa.

In the week leading up to Paul's funeral service, I received a call and this voice called out, 'Keith, Paul Neville here.' I think that the bounds of silence from my end of the phone said very, very clearly that he should've said 'Paul Jr'. Can I say, in Paul Jr Mr Neville lives on; it's the same voice and the same mannerisms. Paul and Peter, the youngest twins, I actually went to school with at Kepnock High School. They were a couple of years younger than me. I competed with Peter in surf lifesaving. They were the same sort of people—passionate. Nothing gets in the way. They go hard at the things that they are chasing.

Paul was elected the member for Hinkler in March 1993, and he served in that office for 20 years, retiring in August 2013. He certainly wasn't there for the short game or the personal gain. He was what we should all aspire to be, and that is a local champion. He was a local champion, there for the long run, despite being in a marginal seat. He fought election after election and he won them all.

For Paul, it was about representing the people he served, his faith and his family. He was an old-style politician, more prone to having a chat over a cup of tea than getting into those media fights that others do, I guess, in the current parliament. He was always very, very keen for a smoko and to have a chat.

In fact, across the electorate and the boundaries that changed, Paul did a lot of miles on the road, like we all do in regional seats. I've got to say that he was not the greatest driver at the time. Paul was not the best behind the wheel. In fact, we travelled to an event in 2013, and I clearly remember being on a very straight section of road at 100 kilometres an hour. Off in the distance, I could see a line of ducks crossing the road, and I thought: 'Oh, well, I'm sure Mr Neville will slow down soon. I'm sure he's going to put his foot on the brake soon.' About 400 yards out, I said: 'Paul, duck! Paul! Duck! Duck! Duck!' It got a bit faster and a bit more frantic, and in a cloud of smoke and screeching tyres—and I'm still not sure how the airbags didn't go off—we stopped to let the ducks pass. And Paul looked over at me and he said, 'Oh,

"duck"! He said, 'I thought you said'—and I'll let *Hansard* take its own conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker! He was that sort of character.

In fact, at his valedictory dinner in Bundaberg, we had about 130 or 140 people attend. Mr Neville spoke for 77 minutes and had to be removed from the podium. He continued on into the night, and I recall some of the comments from those who attended, particularly from our colleagues. Many of the Nationals showed up, and many former members and people from business. I very clearly recall an experienced senator who had been around for a long time, who on the way up at about a quarter past 12, after a 77-minute speech and yours truly having to do the wrap-up, said to me, 'Well, son, in this game, you go to a lot of these events.' He said, 'Most of them you just don't remember, but I'll never forget the day I came to Bundaberg and Paul Neville spoke for 77 minutes.' He said, 'I started off drunk and I finished up sober!' It was a great way to send him out. But Paul was just one of those characters.

There have been such strong reflections locally from constituents and from those on the opposite side of politics, which I think is very important. The celebration of Paul's life at the Holy Rosary Catholic church in Bundaberg I think was a fitting and dignified service attended by so many of his current and former colleagues. In fact, on my count, there were almost 50 dignitaries at the event, including former Prime Minister John Howard. Can I place on record my thanks to the Hon. John Howard for making the effort to attend. I think it was a great reflection of his friendship with Paul and certainly for his family. I think Margaret, for her part, appreciated the fact that everyone made that effort. In fact, Mr Howard spent his time handing out cups of tea and biscuits. That's just the kind of people they were. And, of course, Warren Truss, the former long-term member for Wide Bay and Deputy Prime Minister, was a very close friend of both Paul and Margaret Neville. He has been incredibly saddened, I know, by his passing.

It was always an interesting time when you were dealing with Paul Neville. He was always good for a joke and a laugh. He was always keen to put forward his point of view. As I said, the service was incredibly dignified, attended by people from across the spectrum of politics, including the former Labor member Brian Courtice. I've got to say that we all get on reasonably well now, even though we were on opposite sides of politics. I actually rang Brian on the day that Paul passed away, just to confirm that he was still there, because we lost another former member for Hinkler, Bryan Conquest, just 12 months or so ago. So there are two of us at the moment. Certainly it's a great loss for Margaret, for the family, for our local constituencies, for Paul's church and for all of the community organisations he was involved with.

In closing, I just want to say a couple of brief comments about Paul Neville himself. Anyone that had spent any time with Paul, that had had a conversation with him, regardless of whether it was around a constituency matter, a matter of policy, a matter of the nation's security or economic security—from the top down to the bottom, from the smallest and youngest individual through to some of the most important or those with very difficult positions, whether you were a prime minister or a plumber, Paul Neville always had time for you. When you had a conversation with Paul Neville, you always knew who did most of the talking: it was Paul Neville! May he rest in peace, Paul Christopher Neville. Vale Paul. My best wishes to his family in their time of grief.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Deputy Leader of the House) (11:00): It is with a tinge of sadness but great joy that I have the opportunity to reflect on my great friend, former colleague and, in many ways, mentor, Paul Neville. I congratulate the current member for Hinkler for his comments. His reflections very much sat with mine in terms of what a character Paul was.

Many will speak here today. His National Party brothers and sisters will speak about Paul's wicked sense of humour. Indeed, he took great joy in sharing jokes—normally around whips' drinks—and quite often the same joke week after week, but often told with more flamboyance on every occasion. He was quite the raconteur in that regard. He was also a great intellect, Deputy Speaker McVeigh. I've had the great privilege of sitting around the cabinet table, as you have. Paul would have matched any of those men and women who sat around the cabinet table with me. He had a great intellect.

He had an enormous degree of personal integrity. Paul was someone who would be your friend, and friend for life. He wasn't a fairweather friend. He wasn't someone who had false airs and graces. He was someone who would gather friends as others collect stamps or collect coins. Friends seemed to gather around Paul and enjoy his company enormously. He also had an incredibly generous spirit. He was one who was very giving to those who were in his friendship circle, and that was a very large friendship and family circle. Indeed, he had enormous pride in his family's achievements. I think the measure of Paul in many ways is the fact that he crossed party lines in this place. There are many on the other side of the chamber who had great positive experiences in dealing with Paul because of that integrity, because of that generous spirit. He had friends on both sides of the chamber.

I want to share a few memories here today in the time I have allowed. A couple of reflections on Paul—it would take me all day to go through all the stories, but there are a couple that spring to mind. Paul always claimed that he was the first politician to ever darken the doors of Portia's restaurant in Kingston. He claimed he was the first ever politician to have dinner at Portia's. He would take great delight in telling that story every time we went out for dinner. If you asked Paul, 'Where are we going for dinner?' he'd say, 'Maybe Italian, maybe—let's go to Portia's.' We never went anywhere else. He took great delight in telling me that story on every occasion. He knew the menu backwards, and the staff loved him dearly.

Paul is also the member of parliament responsible for me crossing the floor in my first term in this place. Paul, as you'd be well aware, represented the seat of Hinkler, which is home to the Bundaberg Rum Distillery. In my first term of parliament, the issue of ready-to-drink alcohol products and the Rudd government's plan to increase the tax on them was causing quite a heated debate. The coalition had taken a view that it was going to oppose the legislation. I supported that view, but somewhere in the debate the coalition's position changed—except Paul Neville and I didn't change our position. As it came to pass, the only time I ever crossed the floor was to try to get cheaper grog for Paul Neville. Anyway, I digress. We both crossed the floor on the alcopops tax. We used to revel in that every time we shared a drink.

The member for Hinkler, my colleague, just spoke about Paul's farewell speech. I'm sure many of our colleagues will reflect on that evening, where Paul spoke and spoke and spoke and spoke. Margaret, his beautiful wife, tried to wind him up on at least five occasions, and

Paul kept on ploughing through. It was when he told the same joke for the third time that we realised that Paul was ready to sit down. It was a great night.

I didn't get to Paul's funeral—sadly, I had other commitments—but I'm going to share from my great friend and one of Paul's long-time staff members, Cath Heidrich. Cath spoke at Paul's funeral and gave a eulogy, which was quite beautiful. I'd encourage anyone who knew Paul to get a copy of Cath's speech on that day. In her description at the church, as she gave the eulogy, Cath quoted from the federal Nationals' leader Larry Anthony, who said, quite beautifully, 'Paul had a heart as big as Phar Lap's, the compassion of Mother Teresa, the tenacity of John Howard and the humour of Rowan Atkinson.' That sums up our great friend. I will quote from a couple of other things that Cath said in her eulogy. She said:

I have known Paul and Margaret for most of my life. Paul helped me to secure my cadetship at the Bundaberg News Mail and I lived with the Neville clan at Limpus Crescent for a few months. Years later I worked for Paul until his retirement from politics.

Paul won the seat of Hinkler in 1993, defeating Labor's Brian Courtice who is here today, and his ability to win tight elections in his seat are legendary—winning again in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010. The 2001 win was particularly close—69 votes, 64 votes on recount, and the result was not known for 13 days. During that time Paul came here, to this church, to contemplate and pray.

He was a man of great faith. Cath continued:

In 2007, Paul faced another hurdle after a redistribution saw the boundaries of Hinkler change dramatically, losing Gladstone and gaining Hervey Bay.

At the last election he contested, in 2010, Paul won every booth—a tremendous feat.

His dedication to his role as Federal Member was unsurpassed. He never thought anyone's time was more important than anyone else's.

I worked with Paul when he fought on behalf of the legendary Major Harry Smith for recognition for his troops in the Battle of Long Tan. Paul was instrumental in making sure that the troops were properly recognised many years after that battle. I will continue with Cath's comments. This is one of the stories that I think many in the National Party room have heard before, but Cath told it beautifully on this occasion. She said:

Of course one of his most famous trips was with Margaret to a wedding in Rockhampton. En route he called into a township called Ambrose between Gladstone and Rockhampton, where in 1993, five booths had swung against him. Paul was keen to speak with some locals and try and work out what he could do to improve his standing. It was mid Saturday morning. There was no one in the pub, the shop or the streets on the eastern side. Moving to the west, it was almost the same but as they rounded a corner near the State School, up loomed a CWA Hall with 50 or more cars around it.

Jackpot!—it was Paul's chance to engage with the town in one hit. Margaret felt the locals might have been getting ready for a wedding or a dance that night.

So, bold as brass, and full of confidence, Paul bounced in and said to the ladies who were feverishly going here and there—"well girls, what's on here today?"

Paul had gate crashed a country pap smear clinic.

Let it be known that Paul Neville went literally everywhere for a vote!

With Paul's self-deprecating humour, he'd tell that story with great relish on many occasions, and it still remains one of my favourite memories of Paul as a grassroots campaigner. He would stop and talk to anyone in his electorate and spend time with them.

In his valedictory speech, Paul said he looked back over his 20 years in parliament feeling the exhilaration of success, the stings of failure, the warmth of colleagues on both sides and the common humanity of the people he had been privileged to serve, and now it was time to move on. In closing, I feel blessed to have had both Paul and Margaret Neville in my life. The National Party family—and the member for Dawson is here with me today—is certainly richer for characters of Paul's depth and just decent humanity to one another.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (11:08): It is my great pleasure to rise to speak on this condolence motion. Sadly, it is a condolence motion, but it is my pleasure nonetheless to speak in honour of my former colleague and good friend Paul Neville. Paul Christopher Neville was the member for Hinkler for a long time. When I was a grassroots member of the Queensland Nationals I would see Paul at conferences, but I came to know him personally when I came to this place when I was elected in 2010. My office was sandwiched in between the then deputy whip Paul Neville's office and the whip's office of the member for Parkes. That office placement might have been a happy accident or it may have been designed to ensure that, as a new member—who they weren't so sure about—I benefited from the guidance of the elder statesman of the Nationals. In using the word 'elder', I do refer to the member for Hinkler, with no reflection on the member for Parkes. In that office placement, I had many occasions to experience the charm, the wit, of Paul Neville as he regularly held court in the whip's office, regaling us with joke after joke and story after story. He was one of the great raconteurs in this place, with an endless repertoire of jokes, most of which—most, not all—could be told in polite company and could be put on *Hansard*. The frog joke has been mentioned time and again in these speeches. I won't retell the frog joke, because it's already been recorded in *Hansard*. Paul told it in his valedictory speech to this place, so it will live on for posterity.

He was much more than a fine teller of jokes, though. What also will live on for posterity—people have referred to it—is the 77-minute speech, timed almost down to the second, that he gave at a function that the Liberal National Party held for Paul Neville in Bundaberg. It was his valedictory to his community, I guess. While others, as has been said here, started off drunk and ended up sober by the end of the speech, I, knowing Paul, had positioned myself right beside the bar so I didn't have that problem. For me it was a great speech. Actually I recorded the start of it, where he did another infamous thing that Paul was known for—he composed his own operatic-style song, about Sol Trujillo. If people want to look at it later—it just is Paul's wit—he actually sang the song in full and it's on YouTube, because I've uploaded it.

He loved his entire electorate of Hinkler and he loved the people that he served. He was a master at working his electorate. He took it when it was a marginal seat. He recalled to me the time when it was down to the wire and he was waiting days, perhaps even more than a week, for the result. As the person of faith that he was, he went down to his local church—I suspect it was the one that his funeral was held in—and he sat there in silence and just prayed. Whatever was going to happen was going to happen. It was then that one of his staff members actually walked in and told him that he had been re-elected. It was a very marginal seat, and he took it in the end to a margin of over 10 per cent. That was a reflection of Paul Neville and his abilities as an MP.

Paul wasn't a politician; he was truly a parliamentarian, one of the gentlemen of this House. That's what I will remember Paul for, and I'm not the only one. The member for Hinkler before Paul was mentioned earlier: Brian Courtice. He reflected on Paul's 20 years of successful election campaigning and he said:

Anyone who can hold the seat (of Hinkler) for that amount of time has considerable political acumen.

He achieved so much. He had his finger on the pulse and he understood politics. I think that his ability to win those elections was not because of his campaigning, although he did a lot of that. It was because of his reputation in his community and what he did for his community. He won in 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010, and no doubt he would have won if he had decided to go on. I remember he was umming and ahing because he realised that he was getting on and he wanted to spend more time with his beloved wife, Margaret, who is just a wonderful, wonderful woman, and his family and his grandchildren, who he was just so passionate about. I've already regaled you with the fact that it came down to the wire—69 votes—in one of those elections. That was what he won by. After serving for those 20 years, he left on a high, having won every booth in 2010—it is a great reflection on any member of parliament when you carry the support of your entire community in every single place—and left that seat in great shape for his successor, the now member for Hinkler.

Paul credited much of his success to his beloved wife, Margaret. He described how her commitment from day one 'door-to-door, backs of trucks, stalls and markets and endless public meetings' helped him win every electoral battle that he went into. In 2013, Paul said:

It was her from-the-heart undoctored handwritten letters to the electorate that won me more votes than you can possibly imagine. You would go to a function after one of her letters went out and no-one would want to talk to me but they'd say, 'Is your wife here? How are the two sets of twins?'

They were a team. That's why I feel very sad for Margaret, losing her life partner. They lived that from-the-heart creed. My deepest condolences go out to Margaret and to all the Neville family. Yes, there were two sets of twins—Gavin and Gaye, and Peter and Paul—as well as Sally.

Paul was a man of regional Queensland, born in Warwick in 1940. He was passionate about the arts. That's probably one of the things people didn't know so much if they didn't know Paul Neville too well. He was the manager of the Moncrieff Theatre in Bundaberg, formerly the Crest Cinema. He managed the Bundaberg District Tourism and Development Board. He was, like me, a former state president of the Queensland Young Nationals.

Following his first election, he became the National Party whip from 1998 until his retirement in 2013. It's been said before that he was really engaged with his work on parliamentary committees, and that's been commended by speakers from the Labor Party here today. He served on a large number of committees. He was the chair of the Communications, Transport and Microeconomic Reform Committee. He was passionate about that. He pestered everyone, even his own side, about doing the right thing by regional communities when it came to communications. He was chair of that committee again when it morphed into the Communications, Transport and the Arts Committee, and also of the Transport and Regional Services Committee. He served as chair on all of those committees, and did a fine job in putting forth recommendations which changed policy and, ultimately, became the law of this land. The reform in radio is one of those.

To cap it all off, it was fitting that on Australia Day—sadly, after his passing—Paul Christopher Neville was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his contribution to this nation and, particularly, to the Bundaberg community, which he continued to serve well after he left this place.

I will miss Paul. I will miss him immensely. I will miss the jokes—we even called him up at whips' drinks, after he was gone, to say, 'Hey, Paul, tell us another one of your jokes.' We won't be able to do that now, but we'll never forget. He was a great man.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11:18): I'm really honoured to be able to say a few words about my friend Paul Neville today. The last time I spoke about Paul Neville was at his retirement, in the National Party party room. I was also very honoured at that time to be able to say a few words in Paul's presence about how much his friendship meant to me. He truly was one of the best and most decent people I have served with in this place. The passing of Paul Neville is a great loss to his family, of course, to his community and to our country. The member for Longman has just told me a story that I didn't know about Paul and Margaret: they put her up for a few months when she was moving to attend school, without any question, without any thought of benefit for themselves. That's just the sort of decent people they were.

Paul Neville and I probably first met because of the parliamentary friends of Slovenia friendship group. My parents are from a Slovenian background, but Paul was as much an enthusiast for Slovenia as anybody could have been and spoke about his trips there, the times that he had travelled there. He used to talk about the magnificent agricultural produce in Slovenia, and the countryside and the people. That gave us a first point of bonding.

The thing that I liked and respected about Paul so much was the seriousness with which he undertook his role as a parliamentarian, representing the people of his electorate, but also the lightness of touch he had with that seriousness. He was never anything other than completely dedicated to his work and to his community but, with that, he had a mischievous sense of humour that lightened the touch. I'm sorry I didn't hear the previous speakers, but no doubt the frog joke got a bit of an airing today! It said so much about Paul Neville that, by the end of his time here in the parliament, he couldn't even hear the call for the frog joke to be told without dissolving into giggles. He had, as I said, a light touch and a mischievous sense of humour that was truly delightful.

I don't find myself often agreeing with John Howard, but I recall the former Prime Minister said that Paul Neville truly had his finger on the pulse of regional Australia. I can't begin to agree with that enough. He was an absolutely classic old-school country gentleman, to the extent that, when I was campaigning against him in his seat, for the Labor candidate, we ran into each other and he said, 'We must have lunch next time you're up here; I'd like to show you the sights of my electorate'—absolutely typical of the courtesy and decency of the man.

I'm really grateful to the leader of the National Party for calling me after he heard of Paul Neville's death and letting me know. He knew what high regard I held his friend in. It was a very sad task, but I was pleased that I was able to call his family and pass on my regards, because there are truly not many people that I have served with in my 20 years here of whom I could honestly and in the most heartfelt way say that he was respected by everyone, from whatever party background you are talking about, regional community or city community. Again the essential decency of the man prevailed at every time, in every instance.

I want to send a message to his wife, Margaret, and to the Neville family. I know that their more than 50 years together truly was an extraordinary partnership between Paul and Margaret. As the member for Longman has pointed out, so much of the work they did for the community was the work of the two of them together. I'm sure there were times when Margaret, the children and the grandchildren missed Paul while he was down here, and I'm pleased that he had those years at home after he retired to be able to show his love and affection to the family that we all know he treasured so very much. Every time we saw Paul out of hours here in Canberra, Margaret was often with him, but his talk about his children and grandchildren was so full of love and affection as well. His family, his colleagues and his community have my deepest sympathy.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of The Nationals) (11:24): I acknowledge the words—the fine words, the eloquent words—of the member for Sydney, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, of the Labor Party. I also acknowledge the fact that she is probably the only one from her party who has addressed the modern National Party in the party room. That was an allowance we made because we knew of the special bond and affection that Paul Neville and Tanya Plibersek had for one another. I think that goes to show the uniqueness of Paul. He was always able to reach across the aisle. He always put people ahead of politics. He had a deep and abiding affection, as I said, for Tanya. That bond continued. That is why I did call her early on 1 January to tell her the sad news that Paul had passed away. I appreciate the fact you have come in here in this condolence motion to recall your memories of a great man. He was, indeed, a great man.

I've just come from a meeting with Commercial Radio Australia representatives Joan Warner and Grant Blackley. When it came to telecommunications, particularly regional telecommunications, Paul Neville was a champion. No telecommunications policy was ever put through the parliament unless it had Paul Neville's imprimatur on it. He certainly made sure there was a better deal for regional Australians when it came to radio, television and print outcomes. He made sure that, whether it was commercial television or the ABC, we were looked after in the bush—as far as being able to get the right media message out and to ensure that the message was being received here in Canberra. John Howard, the former Prime Minister, used Paul as his sounding board in that regard.

There are those who say that politics is a vocation and some are called to the service of others through medicine, through teaching or even holy orders. There are some for whom election to this House is such a calling, such a vocation, and Paul Neville OAM was one of those people. I'm glad to say 'OAM'; he was honoured posthumously in the Australia Day honours. He knew he was going to receive an honour, but what a great shame he didn't get to receive that honour in person. His gregarious personality and generous approach to life was a hallmark of P-Nev's grassroots politics. Across the Hinkler electorate, no matter the person, the community or the issue, Paul's approach was the same: if it mattered to them, it mattered to him.

Whilst the stroke of midnight on 1 January can spring hope and optimism, it was with sadness that we heard of the loss of our dear friend. He was a giant of the Nationals, he was a giant of the LNP and he was a giant of the parliament. His infectious wit and country charm—he had those in spades. He had a passion for the arts. His love for Margaret, the children and

the grandchildren was what defined Paul and embodied the gentleman he was in every sense of the word.

I was very, very fortunate because I sat next to P-Nev in my first term—his last—in the parliament. I recall that, one day, I was being rather loud during question time. I can't remember whether it was Wayne Swan or Julia Gillard at the dispatch box but I was being rather loud and so was George Christensen, who was sitting on my right. I received a message from Catherine Heidrich, in Paul's office, to wake P-Nev up. He had had a cancer taken out of his ear. The next thing you know, P-Nev was against me, and I'm trying to prop Paul up and continue my tirade.

Paul was a great contributor to the parliament and to the debate, but he wasn't well in the last year of parliament. Unfortunately, and obviously, the last few months of his life were a struggle. But he never lost optimism and never lost sight of thinking of other people, making sure other people came first, making sure that his electorate was being well heard and that the delivery was there for them. Catherine Heidrich gave one of the greatest eulogies I've ever heard. There were two. The other one was delivered by Mike Edgar, a long-term Labor voter. I think that probably says something about P-Nev—the fact he had those two deliver the eulogy for him.

Paul's story is a uniquely Australian one. He was drawn to service by the love of his community and a belief that his party was the one to serve it best. He was a former theatre supervisor and he used his place in parliament to transform country communications and to leave it better, bringing common sense to the country's parliament. He certainly did that. As a boy, he would sit up on election night, listening to the radio with a pad and pencil, writing it down to try to figure out who would win the individual seats. He described representing the people of Hinkler in this place as 'the fulfilment of my long-held dreams'. And so it was that he would take on the cause and the campaign of the people of Hinkler—for the most part, as one of parliament's most marginal seats—where a passion and a dedication for his people was second to none. He always lived by that.

Through the rough-and-tumble of politics, which at one election saw him win his seat by just 64 votes, Paul maintained the charm and the stories for which he was so famous. As the years went by, Paul, ever the raconteur, accumulated a lifetime of stories, including the frog joke, and experiences with characters that would leave his guests in tears of laughter, even if you'd heard the story many, many times before. No matter the retelling, you'd still laugh at the punchline. The story about the country Pap smear clinic, retold so well by Catherine in the eulogy; the frog joke; the song about Sol Trujillo—you've heard them a hundred times, but each time they were just as funny.

He and I sat next to one another in my first term in this place, as I said. Paul, the wily veteran, sat alongside the members for Riverina and Dawson to impart his wisdom and his decorum. The decorum bit didn't always work, but I think Paul got there in the end. It was there I saw his respect across the chamber; it was very, very clear. From committee work and his years around the place, Paul received universal love and affection, and that's been shown today. Many colleagues shared their affection and memories of Paul, such was the high regard in which he was held in this place.

I was privileged to call in on Paul and Margaret late last year for a cuppa, during a visit to Bundaberg, at his home at Limpus Crescent in Bundy. We sat on his famous verandah, from

which GANGgajang composed 'Sounds of Then'. That song was released in 1985. It's obviously an iconic Australian song, but it was written on Paul's back patio. As you sit there and listen to the words, you can see the cane fields in the distance and the odd-shaped block and you can almost hear Paul Neville's patriotism coming through the words of that wonderful song. We laughed, we shared jokes and we talked about the good times. We talked about the future ahead. Paul had great optimism—for his beloved Nationals, for the LNP and for the future of Australia. He and his wife, Margaret, ever the partnership, just celebrated 50 years of marriage and the love of their family. The joy for both of them on that day, and every day, was clear. Gavin and Gaye, Sally, Peter and Paul, the wonderful children of Paul and Margaret—we all miss him very, very dearly.

He was rightly honoured with an Order of Australia medallion in the recent awards. It's a testament to his lifetime of service to his community, to his family and to this nation. He was a gentleman. He was a giant of this parliament. He will be sadly, sadly missed. Vale, Paul Neville. Rest in peace.

Mr JOYCE (New England) (11:32): In the last term of the Howard government, I was at a function in the Great Hall. Paul's health had been fading somewhat, but all the time he was a delight to be around. I remember, whilst the Prime Minister of Australia was speaking, Paul had a little bit of a turn. His head was on the table, flat out. The doctor from Western Australia, from the Liberal Party, Mal Washer, came across, and we all went to Paul's table. He said, 'He'll be right, but perhaps you can quietly take him back to his room.' And it wasn't inebriation; he'd had a slight turn. As I took him out of the Great Hall, his strides fell down! His own response was, 'Listen, man, pull up my strides!' So I reached down with one hand and pulled them up by the belt. I was looking at him and I said, 'Paul, this is not the time to be mooning John Howard!' Everything with Paul was a delight.

Not long after that, some of his staff approached me and said: 'Could you have the hard conversation with Paul. I think it's time—for himself, for Margaret and for his family—that he spend his time at home. No-one wants to go out of here having their last days in this place.' I went around to see Paul and I said, 'Paul, I have to have a very difficult conversation with you.' He said: 'There are no difficulties between you and me, Barnaby. We are close friends, close mates. I'll just grab a bottle of red wine. Fire away.' I remember looking down and saying, 'Paul, I want you to retire,' and the conversation stopped. What I can say about Paul is that he was never vindictive, he was never nasty and he never had a bad word. He went quiet and, later on, came back and said, 'I accepted that. I think that was the appropriate thing to do and the appropriate conversation to have.'

Every day was a joy with Paul. There were so many jokes! But some of them were off-colour. You just can't repeat them. Paul could say them but no-one else could. He had one about a Yorkshire man and a border collie, and you'd wait and think, 'Oh my God, the punchline is going to come and then the room is going to disappear under the table!' He told of a Yorkshire man to whom a person was saying, 'You've got a lovely dog,' to which the Yorkshire man replied, 'I have a lovely dog. It's a border collie, you know.' The man asked, 'What's its name?' to which the Yorkshire man replied, 'His name is Francis Bacon.' The man said 'Francis Bacon?', to which the Yorkshire man replied, 'No, Fancies Bacon.' The man asked, 'Why would you call your dog Fancies Bacon?' The Yorkshire man replied, 'Oh, he has a distinct love of pigs!' And everyone said, 'Well, there you go!'

An honourable member: He told it a lot better!

Mr JOYCE: He told it a lot better—and probably with a definite lexicon in certain areas! One of the great tragedies is that Paul was never a minister. He certainly deserved to be one. He was a shadow parl sec for a very brief period of time. I say that because his knowledge in certain areas was absolutely exemplary—especially in the communications field, which was his personal love. He wanted to make sure regional areas were well-heard and did not have to deal with syndicated coverage from the major capitals; he thought that was a complete usurping of the fundamental right of having your own story heard by local people. And he drove media ownership within the coalition—he definitely did. He had to be respected. You had to get a tick-off from Paul before you made a major change. He might not have been a minister but if he decided to confront you in the party on some of the issues, you'd lose because his knowledge was exemplary.

He was a very sophisticated and well-polished person. Once I was at mass with him and my parents at St Stephen's Cathedral in Brisbane. My mother, who is vastly more polished than me, was talking to Paul, to whom I'd introduced her. She said, 'That final hymn was marvellous. Was that Brahms?', and Paul said, 'The 2nd one? No, that was Mozart's 3rd.' I just looked at him and thought, 'You're no fool. You're a very intelligent person.' And he came with a strong sense of the aesthetic. His love of the arts was something that showed another side to his character.

Paul was a brilliant marginal seat campaigner. Both sides of politics have them. I'll call one out. Chris Hayes is a brilliant one for the Labor Party. They are given a hard job and they go out and do it. In state politics, there is Thomas George. Give them a hard job and they'll go out and do it—and Paul did it. I'll try to refer colleagues to his style. His style was not to be adversarial but to be absolutely diligent about the needs and requirements of people. He saw being the local member as doing public service on the small issues. If you do that public service well on the small issues, helping people with their pensions and helping people with other requirements, where you are the final hope for that person—you're their final hope, Obi-Wan Kenobi!—people will follow you as a person and respect your work ethic. Driving around with Paul was incredible. He'd say, 'See that street there? There's Mrs Smith, who lives at No. 5. I'm pretty sure she voted for me at the last election but I think I might have lost her, because I've been speaking to her lately.' That is the micromanagement that he had for the people. And he'd say why, he'd say the issue. That's how he worked.

Another story concerns a very, very tough town for the coalition, Mount Morgan. It's absolutely strongly Labor—always has been. The street names are from miners and they are named after parts of Ireland and Cornwall. You could say that things haven't changed much since the mine was opened. Paul could never win the seat but he decided he'd make an all-out effort in Mount Morgan. I think he had got 364 votes in the last election. So he built a bridge. He raised money and got a bridge built that was named after Private Jones, who was the first serviceman killed in action while fighting under the auspices of Australia—before that it was New South Wales, Queensland, the colonies. He built this bridge, and everyone went up, and at the next election he got 365 votes! So he said, 'That bridge, which cost so much, got me a vote!' But it was the attention to detail.

I really want to convey to Margaret and the Neville family how fondly Paul was thought of. You must realise that he was the centre of the conversation at any time the party had drinks, a

meal or something that was not part of the official process. He was an absolute dilettante. When he was taking notes at party room meetings, he had a very fine script, and he was an absolute dilettante about everything that was happening in that meeting, who was saying what and what their position was. You would not get him on details. You could not re-ascribe what you might have said, because he had noted it. He would sit at the table and note everything absolutely.

He was very close to Warren Truss. They were the best of mates and of a similar ilk. He continued on in his role with an absolute passion, and he never had a fit of pique; he might have wished to have a higher office, but—very similar to Senator 'Wacka' Williams—he was absolutely certain that he could do his job from whatever position the parliament had given him.

The start of my knowledge of Paul came from him at state conference. He loved the National Party's state conference and he would occupy the microphone on virtually every second issue—he apparently had a position on them. He loved the sense of being a representative of the rank and file members of the party, and they respected him immensely for the fact that he took the rank and file section of the party and treated it with absolute respect. He would be their champion and fight their issues. So vale Paul Christopher Neville. May you rest in peace. I'm absolutely certain that a person who has lived the tenor of your life has nothing to expect in what comes after except the very, very best, in a reflection of a very, very well-lived life.

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (11:42): As Barnaby suggested and knew, Paul was not born in Bundaberg, but he spent most of his life in Bundaberg. In fact, Paul was born in Warwick on 28 March 1940. In his early life, he moved to Bundaberg and he was the manager of Birch Carroll & Coyle, which was the movie operator in Bundaberg then and still is. That's where he met his wife, Margaret. She was a sugar chemist in one of the sugar mills in Bundaberg. Of course, they went on to have a very, very happy life.

On the day before he died, the priest and Margaret and close family were called to his bedside, and said, 'Paul, things are not looking too good, mate,' which he accepted. They said, 'You could last three to four weeks, but you could go any time,' and Paul accepted that, and he died in the early hours of New Year's Day of this year. Posthumously, he was awarded, in the Australia Day awards, an Order of Australia. Although it wasn't presented to Paul, he knew about it, and knew it was coming, and he was very appreciative of the fact that his colleagues, his friends, had recommended him for that award. And it was justly deserved.

He served 20 years and four months in parliament. He always corrected me when I said 20 years; he always added, 'Plus four months'. It was a great 20 years and four months. In fact, the seat of Hinkler went into my current seat of Flynn. Hinkler was a pretty big seat in those days, but in 2007 we had a redistribution of boundaries. Flynn became Flynn and it gave Paul the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay area, which he liked. He loved that area. But he also had very good, close ties to places like Gladstone and Ambrose—where he went into that hall, and that's where he got caught with the Pap smear tests! Margaret still laughs her head off about that. Paul used to always like to butt into a gathering. On this particular day, as was told at his funeral, he'd seen all these cars parked outside of the Ambrose hall, so he had to go inside. He thought there was a gathering of some sort. When he got inside, Paul said, 'What's going on

here today?' They said: 'Oh, we're conducting women's Pap smear tests. Do you want to join in?' Margaret thought that was a great joke.

After he retired from politics at the age of 72—that was back in 2013—we had a great celebration in Bundaberg. His colleagues came from all over the eastern coast of Australia to that farewell. The hall was packed. Unplanned, I suppose, Michael McCormack, now the Deputy Prime Minister, was the chairman for the night. After one hour and seventeen minutes of Paul speaking—and a lot of people had fallen asleep—Paul went on, and really protested when Michael went up and gave him the wind up!

I'll tell a little story. Paul had a big morning coming up the next morning. He said to the chairman of Bundaberg Sugar, Allan Dingle, that he had to go to the toilet. When Allan realised that he'd been gone for some time, he gave him a ring on the phone and said: 'How are you going, mate? Are you all right?' He said: 'Yeah, I'm good. I'm home in bed!' It was an outstanding speech.

At the end of the night, Paul said, 'There are a lot of things I could have said that I didn't say in that speech,' but the chairman reminded him that it would have taken another two hours to get through it all! He was a delightful fellow. It was amazing at his funeral service that he had at least five priests conducting the service. Nowadays, Catholic priests are hard to come by in regional areas, and sometimes they have fill-ins, but there you were. I've never seen it in my life before, but he had five Catholic priests at his funeral. It was a great tribute to Paul.

He's gone now, but he won't be forgotten for many years for serving parliament and serving the people of Bundaberg. The Hinkler Hall of Aviation was one of his pets. He did a lot of good things for Bundaberg and Gladstone, which was formerly in Hinkler. The bridge on Kirkwood Road is named after Paul. Quite often he would ask: 'Ken, have you been out along Kirkwood Road? Is my name still on the bridge?' 'Yes, she's still there, Paul!' 'Good on ya.'

It was sad, but he knew that he was coming to the end of his life. Friends and I went to see him a couple of months before he passed. He still had very good jokes. The same jokes he's told for 20 years, but he still told them to us! We asked him if he could give us a little song, and he did give us a song. Then the day nurse came and took him inside. I thought that was the last time I would probably see Paul. He had a lot of medical problems. We thought we'd lost him probably six months before that. I got a phone call on a Friday night to say that we probably wouldn't see Paul again. His family were being called in from Perth, and they came quickly. The next morning, Saturday morning, when the phone rang I thought, 'Well, here's the bad news coming.' They said, 'Oh, no, Paul's sitting up in bed having breakfast.' That was the warning, but he took the warning and had all of his affairs in order. A great man; a great life.

Cooney, Mr Bernard Cornelius 'Barney'

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11:50): What a sad day, to have to speak about the lives of two such great parliamentarians and great Australians. I rise to speak about former senator Barney Cooney. He really was one of the great men of the Australian Labor Party.

We've been talking about Paul Neville. Barney Cooney, like Paul, was absolutely, thoroughly decent, hardworking, principled, with wonderful values, and respected across the parliament. He was one of the greats. He was a natural senator. He was absolutely across the

detail of any legislation. He dealt with it calmly, methodically and in a collegiate way; that's one of the reasons he was so well respected by people on the other side of the parliament. He was kind and he was warm. I first knew him when I was a staffer working for former senator Bruce Childs. After I was elected to the parliament, the way that he treated me didn't change at all. He treated every person he encountered in a respectful way, with kindness and consideration.

His Labor values were formed by his Catholic faith, his commitment to social justice and his work in the legal profession—mostly around industrial relations and workers' compensation law. You could tell by the issues that he chose to champion throughout his time here as a senator how important he thought individual rights and liberties were as well. He was always so concerned to ensure that laws didn't intrude on people's lives any more than they needed to.

His role in the Victorian Labor Party was particularly important because he was one of that generation who really had to work very hard to heal the split in the Victorian Labor Party and in the Labor Party more generally. He, with John Button, John Cain and Michael Duffy, really helped to modernise the Victorian Labor Party as well. It was his work in healing the rifts and modernising the Labor Party that allowed the state electoral victories that followed in Victoria and the contributions that the Victorian members of parliament who were elected to the federal parliament were able to make to subsequent federal Labor victories as well.

Barney was born into an Irish Catholic family in Tasmania in 1934. He spent most of his early life in the Mallee region of Victoria, at the tail end of the Depression. He spoke often about his earliest memories of working men, many of them returned soldiers from the First World War, going door-to-door in regional Victoria, knocking on doors and asking for food. He told the story of his mother never refusing a meal, never refusing to provide food for the people who knocked on the door, and of how very important it was to see that example of her grace and her generosity in the way that she treated the people who were asking for help. That kindness and that courteousness informed his entire subsequent life and the way that he dealt with people not just in this place but in his professional life as well.

Barney studied at St Kevin's Christian Brothers School in Toorak in Melbourne and then won a Commonwealth scholarship to study arts and law at the University of Melbourne. He was called to the bar in 1961 and he remained enrolled at the bar for the rest of his working life, including the time that he was here in the parliament, in the Senate. For more than 20 years, most of his legal work was, as I said, in industrial law and in workers compensation law, in personal injury cases.

It was through that work and at that time when he met his wonderful wife, Lillian, who was also a lawyer. He married Lillian and they went on to have five children. In 1980 Barney Cooney chaired an inquiry into Victorian workers' compensation, which resulted in the development of the modern WorkCover system. He was elected a Labor senator for Victoria in 1984 at the age of 50 and he served for 17 years, retiring in 2002.

As I said, I first knew Barney when he was a senator and I was a staffer, but I did serve with him for several years after I was elected as well. He and his generation were wonderful role models in the way they conducted themselves—in some ways, I would say, old fashioned in their courtesy—in the Senate and in the parliament. When he left the Senate, those who served at the same time from other political parties spoke at his valedictory in the most

glowing terms. I encourage members to read the beautiful piece that former Senator Amanda Vanstone wrote about Barney Cooney in the Fairfax papers this week. She described a parliamentarian who was decent, hardworking and committed, respected by senators and staff alike. Amanda also described how Barney was often deployed by the Labor whips when they were in a tight spot.

I remember this myself. He could speak on any piece of legislation. If there was ever a time when we needed to talk for another half an hour or an hour, you could absolutely rely on Barney Cooney, first of all, to be across the detail and to be able to speak convincingly, thoughtfully and intelligently about the legislation that was before the Senate. You could absolutely count on Barney Cooney to be reliable, to be there when he was needed by his party and by his colleagues.

He was a very thoughtful but very strong advocate for a number of issues that he cared about passionately. It didn't matter whether those issues were popular; he spoke up on very many unpopular issues as well, on things that motivated him. It didn't matter whether he was criticising the other side or his own side; he was a very articulate critic of some of our own policies as well.

Barney never served as a minister—although I think many would say that he should have—but, over 17 years, he became the master of the Senate committee system, chairing seven standing committees. He was best known for the work that he did as the chair of the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills. He took the role of that committee very seriously indeed. The role of the committee is to guard against legislation which would trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties. He was absolutely determined that the laws that we passed in this place would improve people's lives, not be a burden on their lives. He very strongly argued against the Labor proposal, in 1987, to introduce an Australia Card. It was a very fiery caucus meeting in which Barney Cooney spoke against his own party's proposition at that time.

Later in his career he was deeply concerned about, and a very articulate critic of, the Howard government's approach to asylum seekers and terrorism measures. His critique said that those measures were eroding human rights and setting the course for the further erosion of human rights as legislation continued to be updated. At his retirement, senators from all sides rose to thank him for his grace and for his commitment to our democracy. After politics, despite his illness, he continued to actively participate in the Labor Party, regularly attending branch meetings in Melbourne. He continued as a member of the Trades Hall Council's Literary Institute committee of management. On behalf of our Labor family, I send my deepest sympathies to his family—his wife, Lillian, his children and grandchildren. He truly was a great man, and we will miss him deeply.

Mr JOYCE (New England) (11:59): Prior to starting here in politics, I came down to Canberra—Ron Boswell invited me down. Part of the induction process was going to a place that I don't think anybody frequents anymore, called Holy Grail. Whilst at Holy Grail—before the age of mobile phones—there was a whole retinue of politicians from both sides; it was a sort of default club for people who were in politics. There was a gentleman waiting at the bar and I noticed he had the same name as me, 'Barney'. So I ended up—probably towards the end of the night, to be quite frank—having a discussion with him. That was Barney Cooney.

Being a complete novice to politics, I broke into song about the virtues of the National Party and the deficiencies of the Labor Party, and Barney listened to me reluctantly and let me run out of air, then said to me: 'I'm going to give you a little bit of advice. A person who has been in the Labor Party for, whatever it is, 30 years, is not going to change his views about the party he is a member of because some idiot has just cornered him at the bar.' He said, 'You're about to start your political career?' I said yes. He said: 'I'm going to give you some advice. You should work very closely with someone who has earned his stripes and is a great member of your party, and that is Ron Boswell. You should be taking advice from him and not thinking you have all the answers yourself. You should follow his lead and take instruction from him as much as possible. That would be a smart political move for you.' That brief meeting with that individual has stuck with me all through my time in politics. Once more, vale Barney Cooney. It says something about any person if they can talk to you for approximately 45 seconds of your life and what they say sticks with you forever.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (12:02): My admiration and deep respect for Senator Barney Cooney is immeasurable and I send my condolences to his family and friends. While I stand here with a deep sense of sadness, it is, however, Barney's contribution to Australian politics, his sharpened instinct for social justice and the generous guidance that he afforded me and so many others that stands out.

Barney arrived in this place with a resolute determination to ensure that the parliament delivered good government to the people of Australia. He understood that improving the integrity of our institutions through the parliamentary committee system was one very good way to make this happen. In fact, Barney spent most of his energy and resources as a senator of some 17 years in this place in the committee system. He chaired many committees and was steadfast in his view that the community was entitled to expect the best from the committee system. Barney always held that the Senate's committees played an important role in our government and he took seriously his responsibility to use that system to produce far-reaching improvements for all Australians. Barney once said, 'A true conscience is a reliable guide in reaching the right conclusion.' This, of course, was just common sense to Barney.

Long after Barney's departure from parliament, he did not rest. I point to his 2010 submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee of the Senate, in which he eloquently reframed a challenging legislative debate into a simple statement about values and what really matters: 'Legislation should be examined in the light of what is fair.' In a separate submission, to the Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills in 2010 about its future direction, Barney noted, 'My submission is aimed at making a great committee even better.' These statements, founded on values of fairness and working for the common good, sum up Barney's values and his time in parliament working for what is right and what is fair for the people of Australia. Barney exemplified Labor values and traditions. His open-hearted approach, buttressed by what might be described as a bolshie determination to achieve his goals, was irresistible and he brought out the best in all of us.

Barney was also a tremendous inspiration to me and helped shape the kind of parliamentarian that I hope I am. I thank him for that guidance. He encouraged me to seek preselection more than once and to keep chasing my goal of becoming a member of this parliament. He showed me how this place can make lasting change for the good in our Australian community. I recall particularly Barney's unceasing background work on the need

to develop protections for whistleblowers. It was work that he had advanced while in the Senate and which, regrettably, had not manifested in legislation by the time he left the parliament.

He would often call me to let me know that I needed to get on with it, but his language was more colourful than what I've just suggested. He could not understand why, by 2007, when I entered this parliament, every Australian jurisdiction other than the Commonwealth had enacted whistleblower protection legislation for public servants. I did listen intently to Barney's advice. In 2008 and 2009, as the Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, I led its inquiry on whistleblower protection and, in 2009, I had the honour of tabling the report of the inquiry into whistleblowing protection within the Australian government public sector. That report built on work which Barney Cooney had commenced.

Barney's enduring influence on me did not end there. It took four more years for our Labor government to get to legislation but, as Special Minister of State, in March 2013, I was able to introduce and ensure the passage of the Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2013, which I know, because Barney called me about it, was a proud day for him. He said it had taken much too long but we had got there in the end. The bill, of course, strengthened protections for those who report wrongdoing in the public sector. I want to acknowledge Barney, not just for the help he gave me on the whistleblowing area and his encouragement generally in the work that I've been able to do in this parliament; I want to acknowledge Barney for his generous counsel and his legacy in that particular area of legislative reform.

As other speakers have said, the significance of Barney's contribution to the Australian parliament was immense; his readiness to support the most vulnerable people in our communities and his generosity were immeasurable. Barney was always ready to help, he was always welcoming and he was always there. Barney believed in a fair go and he will be greatly missed. I and the whole Labor family send our condolences to his family.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (12:08): Senator Barney Cooney and I became fast friends in the four years we served here together in the federal parliament. I would often meet him in the most unlikely place, in the gym, and I would receive long lectures and long advices about what Labor's policy ought to be. These long lectures and advices repeated what he told the caucus, being probably the most inveterate question asker in the Labor caucus between 1998 and his retirement in 2002 that I can remember. Barney lived in my electorate, in Shoobra Road in Elsternwick. His son Justin I know well, and his wife, Lillian, as well. After his retirement, we remained fast friends on the telephone and sometimes meeting for coffee.

He was, as the member for Sydney described him, a very kind, warm person, with never a nasty word, even if you had political disagreements. I think the story that Amanda Vanstone told in the Fairfax press in an obituary for him was very typical of the kind of gentle but persistent Melbourne barrister that he was. There was a committee where the Law Society appeared. He gently got them to commit themselves to how great they were and their commitments to this and that. He had a witness who he saw sitting at the back of the room who had been badly treated by them. After drawing them out fully, as a smart barrister would, he then got this witness to come up to the head table and asked them questions about what they'd really done to her. It was very, very effective, and it obviously impressed former Attorney-General Vanstone very much.

The commonality that Barney and I had was a very strong commitment to international human rights. The more I pushed that, the more he liked it. As I said, we became close friends. He was a strong supporter. I was very grateful for his advice. I was grateful for, as the member for Isaacs said, his counsel—his wisdom, his knowledge and, sometimes, his attempts to redirect you away from a certain course towards another in order to achieve the same end in a different way.

I will greatly miss him. I pass on to his family the condolences of my wife, Amanda Mendes da Costa, who served at the bar with Barney and also had great affection for him. Barney was a great Labor senator, a person who, as the member for Isaacs said, used the committee system in a way that few of the very ambitious people who aspire only to be ministers in this place ever understand. You can achieve things, as he did, through the parliamentary system, through the committee system. It's slower and it's more grinding, and you need to be persistent, as Barney was. But you can achieve things. He's a perfect example of a great senator, a great parliamentarian, who managed to achieve change for the better in Australia by using the system that he knew and that he'd perfected through his experience as a great Melbourne barrister.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Black Saturday Bushfires: 10th Anniversary

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (12:12): Like many regional Victorian MPs in this place, I spent last weekend at events with my local community, recognising and remembering Black Saturday 10 years on. I want to start by saying that many across central Victoria do really acknowledge that we were quite lucky on this day: we did not suffer anywhere near as much devastation as other areas in regional Victoria. Across Victoria, 170 people lost their lives. Tragically, one person in Bendigo also lost his life that day. I want to reflect upon his family's journey since that day. Livestock were killed, thousands of homes were destroyed, entire communities were devastated and more than 400,000 hectares were burnt. It was our darkest day in the state of Victoria. It was a day that, even 10 years on, many communities, many people and many families cannot talk about. Whilst we remember that on that day 173 people died, many others have since have lost their lives, many who could not emotionally, physically or mentally recover from the scars and the injuries that they incurred on that day.

Like many, I remember where I was on that day, 7 February 2009. We knew in advance that we would be on red alert that day, that it would be a day of extreme heat. I was working back then for United Voice in Melbourne. I was working very early in the morning—I had the night shift/morning shift—and I can remember walking out of Crown casino just after 9.30 in the morning and going, 'This is far too hot for this time of the morning.' I didn't drive back up the Calder that day. I went to stay at a friend's place because there were already warnings at that time: don't come back to the regions. Like many, I saw it unfold on the TV, watching so many of our volunteers, our emergency services, our CFA, our professional firefighters, our SES and just ordinary community members doing what they could to hold back the fire. The recovery effort post the fires is also something that I'll never forget, along with the way in which communities did try to come together to deal with the grief, to deal with the loss and to deal with the horror that they had experienced.

On Saturday, we paused for a moment at the memorial that's been established in Bendigo to reflect on our experience of Black Saturday and to remember the man who lost his life. One man lost his life. His family spoke about their journey since he passed on. Maybe it was a bittersweet moment—last Saturday was a very different day than Black Saturday—but, just as Mr Kane's sister stood to speak, it started raining. It was very cold. We sat there and sat through it, and the children from Specimen Hill played in the rain. We had the minstrel singers from Our Place, who were established in terms of recovery after the bushfires, singing through the rain with their CFA umbrellas. Yet there was that sense amongst all of us, as the CEO reflected on that day, that it's nothing for us to sit through some rain if we reflect upon what people experienced on that day.

Bendigo also lost 75 homes, and 115 outbuildings were destroyed by fire. That was a fire that started at 4 pm in Maiden Gully. It made its way through our suburbs towards our city centre. Our fire crews had been prepared for the worst and, in severe heat and wind, had pushed back as much of the fire as they could. It was a day when professional firefighters and volunteer firefighters really came together to fight the fire. On that day, more than 50 people sought refuge in the emergency response centre at Kangaroo Flat. Many others stayed with friends and family. Maiden Gully is a part of Bendigo. It's all interconnected. You don't want to think about what could have happened to the rest of our town if the fire had not been stopped at Maiden Gully.

It wasn't just Bendigo that was affected. More than 3,000 volunteer firefighters and community members, with 46 trucks, three bulldozers, four graders and six aircraft, battled to contain the blaze at Redesdale. Redesdale sits in between Kyneton and Heathcote. It has a community that is strong and that is aware of fire—it comes quite often. The Redesdale community fought really hard to ensure that their town was as safe as possible.

I should also note that, in February 2010, two teenagers were charged with lighting the devastating Bendigo fire. We should acknowledge the work and effort undertaken by our police and our authorities to pursue those who started these fires that caused so much damage. Not all of the fires were acts of man; some of them were started by accident; some of them were started by nature through lightning strikes and so on and so forth—although there wasn't any real lightning on that day, but it has happened in other areas.

Ten years on, what I think all regional members really reflect upon is the recovery effort and the efforts of our community to deal with their grief and move forward. It's fair to say that a number of people in Bendigo have what we call 'survivor's guilt', in that we were nowhere near as badly affected as other areas. Our community was able to rally around those who lost their homes and help them rebuild. Our community rallied around the Kane family to ensure they had the support they required. But how do you really comprehend the loss of an entire community, which other areas, particularly in the electorates of McEwen and Indi, are still working through to this day?

What we know is that since then, 10 years on, we have changed the way in which we tackle bushfires. Today, the response and the modelling that have gone on since Black Saturday means that our communities have a better fighting chance—the way in which we deploy water-bombers, the way in which we get communities out as early as we can. We respond differently now to bushfires and the threat of bushfires, and we know that it is saving not only property but also lives.

I have over 60 volunteer firefighter brigades and a professional firefighting unit in my electorate of Bendigo. Every time that warning pops up on your phone or you see the signs out the front of the CFA flick from orange into red, the hairs on the back of your neck stick up and you feel a shudder down your spine, hoping nobody does anything stupid. I acknowledge the change in behaviour and culture we've had across the region since Black Saturday. People have changed how they work. The moment they see that it's a red day or an extreme weather day, people don't work in those industries that could spark a fire. People are really conscious of what they do on those days. Our trains slow down deliberately to ensure that there is no adverse spark. Our mechanics change what they do. We don't work on our farms. Our farmers change what they might have otherwise done on that day. There has been a real change in culture, with every individual taking responsibility for what they do on code red days so a fire can't be started.

In closing, I acknowledge the Caine family—their loss, how they're going on their journey, their path to recovery—acknowledge all the people who did lose their homes in the Bendigo electorate, acknowledge all of the volunteers and their countless hours in fighting the fires and in the recovery and, like all the people here today, acknowledge how our nation came together to support those people when they were most in need.

Mr ROB MITCHELL (McEwen) (12:22): At 11.47 am, 7 February 2009, our world, our communities, changed forever. From a little strike that started on a powerline in a paddock to Australia's worst natural disaster, 173 people lost their lives and 440 were taken to hospital, and there have been many more since. After the 10 years from that day, we still fight day in, day out with the trauma from that particular time. I'm not going to go through all the stats, because we know them. Over the last 10 years we've learnt all the stats about what happened. But there are people who probably don't get the recognition they deserve. Their work and their effort is second to none. They are the 19,000 CFA volunteers who fought the fire and our DELWP firefighters who went out there and gave their all—people who were in communities day in, day out and saw the worst of it from the start.

One of those people I think of quite often is Cameron Caine, who was the policeman at Kinglake. Cameron is a good bloke. He has bad political judgement—he ran against me in 2010—but he is a good mate. I think about what he has been through and the troubles he faces even today. I particularly want to think about one person. There are many that sit under the spotlight; many just go and do their job and get on with it. Ben Hardman was the member for Seymour at that time, and nearly all of that Black Saturday fire was in his electorate. He worked tirelessly. I'm sure the member for Murray knows that Ben Hardman is a decent bloke. He just gets on with his job, but he has always been very unassuming about it. I think quite often we forget these people who just get in there and do it. I think of people like the Strathewen Bushfire Relief Company—David Brown, Malcolm Hackett and Mary Avola.

I went to the 10th anniversary at Strathewen the other night. It was just an amazing evening. A few hundred people turned up. There were some very interesting stories told from that day—where people have gone, what they've done, what they've lost. I think one of the best stories I heard was from a young fella who was one at the time. He gets up to speak and says, 'I can't really remember much about the fires,' which was understandable at one year of age, but he talked about life in Strathewen since. He was talking about how the best present he ever received was on his ninth birthday, because mum and dad bought him a jersey cow

and calf. Now he's learnt to ride the tractors through the bush and check the fences and use the bobcat. There was another young family there that had bought after the fires. The thing that came through all these stories—including from Mary Avola, who talked about the loss of her husband—was the strength and the unity that that community and the region has got since those fires went through.

I went down to Wandong, which is another place that really was the start of it. I still remember the day that it happened. I'd finished painting the engine bay on a car, as you do on a hot day, and I got a phone call saying, 'The fires are happening,' et cetera. So I flicked the radio on to 3AW—3-Always-Wrong as it's known. They reported that the town of Wandong had gone. So I rang Ben Hardman and said, 'Ben, look, I've just heard the township of Wandong has gone.' He said: 'Gee, I hope not, Robbie. I've been on the fire truck here fighting the fire at the school for the last three hours and it still looks good.' You think about that community that was getting cut off and everything put away, but people stood strong and still stand strong today—people like Karen Christensen, Allen Hall and Buffy Leadbeater. You head to Clonbinane, another little town that was heavily impacted, and you meet people like Janelle Morgan, and you just think, 'Wow, how lucky are we to have these sorts of people in our community, day in, day out?' Wherever you go across the region, you know that these communities started at 11.47 on that morning facing a new normal.

Premier Brumby was criticised by the opposition, who said that he was being melodramatic and over the top in the days leading up to that fire. Mr Brumby is owed an apology. He warned us what was going to happen and he was right. Communities paid a very heavy toll. But they've come back. The bush, like the people, has scars that will never go away and will never be healed. But they've come back bigger, better and stronger. Through every tragedy we face, there is an opportunity. The opportunity for this nation was to learn from those bushfires. Since those bushfires, people who were heavily involved at the start have been able to go on to other natural disasters and help our communities in need.

We learnt some lessons that day—some very, very important lessons. They say that the cream rises to the top; we're full of cream, because there are a lot of people who have risen to the top and shone. Some of those people today are starting to feel a bit weary of it all. It has been 10 years of hard slog, rebuilding communities, rebuilding families, growing—that sort of thing—and they're getting tired. My hope is that we can see some real action to bring in more mental health services for people. Professor Robert Gordon—if you ever get the opportunity to listen to what he's said—has been spot on, all the way through these 10 years.

I've been very lucky and blessed to be able to go through those communities. I lived in them. We were very lucky the fire didn't get to our house. It got across the road. It's fair to say the old heart rate goes up a fair bit when you watch this wave of flame come in. It was like when you go to the beach and you have those little rolling waves. That's what it was like. But then the red trucks turned up and people put the fires out, so we were lucky. Where we have been lucky is to have the strength and resilience that we've got, as people and as communities, to rebuild and to make them so much more special. We'll never forget, but we don't stand still. We don't stand still where we were. We keep going, and going forward, because that's what we have to do.

As I said, it's a new normal that we've woken up to. There's not a person in those communities now who doesn't get up in the morning when it's a hot day and the winds are

blowing and, first thing, look up in the sky. Is there smoke? What's going to happen? And you get prepared. We still don't know the full impact it has had on children. Many children have dealt with it, like adults, in different ways—some better than others. But even today there are still those who face difficulties from when they were young, and they're young adults now. When you go to the anniversary events, you get to see the people who were there day in, day out, and you see just how much our communities mean to our people. There is no normal. There is no textbook on how you deal with this. Some people go at different speeds to others. Some stay. Some move away. But, when you go to the anniversary events, they all come back together.

There is a shared bond that can never be broken. It can never be broken because of what they went through and how they reacted. You could never write a full list of all the people that did everything in those bushfires, right down to the people who just drove in to relief centres and said, 'What can I do?' From all over Australia, people came in to help our communities. These people will never forget this stuff. That's why, when there have been other disasters, our communities have rallied very quickly to help. We've gone through that and we know what it's like. As I said, 10 years on, things have changed but the new normal is here to stay. We continue to keep growing and getting on with it.

Mr DRUM (Murray—Nationals Whip) (12:32): Certainly, Black Saturday 2009 was a horrific time in Victoria's history. Prior to 2009, we were often told you had two options if fires were in your particular area: if you want to leave, leave early; if you want to stay and fight, make sure you plan well and make sure you prepare your property so that you can stay. I think the statistics are that roughly 90 per cent of people who lost their houses in fires prior to 2009 lost their houses in the 10 to 15 to 20 minutes once the fire front had gone past. The embers would slowly take hold of leaves in gutters. The embers and sparks would take a little while to actually take on and start the burning process of a house. It was a slower process after the event.

What we found out though was that some of the people who decided to stay, at Kinglake in particular, quite simply didn't have a chance. Whilst they were very well prepared, the force and the brutality of the fire front came through from Kilmore—it started at Kilmore earlier in the day—and hit the townships of Kinglake West and Kinglake in particular. The people there were extremely well prepared, with houses that were cleared, houses that were hosed down, fire pumps at the ready and a good supply of water to keep the lawns wet. Ultimately, the fire went straight through those properties. The individual anecdotal tales are horrific. The speed with which the fire moved and the winds on that day have been well reported. It was a perfect cocktail of incredibly high winds mixed with about four days in a row of incredibly high temperatures. It tended to follow the bush, the trees and the timber associated with the roadways as it found its way from Kilmore all the way over to the heavier bushland of Kinglake and Kinglake West.

As a member of the Victorian parliament at the time, I was escorted onto the mountain on the Monday. I was very conscious that there were reasons not to go up there, but there was a need, as a representative of that region, to make sure we had an understanding of the devastation. When we went up there, it was quite shocking. It was confronting. The destruction and the loss were quite startling. On that day we saw not only the physical destruction of the materials up there; we also saw that the survivors had a very distant,

faraway look in their eyes. They weren't quite sure what they had in fact lost, what they were going to be able to salvage out of the rubble and how they were going to be able to pick up the pieces and carry on. There was this very distraught, distant look in their eyes, and we weren't quite sure of how they were going to handle the oncoming days, weeks, months and years.

I think Premier Brumby and his team handled the aftermath really well. They put in place high-quality individuals as staff who were given the task of liaising with the victims, the survivors, who had a whole raft of questions about how they could clean up, what assistance they were going to get to clean up, what they could salvage, when they could get back up there on the mountain, what was available in the way of state government and local government assistance and how long they were going to be able to access the temporary accommodation which was set up at Kinglake. Many of the people were there for over 12 months, and it became its own little village over time. The survivors also wanted to know what services in relation to mental health and counselling were going to be put in place and how they were going to be accessed.

It was an incredibly dark period in Victoria's history. It was something that was totally shocking. As the member for Mitchell and the member for Bendigo quite rightly stated, it changed the way we now prepare for fires on those atrocious days when we are looking at the highest fire ratings. We no longer give people the option to prepare well and stay. The advice is quite simply: leave and leave early and make sure that your valuables are in a position where they may be able to withstand the fire. Certainly we have changed our warning system significantly, predominantly based on what happened on Black Saturday.

I am happy to make my short contribution on this. It is something that we will never forget, nor should we. We should acknowledge those people who came into the aid sphere immediately after the fires. The donations were quite significant—of clothing, bedding, mattresses. People were donating every type of appliance that they could afford to donate, because they knew that so many people were going to be in need of these household appliances. I just want to thank all of those people who did donate and the people who gave up their time to help with the distribution, to hand out some of those things and to make all of that process work over the ensuing weeks, because it did take weeks, months and years before people were able to rebuild and get back on their feet. We will never forget the contribution of those people. We will never forget the rigour and the strength shown by the survivors. We acknowledge them at the 10-year anniversary and hope that we never have to go through that again.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:39): Ten years ago I stood in the main chamber and spoke about the loss of life and the devastation caused in my electorate of Gippsland by the Black Saturday bushfires. I don't mind saying that it was the hardest speech I've ever had to give in my life. Days of listening to tearful Gippslanders—those who had survived, speaking about their narrow escapes, but also telling me about those who, tragically, had perished. It had an impact on me, as I'm sure it did on you, Deputy Speaker Vamvakinou, when you met with people in your own electorate who had been traumatised. It had an impact on local members that perhaps we didn't necessarily understand at the time. I have to say that I was relatively new to

parliament. I had been in the parliament for less than six months. It was emotional, and at times I could barely get the words out. But my speech in federal parliament was never meant to be about me. It was about the everyday heroes of Gippsland who had fought the Black Saturday bushfires and it was about how our community had rallied together in this time of extraordinary crisis. It was about the firefighters, the community volunteers, the emergency service workers—those first responders who rush into trouble while the rest of us are rushing away—the contractors who had been put in to start removing dead trees and to open up roads, and the neighbours who had placed themselves in harm's way to help their mates in a time of great need.

As we gathered in Gippsland last week on the 10th anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires, we had the smell of smoke in the air again as a very poignant reminder of how bushfires in regional Victoria are a part of summer. We remembered those who died, we remembered those whose lives had been changed forever and we remembered those who had contributed so much to our community at a time of need. We paused to give thanks to our community for being so resilient, and to the resourceful people who had the strength to get back in there and rebuild their lives.

We lost 11 people in Gippsland during the Black Saturday bushfires. The services in Gippsland last week commemorated their lives—the lives of Nathan Charles, Fred Frendo, Scott Frendo, Colin Gibson, David Gibson, Alan Jacobs, Miros Jacobs, Luke Jacobs, Annette Leatham, Gertrude Martin and Martin Schultz. These eight men and three women died in the fires across Traralgon South, Callignee, Koornalla, Hazelwood and Jeeralang. I think from time to time that those towns—Traralgon South, the tiny hamlet Callignee, Koornalla, Hazelwood and Jeeralang—are hardly household names, but they are burnt forever into the collective memory of all Gippslanders.

I actually had the chance on Saturday night to speak at a community event in Boolarra, which is another little town in my electorate that was hit by bushfires during the week before Black Saturday, which is sometimes forgotten in the whole Black Saturday conversation. The people of Boolarra suffered enormously in the week leading up to Black Saturday. Houses were destroyed and there was enormous damage to the natural environment. When I spoke at that function of about 250 people, which was pretty much the entire community of Boolarra crammed into the hall, I remembered something that Australian test cricket captain Steve Waugh had used in 2001 on the Indian tour. He apparently wrote on the whiteboard—I don't know if it's true or a myth—'Your attitude is contagious. Is yours worth catching?' Think about that. The reason Steve Waugh wrote that on the board is that Australian cricketers touring India notoriously would whinge about the food and complain about the weather and the pitch. Basically, they'd make excuses for why they couldn't possibly succeed in this hostile environment. The reason I raised that on Saturday night in Boolarra was that the local leadership in the aftermath of the bushfires in Gippsland was contagious. The attitude that people brought to the task was contagious—their determination, their enormous resilience, their willingness to give to each other in extraordinarily tough circumstances. People who had lost the lot would always find someone else who had lost more and then go to their aid. So we were blessed in many ways. I guess it's frustrating for us to sometimes wonder: what if we could harness that level of energy and effort every day, rather just in response to the disasters? But I've got to say that it was great to see it when it came to the fore in a regional Victorian

sense in my community of Gippsland during the response phase—and other members have spoken about this: the firefighters, both volunteer firefighters and the contract firefighters through the department, the police, the paramedics. Things went horribly wrong on that day. To lose 173 Victorians in one day—things went horribly wrong.

The member for Murray has just touched on the fact that we learnt a lot from that. We learnt a lot in terms of the messaging to our communities. On the days when the fire conditions are off the scale in terms of danger, we send a message out to people: 'Yes, enact your fire plan, but if a fire starts in your community you won't be able to survive. Just because you've got a well-prepared property doesn't mean you're going to be able to make it through.' That message is very strongly understood in the community now. There are days that are off the scale and you are better off just getting out of there. I think people learnt that message very strongly from Black Saturday. If there was any positive out of Black Saturday, it was that.

The response was extraordinary. Then the recovery phase, which started while the fires were still burning, was something quite amazing to watch as well—to see the volunteer effort from our Red Cross type organisations. Our local councils often come to the fore in these moments. Latrobe City Council, Wellington Shire Council and East Gippsland Shire Council staff came to the fore in establishing centres for people to sleep. People who have lost their homes need somewhere to sleep as a starting point. Some were put up in motels. Some had to sleep those first couple of nights in community facilities.

And then, as my good friend the member for Murray just commented on, in the outpouring of community support during that recovery phase, where goods were donated and cash was donated, we saw the very best of human nature in that regard. And we're seeing it again right now in relation to the Townsville floods. Ironically, when the fires were burning on Black Saturday, Queensland was underwater then as well. Queensland was flooded in 2009. So it's not unusual, unfortunately, at this time of year, for our northern friends to be underwater while Victoria, New South Wales and Tassie battle fires. But to see that recovery effort where people opened their wallets, opened their hearts and made donations to try to help those less fortunate was something that filled me with a great deal of pride.

And then there was the rebuilding phase. The only thing about the rebuilding phase that makes it possible is that people have hope for the future. They find it within themselves to have hope that they can build a better future in their community. Now, I understand that many couldn't go back. Many in my community couldn't go back to those little bush hamlets anymore. They chose not to rebuild, and they moved on with their lives. I can understand that. I don't think anyone thinks any less of them because of that. But to see those prepared to go back into their small communities to clear the house site, to then rebuild and then to watch the natural environment rebuild around them has been something that I think has filled a lot of people in our community with a great deal of joy.

This last week has been an unusual week in my community. There's been a great deal of contemplation as people have reflected on the loss, but also some level of celebration that they have been resilient and have been able to withstand this enormous event. I was in a very small part of my community on Sunday morning, in a place called the Tarra-Bulga National Park. If anyone is listening to this broadcast, I'd encourage them at any time to visit the Tarra-Bulga National Park. It's a beautiful little rainforest about 20 minutes out of the township of

Traralgon. They had a 'rhythms in the forest' concert, with local musicians performing and people from the nearby town of Balook. I think there's a total population of 12 people in Balook. All 12 of them were there. They're either in the Friends of Tarra-Bulga National Park or they form the Balook and district ratepayers association, and they put on an amazing concert in that bushland setting surrounded by the natural environment, which has been able to recover remarkably from the Black Saturday bushfires.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this 10-year anniversary of the Victorian bushfires. It wasn't only Black Saturday. There were fires leading up to that event in my community which equally had an enormous impact on our region. I mentioned it before: the level of hope and confidence in the future is what sustains these small regional towns. As I said to the people in Boolarra on Saturday night, with their positive, contagious attitudes, they're capable of achieving anything. Our little regional communities are amazing in what they do in times of trouble.

The Latrobe Valley right now faces some tough times. There have been some economic challenges around job losses associated with the Hazelwood Power Station closure. But I'm very confident that with that strong local leadership, with that same positive attitude, the people of the Latrobe Valley will go from strength to strength. We've come back from times a lot tougher than this. It gives me great pleasure to make my comments today, knowing full well that the people of Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley are amongst the most resilient and hardy people in our nation. My thoughts are with them as they deal with their own commemorations of this quite tragic event.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou) (12:48): Thank you, Minister. With the indulgence of the chamber, I'd like to associate myself with everything that's been said today and to also take the opportunity to express the grief that my community felt when it lost one of its greatest local GPs, Dr Chris Towie. I'd like to remember Chris today, knowing that our community was affected in a profound way. He was one of the 170 people who perished in the Black Saturday fires. I thank the chamber.

Sitting suspended from 12:49 to 16:01

CONDOLENCES

Cooney, Mr Bernard Cornelius 'Barney'

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:01): It was my very great pleasure to have known Barney Cooney almost all my adult life, and it is a privilege to be able to say a few words in tribute to him and to commemorate him in this place, in a building that he loved and contributed so much to. I also want to pay tribute to all of his family—his wife, Lillian, and all of their children, whom I've had a chance to encounter in various capacities. I'm sure this is a difficult time for them and I hope the words that have been spoken already about Barney will bring them some comfort and perhaps the occasional smile as well. I was particularly pleased to be here for the contribution of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Sydney, who spoke typically with charm, insight and real feeling about Barney and captured the man as I knew him too.

Barney Cooney was a barrister and, in that, made a great contribution, building on the foundations of his views and his sense of how the world should be. He had a very deep Catholic faith, married to a deep belief in social justice and a membership of the Socialist

Left—an unusual combination, in my experience, but one that characterised all of his contributions in his work and public life. As a barrister, he did much, but I think most importantly he pulled together the review that founded Victoria's no-fault workers compensation scheme, a scheme of enormous importance to millions.

Beyond his time at the bar, he was elected to Australia's Senate, where he served for 17 years. He brought to the Senate all of his personal qualities and an understanding of the importance of that chamber to this parliament and to our nation, with his passion for human rights, his love of detail and the law, and his absolute commitment not only to his values in politics but to finding ways to express them that brought people together regardless of their philosophical or ideological differences. It was always striking to me how people of diametrically opposed views could love Barney as much as those of us who were closer to him on the political spectrum. I think that's a great tribute to anyone in this place—to have those friendships and that appreciation across the aisle.

He was characterised by three qualities: generosity, decency and compassion. His decency shone through in the way he treated everyone. The member for Sydney made clear that, when she changed her status in this place from a staffer to a member of the House of Representatives, he spoke to her in exactly the same way. I think that is a beautiful shorthand for how he saw people as fundamentally equal. He was, though, deeply compassionate and always looking for those who needed help to find a voice or to find their path through life.

Most of all, I found Barney to be generous. Many of us on this side of the House, on this side of politics, talk about our commitment to collectivism; few practise it in the way that Barney Cooney did, with a profound interest in and respect for the people around them and a desire to always bring them along. I am one of many—and my great friend the member for Bruce may also touch on this—who know that the Victorian Labor Party today is a much better place for Barney Cooney's generosity. There's a generation of people in this place, and in Victoria's parliament, who are there because of his work in the seventies, with people like John Cain, to open up our party and his work through his time in formal politics and, more particularly, after it. They share the benefit of his experience, wisdom, empathy and understanding of the world as it is and his deep belief in the world as it should be.

Barney Cooney was kind enough to move my admission as a lawyer. It's pretty clear I didn't reach the heights he did in that profession. I'm reasonably confident I won't share the appreciation around the parliament that he enjoyed. It was a great honour for me to have him take that step with me in my professional career. It echoes all the steps he led me through politically. I also had the honour, briefly, of working for him. Again, he benefited much less from that arrangement than I did; I am very pleased to put that on the record. There are probably many others who would say exactly the same, the one exception being our mutual great friend, Lidia Argondizzo, former member of the Legislative Council for Victoria, who I know will be feeling his absence greatly.

So too will Lindsay Tanner, the former member for Melbourne, who shared an office and much more with Barney, going back a very long time. I'm sure that, if Lindsay was still in this place, he would be first to pay tribute to his dear friend. I know that Senator Carr, in the other place, will be feeling this deeply too, as well as the member for Bruce and the members for Jagajaga and Calwell especially. Another very close friend of mine, Jill Hennessy, the member for Altona and Victoria's Attorney-General, will be deeply affected but a great

comfort to the Cooney family. Right across the party that I love, Barney Cooney spread his love. He gave so much to so many. He continued his struggle, and his inquisitive nature, to always find a better path, right to the very end. I will cherish all the time I spent with him but think most often of the last time. Like many others, I'm sure, I wish that I'd visited him more often near the end and told him directly how much he meant to me. Vale, Barney.

Mr HILL (Bruce) (16:08): I have no great words of eloquence—having just seen that this debate was scheduled, I have had only a moment to scribble a few reflections—but I do want to do Barney and his family the honour of recording in the *Hansard* a few words of appreciation for his life and his service, knowing that these things get passed on. Having listened to the member for Scullin, I was struck by how many of the words he used are exactly the same as the notes that I scribbled; we knew the same man. It is with great sadness that those in the Labor family, and particularly those who knew Barney and worked with him in so many different phases of his life, heard of his passing. I worked casually for Barney for a short time, and I think it's fair to say that he benefited even less from my service than from yours back then, given the nature of what was going on.

As young, bright-eyed, overly active activists, we only had to meet Barney to see immediately his decency, his humanity and his extreme good manners. Barney was one of those people who would never talk over anyone. His generosity meant that he was never too busy. His door was always open. He was never too busy, no matter what he was dealing with, to have a word with young Labor people—who were trashing his office and unwashing the dishes and all the rest of it. His great compassion was overwhelmingly clear.

When I was a staffer from 1995 to 2000 in this place for Alan Griffin, Barney was always held up as the archetypal serious senator, if you like, someone who relished his role as a parliamentarian and took it very, very seriously. If you wanted a piece of policy work done and done thoroughly but understood the risk that you might not get the answer you were hoping for, because Barney would follow the evidence and apply his values to whatever came before him, then you knew to take it to Barney or one of his committees. As I think has been said by others who worked more closely with him, at times he could be frustrating, and furiously so, because of his adherence to process and his determination to follow his values and speak out, even against his own party, when he felt moved to do so.

My predecessor spoke in his valedictory of different types of people who are called to serve in this place: the parliamentarian and the politician. Some are both, and some are one or the other. I think Barney overwhelmingly was a parliamentarian, someone here for service, to legislate, to evaluate, to pass good laws and to advocate for and represent the people he felt he was here to represent.

I'll just put a personal note there that I was also very good mates with Justin Cooney, his son, at university. He is a few years older than me—although he seemed many years older than me, now I'm not so sure, as the years pass! I texted Justin when I heard of his father's passing, and he texted back not long after with a wry reflection. He knew exactly what was on my mind. He said, 'Yes, I'm just glad that he died without ever knowing what we all got up to at his beach house at Anglesea,' which he was so generous as to share with hordes of young Labor people. It was, 'Yeah, there'll only be three of us,' and 25 descended on the house. He was generous in that way.

As has been said, he brought to his role as a senator a lifetime already of service and commitment to social justice, to unions, to collectivism, to human rights and to the Labor Party. He was 50 years old when he was elected, so he was already mature in his career, and it certainly wasn't a pay rise for him. He did it out of a sense of service.

Barney also was a deeply religious man—deeply, deeply religious—and not always associated with the ratbag left wing of the Labor Party. I'm not a religious person, and at times I have worried about, if you like, the muscular religiosity in our public sphere. I don't mean people expressing their values but those taking that one step further by forcing them on others or expecting others to live by their particular set of values or beliefs. But Barney's convictions were deep and personal, probably more so than those of people who I think at times preach these things to others. His religious convictions certainly shaped his values and how he lived his life without ever preaching to others or expecting others to conform to his way of being in the world and certainly informed his Labor values.

I just want to read into the *Hansard*, in closing, from a beautiful press release—a statement, really—put out by Senator Kim Carr, his very dear friend of many years. I want to read two quotes. Firstly, on Barney's attitude to power, I'll just quote from Kim's release for the *Hansard*:

In his first speech, Barney turned Lord Acton's famous dictum "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" on its head: if power corrupts, he said, "lack of power corrodes absolutely". Those in Australia who lacked power "to give at least minimum expression to their needs" included indigenous people, the unemployed and non-English-speaking migrants, especially women. "The more they can be effectively equipped with power", Barney said, "the more likely it is that their social distress will be abated and the community as a whole benefit".

From that fundamental belief, he never wavered in his 17 years of service in the Senate, which he was called to, he felt, as 'the chamber best equipped to check abuses of power'.

I'm told that those of his colleagues, Labor, Liberal or otherwise, who came before his committees always knew that he had a set of values that were applied ruthlessly and consistently to legislation before him. But—to close—Barney was also held up on both sides of the chamber because of his courtesy, which he displayed when expressing his own views and responding to criticism. He wrote:

Courtesy and grace are forever needed in debate. A civil society cannot be at its best unless constituents treat each other civilly.

In remembering Barney for his love of life, his love of family, his love of Labor and, indeed, his love of humanity, I'll forever remember those twinkling eyes that he had when he sat down to listen to whatever mad scheme or idea you'd come up with, as he did so patiently and graciously. Vale, Barney.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Black Saturday Bushfires: 10th Anniversary

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:15): I just want to say a few brief words on this important commemorative debate. As this parliamentary year commenced, it was striking that we heard excellent speeches, in particular from both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, about current natural disasters in Australia as we also reflected on the 10th

anniversary of one of the worst natural disasters that's ever befallen our country—one which is so vivid in the minds of people from Victoria.

Black Saturday's bushfires very significantly impacted the whole Victorian state, either directly or through our concern for our fellow Victorians, and impacted on parts of the electorate of Scullin. In recent days there have been affecting commemorative events in both the shire of Nillumbik and the City of Whittlesea. I know that this has been a difficult experience for many of those affected, for their relatives and for those who care about them, but it has also, I hope, been an important moment for the whole community to reflect on the tragedy that happened, our shared endeavour to respond and the manner in which we did so. It's something I'm very proud of as a Victorian. I was proud then; I am now, 10 years later.

I'm thinking of colleagues as well. The fires in Scullin and around Scullin greatly impacted the local community, including the local Labor family; we are in mourning for that. Greater impact was felt in the areas represented by my friend the member for McEwen. My thoughts are with him and also with the state member for Yan Yean, Danielle Green, who did so much as a CFA volunteer and a local representative through very difficult times and helped so many through the recovery process, which still continues in too many cases.

There are just two points I want to make in participating briefly in this debate, to make clear, as the member for Scullin, that I am thinking of those events of 10 years ago: I'm thinking of the courage, generosity and decency displayed by Victorians and people from right around the country who reached out at that time; and I'm thinking not only of all those who lost their lives but also of those whose lives continue to be scarred today and who need to be supported, particularly on this difficult anniversary.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (16:18): by leave—I move:

That order of the day No. 1, committee and delegation business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs

Report

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House take note of the report.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (16:19): In February 2017 I seconded the member for Kennedy's private member's bill to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and their customers from cheap fake Indigenous art and craft flooding Australian souvenir shops. I must acknowledge and commend the member for Kennedy on his work in this space. He really has been an excellent advocate for Indigenous Australians getting a fair deal for their unique cultural and intellectual property. As a result of the member for Kennedy's advocacy, the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs has undertaken this fine body of work on inauthentic Indigenous art and its impact. It is widely appreciated by those involved with

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art that we have a problem with inauthentic Indigenous art in Australia and we need an urgent solution.

I support the recommendations of the committee and seek to strongly urge this government—and any government elected to this place, following it—to act on those recommendations. In particular, I wish to draw attention to recommendation 8, which concludes that standalone legislation is required to protect Indigenous cultural intellectual property, including traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. Work on this legislation and public consultation needs to start urgently, as cheap, fake imports should not be allowed to continue to undermine the livelihoods of Indigenous artists.

In closing, I thank the committee and its secretariat for their work and I thank the member for Kennedy for his advocacy. I urge the government to act upon the report and its recommendations, especially the urgent introduction of legislation to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from cheap, fake imports.

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (16:21): It really is my pleasure to speak to the *Report on the impact of inauthentic art and craft in the style of First Nations peoples*. I was on this committee. I joined the inquiry when it was partway through its work. I thank all of the committee for their involvement and those that travelled far and wide across the various Indigenous art centres and Indigenous art fairs in this nation to take the parliament to places around the country and meet with people who wouldn't normally get to speak with their elected representatives on such an important matter to the artists concerned.

I particularly want to thank the chair, Ann Sudmalis, the member for Gilmore, who concluded this report, along with the deputy chair, Warren Snowdon, the member for Lingiari, my colleague Sharon Claydon, the member for Newcastle, and all the other MPs who participated actively in this inquiry. I'd also like to thank the secretariat for their great work—it was a challenging inquiry, going around the country, as it did, to many remote areas—and also the Hansard operators, who really did have some challenges on their hands in various parts of the country. It was hot work at times for the Hansard operators, under some interesting conditions. I thank you all for your support of the committee and the work that it carried out.

It was a remarkable experience to be part of this inquiry. The statements of the people we got to meet and hear from were very moving. Hearing what their art and cultural expression mean to them was very enlightening. I was only elected just over two years ago, but it's a remarkable experience as a parliamentarian to go and meet people in their own lands and hear about things that matter most to them. In this case, it was about the dignity of their art and how they are seeing it become terribly undignified by the proliferation of fake, cheap imitations of the expression of a culture that is 65,000 years old.

Anyone who knows the souvenir stalls that are on many main streets around certain parts of the country knows that some are trying to do the right thing and get authentic art on the shelves for tourists, but there are other areas where it feels like an insurmountable task to try to address it. And these are in very popular tourist destinations such as Cairns, Darwin and Fremantle and in airports all around the country. The abundance of imitation art, which really harms the culture of First Nations people, has to be seen to be believed. As parliamentarians, we all pass through airports and see this work. I now have my eyes open to just how prolific it is and the fact that something needs to happen to stem its tide.

I totally agree with the chair, the member for Gilmore, when she says in the foreword to this report:

This unacceptable misappropriation of First Nations cultures cannot be allowed to continue unchecked. These imitation products exist solely to make money. They demean the rich and ancient history of Australia's Indigenous peoples. These items have a profound and harmful effect on First Nations peoples. They do not teach or inform the buyer about Indigenous heritage as they have no connection to it. Beyond the immediate consequences mentioned above, this situation has a negative impact on Australia's image abroad.

I'd like to reflect on our image abroad in respect to Indigenous art. It was a matter that came up in the inquiry. In fact, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade put in a submission and appeared before the inquiry. In their submission they highlighted that First Nations cultures need to be recognised as a part of Australia's collective identity and nationhood. They also stated in their submission:

Australian Indigenous art is unique, world-recognised and one of our greatest public diplomacy resources.

This is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the high regard that it holds First Nations art in.

In their submission, Regional Arts Australia put forward this statement:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art industry is an important Australian industry. It is unique in the world. It is acclaimed throughout the world. It enhances Australia's national identity and national reputation. It is a source of belief and pride for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It provides substantial economic benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

How damaging therefore, to our nation, to the regions and to the artists on which this unique industry is founded, that there are ongoing and unresolved allegations about fake art, misleading and deceptive conduct and market manipulation.

Now, some people might not be aware, or might take for granted, how significant Indigenous Australian artworks are around the world. Many people in this place and lots of Australians have been to the Eiffel Tower in Paris. If they go to one of the higher levels, they're able to look down and see the roof of the Musee du Quai Branly. On the rooftop there is a work of Lena Nyadbi of the Kija people. Her painting *Dayiwul Lirlmim* shows the barramundi scales reimagined on the roof of this very important museum in the heart of Paris. On the banks of the River Seine the world sees the dreaming of Dayiwul country in the vast Kimberley. This is a remarkable thing to happen in this world, where a woman from the Kimberley can produce art that is reproduced in the heart of Paris for all of the world to see. This is how Australian First Nations art is seen around the world.

One of the world's most famous artists, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, has been compared with Claude Monet, Henri Matisse and Jackson Pollock. She was born in 1910 in the desert area north-east of Alice Springs, the area we know as Utopia. In her obituary that was published in London's *Independent* in 1996, it was said that Emily:

... carried aboriginal art beyond the limited sphere of ethnographic curiosity into the broad stream of contemporary culture.

These examples—and there are many more; some more contemporary than Emily—contribute to the arts and culture of this world and to a greater understanding of our humanity. It being the oldest culture on the face of the work, we cannot underestimate the importance of

First Nations art and its cultural expression to global heritage. It deserves and needs the protection that we as parliamentarians can provide. To protect and preserve First Nations art—the art and cultural expression that sustains the people who create it—is a great advantage to our nation as a whole.

For those who didn't see the *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* exhibition at the National Museum last year, it captured the Dreaming of our Indigenous sisters and brothers, a Dreaming that came into being in their history and their minds long before the Greek civilisation was even considered. We need to think about time differently when we think of our First Nations community and the art that they produce, because they were producing art long before the ancient civilisations that we seem to sometimes have a much higher regard for. If we can protect the treasures of ancient Greek society, we should probably think more about how we can protect the treasures of our First Nations society right here in Australia.

There are a couple of recommendations in the report and a couple of things to highlight. Properly funding the Indigenous Art Code is very important. There's only one full-time staff member trying to do everything to protect a pretty remarkable body of art around the country, and we need to think about how that can be bolstered further.

The prospect or the idea of a national Indigenous arts and culture authority is one I hope we will get to explore further in the next parliament. It is probably too late for this one but, whatever the next parliament is made up of, I hope the government of the day considers this. Recommendation 8 of the report suggested there is—and I highly support this—a need to have a look at how our intellectual property system can create new laws to protect what is a unique area of cultural expression and art in this world and not try to contain the protection of First Nations Indigenous art within the existing copyright system. New intellectual property laws would be a great endeavour. It would be a great endeavour to protect what is a great endeavour itself: First Nations art. It is not beyond our wit. We have seen many other nations seek to protect their treasured things, like Champagne in France, of course. I don't think it is beyond the wit of Australians to protect the great cultural heritage of our First Nations peoples.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (16:31): It is with great pleasure that I rise after my colleagues to speak on this report on the impact of inauthentic art and craft in the style of First Nations people today. This report has been worked over for a couple of years, actually, by a range of committee members, but I have had the honour of being there throughout the course of the inquiry. I really want to thank my Labor colleagues—in particular, the deputy chair, Warren Snowdon, the member for Lingiari; my colleague and friend Madeleine King, member for Brand, who just spoke before me; and, of course, the chair, the member for Gilmore, who, when she was available, played a very active role at that time.

It was a really remarkable inquiry in many ways. In order to understand some of the context, we perhaps need to acknowledge the very strong community based campaign that was run. It was perhaps initially kickstarted by the Indigenous Art Code and the Fake Art Harms Culture campaign. It was a very strong community based campaign. It really highlighted the essence of the need for the inquiry. I'd like to start with a quote from Ms Marjorie Williams from Tangentyere Artists in Alice Springs. She tried to convey to the committee, as did so many artists, what that lived experience of the impact of inauthentic art was like. I quote Ms Williams:

When I see fake art I get a really bad feeling. How can they steal our culture and our style, which we learned from our elders? After many years of practising, we paint our Dreaming of our country. The river runs through and every land has Dreaming. Each Dreaming belongs to the people of that land. It's what we are. Fake art is destroying our identity and what we are. We are First Nations people and our arts and story must be protected for only us to share with our kids and the wider world.

I hope that goes some way to conveying what we're really talking about here. The flooding of the market with inauthentic art is not just a nuisance for people; it's not just flooding our souvenir stores with inappropriate product. It actually has a profoundly hurtful impact for First Nations people. We need to keep that front and centre when we read this report and when we think about the recommendations that are put here. Hopefully, if that is kept front and centre, there will be really good responses from government as a result of this inquiry. But we can never lose sight of the profoundly hurtful effect on First Nations peoples and their cultures of the denigration of the imagery, which, of course, has great cultural significance for First Nations peoples. So this is not just an inquiry about inauthentic art; it actually goes to the very core issues of identity and culture.

I also highlight the very significant economic impact that this has had for First Nations communities. It is deeply regrettable that one of the issues we discovered in the course of this inquiry is that there isn't any robust or accurate data around the size of markets and what the economic loss to First Nations communities might be through the flooding of markets with inauthentic product. We as policymakers certainly need to address that. There is a very good recommendation in the report that goes some way to ensuring that there is appropriate data in the future that would be made available so that we've got much stronger guidance for how we might implement some of these recommendations.

When you consider that First Nations peoples are among the most economically disadvantaged peoples in Australia, their lives and their communities could be transformed by earning a very sustainable living from their own culture. Indigenous art centres across Australia, many of which gave terrific evidence to the inquiry, are very, very responsive to the need to maintain some cultural integrity but also address the economic needs of people in those communities. There is an excellent recommendation in the report that goes to recognising the art centres and the role they play in providing safe places for people to work in, in the marketing of art and in giving sound advice around measures to best protect intellectual property within the constrained environment of the existing laws. As I said, the art centres certainly gave a lot of terrific evidence. It was quite clear, throughout the course of the inquiry, that really much of the problem is not at the high-end fine arts market—which is predominantly governed by the art centres, notwithstanding a few independent artists in that market—but at the lower end souvenir range, where there has been cultural theft. I don't think we should sugar-coat in any way the fact that it is a source of cultural theft.

We also took some very disturbing evidence around what is colloquially known as carpet bagging, which has happened in that higher end of the market too. It is just obscene that in Australia in 2019 there are people perhaps working against their will or having their artwork stolen in a number of different ways. That is an issue that every government should take very, very seriously. As I said, we took some very disturbing evidence around that issue, and I certainly expect that there will be ongoing inquiries in that regard.

But I would like to support my colleague the member for Brand and her calls just a moment ago for us to take a really serious look at the adequacy or otherwise of the existing intellectual property rights in Australia. Terri Janke, an Indigenous woman who has worked in this legal space for decades now, has written extensively in this area. She gave us for consideration a very good proposal around a national Indigenous art and cultural authority. I think she was not alone in giving that evidence. I think it is very worthy for the parliament to look seriously at that. It shouldn't be as difficult a job as it may be to make our intellectual property laws accommodate different sorts of concepts of ownership. To be able to consider the concept of collective communal ownership should not be beyond our wit.

We know that other nations have struggled with these questions, and there is no reason that Australia should not in fact be leading the world in terms of strong commitments around protection of intellectual and property rights for First Nations peoples.

I do hope that government, whoever that might be, takes seriously the recommendations in this report. There are certainly a large number of Indigenous artist communities and organisations out there relying on us to do a better job. The Indigenous Art Code absolutely needs to be adequately funded in order to do the task that it has been set. It is not just a matter of funding, though. It is a matter of deep commitment from policymakers in this nation to change laws that do not adequately account for First Nations cultures and communities.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (16:41): I move:

That the debate be adjourned and the resumption of the debate be made an order of the day for the next meeting.

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (16:41): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 16:42