



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SENATE

Hansard

THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2025

CORRECTIONS

This is a **PROOF ISSUE**. Senators may suggest corrections to their own speeches within 15 non-sitting days by contacting the Hansard office

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

PROOF

**FORTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

Governor-General

Her Excellency the Hon. Samantha Joy Mostyn AC

Senate Office Holders

President—Senator the Hon. Sue Lines

Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Slade Brockman

Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Claire Chandler, Raff Ciccone,
the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Dorinda Cox, Varun Ghosh, Karen Grogan,
Steph Hodgins-May, Maria Kovacic, Deborah O'Neill, Matt O'Sullivan,
Helen Polley, Dave Sharma, Marielle Smith and Glenn Sterle

Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Penny Wong

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Don Farrell

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston

Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher

Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm

Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Paul Scarr

Senate Party Leaders and Whips

Leader of the Labor Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Penny Wong

Deputy Leader of the Labor Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Don Farrell

Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash

Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston

Leader of the Nationals in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie

Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate—Senator Susan McDonald

Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Larissa Waters

Chief Government Whip—Senator Tony Sheldon

Deputy Government Whips—Senators Karen Grogan and Lisa Darmanin

Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Wendy Askew

Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Leah Blyth and Jessica Collins

The Nationals Whip—Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan

Australian Greens Whip—Senator Nick McKim

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Members of the Senate

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Allman-Payne, Penny Jane	Qld	30.6.2028	AG
Ananda-Rajah, Michelle	Vic.	30.6.2031	ALP
Antic, Alexander (Alex)	SA	30.6.2031	LP
Askew, Wendy	Tas.	30.6.2028	LP
Ayres, Hon. Timothy (Tim)	NSW	30.6.2031	ALP
Babet, Ralph Didier	Vic.	30.6.2028	UAP
Blyth, Leah ⁽⁴⁾	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Bragg, Andrew James	NSW	30.6.2031	LP
Brockman, William Edward (Slade)	WA	30.6.2031	LP
Brown, Hon. Carol Louise	Tas.	30.6.2031	ALP
Cadell, Ross Philip	NSW	30.6.2028	NATS
Canavan, Hon. Matthew James	Qld	30.6.2028	NATS
Cash, Hon. Michaelia Clare	WA	30.6.2028	LP
Chandler, Claire	Tas.	30.6.2031	LP
Chisholm, Hon. Anthony David	Qld	30.6.2028	ALP
Ciccione, Raffaele (Raff)	Vic.	30.6.2031	ALP
Colbeck, Hon. Richard Mansell	Tas.	30.6.2031	LP
Collins, Jessica	NSW	30.6.2031	LP
Cox, Dorinda	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
Darmanin, Lisa ⁽³⁾	Vic.	30.6.2028	ALP
Dolega, Josh ⁽⁵⁾	Tas.	30.6.2028	ALP
Dowling, Richard	Tas.	30.6.2031	ALP
Duniam, Hon. Jonathon Roy	Tas.	30.6.2028	LP
Farrell, Hon. Donald Edward (Don)	SA	30.6.2028	ALP
Faruqi, Mehreen	NSW	30.6.2031	AG
Gallagher, Hon. Katherine Ruth (Katy)	ACT		ALP
Ghosh, Varun	WA	30.6.2031	ALP
Green, Hon. Nita Louise	Qld	30.6.2031	ALP
Grogan, Karen	SA	30.6.2031	ALP
Hanson, Pauline Lee	Qld	30.6.2028	PHON
Hanson-Young, Sarah Coral	SA	30.6.2031	AG
Henderson, Hon. Sarah Moya	Vic.	30.6.2028	LP
Hodgins-May, Steph	Vic.	30.6.2031	AG
Hume, Hon. Jane	Vic.	30.6.2031	LP
Kovacic, Maria ⁽¹⁾	NSW	30.6.2028	LP
Lambie, Jacqui	Tas.	30.6.2031	JLN
Liddle, Kerryanne Jeanette	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Lines, Hon. Susan (Sue)	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
McAllister, Hon. Jennifer Ryll (Jenny)	NSW	30.6.2028	ALP
McCarthy, Hon. Malarndirri	NT		ALP
McDonald, Susan Eileen	Qld	30.6.2031	LNP
McGrath, Hon. James Anthony	Qld	30.6.2028	LNP
McKenzie, Hon. Bridget Grace	Vic.	30.6.2028	NATS
McKim, Nicholas James (Nick)	Tas.	30.6.2031	AG
McLachlan, Andrew Lockhart, CSC	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Mulholland, Corinne	Qld	30.6.2031	ALP
Nampijinpa Price, Jacinta Suzette	NT		CLP
O'Neill, Deborah Mary	NSW	30.6.2028	ALP
O'Sullivan, Matthew Anthony (Matt)	WA	30.6.2031	LP
Paterson, James William	Vic.	30.6.2031	LP
Payman, Fatima	WA	30.6.2028	AV

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Pocock, Barbara	SA	30.6.2028	AG
Pocock, David Willmer	ACT		IND
Polley, Helen	Tas.	30.6.2028	ALP
Roberts, Malcolm Ieuan	Qld	30.6.2031	PHON
Ruston, Hon. Anne	SA	30.6.2031	LP
Scarr, Paul Martin	Qld	30.6.2031	LP
Sharma, Devanand Noel (Dave) ⁽²⁾	NSW	30.6.2028	LP
Sheldon, Anthony Vincent (Tony)	NSW	30.6.2031	ALP
Shoebridge, David Martin	NSW	30.6.2028	AG
Smith, Dean Anthony	WA	30.6.2028	LP
Smith, Marielle Feuerherdt	SA	30.6.2031	ALP
<i>Vacancy</i>	NSW	30.6.2031	PHON
Steele-John, Jordon Alexander	WA	30.6.2031	AG
Sterle, Glenn	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
Stewart, Jana Naretha Anne	Vic.	30.6.2028	ALP
Thorpe, Lidia Alma	Vic.	30.6.2028	IND
Tyrrell, Tammy Marie	Tas.	30.6.2028	IND
Walker, Charlotte	SA	30.6.2031	ALP
Walsh, Hon. Jess Cecille	Vic.	30.6.2031	ALP
Waters, Larissa Joy	Qld	30.6.2031	AG
Watt, Hon. Murray Patrick	Qld	30.6.2028	ALP
Whish-Wilson, Peter Stuart	Tas.	30.6.2028	AG
Whiteaker, Ellie	WA	30.6.2031	ALP
Whitten, Tyron	WA	30.6.2031	PHON
Wong, Hon. Penny	SA	30.6.2028	ALP

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

Territory	Senator	Party	Senator	Party
Australian Capital Territory	Gallagher, KR	ALP	Pocock, DW	IND
Northern Territory	McCarthy, M	ALP	Nampijinpa Price, JS	CLP

⁽¹⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice J. Molan), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution

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

⁽³⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of Victoria to fill a casual vacancy (vice L. White), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution

⁽⁴⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice S. Birmingham), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution

⁽⁵⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy (vice A. Urquhart) pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party;

AV—Australia's Voice; CLP—Country Liberal Party; IND—Independent;

JLN—Jacqui Lambie Network; LNP—Liberal National Party of Queensland;

LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;

PHON—Pauline Hanson's One Nation; UAP—United Australia Party

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye

Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees

Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—J Hinchcliffe

Parliamentary Budget Officer—S Reinhardt

ALBANESE MINISTRY

TITLE	MINISTER
Prime Minister	The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for the Public Service	Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher
Minister for Women (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher
Minister for Indigenous Australians	Senator the Hon. Malarndirri McCarthy
<i>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>The Hon. Patrick Gorman MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for the Public Service</i>	<i>The Hon. Patrick Gorman MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Women</i>	<i>The Hon. Rebecca White MP</i>
<i>Cabinet Secretary</i>	<i>The Hon. Dr Andrew Charlton MP</i>
Minister for Defence (Deputy Prime Minister)	The Hon. Richard Marles MP
Minister for Defence Industry	The Hon. Pat Conroy MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Defence Personnel	The Hon. Matt Keogh MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>The Hon. Peter Khalil MP</i>
Minister for Foreign Affairs (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Trade and Tourism (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
Minister for Pacific Island Affairs	The Hon. Pat Conroy MP
Minister for International Development	The Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade</i>	<i>The Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Tourism</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Nita Green</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Pacific Island Affairs</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Nita Green</i>
Treasurer	The Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Minister for Housing	The Hon. Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Homelessness	The Hon. Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Cities	The Hon. Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Small Business	The Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP
Assistant Treasurer	The Hon. Dr Daniel Mulino MP
Minister for Financial Services	The Hon. Dr Daniel Mulino MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Productivity, Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>The Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>

TITLE	MINISTER
Minister for Finance	Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher
Minister for Government Services	Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher
Special Minister of State	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
Minister for Home Affairs	The Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	The Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Cyber Security (Leader of the House)	The Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP
Minister for Emergency Management	The Hon. Kristy McBain MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Immigration</i>	<i>The Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Emergency Management</i>	<i>The Hon. Josh Wilson MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Customs and Multicultural Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon. Julian Hill MP</i>
Minister for Health and Ageing	The Hon. Mark Butler MP
Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Deputy Leader of the House)	The Hon. Mark Butler MP
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	Senator the Hon. Jenny McAllister
Minister for Aged Care and Seniors	The Hon. Sam Rae MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>	<i>The Hon. Emma McBride MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health</i>	<i>The Hon. Emma McBride MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care</i>	<i>The Hon. Rebecca White MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health</i>	<i>The Hon. Rebecca White MP</i>
Minister for Climate Change and Energy	The Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for the Environment and Water	Senator the Hon. Murray Watt
<i>Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>The Hon. Josh Wilson MP</i>
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government	The Hon. Catherine King MP
Minister for Northern Australia	The Hon. Madeleine King MP
Minister for Communications	The Hon. Anika Wells MP
Minister for Sport	The Hon. Anika Wells MP
Minister for the Arts	The Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon. Kristy McBain MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Regional Development</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Northern Australia</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Nita Green</i>

TITLE	MINISTER
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Skills and Training	The Hon. Andrew Giles MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</i>	<i>The Hon. Patrick Gorman MP</i>
Minister for Education	The Hon. Jason Clare MP
Minister for Early Childhood Education	Senator the Hon. Dr Jess Walsh
Minister for Youth	Senator the Hon. Dr Jess Walsh
<i>Assistant Minister for International Education</i>	<i>The Hon. Julian Hill MP</i>
Attorney-General	The Hon. Michelle Rowland MP
Minister for Social Services	The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>The Hon. Ged Kearney MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>The Hon. Ged Kearney MP</i>
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	The Hon. Julie Collins MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm</i>
Minister for Resources	The Hon. Madeleine King MP
Minister for Industry and Innovation	Senator the Hon. Tim Ayres
Minister for Science	Senator the Hon. Tim Ayres
<i>Assistant Minister for Resources</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy</i>	<i>The Hon. Dr Andrew Charlton MP</i>
Each box represents a portfolio. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there can be two departments in one portfolio. Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type. <i>Assistant Ministers</i> in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the <i>Ministers of State Act 1952</i> .	

SHADOW MINISTRY

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
Leader of the Opposition	The Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for the Public Service	Senator James Paterson
Shadow Minister for Women	Melissa McIntosh MP
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians	Senator Kerryne Liddle
<i>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</i>	<i>Andrew Wallace MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Senator Maria Kovacic</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Women</i>	
Shadow Treasurer	Ted O'Brien MP
(Deputy Leader of the Opposition)	
Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness	Senator Andrew Bragg
Shadow Minister for Small Business	The Hon. Tim Wilson MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	Pat Conaghan MP
Shadow Minister for Financial Services	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>Senator Dave Sharma</i>
Shadow Minister for Agriculture	The Hon. David Littleproud MP
(Leader of the Nationals)	
Shadow Minister for the Environment	Angie Bell MP
Shadow Minister for Water	Senator Ross Cadell
Shadow Minister for Fisheries and Forestry	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Fisheries and Forestry</i>	<i>Senator Matt O'Sullivan</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Agriculture</i>	<i>Jamie Chaffey MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs	Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash
(Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	
Shadow Minister for Trade, Investment and Tourism	The Hon. Kevin Hogan MP
(Deputy Leader of the Nationals)	
(Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	
Shadow Minister for International Development and Pacific Island Affairs	The Hon. Jason Wood MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade</i>	<i>Senator Dean Smith</i>
Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care	Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston
Shadow Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme	
Shadow Minister for Sport	
(Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</i>	<i>Phillip Thompson OAM MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health</i>	<i>Zoe McKenzie MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Health</i>	<i>Sam Birrell MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Defence	The Hon. Angus Taylor MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. Darren Chester MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Industry	Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price
Shadow Minister for Defence Personnel	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Phillip Thompson OAM MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Finance	Senator James Paterson
Shadow Minister for Productivity and Deregulation	Senator Andrew Bragg
Shadow Special Minister of State	Senator the Hon. James McGrath

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
Shadow Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction	The Hon. Dan Tehan MP
Shadow Minister for Industry and Innovation (Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	The Hon. Alex Hawke MP
Shadow Minister for Resources and Northern Australia	Senator Susan McDonald
Shadow Minister for Science	The Hon. Melissa Price MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</i>	<i>Senator Dean Smith</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing and Sovereign Capability</i>	<i>Andrew Willcox MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Resources</i>	<i>Jamie Chaffey MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Technology and the Digital Economy</i>	<i>Vacant</i>
Shadow Minister for Home Affairs	The Hon. Andrew Hastie MP
Shadow Minister for Emergency Management	Senator Ross Cadell
Shadow Minister for Cyber Security	The Hon. Melissa Price MP
Shadow Minister for Immigration	Senator Paul Scarr
Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs (Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)	
Shadow Minister for Education and Early Learning (Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam
Shadow Minister for Youth	Angie Bell MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education and Early Learning</i>	<i>Zoe McKenzie MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Education</i>	<i>Sam Birrell MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment	The Hon. Tim Wilson MP
Shadow Minister for Skills and Training	The Hon. Scott Buchholz MP
Shadow Minister for Social Services	Senator Kerryne Liddle
Shadow Minister for Government Services	Senator James Paterson
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Child Protection and the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>Senator Maria Kovacic</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Stronger Families and Stronger Communities</i>	<i>Senator Leah Blyth</i>
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development (Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie
Shadow Minister for Urban Infrastructure and Cities	Senator the Hon. James McGrath
Shadow Minister for Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games	
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	Dr Anne Webster MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure</i>	<i>Senator Matt O'Sullivan</i>
Shadow Attorney-General	Julian Leeson MP
Shadow Minister for Communications	Melissa McIntosh MP
Shadow Minister for the Arts	Julian Leeson MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Communications	Dr Anne Webster MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications</i>	<i>Vacant</i>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Shadow cabinet ministers are shown in bold type.**

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Thursday, 4 September 2025

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. Sue Lines) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The Clerk: I table documents pursuant to statute and returns to order as listed on the Dynamic Red.

Full details of the documents are recorded in the Journals of the Senate.

BILLS

Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2025

Second Reading

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory—Independent ACT Whip) (09:01): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I rise to today to speak to the Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2025, and I start by acknowledging that the bill was first introduced into the other place by the member for Kooyong, Dr Monique Ryan.

This bill is about an issue that cuts to the core of how decisions are made in this country: lobbying and the urgent need to reform the way that it's regulated. It's not always visible to the public. It rarely dominates headlines, but it influences everything that happens in this place, from how policies are shaped to which voices are heard and which are ignored. Before I was elected as a senator I, like so many Australians, was deeply frustrated by politics. I was disappointed by government decisions that made little sense. I was frustrated that often policies and decisions seemed to ignore communities and evidence based policy. They seemed to ignore what the best and brightest—the experts and scientists—were telling us. I was a little perplexed at how powerful voices often seemed to win out while ordinary Australians struggled to be heard. When I arrived in parliament, part of the reason for that became very clear—a system of influence that operates behind closed doors, protected by outdated rules and a lack of transparency.

Lobbying plays a legitimate and vital role in our democracy. We need experts, community groups and advocates to inform policy and raise concerns, and I welcome them into this place. But that role must be open and accountable, not concealed behind legal loopholes and privileged access. What we have today is anything but open or accountable. A recent report from Transparency International Australia found that federal lobbying rules are the worst in the country, scoring just 17 out of 100, compared to a score of 75 for those in Queensland. It's pretty clear how weak they are here at a federal level. Other jurisdictions require publishing of ministerial diaries, have an independent watchdog and have lobbying laws with teeth. But the most striking failure of federal lobbying rules is that 80 per cent of lobbyists are not even considered lobbyists.

Most Australians assume that corporate government relations teams from companies like Qantas, Woodside, Santos and others are regulated as lobbyists, but they're not. And talking to people that I represent, when I talk about this, they're shocked and appalled that this is the status quo in Canberra. What about industry peak bodies who clearly are trying, on behalf of their members, to speak to the government, to put forward their views, to lobby? The Australian energy producers who represent the gas industry or the Pharmacy Guild—they're not even considered lobbyists either. These groups should have access; these views are important. But these groups should not be excluded from the federal lobbying register and code of conduct. They face no obligation to disclose meetings or report their activities. They can be granted a sponsored pass to this building and no-one is required to say who they are and who gave them access or for what purposes.

These lobbyists can walk into a minister's office unannounced while community organisations wait weeks for a response to a meeting request, if they get one at all. At any given time, over 1,500 individuals hold all-access passes to Parliament House. In the last parliament, at the estimates before the election, I asked, and there were over 2,000 sponsored passholders to this building—and that excludes staff, volunteers, family. Clearly they don't need to be made public, but, when it comes to sponsored passholders for organisations, for companies and for industry groups, there is a very strong argument that they should, because we currently don't know their names. We don't know which MPs or senators sponsored them and we certainly don't know who they're meeting with and what decisions they are having with decision-makers. This isn't oversight. This is not accountability. It's a system built for insiders, not the public, and we need to and can change that.

The need for reform is urgent. We need a single comprehensive lobbying register that covers all lobbyists, including those who work in-house for powerful organisations, corporations and other groups. We need meaningful rules, not a code of conduct so weak that it's been described as 'dishwater'. We need real enforcement and serious consequences for those who breach them. Asking at estimates, it seems like the worst thing that can happen if you breach the Lobbying Code of Conduct is a three-month holiday from lobbying, which doesn't stop you from accessing the building with a sponsored pass; you just can't be a lobbyist. In other similar jurisdictions there are civil, sometimes criminal, penalties, as there should be for breaching privileged access and the rules around that to this building. We need transparency. We need published ministerial diaries. We need quarterly disclosures showing who lobbyists meet with, for how long and about what, and the Senate will know full well how hard it is to get these details out of government ministers. That should be a base-entry-level requirement of being a minister and working on behalf of the people of Australia—to be transparent.

Last year I secured support for a Senate inquiry into lobbying, and it confirmed what many of us suspected: the system is fundamentally broken. But it also showed this appetite for reform, even from within the lobbying industry itself. Sadly, that appetite hasn't been matched by political will from the major parties. Repeatedly, I've seen them resist even modest changes that would make the system more transparent, and I want to acknowledge my crossbench colleagues—Senator Lambie, the Greens and others—who have repeatedly pushed for more transparency around lobbying, for the release of ministerial diaries, only to be teamed up against by the Labor Party, the Liberal Party and the National Party. And it's not hard to see why. After three years in this place, I've witnessed how much influence certain industries still hold, particularly gambling and fossil fuels. Lobbyists from these industries walk into ministers' offices at will. Meanwhile public health experts, environmental scientists and community advocates are left knocking on closed doors or waiting for email responses to secure a meeting.

That's why I've brought this bill to the Senate, again acknowledging that it was introduced into the other place by the member for Kooyong. It is a practical, sensible package of reforms, and it's exactly what this parliament needs. This bill would expand the definition of 'lobbyist' to cover in-house staff, industry associations and consultants engaging with government; legislate a mandatory lobbying code of conduct with real penalties for misconduct; require quarterly online reporting of lobbying activity; require ministerial diaries to be published; ensure oversight by the NACC; and impose a three-year cooling-off period for ministers and senior advisers before they can take lobbying jobs. These reforms are not radical. This is not a radical proposal by any means. Much of this bill is standard practice in other democracies such as Canada and the UK, and it's time Australia caught up.

Transparency International has highlighted the urgency of reform. They found that, since 2001, almost every single federal resources minister has taken up a role in the fossil fuel sector after leaving office. They documented multiple former ministers and advisers moving straight into roles promoting gambling. Is it any wonder that meaningful regulation of these industries continues to stall or that reviews like the one that was led by the late Peta Murphy into gambling harm, with 31 recommendations and cross-party support, sit unanswered by the government? Who are they listening to? Who are they in here to represent?

We're told the government is protecting children from social media, but what about protecting them from wall-to-wall gambling ads? We're told there's no money for environmental protection and a limited budget for social housing, yet last term the government passed changes to the petroleum resources rent tax that have seen revenue fall rather than rise. This is unfathomable. The parliament is becoming out of touch with the Australian people on these issues, and I urge the Senate to take action. We can turn this around. We can actually start to implement changes like this and say: 'We're going to be more transparent. We're going to let you see who is meeting with ministers.'

The cost of broken lobbying rules is immense. While countries like Norway are using their natural resources to build an over \$2 trillion sovereign wealth fund, here in Australia, one of the biggest fossil fuel exporters in the world, we have a budget which is mainly in deficit and a trillion dollars of national debt. That's quite the contrast. Imagine what we could do with all of that lost revenue. We've just had a case where the government, until they were essentially forced to do it, wouldn't release 20,000 home-care packages for older Australians seemingly because of the cost, yet we're happy to give gas away for free and buckle in the face of vested interests, which clearly is not in the interests of Australians now and certainly not in the long-term interests of this country and younger Australians.

Despite all this, I remain hopeful because across the country people are rising up and demanding better—people like Konrad Benjamin. Known to many as 'Punter's Politics', he has built a following of nearly half a million Australians as he seeks to hold the government to account. He's raised tens of thousands of dollars for billboards calling for fairer tax policy, and now he's fundraising for a people's lobbyist, someone who can represent the punters' interests here in this building day in and day out. I think that's the kind of democratic innovation that we need more of, but it also underscores just how unequal our system has become when you have to do that to actually try and deal with the system.

I want to conclude with a small but important step forward on this issue, one that I hope signals a broader cultural shift in this place. Today I am launching the parliamentary pass register, a public website that brings long overdue transparency to an area of our political system that has operated in the shadows for far too long. As part of this effort, I've written to every senator and every member of the House of Representatives asking them to disclose the names of the individuals they sponsor for building access—the names of the people and the organisations or companies they represent who have access-all-areas passes to this building. I've asked that this information be provided by 1 October, giving the public, for the first time, a clear view of who holds sponsored passes and who granted them. I'm incredibly grateful to the parliamentarians who've already responded. It's a small act, but I think it speaks volumes about a commitment to openness and trust.

I want to especially acknowledge Senator McDonald. We may hold very different views on a range of issues, but she has led by example. For me, this highlights what sponsored passes should be. As a parliamentarian, if you're giving someone a sponsored pass, you should be willing to stand publicly and say, 'Yes, this person has a legitimate reason to access this building.' I'm not ashamed to give someone a sponsored pass, and for that reason I've been disclosing my sponsored passes on my website. It's a check on me, too. Every time someone asks for a sponsored pass, I have to weigh it up and ask: What would the people who I represent think about this? Does this align with people in the ACT? So I thank Senator McDonald. And I thank the members from the other place who've already sent their lists. I encourage and welcome others in this chamber to do the same.

Again, lobbying is an important part of our democracy. I'm not antilobbyists. I just think there should be more transparency over who is accessing this building. By doing that, we will start to rebuild trust in the parliament and in institutions at a time when we desperately need that. If you turn on the TV, you'll see this is the time we need to rebuild trust, not continue to erode it.

Senator DARMANIN (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (09:16): The government does not support the Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill. At the outset, I'd just like to say that the Lobbying Code of Conduct in existence was created by the last Labor government. When the code was established the first time, lobbyists were required to register their activity and comply with strict rules on transparency. It was one of the many integrity measures introduced by the Rudd Labor government of the time, which also included a new code of conduct for ministerial staff. It also strengthened the ministerial code.

When the government tabled the lobbying code at that time, in May 2008, in the other place, the responsible minister, Senator John Faulkner, outlined the purpose of that code. It is instructive reading, and I commend his speech to the chamber. In May 2008, Senator Faulkner said:

The government recognises that lobbying is a legitimate activity and part of the democratic process. Lobbyists can help individuals and organisations communicate their views on matters of public interest to the government and, in doing so, improve outcomes for the individual and community as a whole.

However, there is a legitimate concern that ministers, their staff and officials who are the target of lobbying activities are not always fully informed as to the identity of the people who have engaged a lobbyist to speak on their behalf. The government believes that this information can be fundamental to the integrity of its decisions and should be freely available to those who are lobbied and to the wider public.

For these reasons, the code and associated register aim to ensure government representatives know who is engaged in lobbying and whose interests are being promoted. When a third-party lobbyist contacts a government representative, including a minister, the code requires that they confirm they are on the register and disclose whose interests they are representing. The code also imposes an obligation on government representatives. They must not knowingly be a party to lobbying by a third-party lobbyist who's not on the register. There are penalties associated with the failure to comply with the code, including a power for the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department to bar a lobbyist who has committed a serious breach.

I acknowledge that some, like Senator Pocock, want registration obligations to extend to in-house lobbyists. There are also some who want to ban lobbying altogether. The government believes that the code strikes the right balance—recognising the right of lobbyists to lobby but placing conditions on the manner of third-party lobbying through mandatory registration and disclosure obligations.

The code prohibits former ministers from lobbying on matters they had official dealings with in their last 18 months in office for a period of 18 months after leaving office. This prohibition is intended to balance the benefits of individuals moving between positions in the public and private sectors against the integrity risks that this may represent. The code promotes trust in the integrity of government processes and ensures that contact between lobbyists and government representatives is conducted in accordance with public expectations of transparency, integrity and honesty, which is what all Australians expect. The code is focused on government representatives as the decision-makers within our democratic system. The code places obligations on third-party lobbyists to increase transparency and allow government representatives to make informed decisions about lobbying activities. The code

also sits within a broader integrity and transparency framework, such as the Code of Conduct for Ministers, the Public Service Act 1999, the APS Employment Principles, the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018—which also regulates lobbying activities—and, of course the National Anti-Corruption Commission.

The lobbying code is an administrative instrument. It is an executive action. For that reason it is misconceived to expect the code to require disclosure of sponsored pass access to Parliament House. Parliamentarians are already expected to comply with the rules of access to Parliament House, including in relation to sponsored passes. These rules of access to Parliament House are a matter for the Presiding Officers. Access to official documents of government is available under the Freedom of Information Act by request. These decisions are subject to review by the Information Commissioner and, if necessary, by the Administrative Review Tribunal.

The current freedom-of-information regime is another legacy of the last Labor government. Labor abolished conclusive certificates. Labor created a three-commissioner model—an information commissioner, a productivity commissioner and a freedom-of-information commissioner. The former Liberal government regrettably smashed that model by trying to repeal the legislation and then defunding the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. When Labor returned to office we reinstated the three-commissioner model as the parliament had originally intended. The Albanese Labor government is committed to integrity, honesty and accountability in government.

I recognise Senator David Pocock's advocacy for more transparency in government, and, after nine years of Liberal government, more transparency was desperately needed. The Albanese government is committed to upholding a high standard of integrity, transparency and accountability, as I've said—a standard the former government never aspired to let alone achieved. We have already delivered a significant integrity reform agenda to restore public trust in government and strengthen standards of integrity in the federal public sector, and we have more on the way. Within months of coming to office in 2022, we established the National Anti-Corruption Commission, the single biggest reform to the integrity framework in decades. The commission commenced operations on 1 July 2023, a major reform of the current Labor government. We said we would get this done in the same year we were elected, in 2022, and we did.

We also established the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. We implemented the Bell inquiry recommendations to improve transparency and accountability and to restore public trust in Australian democracy, after Scott Morrison appointed himself to administer multiple departments without disclosure to his colleagues or the public. We have reformed Australia's system of administrative review with the creation of the Administrative Review Tribunal, a new federal review body that is user focused, efficient, accessible, independent and fair. We have re-established the Administrative Review Council, a recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, which will be an expert body to monitor and advise on the operation and integrity of the Commonwealth administrative review system. We have strengthened provisions in the Public Service Act 1999 to make it clear that ministers cannot direct agency heads on employment matters. We have established an APS Integrity Taskforce to identify gaps and opportunities to deliver system-wide integrity improvements in the Australian Public Service.

We have also strengthened whistleblower protections through a first tranche of reform to the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013. These reforms implemented 21 of the 33 recommendations of the 2016 independent Review of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 by Mr Philip Moss, and we've commenced work on a second stage of reforms to ensure the Commonwealth public sector whistleblowing framework is fit for purpose. We've reinvigorated Australia's participation in the Open Government Partnership, developing a third national action plan promoting transparency and accountability in government. We have passed new laws to address challenges in detecting, investigating and prosecuting foreign bribery in Australia. And we've also passed the Respect@Work legislation—another job left half done by the former government—which now requires businesses across the country to take proactive steps to create workplaces that are safe from the risk of sexual harassment. This is a major step forward for our nation.

All of this speaks to what we have done, but we have much more to do. This week, the Attorney-General introduced important reforms into the parliament to improve the freedom-of-information system so that anonymous FOI requests are no longer permitted, genuine FOI requests are prioritised and taxpayers' money is saved on frivolous and automated requests. Freedom of information is a vital feature of our democracy. It promotes accountability and transparency of government. It also enables Australians to access their personal information and supports the media in their important role as the fourth estate. But right now the FOI Act is flawed and not working well for anybody, and our laws need updating.

Despite successive reviews, the FOI framework is stuck in the 1980s—before the use of email and well before the capabilities of AI were contemplated, not all of which are used for public good. In 2024, public servants spent more than a million hours processing FOI requests. Modern technology is making it cheap and easy to create

anonymous, vexatious and frivolous requests, tying up masses of resources through abuses of process, unnecessarily costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars and delaying the processing of genuine requests. More fundamentally, frivolous requests divert public servants from their core priority of delivery, and we must strike a better balance. The government looks forward to engagement across the parliament on this important reform.

In closing, I want to make some additional comments about Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index. The Albanese government has reversed Australia's decade-long slide by lifting the country's ranking on Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index from 18 to 10. This didn't happen by accident. As I said earlier, we established the National Anti-Corruption Commission, we strengthened the ministerial code of conduct, we have strengthened protections for whistleblowers, we have increased funding to the Australian National Audit Office, we have restored transparency to AAT appointments, we have reinstated a standalone privacy and FOI commissioner, and we have implemented the Bell inquiry recommendations.

In conclusion, the Australian people voted for a government that would deliver on integrity. The Albanese government is committed to integrity, honesty and accountability in government. The government does not support this bill.

Senator HODGINS-MAY (Victoria) (09:30): I rise to speak in support of the Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2025 and commend Senator David Pocock for bringing it before us today. When each of us enters public office, we do so to represent the communities, our constituents and the concerns of Australians, who trust us to act with integrity, accountability and transparency in this place. We have no mandate to serve the corporate interests of Woodside, Santos, Sportsbet, Pfizer or Lockheed Martin, yet the current lobbying regime gives precisely those interests disproportionate access to decision-making through a weak code of conduct, with minimal to no consequences for poor behaviour, undisclosed ministerial meetings, minimal oversight of sponsored parliamentary passes and a revolving door between government and industry spinning unrecorded and unchecked.

I heard the government quote Transparency International. I'm also going to quote some of their figures. Transparency International Australia's recent analysis shows the Commonwealth ranks near the bottom amongst Australian jurisdictions on transparency, enforcement and anticorruption measures, scoring just 17 out of 100. There is no independent federal regulator to enforce lobbying rules. Over 700 registered lobbyists, more than triple the number of elected MPs, operate with minimal scrutiny. The Centre for Public Integrity has shown just how deep the link between lobbying and donations runs in this country. Political donations from lobbyists have risen more than 500 per cent since the late 1990s, spiking into the millions during election years. Most of this money flows unchecked through donations and backroom access.

Speaking of backroom access, the revolving door between this place and cushy jobs is bipartisan and systemic. Both Labor and Liberal former ministers regularly transition from regulating industry to working with it, raising legitimate concerns about conflicts of interest. Simon Birmingham, finance minister until 2022, is now the CEO of the Australian Banking Association, just three years after overseeing the very industry he now represents. Ian Macfarlane, industry minister until 2015, joined Woodside almost immediately after leaving office, following nearly every former resources minister into the fossil fuel sector. Josh Frydenberg, Treasurer until 2022, is now chairman of Goldman Sachs Australia and New Zealand. And, just recently, the *Australian Financial Review* reported that ADNOC, the United Arab Emirates state owned oil company, hired Prime Minister Albanese's former chief of staff to advise on its Santos takeover bid, while Peter Dutton's former chief of staff joined lobbying firm TG Public Affairs. These aren't isolated cases. How do you think this instils confidence in the public that we are in here representing their public interests?

These cases form a pattern. Ministers and senior advisers are moving straight from regulating industries to profiting from them, while the public is left in the dark. Yet, despite all of this capital, we have a weak lobbying code with virtually no enforcement. Since 2013 there have been at least 14 confirmed breaches of the federal lobbying code, yet not a single sanction issued. Breaches have been handled informally, with no penalties beyond a slap on the wrist.

That is why the Greens acknowledge the measures proposed in Senator David Pocock's bill. We must strengthen lobbying rules by expanding the register to include in-house lobbyists. We must improve transparency, restrict gifts and conflicts of interest, and extend cooling-off periods to close the revolving door between politics and industry. These steps are long overdue and would bring Australia a step closer towards international best practice. Countries like Ireland, Canada and Scotland already adopt many of these standards. The proposed measures in this bill would move the dial considerably on honesty and trust, but of course much more is needed to truly shift the balance of power in our democracy towards genuinely representing the public interest. Transparency and accountability matter—of course they do—but transparency without structural change still leaves corporations with outsized power to shape laws and policies.

We must take on the fossil fuel giants and gambling companies that are holding entrenched influence over both major parties here in this parliament because, frankly, what we are facing is state capture. Nowhere is this clearer than the fossil fuel industry's capture of successive governments in this country. In the Australian Democracy Network's report *Confronting state capture*, they write:

The fossil fuel lobby has been an aggressive and ubiquitous presence within Australian politics for as long as these industries have existed. Its present form has been shaped in opposition to the growing urgency of the climate threat since the late 1980s, with the coal industry joined in recent decades by the rapid growth of the export gas industry.

Within this report, a fossil fuel lobbyist themselves is quoted as saying:

We know more about energy policy than the government does. We know more about industry policy than the government does. We know where every skeleton in the closet is—most of them, we buried.

This capture permeates law, policy, media and culture from all angles: laws cracking down on climate activists who dare to speak the truth about these industry giants, fossil fuel companies sponsoring community infrastructure to brand themselves as good corporate citizens, and media outlets captured and funded to run favourable stories. Over the past decade, tens of millions of dollars have flowed from the oil and gas industry to politics in donations, sponsorships and membership fees, targeting both major parties to block climate action, to weaken environmental laws and to delay meaningful reform.

How can we write strong and bold climate policies when Labor alone received almost \$800,000 from fossil fuel companies in the last reporting period, when former ministers walk into fossil fuel board rooms, and when corporations are handed the pen to draft policies that don't just ignore the climate crisis; they actively accelerate it? And, I might add, we are still waiting for Labor to disclose their latest political donation figures. How much has the Albanese government taken from fossil fuel companies this time, just as they prepare to decide on critical policies like our 2035 emissions targets? The Albanese government must open its books.

To confront this deep and entrenched state capture, we must not only rein in lobbyists but also level the playing field, making space for grassroots voices, community advocates and scientific experts, who too often get crowded out or just simply ignored. I meet daily both here and back in Victoria with tireless community representatives. Just yesterday I met with the AYCC, the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, and Seed Mob, a group of ferocious young activists pushing this government towards bolder action. I hear from healthcare and consumer groups, multicultural communities, researchers and lived experience advocates. Their voices are vital, yet too often they are ignored, encounter closed doors or are pushed aside by corporate interests.

Meanwhile, well-resourced corporate actors book out calendars, set agendas and secure influence—whether it be through an expensive lunch or a ticket to a box at the footy. This isn't democracy. It's corporate dominance at the expense of the voices of people who have the solutions to the problems that we face and, frankly, deserve to have a seat at the table and to be listened to. We can and should do so much more. We can require full disclosure of all legislative consultation, including who is being consulted, when and where the gaps lie. We can prioritise and properly resource community advocates. We can listen to and adhere to science and expertise by establishing a parliamentary office of science and technology. We can support participatory forums such as citizens juries, public assemblies and community panels. We can consider restrictions on success fees and industry rent-seeking. These reforms shouldn't just be viewed as nice to haves; they are essential to a well-functioning democracy.

If we're to have a fighting chance against the might of the fossil fuel, gambling, weapons and pharmaceutical industries, we must enact structural changes that shift the scales in favour of the broader public interest. Transparency alone is important but won't be enough. Real reform must create space for community voices and grassroots advocacy to have genuine access to decision-makers so that public policy reflects the interests of Australians, not just the balance sheets of corporations. These steps would begin to restore balance in our democracy and give the public a fighting chance to have their voices heard and acted upon.

I must say that we're off to an appalling start in this term of parliament. The Albanese government is now seeking to charge for freedom-of-information requests and is refusing more Senate orders for documents than the Morrison government did. It has already become an administration of secrecy. But we can turn this around. We can make the 48th Parliament one of openness and fairness, and the Greens stand ready to work with the government to strengthen our democracy and transparency measures, as we do with the crossbench who have brought this on today.

We can build a democracy that works for Australians and not corporations. We can create a parliament where laws and policies reflect the voices of communities, not the balances of fossil fuel corporations, gambling giants or other entrenched corporate interests. That is the democracy Australians deserve and that is the democracy the Greens are committed to building.

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia—Australia's Voice Whip) (09:40): I rise to speak in support of Senator David Pocock's Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2025. Yesterday I moved that the

government should table a very simple list: the organisations that currently hold sponsored passes to access Parliament House. It's a measure that would cost the government nothing but would give the public some insight into who has privileged access to the decision-makers in this building.

That motion was blocked by both the Labor Party and the Liberal-National coalition. It highlights and is a very small example of a bigger problem. In almost every area, this government has sought to reduce the ability of this parliament and the Senate—and, by extension, the Australian people out there—to scrutinise its activities. Rates of compliance with Senate orders for the production of documents are now among the lowest since record keeping began. We have to drag information out of departments that should, by right, belong to the people. The freedom-of-information system is already broken. Is that to anyone's surprise? Requests are delayed for months, bounced between agencies or stonewalled altogether.

Instead of fixing it, the government proposes so-called reforms that would make things even worse. They want to introduce new fees for Australians who make FOI requests. But Australians already pay fees. They're called taxes. They already pay the wages of the public servants who process these requests. So I don't understand what the government's trying to get at there. Charging them twice isn't efficiency; it's about discouraging people from making the request in the first place and discouraging them from asking those real questions.

We've also seen that even answers to basic questions on notice in Senate estimates have become increasingly unhelpful. Orders for the production of documents are usually returned entirely redacted and blacked out, page after page—so much for transparency—months late and often reduced to a link to a department's website or a vague paragraph about government philosophy. This isn't transparency; it's an obstruction that's dressed as process.

When it comes to accountability, Australians in 2022 were promised a national anticorruption commission that would restore the trust in government, but what we have is a body so restricted in its scope and so hamstrung by secrecy provisions that it cannot do the very thing it was created to do. A commission that can't compel transparency, that dismisses referrals without explanation, that shields the most powerful from scrutiny, is not a watchdog. It's window dressing. It gives the appearance of integrity while protecting those in power from real consequences.

This isn't what the Labor Party, historically, stood for. Labor has always claimed to be the party of integrity, the party of transparency and the party that champions the rights of ordinary people against entrenched interests—from John Curtin's wartime government that trusted Australians with the hard truth to Gough Whitlam's reforms that expanded access to information and broadened rights of participation. Labor has claimed the mantle of honesty and openness. Yet what have we seen transpire in the previous parliament and in the 48th Parliament?

The modern Labor Party platform commits to 'restoring trust in democratic institutions, ensuring integrity in government decision-making and championing the rights of people over the influence of vested interests'. Those are not my words; they are the Labor Party's words. Yet when the moment comes to honour them, to stick by them and to implement them, when the Senate asks about transparency and about who holds passes to this building or when the public asks to see documents behind government decisions, the shutters come down.

Let's remember why this matters. The people who sit in this chamber and who walk the halls of this building make decisions that affect every person on this continent: decisions about housing, health care, the environment and our nation's future—decisions that young people in particular will live with for decades to come. I speak with young Australians every week, whether in WA or here in Canberra—in communities across the country. They're engaged, they're informed and they're watching. But, too often, they tell me they feel locked out of politics. They don't believe that the government is listening to them. They see lobbyists who have passes to this building being given more access than the communities they represent. They see secrecy where there should be openness and see self-interest where there should be service.

That's the crisis we face. It is not just a crisis of policy and mismanagement but a crisis of trust. When the Albanese Labor government was elected in 2022 we thought that the era of mistrust had gone, that they would bring hope to Australian politics, to do things differently. Unless we fix it, unless we build that transparency back into the way government operates, we risk losing an entire generation's faith in our entire democratic system, and that's dangerous.

This bill gives us an important opportunity to turn back from that path. As Senator Pocock said, this is not a radical proposal. It's simple. It's sensible. It's a basic attempt to repair the fabric of that trust between people and government. I say to my former colleagues in the Labor Party: you built your party on a promise to stand with the people against secrecy and entrenched power; do not walk away from that legacy now. Do not abandon young Australians who are demanding integrity and honesty in politics. You shouldn't see transparency as a threat. It's a foundation of our democracy. If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear. For the sake of young Australians, who deserve a government they can believe in, and for the sake of rebuilding trust in this parliament as well as for the sake of Labor's own legacy of integrity, I commend this bill to the Senate.

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH (Victoria) (09:48): The government will not be supporting the Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2025. Senator Pocock and some members of the crossbench, including the Greens and possibly even the Liberals—which is astounding—have made themselves the self-styled prefects of this parliament. They ensure that we all have our ties straight and our shoes polished. Yet, when I look back on the track record, it's not them who ushered in the National Anti-Corruption Commission, which we did in our first term of government—this Labor government. They were a footnote in history, but history will show that it was the Albanese Labor government of the 47th Parliament—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Marielle Smith): Order! Senator Ananda-Rajah sat in silence while other senators made their contribution, and I expect that she's given the same courtesy.

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH: The truth hurts. History will show that it was the Albanese Labor government in the 47th parliament, when it was elected in 2022, that within a year of election established, as promised, the National Anti-Corruption Commission. What a legacy that was.

That wasn't all we did. If you recall, there was this small issue that was lingering for many, many years called robodebt. Has anyone forgotten that? Robodebt was an absolute calamity for this nation, a complete and utter systemic failure of public administration, and it happened under the Liberals' watch. It was the Liberals who basically did nothing about robodebt but fuel it. It led to an immense amount of suffering for 430,000 Australians. Never forget that. It was this Labor government—not the crossbench, not Senator Pocock, not anyone else—that led the royal commission into robodebt. There were many recommendations and lessons that were learnt, which we are now working through and will enact, and will strengthen integrity in this country, ensuring that our most vulnerable are never subjected to that again.

We—not them, not anyone else, not any of the other passengers in this place—also are the ones who implemented the Bell inquiry recommendations to improve transparency and accountability and to restore public trust in Australian democracy.

Senator Allman-Payne interjecting—

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH: I'll take the contributions from the Greens political party. Let's look at the Greens. The Greens stand here and champion transparency and openness, yet within their own political party they evict people over contested issues. What is it? Maybe you can help me out here. Maybe it's gender diversity. Those conversations are shut down and people are evicted. You even kicked out one of your own co-founders, Drew Hutton.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Ananda-Rajah, I remind you to direct your comments through the chair. I've already called other senators to order. It's disrespectful not just to the speaker but to me in the chair.

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH: The Greens political party come into this place and talk the big game, but they've got a few housekeeping issues that they need to address. One of those is why exactly their co-founder, Drew Hutton, leave—or was he expelled? We don't know; it's all a little bit murky. There was also—and I still remember the case—Alex Bhathal, a candidate in Melbourne in Victoria, who basically accused her own party, the Greens, of bullying. What came of it? Crickets, absolutely nothing. The pure-as-snow Greens political party like to come in here, wave their finger at the Labor government and lecture the rest of us, but they don't want to really open that black box and do their own housekeeping. Never forget that.

Going back to this Labor government's record on integrity, we also cleaned up the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. That old chestnut was a millstone around this country's neck when we came to government in 2022. It had been absolutely stacked with a bunch of Liberal mates, cronies and hacks. We basically completely abolished it and created what is called the Administrative Review Tribunal, the ART, a new federal body that is user focused, efficient, accessible, independent and fair, and has merit based appointments. It's not just putting your buddies on there to do your work—those people who were failed politicians or would-be politicians.

That's not all. We also strengthened provisions of the Public Service Act 1999 to make it clear that ministers cannot direct agency heads on employment matters. I remember that in the other house, in the first term of government, I spoke about this. I remember speaking distinctly about the importance of ensuring separation of powers with respect to our Public Service. As we know, in the aftermath of robodebt, the Australian Public Service, a venerated institution in this country, had been absolutely gutted. It was cowering in the corner after 10 years of coalition rule, leading to the catastrophe that was robodebt. We brought in legislation to ensure that we strengthen the independence and integrity of the APS so that it can provide free and fearless advice to government. We established an APS Integrity Taskforce to identify gaps and opportunities to deliver system-wide integrity

improvements in the Australian Public Service. That's not all. I'm reading out a few of them, but that's not all. These are some of my favourites. I want to pay tribute also to the previous attorney-general, Mark Dreyfus, for his work in this space. He quietly went about doing it, but he brought in significant reforms as part of a broader integrity agenda—things that are foreign to the Liberal and National parties—completely alien.

We also strengthened the whistleblower protections, knowing that there is more work to do. The first tranche was reforms to the Public Interest Disclosure Act. These reforms implemented 21 of 33 recommendations of the Moss review. When was that Moss review handed down? Was it in 2022 or 2021 or 2020? Actually, it was in 2016, and, FYI, it wasn't us in power then. It was the opposition. Why didn't they act on it? I'm not sure, but perhaps we wouldn't have had some of the issues around whistleblowers doing the right thing but getting persecuted for it had the recommendations been enacted. I cite specifically the case of Mr Richard Boyle, who was recently exonerated. He should never have gone through that kind of suffering. My heart goes out to him and his family. Had these whistleblower protections actually been enacted by the previous government, maybe all of that would have been prevented and maybe taxpayers would have saved a few bucks.

We have now commenced work on the second stage of reforms to ensure that the Commonwealth public sector—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Pocock, on a point of order?

Senator David Pocock: I have a point of order on relevance. This is about lobbying reform, not whistleblowers. I understand it's a filibuster, but if it could be specific to lobbying, that'd be great.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Pocock. I'll draw the senator's attention to the topic of the debate, but, in my observation, she has been generally relevant over the course of it.

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH: I think that context is important. It is very important that I lay out the context before I start talking about the substance of this private member's bill. Context matters.

With respect to our broad based integrity agenda, we are now working on a second stage of reforms that will strengthen the whistleblower framework, and next week we're going to be opening that up to public consultation. I encourage all Australians who are interested in whistleblowing to make a contribution—not just the peak bodies but all Australians. We certainly have committed to establishing a whistleblower ombudsman, which I think is a very welcome step.

We have also proudly rejoined what is called the Open Government Partnership. This turns out to be an international alliance of countries that are determined to progress transparency in government. It is this Labor government that did that. We have passed new laws—and I'm particularly proud of this—to improve the detection and prosecution of foreign bribery, influence and, particularly, money laundering in this country through mechanisms like real estate and even jewellery, precious metals and stones. There are now much stronger protections around those kinds of activities.

Of course, let's not forget that we passed the Respect at Work legislation, not in piecemeal fashion but in its entirety. That was a piece of work that was left half done by the previous government. When we came to government, this parliament was stained with a reputation of toxicity and alcohol-fuelled behaviours and partying. It looked nothing like a professional workplace. The injection of a large cohort of women parliamentarians through the Albanese Labor government means that we've seen an uplift in standards in this place. I pay tribute to the work of the member for Newcastle, the Deputy Speaker in the other place, Sharon Claydon, and Minister Katy Gallagher in pushing this work through. It's incredibly important.

Now let's go to the matter of the lobbying register. I have just laid out a catalogue of all of the Albanese Labor government's achievements on integrity. It was a very broad based agenda. It was far-reaching, touching on many aspects: corruption, strengthening the Public Service, whistleblower protections and improving the standards and behaviour of parliamentarians in this place. But there is now the important matter of how we manage lobbying in government. Speaking to another Labor government legacy, the Lobbying Code of Conduct was introduced by the Rudd Labor government in 2008. It applies to ministerial staff and ministers. In 2008, Senator Faulkner—and I'll read it out because his words were prescient and they apply to today as well—said:

The Government recognises that lobbying is a legitimate activity and part of the democratic process. Lobbyists can help individuals and organisations communicate their views on matters of public interest to the Government and, in doing so, improve outcomes for the individual and community as a whole.

However, there is a legitimate concern that Ministers, their staff and officials who are the target of lobbying activities are not always fully informed as to the identity of the people who have engaged a lobbyist to speak on their behalf. The Government believes that this information can be fundamental to the integrity of its decisions and should be freely available to those who are lobbied and to the wider public.

So we established a lobbying code of conduct which extended to third-party lobbyists.

For people watching, third-party lobbyists are basically on a register now. They're listed on a register. Companies or even not-for-profits, for example, can approach them and seek their services, which are paid for, usually, and then they go to work to try and seek meetings with ministers or parliamentarians, for example, in Parliament House. They are registered. The substance of this bill, I think, that Senator Pocock has put forward is to now extend that to in-house lobbyists. That means the people who come through Parliament House who have sponsored passes. The two are quite separate. The sponsored pass list is managed by the parliament and the people who have carriage over that are the presiding officers. It's not the government. It's held at arm's length from that.

Returning to the issue of the lobbyist register, if there are breaches of that, it comes with penalties. The registration obligations now put forward in this bill seek to extend this to in-house lobbyists. I'm happy to speak about some of the people who lobby me. It's not Woodside. It's actually renewable energy companies and a lot of community groups, and I never say no to them. They're welcome to come and see me in my electorate office or here. Of course, it's also a lot of pharmaceutical companies because of my background as a doctor and my previous membership on the Standing Committee on Health in the other place.

The code currently prohibits former ministers from lobbying on matters that they had official dealings with for at least 18 months after they've left office. So there is a lockout period baked in because we recognise that we have to protect the public and private sectors against integrity risks, knowing full well that we also have the National Anti-Corruption Commission, which has all the powers of a royal commission and can investigate any claim, complaint or concern put forward by any member of the public. So that is the outline of our track record. *(Time expired)*

Senator GROGAN (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (10:04): On this bill, the Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2025: this is an issue that has been spoken about by many of my colleagues for some time now, in this chamber and also in the other place. And I find some of the commentary quite challenging. The assumptions that are built into some of this commentary are quite frankly, in my humble opinion, a bit misplaced.

When we talk about lobbyists, from my perspective and certainly from the government's perspective, lobbying is a legitimate activity. It is a legitimate activity undertaken by a whole range of different people. The assumption that is put forward by some of my colleagues is that lobbying is bad—that, on some interpretation, lobbying is only done by evil people and only ever done on behalf of bad companies. That's absolutely not my experience, and I personally have been in a position of lobbying—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sterle): Senator Grogan, resume your seat. Senator Pocock on a point of order?

Senator David Pocock: Acting Deputy President, a point of order on potentially misleading the Senate. None of that was said in my speech at all. No-one in their speech has denigrated lobbying in this debate.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Pocock, it's not a debate. I hear you, thank you, but there is no—

Senator David Pocock: You can't just make stuff up.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Pocock, there is no point of order. I see no point of order. I will go back to Senator Grogan.

Senator GROGAN: I will respond, in part, to that interjection. I've never named anyone in this chamber as being those people. I have seen the commentary out there. So you can say I'm making it up, Senator Pocock, but I'm not casting any aspersions on you. Maybe we'll just agree to disagree on some points.

Now, the idea of lobbying is a very legitimate one. As I said previously, I, personally, used to lobby on behalf of the councils of social service. I lobbied on behalf of many community organisations—small community organisations, with critical issues that they needed to deal with. We had the appropriate passes when we came here, and we declared that we were here. There were no secrets: 'We're here talking to ministers. We're here talking to backbenchers. We're here trying to get people to understand our issue.'

Now, the interpretation by some is that, because someone has come to speak to you, you are immediately on their case and you're going to funnel bucketloads of money to them and support their cause—just because they walked in the door. Or the interpretation of many people in this parliament is that I only meet with people I agree with. I don't. I meet with people that I don't agree with; I meet with people from all sides of an argument, if there's something in front of me as a senator. That's particularly so for those of us who chair Senate committees. You have to deal with contentious issues. You have to deal with significant issues that have many views. For me, the appropriate thing to do and, as a representative of South Australia, the right thing to do is to listen to all perspectives and to listen to all views, and then form an opinion myself once I have seen that evidence. To blank people out and say

that people shouldn't be allowed to talk to us—shouldn't be allowed to come into this place and engage in activities of our democracy—is not where I'm at. I completely disagree with that perspective, which has been put out by some in the media and some out in the community and in some commentary from some people within the parliament.

Lobbying is a legitimate activity. And it was a Labor government that brought in the code. It was a Labor government that sought to ensure that lobbyists were well regulated. We know who people are. They have to disclose who they are, where they are and who they're working for. So there's no great secret here.

The interpretation that parliamentarians are too vacuous to make up their own mind—to meet with a lobbyist, digest the information they might give them and actually come to a perspective, rather than just going, 'Oh, if someone's sitting in front of me, obviously I must agree with them'—is completely absurd. That may be the case for some of my colleagues. Maybe they just listen to what's in front of them. That's absolutely not how I work. I know it's absolutely not how the majority of my colleagues work.

So we have lists, and we have regulation. People who have sponsored passes range across such a vast array. You'd like to think it ranges across our whole society. Certainly, people seek to visit and talk with me about the issues that are concerning for them or issues they're trying to promote. I see people from all walks of life, from big business to small community groups. They all have a perspective, and they all deserve to be heard. They all have a right to come and talk to people in this place about the issues that are important to them. I will stand by that. I think restricting people from talking to politicians is a bad idea—I just do. I think the codes that we brought in in 2008 made it a much, much more transparent system. The fact is we're at the centre of democracy in our country and as many people as possible should have access to this place.

In a quite recent report from the Finance and Public Administration References Committee, there were some additional comments from Labor senators, and I was taken by some of the comments that were made—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The time allotted for this debate having expired, the debate is interrupted.

DOCUMENTS

National Priority System

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator McALLISTER (New South Wales—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme) (10:11): I table documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the waiting list for the national priority system.

BUSINESS

Consideration of Legislation

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (10:11): I seek leave to move a motion relating to consideration of the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025 as circulated.

Leave not granted.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Pursuant to contingent notice standing in the name of Senator Waters, I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Senator Waters moving a motion to provide for the consideration of a matter, namely a motion to give precedence to a motion relating to the consideration of the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025.

The government and the coalition have agreed to ram through the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025 which is a bill to strip natural justice, a fundamental right, from asylum seekers and whomever else the government chooses to deport to Nauru.

The government has run the argument that it needs to be rammed through this week because it is urgent. I can tell you we had a three-hour committee hearing in relation to this bill last night. Officials from Home Affairs came and they provided their case for urgency, and it was demolished—utterly demolished. I'll give credit to Senator Cash, who picked apart the argument for urgency that was presented by Home Affairs. In questioning from Senator Cash, Senator David Pocock and me, what Home Affairs eventually said was, 'Well, we'd like this legislation because we want to make sure that our current unfair processes, which we're going to continue regardless, cannot be legally challenged.' They also said that, regardless of whether the bill goes forward, they're going to continue to grind away and their actions will not change whether or not the bill passes. Then, when tested about whether there was any particular case that they desperately needed this legislation for, Home Affairs basically said no and that the cases that are either in the criminal courts or in the High Court are going to grind through and that they didn't need this legislation for any urgent matter dealing with cases.

Having established that so clearly, the question is: why is the coalition agreeing for Labor to remove the usual procedural checks and balances and ram through this legislation on a guillotine motion? I'll tell you what this legislation is: it is reckless, mean and nasty, and that's why Labor wants to ram it through on a guillotine without proper process.

We had the benefit, in the committee hearing last night, of submissions that came to us and that came to my office, and that would've come to any senator willing to ask, from across civil society—from the Law Council, from the ASRC and from multicultural communities. They were from across civil society and they all said the same thing—that the government's legislation is demonising multicultural communities, that it's targeting multicultural communities, that it's picking out multicultural communities and giving people who came to this country from another country fewer rights and doing it so visibly and deliberately. It is an attack on multiculturalism. They wanted the opportunity to tell the whole committee that in a proper hearing.

To its utter shame, Labor, even in establishing that committee, passed a resolution saying they didn't want submissions from civil society. It's so nasty that they're blocking their ears to the cries of multicultural communities that are saying: 'Stop doing this. Stop working with the coalition to ram through even more draconian laws.' Reckless, mean, nasty—that's what this piece of legislation is. So of course I move this motion and of course my Greens colleagues join me in moving this motion to ensure that this latest attack on multicultural Australia and on the rights of asylum seekers from Labor gets the scrutiny it needs.

What are you so afraid of? Are you so afraid of the fact that the public will see what you're doing? They are getting wise to Labor. In particular, multicultural communities are getting wise to Labor. They've now seen that it was Labor that put in place mandatory detention. They've now seen that it's Labor who's cut a secret deal with Nauru. I'll tell you what else we saw last night. We found out for the first time that this deal that Labor's cut with Nauru isn't a \$400 million deal; it's a \$2.5 billion deportation deal. Why did the government hide the truth about the scale of the deal? Why did we have to drag that out of you in a committee hearing? Tell the truth. Protect multicultural communities and stop doing these grubby deals with— *(Time expired)*

Senator McALLISTER (New South Wales—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme) (10:17): I move:

That the question be now put.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sterle): The question is that the motion be put, as moved by the minister.

The Senate divided. [10:21]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Sterle)

Ayes.....31
Noes.....13
Majority.....18

AYES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Green, N. L.
Hume, J.
McKenzie, B. G.
Paterson, J. W.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.
Whitten, T.

Askew, W.
Chisholm, A. D.
Darmanin, L.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K. (Teller)
McAllister, J. R.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Watt, M. P.

Blyth, L.
Ciccione, R.
Dolega, J.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
McCarthy, M.
O'Neill, D. M.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Thorpe, L. A.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Waters, L. J.

Question agreed to.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sterle) (10:25): The question is that the motion moved by Senator Shoebridge be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [10:25]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Sterle)

Ayes.....13

Noes.....31

Majority.....18

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Thorpe, L. A.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Waters, L. J.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Blyth, L. (Teller)
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K.
McCarthy, M.
Paterson, J. W.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.
Whitten, T.

Askew, W.
Brown, C. L.
Ciccione, R.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Watt, M. P.

Babet, R. D.
Cash, M. C.
Cox, D.
Duniam, J. R.
Green, N. L.
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

Question negatived.

MOTIONS

National Security

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation and Pauline Hanson's One Nation Whip) (10:29): I seek leave to move a motion relating to national security policy as circulated.

Leave not granted.

Senator HANSON: Pursuant to contingent notice standing in my name, I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent me moving a motion to provide for the consideration of a matter, namely a motion to give precedence to a motion relating to national security policy.

That is a grave matter of urgent public concern. Labor's move to secretly repatriate people who joined with the Islamic State has sparked widespread concern among Australians. This raises serious issues which the Senate should immediately debate: issues of transparency, of a government cover-up, of national security, of border integrity and of the risk to Australia's community. We must debate it now because we have a prime minister refusing to answer questions about it, and we have a Labor government even saying they're not actually responsible for it. How could these people even have a chance of returning here if the government wasn't permitting them to and wasn't facilitating it?

It is our job to debate these issues and ensure the government keeps our community safe. We must never forget the savagery of the Islamic State terrorist group. They burned innocent people alive. They took innocent girls as sex slaves after killing their families. They recruited evil people from around the world to join them. They ordered or inspired deadly terrorism right here in Australia. In September 2016 they deliberately told their followers in Australia: 'Kill them on the streets in Brunswick, Broadmeadows, Bankstown and Bondi. Kill them at the MCG, the SCG, the opera house and even in their backyards.'

Some people in Australia responded with enthusiastic depravity. Islamic State inspired an 18-year-old man to stab two Victorian police officers at Endeavour Hills in 2014. They inspired the siege of the Lindt Cafe in Sydney's Martin Place, in which two innocent people died. Islamic State praised the actions of the hostage taker, calling him a righteous jihadist. They inspired an Iranian born youth to murder Curtis Cheng in Parramatta in October 2015. They inspired two teenage boys to murder a service station worker in Queanbeyan in April 2017 and injure three other innocent people. They inspired a Somali born man to murder a receptionist in Brighton, in Melbourne, in June 2017. They inspired a Bangladeshi woman to stab a man in his sleep at his home in Mill Park, Victoria, in 2018. Australian authorities prevented others radicalised by Islamic State from carrying out many more attacks and plots.

Perhaps what horrified Australians even more was that some people living here heeded the call of Islamic State to join their so-called caliphate. We cannot forget that photograph of one of them in the wastes of Iraq, posing with a big grin and his young son holding a severed head. The very idea that anyone from Australia who joined in this lunacy should be allowed to come back is just as depraved as Islamic State was, yet it's already happened. The coalition let it happen first, in 2019, repatriating the family of that same terrorist who was grinning with his son and a severed head. Labor repeated this shame in October 2022. And now Labor is doing it again, cloaking the move in secrecy because what it is doing is shameful, reckless and directly risking the safety of Australians in their own country. What these Labor and coalition governments have done is say that people can join a savage terrorist group, commit the most depraved acts of murder and then be forgiven, brought home and reintegrated into Australian society. They'll be allowed to have more children and radicalise them.

Here's a message a Hamas terrorist, a local imam, gave at a pro-Palestinian rally last year: 'I ask you to continue all the actions that you started one year ago, and do not stop until we see the crumbling of Zionism and the end of the Israeli forces.'

How can anyone possibly believe that people exposed to the savagery of Islamic State do not pose a risk in Australia? Where are our guarantees? These enemies should be monitored, surveilled and restricted to ensure that risk is minimised. These people should not be released into our suburbs and our towns. They should have been left where they are, in the place they chose to go to join Islamic State. If they must be brought here—and I totally oppose any of them coming into this country—then they must be put in prison and never allowed to know freedom again. For those of you in this chamber unfamiliar with the concept, these are known as consequences.

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator HANSON: Isn't it quite interesting to hear how people on the other side relate to this. The Greens are so un-Australian. They do not support this.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator O'Sullivan): Senator Hanson, please resume your seat. Senator Hanson-Young?

Senator Hanson-Young: I'd like Senator Hanson to withdraw. I'd also like Senator Hanson to condemn the cop killers that their party continues to support.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: That latter part is not a point of order; it's a debating point, which you can bring up at another time.

Senator HANSON: I have a point of order. I want Senator Hanson-Young to retract that comment. We have never, ever supported cop killers. I want that retracted.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I'm going to ask you both to withdraw, for consistency.

Senator Hanson-Young: I withdraw.

Senator HANSON: No. What have I got to withdraw?

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: A senator has risen and said they've taken offence to something that has been said. It's been accepted practice in recent times that if a senator is asked to withdraw, for the comity of the Senate, we just do that. It would be very simple for you to do that, please.

Senator HANSON: I withdraw.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you. Please continue.

Senator HANSON: I'm calling on openness and transparency. The people have a right to know what is going to happen with these people when the government brings them back into the country. They should not be allowed, and the majority of Australians don't want them back here.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (10:36): The coalition will be supporting the suspension motion moved by Senator Hanson on behalf of One Nation. When you look at the suspension motion, to debate the motion Senator Hanson has moved, it raises some very, very serious issues, particularly in relation to the transparency of the Albanese government. Several questions were posed yesterday

both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate concerning media reports that a cohort of persons who had left Australia to join ISIS, the Islamic State fighters, were coming back to Australia. That is concerning within itself, given they left some time ago and, not only that but in particular, given these are people who made a conscious decision—this is a fact—to wilfully abandon Australia to join the ISIS death cult. Let's be clear about what the ISIS death cult were: they were a group of people who committed genocide against Shias, against Christians and against the Yazidi communities. They murdered a large number of civilians. They used rape as a weapon of war against women and girls.

The government yesterday, in both this place—Senator Wong, on behalf of the Prime Minister—and the House of Representatives—the Prime Minister himself—said there was nothing to see here. Yet, overnight, we now have reports that the acting chief of New South Wales police says that the state force is working with federal counterparts to finalise operations relating to the return of Islamic State brides and their children to Australia. So hold on—yesterday, in both the other place and in this place, there was nothing to see here in relation to what are incredibly concerning reports, but then, overnight, the acting chief of New South Wales police confirms, 'Yes, our state police force are working with our federal counterparts to finalise operations'—not to commence operations, not to consider operations but to finalise operations—'relating to the return of Islamic State brides and their children to Australia.' They have said they are working through the plan with the Commonwealth. So there are now serious questions to be answered by this government in relation to their knowledge of this matter and, more than that, what they are doing to ensure the national security of Australians.

Let us be clear. The return of people who made a conscious decision to leave the greatest country in the world—it is ironic, isn't it? Or maybe it's symbolic that yesterday was National Flag Day, and we were discussing this issue. There are people who are prepared to leave this country—which gives them everything, all the freedoms—to go back to a state and join a death cult that murders people, uses rape as a weapon of war and commits genocide.

Let us be very clear. This is not a question of compassion. The coalition sees this for exactly what every single Australian sees it as. This is a matter of national security. It doesn't matter what weasel words this government uses. These people have now been gone for a very long period of time. They are radicalised. They left Australia, quite frankly, because they do not like what we have here—the freedoms that each one of us stands up for and defends each day.

The government cannot guarantee that these individuals will not pose a threat to our way of life which, let's face it, they turned their backs on and which they hate. It's not about if they return now. This is where the government has got a lot of questions to answer. It is when. These people were exposed to radical ideologies. They lived in the heart of a terrorist caliphate. Now we are asked to believe that they can simply walk back into Australia: 'Hey, how are you going? Great to see you. Sorry I murdered a few women and children overseas. Sorry I used rape as an act of war.'

Senator Hanson, we will be supporting the suspension because the government has serious national security questions to answer.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (10:41): The government will not be supporting the suspension. I would like to say that the situation in Syria is becoming increasingly unstable. Our security agencies have been monitoring and continue to monitor the situation to ensure they are prepared for any Australian from this cohort returning home.

Let me be clear. The Australian government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps. The reporting is incorrect. That has been made clear in the Senate and in the House. It's nothing less than irresponsible to take that reporting on national security issues as fact when the reporting has been clearly rejected. The motion that the senator seeks to move refers to an operation that does not exist.

All Australians have a right to feel safe in their country, which is why our intelligence and security agencies are constantly monitoring any threats to our national security. Our agencies are aware of who the persons of interest are in this cohort. If any of those people find their own way to return, our agencies are satisfied that they are prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety. There is no higher priority for the Albanese government than keeping Australians safe. I move:

That the question be now put.

Question agreed to.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator O'Sullivan): The question is that the suspension of standing orders, as moved by Senator Hanson, be agreed to.

Senator Thorpe: No—Nazis!

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Cash?

Senator Cash: On a point of order. Thorpe may wish to withdraw the interjection she just made.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I didn't actually hear it because I was speaking at the time. Senator Thorpe, I invite you to please withdraw.

Senator Thorpe: I thought we were talking about terrorism. We have racist Nazis terrorising people in this country.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, that is unparliamentary. I've asked you to withdraw.

Senator Thorpe: I'm unparliamentary; you know that.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: If I need to get the President, I will.

Senator Thorpe: We know we have a problem with Nazis in this chamber.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, you don't have the call. I'm going to ask you one more time to please withdraw.

Senator Thorpe: I withdraw.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Hanson, is this on a different point of order? I've already ruled.

Senator Hanson: It is. Because of the distraction and the comments that were made up here, I was distracted with the vote. I'd ask the vote to be resubmitted again, please.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: That's a fair request.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion moved by Senator Hanson to suspend standing orders be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [10:49]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....25
Noes.....35
Majority.....10

AYES

Antic, A.
Blyth, L. (Teller)
Canavan, M. J.
Duniam, J. R.
Kovacic, M.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Scarr, P. M.
Whitten, T.

Askew, W.
Bragg, A. J.
Cash, M. C.
Hanson, P. L.
McGrath, J. A.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Roberts, M. I.
Sharma, D. N.

Babet, R. D.
Brockman, W. E.
Collins, J.
Henderson, S. M.
McKenzie, B. G.
O'Sullivan, M. A.
Ruston, A.
Smith, D. A.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Chisholm, A. D.
Darmanin, L.
Faruqi, M.
Green, N. L.
Hodgins-May, S.
McCarthy, M.
O'Neill, D. M.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Sterle, G.
Walker, C.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Ciccone, R.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K. (Teller)
Lines, S.
McKim, N. J.
Pocock, B.
Smith, M. F.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Walsh, J. C.
Whiteaker, E.

Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
McAllister, J. R.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Steele-John, J. A.
Thorpe, L. A.
Waters, L. J.

PAIRS

Cadell, R. P.
Chandler, C.
Colbeck, R. M.
Hume, J.
Liddle, K. J.
McDonald, S. E.

Tyrrell, T. M.
Farrell, D. E.
Sheldon, A. V.
Ayres, T.
Wong, P.
Watt, M. P.

Question negatived.

BILLS

Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025**Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (10:52): The coalition have made it clear that we will be supporting the passage of this Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025. We do so because the measures are necessary. What they will do is strengthen Australia's removal framework and help ensure that dangerous noncitizens, particularly members of the so-called NZYQ cohort, which we know includes rapists, paedophiles, murderers and a contract killer, cannot abuse our courts and our legal system to prolong their stay in our country.

What the bill before us will do is tighten the law so that members of this cohort cannot continue to run endless legal delaying tactics. That is why the opposition is voting in favour of the bill. But I need to be very clear: supporting this bill does not mean that we give Mr Albanese and Mr Tony Burke as the minister a blank cheque. Far from it. Last night, we had a short hearing into this bill and, I have to say, every time I asked a question and got another answer it became even more disturbing in relation to what this bill is not doing. It was made incredibly clear to us by the officials at the table that this is a bill that is all about the legal issue of procedural fairness.

I said we support what the bill is doing. However, the coalition has an amendment, because what we want to ensure is community safety. There is no amendment put on the table by the government. The government, in this bill, does not deal with the issue of community safety. What we established last night is that there are still 354 members of the so-called NZYQ cohort roaming free in the Australian community. As I said, let us not forget, that cohort includes rapists, paedophiles, murderers and a contract killer. What came out of that hearing last night is, quite frankly, nothing short of extraordinary. That is what the government said, or what Mr Burke, in his press release, said.

We have now been told and we have worked out next to nothing, other than the announcement of so-called deal with Nauru. There is no detail. That is very clear from the answers I got to the questions I asked last night. There is no transparency—do not worry about that. There is definitely no transparency. But what is worse is that there are just vague assurances, and now we know why.

Last night, I pursued a line of questioning in relation to how much it is costing the Australian taxpayer; Mr Burke has said a particular figure, so let's now work through that figure. The figure that Mr Burke put on the table was that the deal with Nauru, on behalf of the Australian taxpayer, was going to cost them \$408 million. What they didn't tell the Australian taxpayer is this: officials last night revealed that this particular deal could cost Australian taxpayers more than \$2.5 billion over 30 years. That's right—not \$408 million but \$2.5 billion.

Quite frankly, that was probably a conservative estimate because, under the agreement, Australia will pay straight up to Nauru \$20 million the very first moment a detainee sets foot on the island. On top of that, we will put \$388 million into a trust account, with every cent of interest earned on that trust account to flow directly to Nauru. Senator Pocock asked some very good questions last night in relation to what the interest on that money could eventually be worth. It could actually be worth billions of dollars.

But here's the kicker. Despite the big announcement by the government, Nauru gets the final veto. They get to pick and choose who they take. 'There are 354 of them. We don't like 350 of them. They're staying on the street in Australia.' Worse than that, they could actually take zero. There is no obligation to take anyone from the NZYQ cohort at all. There was big fanfare from Mr Burke, but, when you look at the details, Nauru determines who is taken, not the Australian government. Nauru can say no. They could say yes to one, they could say yes to two, or they could get to 10 out of the 354 and say, 'Seriously, we've had enough.'

Officials confirmed that to access the \$2.5 billion—get this!—Nauru does have to take a minimum number of individuals. They get \$2.5 billion of Australian taxpayers' money—big deal—and 354 is the cohort. When I asked the officials, 'What is the minimum number of the cohort that needs to be taken for Nauru to trigger, effectively, the \$70 million a year that is going to be paid to them for the 30 years?' the poor officials said—and this is no reflection on the officials; they merely provide the evidence, and this is a reflection on Mr Burke—that the number has not even been agreed.

This is where we are—a big headline by Labor, a big announcement, which the press loved. Then, when we look into the details of it, we are committing taxpayers to billions of dollars over three decades without a firm guarantee from Nauru as to how many of this cohort they will take. This is, quite frankly, an extraordinary state of affairs, and it raises a very, very simple question: what exactly is the Albanese government doing? Australians deserve to know where their money is being spent. They deserve to know if billions of dollars are being transferred offshore with no certainty that they will actually deliver what the government claims. As Andrew Hastie, the member for Canning and shadow minister for home affairs, said in his speech in the other place, 'This deal looks less like a serious plan for removals and more like a very expensive exercise in political damage control.' If you look at the press release, the media got excited and reported on the deal—\$408 million. That was just the tip of the iceberg.

There is no transparency. There is no accountability. There are actually no details at the moment, just vagueness. The reality is that even with this legislation—and the legislation will go through; let me make it very clear that the coalition will support this legislation—even with the Nauru deal, 354 members of the NZYQ cohort remain where they currently are. And let's not forget who these people are. They are murderers, they are rapists and they are paedophiles, and there is a contract killer. I think most Australians would think, after I've said that, that it's pretty obvious where they are: they're behind bars. But no. This is the Albanese government. Good grief! Behind bars is the obvious answer. But think un-obvious. Think, 'Where wouldn't you put these people?' That is what this government has done, compromising community safety. These people are on the streets, mixing in our communities. The bill does nothing to remove one of them—not one. What it does do is make it easier, on paper, to deport them, with no guarantee that they will actually leave.

The government has known since last November that this cohort would be released into the community. Yet, instead of coming forward with a strong, credible plan to keep Australians safe from the mess it created by putting these people into the Australian community, it has literally lurched from one stopgap measure to the next. I think this is the fifth piece of legislation that we are now dealing with and that we are told is urgent so we've got to get it through the Australian Senate, because the government made a mistake first up. At every stage, the coalition has had to drag the government kicking and screaming to act. We forced them to bring forward emergency legislation last year. They weren't going to. We pushed for stronger visa conditions. We demanded tougher monitoring and reporting. And today—and let me be clear; as I said, we're supporting this bill—we are calling for more. We want our community to be safe.

That is why we will be moving sensible amendments to this legislation—amendments that even the officials admitted will make a—

Senator Thorpe interjecting—

Senator Scarr: A point of order regarding personal reflection, Senator Thorpe should withdraw that comment, that interjection she made.

Senator Thorpe interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, it's not your job to make a comment here. It's your job to listen in respectful silence.

Senator Thorpe interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, if you can't sit in silence, leave the chamber. It's an interjection. It's disorderly. Please continue, Senator Cash.

Senator CASH: As I said, that is why the coalition will today be moving sensible amendments to this legislation—amendments that will actually make a difference to the safety of the Australian community. After all, when you have people who are not meant to be here—murderers, rapists, paedophiles and a contract killer—then, yes, you should as a government put the Australian people first, not the people who should not be here. So we will be urging the government to adopt provisions for preventive detention to ensure that the worst of this cohort can be taken away from the Australian community and detained if they pose an ongoing risk. We will be urging the government to close loopholes in mandatory detention—loopholes that are being exploited right now, as I give this speech here in the Australian Senate.

The people who are affected ultimately are mum-and-dad Australia, who wake up every morning and just want to go about their business safely. But the government have made it clear that they don't want to hear it. This is the fact, though: unless the government accepts strong measures, many of these individuals will remain in Australia for years and years to come. So we are saying that the coalition supports this bill, because the issue of procedural fairness needs to be dealt with, but that is not enough. So, while we'll not stand in the way of the passage of this bill, we will continue to hold the Albanese government to account. We will continue to demand, as we should on behalf of the Australian taxpayer, transparency. We will continue to demand, on behalf of the Australian taxpayer, in relation to the Nauru deal, that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

But, above all, this is our first priority, and it's always been the first priority of a coalition government: national security. The sole responsibility when it comes to the fundamental responsibilities of a Commonwealth government is the security of our great nation and our people. If you cannot guarantee the security of our great nation and our people, then, quite frankly, you don't deserve to be in government.

As I said, when we go to the guillotine at 1 pm—these bills will go to a guillotine—we won't have an opportunity to properly interrogate the amendments, but there will be amendments that are on the table that even the departmental officials last night acknowledged will make a difference to community safety. The government is not proceeding with them in this bill and that is a great shame, but we know why.

The government are not serious about the safety of everyday Australians. They are more interested in protecting the rights of people in the NZYQ cohort, who should not be in this country. As I said, when you look at the 354 people, the cohort does include—it is a fact; I'm not making it up—the rapists, the paedophiles, the murderers and a contract killer. I would've thought, given these people are in the Australian community, the government would be saying to the coalition, 'We'll accept any amendment that you put forward.' In fact, I'm happy if the government make it their own. I'm not here to say the coalition has to have a win here; I want the Australian people to have the win. I want mum-and-dad Australia to know that at least one party of government, the coalition, will always put them first—will always put the safety and security of this great country first. And, as I said, we celebrated Australian National Flag Day yesterday—124 years of flying that fantastic flag.

Australians know, quite frankly, instinctively, what this government seems to have forgotten: they're not negotiable; their safety is not negotiable; community safety is not negotiable. It is, as I said, the first duty of any government. When we were in government, it was always our priority to ensure that Australians, on a daily basis, could get up and know that they had a government that put them first, that believed in national security. The opposition's role is to hold the government to account, and I think it is a very sad day. The bill will pass, but it does nothing to improve the safety of Australians.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (11:07): Here's yet another bill to fix yet another Labor-Liberal 'uniparty' immigration failure. Australian lives are endangered as a result. This is one reason, just one of many, why people marched, in their tens of thousands—across Australia, from north to west to south—on Sunday. And then we have the Labor-Greens communist coalition smearing and denigrating everyday Australians for doing so.

The Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025 has come about as a result of the poor planning and forethought by the Labor government, and, previously to that, by the coalition when in government, allowing unregulated, unsuitable, dangerous immigrants into Australia without adequate screening as to suitability to enter Australia—murderers, armed robbers, paedophiles and a contract killer.

The current visa process, which has seen mass immigration into Australia of excessive, unsuitable migrants, is a clear policy failure by the Albanese Labor government. People have failed to be accepted as genuine refugees and been denied protection visas after multiple assessments, and the government has found that there are difficulties in deporting those people. We told them that. The coalition told them that. Many of these criminals have re-offended in the community—again, murderers, armed robbers, paedophiles and a contract killer.

Around 280 people—the criminals released as a result of the High Court decision in NZYQ—will be deported under these provisions at a rough cost of \$1 million per head. That's how much we're supposed to be paying to Nauru. The Australian government has entered into a 30-year contract with the government of Nauru to accept deportees from Australia who are not allowed to remain in Australia. How about we don't bring in these people in the first place and focus on prevention and protection of our country? It's been speculated that about 1,000 people may be deported to Nauru over 30 years at a cost to Australia in excess of \$1 billion. How about we don't let in these people in the first place?

This bill is intended to fix this incredibly expensive mistake by the uni-party, which failed the Australian people by allowing criminals, rapists, murders and paedophiles to enter this country. They failed to properly check the criminal histories and cultural suitability of would-be immigrants to Australia. That's what the people were on the streets about last Sunday, across Australia.

Australians are entitled to be safe from the activities of those who are criminals, the scum of society, who wish to bring their ideas of hate and acceptance of violence into our mostly safe Australian society. The Greens, whose behaviour and beliefs fall well short of acceptable standards, would welcome these poisonous people into our country. Australians want these criminal noncitizens gone. We demand that all immigrants have in-depth checks done as to their history and suitability to enter Australia. The existing processing system has failed us repeatedly. We have not been kept safe. We've been exposed to violent criminals.

What has the Albanese government done to date? It has lied to us about the number of unfiltered migrants entering Australia, with mass immigration continuing to occur. Last year's estimates of net immigration were, in reality, exceeded by around 200,000 people. So the forecasted numbers were not only extraordinarily high; they were exceeded by 200,000. In previous years, the excess was 280,000. We have had more than half a million people coming into this country in net migration in years. What has Mr Albanese done? He promised that the next year they would be cut. They were increased. Then he promised again that they would be cut. They were increased.

The existence of this deportation option now means that, at last, there's a real prospect of the removal from Australia of those released criminals, and it may allow the government to rearrest and detain those people released into the community after the decision in NZYQ. All this hinges on the contract with Nauru and the passing of legislation contained in this bill. It's not enough, but it is welcome. I support this bill, which will go further in protecting innocent Australians from the failed immigration policies of the Albanese government and, historically, the coalition.

I want to go back to the protests to give people a voice in Australia. People are uneasy across Australia with mass immigration—not with migrants but with mass immigration. The protests are not about religion, skin colour or past nationality. They're about mass immigration. It's about the numbers swamping our country, housing and homelessness. There's record homelessness in my state of Queensland, from Cairns in the north to Coolangatta in the south. In every major provincial city in between, there is record homelessness. It's about swamping the infrastructure, traffic and services like education and hospitals. It's also about mass immigration because mass immigration doesn't adequately filter people. So it's about the quality of people.

We want people who contribute to our society and our economy, who are productive from the moment their feet hit the shores of this country, not who send PBS drugs home or who sign up for welfare. Most importantly of all for the spirit of the country, the culture of the country, the cohesion of the country and the unity across the country, we want them to assimilate into Australia, not to change Australia but to be changed by Australia. We want people to fit into the country. That's why we've got to stop this multicultural rubbish. Multiculturalism prevents assimilation. It ensures the past culture they've come from continues, and then we have a fractured country. I talked yesterday about this.

Government has three roles. That's it. They are to protect life, protect property, protect freedom. Stay the hell out of people's lives but give them a secure environment in which to live and a free environment. We need to restore Australia. Last Sunday was the first step in that. To people across the country, thank you so much for standing up. Thank you so much for reclaiming Australia. We want more. The Australian people need more.

Debate interrupted.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Hanson-Young to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following matter be referred to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by 24 November 2025:

- (1) Gambling advertising in Australian society, with particular reference to:
 - (a) the impact of gambling on Australian communities, families and children;
 - (b) the harm caused by gambling advertising and inducements, and their role in gambling addiction and the grooming of young gamblers;
 - (c) the impact and financial relationship of gambling advertising, media companies and sporting codes, including consideration of alternate funding streams;
 - (d) the various provisions as outlined in the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Ban Gambling Ads) Bill 2024;
 - (e) the government's response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm, chaired by the late Peta Murphy; and
 - (f) any other related matters.

(2) That the committee have the power to consider and use the records of the Environment and Communications References Committee appointed in the previous parliament.

COMMITTEES
Selection of Bills Committee
Report

Senator DARMANIN (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (11:15): I present the sixth report for 2025 of the Selection of Bills Committee. I seek leave to have the report incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The report read as follows—

Selection of Bills Committee

REPORT NO. 6 OF 2025

4 September 2025

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Senator Lisa Darmanin (Acting Government Whip, Chair)
Senator Wendy Askew (Opposition Whip)
Senator Pauline Hanson (Pauline Hanson's One Nation Whip)
Senator Nick McKim (Australian Greens Whip)
Senator Ralph Babet
Senator Leah Blyth
Senator Ross Cadell
Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm
Senator Jessica Collins
Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher
Senator Jacqui Lambie
Senator Fatima Payman
Senator David Pocock
Senator Tony Sheldon (Government Whip)
Senator Lidia Thorpe
Secretary: Tim Bryant 02 6277 3020

SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE

REPORT NO. 6 OF 2025

1. The committee met in private session on Wednesday, 3 September 2025 at 7.11pm.
2. The committee recommends that —
 - (a) the **provisions** of the Australian Centre for Disease Control Bill 2025 and the Australian Centre for Disease Control (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2025 be **referred immediately** to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 24 October 2025;
 - (b) the **provisions** of the Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025 be **referred immediately** to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 30 October 2025 (see appendix 1 for a statement of reasons for referral);
 - (c) the **provisions** of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Board of Management Functions) Bill 2025 be **referred immediately** to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 23 October 2025 (see appendix 2 for a statement of reasons for referral); and
 - (d) the **provisions** of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes No. 2) Bill 2025 be **referred immediately** to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 21 October 2025 (see appendix 3 for a statement of reasons for referral).
3. The committee recommends that the following bills **not** be referred to committees:
 - Australian Education Legislation Amendment (Prohibiting the Indoctrination of Children) Bill 2020
 - Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2025
4. The committee deferred consideration of the following bills to its next meeting:
 - Administrative Review Tribunal and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025
 - Broadcasting Services Amendment (Audio Description) Bill 2019
 - Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024
 - Competition and Consumer Amendment (Divestiture Powers) Bill 2024

- Competition and Consumer Amendment (Make Price Gouging Illegal) Bill 2024
- Constitution Alteration (Right to Free Speech) 2025
- Copyright Legislation Amendment (Fair Pay for Radio Play) Bill 2023
- Crimes Amendment (Repeal Mandatory Minimum Sentences) Bill 2025
- Customs Legislation Amendment (Commercial Greyhound Export and Import Prohibition) Bill 2021
- Digital ID Repeal Bill 2024
- Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Communications) Bill 2025
- Electoral Legislation Amendment (Fair Territory Representation) Bill 2024
- Electoral Legislation Amendment (Fairer Contracts and Grants) Bill 2023
- Electoral Legislation Amendment (Lowering the Voting Age) Bill 2023
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Climate Trigger) Bill 2022
- Fair Work Amendment (Paid Reproductive Health Leave and Flexible Work Arrangements) Bill 2025
- Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures No. 1) Bill 2025
- Higher Education Support Amendment (End Dirty University Partnerships) Bill 2025
- Housing Australia Amendment (Accountability) Bill 2025
- Housing Investment Probity Bill 2024
- Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Amendment (Consideration of UNDRIP) Bill 2023
- Landholders' Right to Refuse (Gas and Coal) Bill 2015
- Lobbying (Improving Government Honesty and Trust) Bill 2025
- National Housing and Homelessness Plan Bill 2024
- Private Health Insurance (National Joint Replacement Register Levy) Amendment Bill 2025
- Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Amendment (Ban Unethical Contractors) Bill 2025
- Right to Protest Bill 2025
- Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Responding to Robodebt) Bill 2025 [No. 2]
- Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Amendment (Frontline Emergency Service Workers) Bill 2025
- Treasury Laws Amendment (Strengthening Financial Systems and Other Measures) Bill 2025

5. The committee considered the following bills but was unable to reach agreement:

- Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2025
- Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025
- Interactive Gambling Amendment (Ban Gambling Ads) Bill 2024

(Lisa Darmanin)

Chair

4 September 2025

Appendix 1

SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE

Proposal to refer a bill to a committee

Name of bill:

Defence Amendment (Defence Honors and Awards Appeals tribunal) Bil (Originated in the House of Representatives on Thursday 28 August 2025)

Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:

To scrutinize this legislation and to hear from stakeholders.

Possible submissions or evidence from:

Interested parties and stakeholders

Committee to which bill is to be referred: Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade Legislation Committee

Possible hearing date(s): September to October 2025

Possible reporting date: 30 OCTOBER 2025

(signed)

Print name: SENATOR WENDY ASKEW

Appendix 2

SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE**Proposal to refer a bill to a committee**

Name of bill:

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Board of Management Functions) Bill

(Originated in the House of Representatives on Wednesday 27 August 2025)

Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration: To scrutinize this legislation and to hear from stakeholders.

Possible submissions or evidence from: Interested parties and stakeholders

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

Possible hearing date(s): September to October 2025

Possible reporting date: 23 OCTOBER 2025

(signed)

Print name: SENATOR WENDY ASKEW

Appendix 3

SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE**Proposal to refer a bill to a committee**

Name of bill:

Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes No. 2) Bill (To be originated in the House of Representatives on Thursday 4 September 2025)

Reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration: To scrutinize this legislation and to hear from stakeholders.

Possible submissions or evidence from: Interested parties and stakeholders

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

Possible hearing date(s): September and October 2025

Possible reporting date: 21 OCTOBER 2025

(signed)

Print name: SENATOR WENDY ASKEW

Senator DARMANIN: I move:

That the report be adopted.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (11:15): I move:

At the end of the motion, add ", and:

(a) the provisions of the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2025 be referred immediately to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 20 November 2025; and

(b) the provisions of the Administrative Review Tribunal and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 be referred immediately to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 13 November 2025".

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (11:16): I move an amendment to the amendment:

Paragraph (a), omit "20 November 2025", substitute "3 December 2025".

Paragraph (b), omit "13 November 2025", substitute "24 November 2025".

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the amendment as moved by Senator Duniam to Minister Gallagher's amendment be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [11:22]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....40
Noes.....24
Majority.....16

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Babet, R. D.
Brockman, W. E.

Antic, A.
Blyth, L.
Canavan, M. J.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Bragg, A. J.
Colbeck, R. M.

Collins, J.
Hanson, P. L.
Hodgins-May, S.
Liddle, K. J.
McKim, N. J.
O'Sullivan, M. A.
Pocock, B.
Ruston, A.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Thorpe, L. A.
Whitten, T.

Duniam, J. R.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Kovacic, M.
McGrath, J. A.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Pocock, D. W.
Scarr, P. M.
Smith, D. A.
Waters, L. J.

Faruqi, M.
Henderson, S. M.
Lambie, J.
McKenzie, B. G.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Payman, F.
Roberts, M. I.
Sharma, D. N.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Chisholm, A. D.
Darmanin, L. (Teller)
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K.
Mulholland, C.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Ayres, T.
Cicccone, R.
Dolega, J.
Ghosh, V.
Lines, S.
O'Neill, D. M.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Green, N. L.
McCarthy, M.
Polley, H.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

PAIRS

Cadell, R. P.
Cash, M. C.
Chandler, C.
Hume, J.
McDonald, S. E.

Sheldon, A. V.
Wong, P.
Farrell, D. E.
Watt, M. P.
McAllister, J. R.

Question agreed to.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of the Australian Greens) (11:23): I move the amendment standing in Senator Nick McKim's name:

At the end of the amendment, add:

(c) the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025 be referred immediately to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 3 November 2025"; and

(d) the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Ban Gambling Ads) Bill 2024 be referred immediately to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 24 November 2025.

Here we are again, with Labor and the Liberals teaming up one more time to shut down debate, to shut down scrutiny on a cooked bill that punches down on migrants and on refugees. What a surprise! I do want to associate myself with the comments that Senator Shoebridge has made all along on this horrific, monstrous bill. You just don't get tired in this race with each other on who is going to punish, who is going to crack down on and who is going to strip natural justice from migrants and refugees. No-one wins in this race except racism, unfairness and injustice.

Labor senators stand here and speak about what a great multicultural nation this is. They criticise the anti-immigration rallies. They still don't condemn them, but they do criticise them. They talk about welcoming different races. They talk about humanity and respect. This is what Senator Wong spoke about yesterday. But, in the same breath, you did the exact opposite. You rammed through laws that will deport these very same people that you say are welcome here without giving any opportunity for natural justice. You silenced the sector by locking them out of the three-hour inquiry. You didn't accept public submissions, but the Greens have tabled those submissions. You did a secret deal—a \$400 million bribe to Nauru—to deport people. It's \$2.5 billion now. You are such hypocrites. You are hypocrites of the highest order, talking about multiculturalism on the one hand and then ramming through a racist bill on the other. You praise migrants for what they bring to this country, you eat our food and you enjoy our festivals, but then you stitch up dirty deals with the coalition to demonise us. That is what this bill does—it demonises migrants and refugees. You criticise the likes of One Nation for scapegoating migrants, blaming them for the housing crisis, when you have done exactly the same. You blamed international students for the housing

crisis. That's how far right you have gone. I don't know who you have become. Who is the Labor Party now? You talk about a fair go, but then you legislate anti-fairness.

I'll tell you what the Labor Party has become. You have become a party with the most monstrous policies on migrants and people who seek asylum. Your cooked policies would make Donald Trump proud. Do you know what? You have actually won, so congratulations to you. You have actually won this race to the bottom with the coalition on who can be more anti migrant and more anti refugee. You have won it—congratulations! You have sacrificed basic humanity, human dignity, human decency and fairness to push through your racist bill. Shame on you. What a disgrace.

You want to hide your nastiness by completely stopping scrutiny on this legislation. This is the harsh truth which you need to listen to. You have never seen us—people of colour and migrants of colour—as equals. Our belonging to this country, our Australianness, has always been conditional. This bill is just another example of how conditional our belonging is. Shame on you. You are all a disgrace.

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory—Independent ACT Whip) (11:28): I just want to put on the record the many concerns I've heard from people in the ACT about the way that the government is rushing through a bill which Senator Shoebridge and Senator Cash methodically proved is not actually urgent. Many Canberrans have very deep concerns about the way that this is happening in our parliament, with a total lack of scrutiny and what seems to be going against the Labor values that we heard about before the last two elections.

On the broader issue of a deal with Nauru to send people who we have been told are too much of a risk to our community to be released, that we simply cannot release these people into our community for fear of what may happen to Australians, we are happy to pay Nauru to take them. They're a small island nation. We are going to pay them \$2½ billion to \$7-plus billion over the next 30 years to do that. It doesn't bode well, given the majority they have in the House, if this is the way that the government are going to treat the parliament.

Senator THORPE (Victoria—Independent VIC Whip) (11:30): It is dangerous and disgusting that, in the same week that Neo-Nazis paraded the streets calling for a white Australia, the Labor government is rushing through harsh anti-immigration deportation laws that will impact—surprise, surprise!—black and brown people the hardest. The Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025 paves the way for the mass deportation of migrants and refugees with no legal safeguards and no opportunity for protection. Australia's immigration regime is so brutal that even Trump pointed to Australia's system and said:

That is a good idea. We should do that too. You are worse than I am.

Shame! He took inspiration from this colony, from the Labor government, just like South Africa got its inspiration for apartheid from the Aboriginals Protection Act in Queensland.

It is racist laws like these that form the fabric of this colony, and this has been the case since the invasion of our sacred lands. This creates a hotbed for white supremacy. White supremacy doesn't happen in a vacuum. It has been allowed to flourish as racist and divisive laws and attitudes to non-white people are laid into the very foundations of this colony, as we see today. Some might assimilate, and I don't know how they sleep at night.

If the Nazis were in parliament today—or maybe they are—they would applaud—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, withdraw the comment you made.

Senator THORPE: 'If the Nazis were in parliament today'?

The PRESIDENT: There's no need to repeat it. I've asked you to withdraw it.

Senator THORPE: What is wrong with this?

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, you are not in a debate with me. I've asked you to withdraw, and I expect you to withdraw.

Senator THORPE: Very hard, this violent colony, but I withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: I've told you before that you don't put statements with a withdrawal. You simply withdraw the statement.

Senator THORPE: I withdraw the statement, master.

The PRESIDENT: No. You can withdraw that as well.

Senator THORPE: I withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Senator THORPE: Well, the Nazis would be very happy with the parliament today. They would applaud these laws and shake Albanese's hand, in fact. I wonder who is providing the advice to the Albanese government if it's

not the Nazis that we saw on the weekend. Congratulations, Labor. You've managed to impress the white supremacists and the cooks in this chamber who support them and speak at their rallies on—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, once again, withdraw that comment.

Senator THORPE: Should I have my speeches checked by you, President?

The PRESIDENT: You're not in a debate with me. I've asked you to withdraw; I expect you to withdraw. May I remind everyone in this chamber that we have all signed up to a respectful parliament, and that includes what you say in this place.

Senator THORPE: You can talk about racists and murderers, but I can't talk about—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, if you don't withdraw, you won't have the call.

Senator Faruqi interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Faruqi, I'm simply dealing with Senator Thorpe at the moment. I will happily come to you once Senator Thorpe has withdrawn.

Senator THORPE: I withdraw.

Senator Ruston: That's not a withdrawal!

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator Ruston.

An honourable senator: Leave it alone.

Senator THORPE: I can't talk about what is the real truth of the country and about the white supremacy that continues to roll out in my workplace. It is not a safe workplace for black and brown people in the Senate or in this building. But let's be clear: this is the Labor Party and the Liberal Party openly continuing a new era of the White Australia policy. Congratulations! Sounds about white.

Bills like these normalise racism and white supremacy in the highest places of power in the colony. The dream of a white Australia is the foundation of this colonial construct: terra nullius, to pretend the land was empty; and genocide, to make sure it would be. Senator Wong publicly condemned last weekend's marches and, in the next breath, rushed through one of the cruellest mass-deportation bills in the world. What the politicians say publicly, on their socials and in the media is very different to what they do in this chamber. Back-door deals—fake, power-hungry, racist politicians.

I want to make clear that no colonial government in this country has the right to say who and who isn't illegal on stolen land. First Peoples do not use immigrants and refugees as political footballs. We make sure that people are welcome and follow the proper protocol of our land. To the people out there who are scared about what this bill means for them and their families: you are welcome here and you are not alone. We know what racism looks like in this country and we see it every day. Stay safe. Look after each other. Together we will continue to resist white supremacy in this country, in this colony and in this parliament.

Senator Lambie: I ask that the question be put separately for paragraphs (a) and (b) of the Greens amendment, as moved by Senator McKim.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Lambie.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia—Manager of Australian Greens Business in the Senate) (11:37): I rise to speak in favour of the Greens amendment, as circulated by Senator McKim. I think it is appalling that, today, what we see is a stitch-up between the Labor Party—the government—and the coalition to shut down an inquiry into gambling advertising in Australia. Both the Labor Party and the coalition have gotten together today to stop the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Ban Gambling Ads) Bill 2024 going to an inquiry because they do not want this issue debated.

I don't know what has happened, between the Peta Murphy report recommendations being handed down and today, that has made the Liberal Party and the Labor Party so scared of the gambling lobby, so scared of the gambling companies and so scared to do anything that was recommended by the Peta Murphy report, which said the single most important thing you could do is stop the advertising of this harmful product. Gambling addiction kills. It ruins lives. It ruins families. It bankrupts businesses. Gambling advertising pushes a dangerous and deadly product, and it is pushing it down the throats of our children, our young people and, in particular, young men across the country.

We have heard expert after expert talk about how insidious and dangerous the advertising of gambling is. We've heard from parents who are crying out for regulation and help because gambling companies are getting straight into the hands of their young boys and their teenagers. We've heard directly from children themselves and from young addicted people about how hard it is to get away from being induced and bombarded by gambling advertising. We've heard the sorrows and the pain from families who have lost sons, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers because of the death that gambling addiction brings.

If you can't bring yourselves to stare down the gambling industry and to stop them from pushing this toxic, deadly product into the hands and faces of our children, you do not have the courage required to lead. It is time to stop the excuses, to do something to stop these gambling companies ruining our children's lives, ruining our families and bankrupting our community. Australians lose more money in gambling per capita than anywhere else in the world. We are addicted to the gambling industry. It takes political courage to do something about it.

The Prime Minister has a supermajority in the House. We've heard the opposition say that they care about this issue, that they are worried about the pain this is bringing to families. Well, stop dragging your feet. Today's blocking of this bill going to an inquiry just shows the lack of courage that both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party have. Stop being scared. Stand up for the Australian people and for the safety of our children.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (11:41): We've just heard the Australian Greens talking about teaming up to block scrutiny of legislation and hiding things from the gaze of this parliament. So it's probably a good opportunity to remind ourselves that not so long ago did the Australian Greens team up with the Australian government, the Labor Party, to stop scrutiny of legislation around actually making sure that this parliament could function. If we want to talk about dodgy deals and people teaming up to prevent scrutiny, why on earth were we not allowed to have scrutiny of legislation that would ensure crossbenchers and the opposition in this place would be appropriately resourced to ensure that we can do our jobs properly to scrutinise legislation, as the speaker from the Greens just said?

We know exactly why. I think my colleagues on the crossbench, the Independent senators, know it's because of the buy-now pay-later arrangement that was entered into by the Australian Greens for their sumptuously appointed, beautifully furnished new party room down the end of the building here in return for their silence on these arrangements around staff. So they come in here and they feign outrage about the lack of scrutiny and terrible deals between the government and the opposition. What about exposing what we saw last week when it came to that crowd, the Australian Greens, who'll happily sell out for all of these sorts of arrangements in order to prevent us from having a proper discussion around resourcing for non-government parties in this place except for the Australian Greens? They're the ones who did alright out of this. Not only do they get to keep their staff but they get that beautiful room. We've all seen the pictures. A million dollars worth of taxpayers' money was put into this and it means no scrutiny. If we want to talk about deals done between parties, there is the best one I've seen so far. It's tangible, clear to see for all and something that I think we should not forget about when it comes to this discussion around deals done between parties.

Whether you want to call it 'buy now, pay later', 'click and collect', frequent shopper' or 'frequent flyer upgrades', that's what the Australian Greens are in it for here. Whatever the price is, they will happily accept it and they will do it in order to get whatever it is they want in any transaction in this parliament. So I will not have them come in here and talk about the hypocrisy of parties when, in fact, they are the worst offenders when it comes to this sort of thing.

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (11:43): What we are seeing here is the continuation of a decade-long collusion between the Labor Party and the coalition to destroy the lives of people who seek asylum in this country. We have seen it for decades, and we have seen literally thousands of lives destroyed by this lockstep in cruelty, this deliberate demonisation of people who seek asylum in this country. As someone who visited the detention centre, the offshore prison, on Manus Island many times—the so-called Lombrum detention centre, the Lombrum offshore prison—let me tell you categorically how many white people there were locked up in that prison: absolutely none. Every single one of the well north of a thousand people who went through was black- or brown-skinned.

The PRESIDENT: The time for this debate has expired. The question is that the amendment as moved by Senator Faruqi, standing in the name of Senator McKim, part (a)—bearing in mind Senator Lambie's request to split (a) and (b)—be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [11:49]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....13
Noes.....25
Majority.....12

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.

Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Thorpe, L. A.

Waters, L. J.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L.
Duniam, J. R.
Green, N. L.
Mulholland, C.
Ruston, A.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Lambie, J.
O'Neill, D. M.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Lines, S.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Question negatived.

The PRESIDENT (11:51): I'll now put part (b) of that amendment. The question is that part (b) of the amendment as moved by Senator Faruqi on behalf of Senator McKim be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [11:52]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....14
Noes.....25
Majority.....11

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Waters, L. J.

Faruqi, M.
Lambie, J.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Thorpe, L. A.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L.
Duniam, J. R.
Green, N. L.
O'Neill, D. M.
Scarr, P. M.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Lines, S.
Polley, H.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Mulholland, C.
Ruston, A.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Question negatived.

The PRESIDENT (11:54): The question now is that the government amendment, as amended, be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Original question, as amended, agreed to.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (11:55): I move:

That general business notice of motion no. 179 standing in the name of Senator Henderson, relating to the Albanese Government, be considered during general business today.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Postponement

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

Business of the Senate notices of motion nos 1 and 2 for today (Senator Lambie), till 27 October 2025.

General business notice of motion no. 34 (Senator Shoebridge), till 27 October 2025.

General business notice of motion no. 163 (Senator McKim), till 27 October 2025.

General business notice of motion no. 164 (Senator Barbara Pocock), till 27 October 2025.

General business notice of motion no. 166 (Senator Bragg), till 27 October 2025.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence

Senator DARMANIN (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (11:55): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senator Wong for today, on account of ministerial business.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Economics References Committee

Reference

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory—Independent ACT Whip) (11:56): I move:

That the following matter be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 9 December 2025:

The proposed takeover of Santos Limited by the XRG Consortium, with particular reference to:

- (a) Australia's energy security and control over critical energy assets;
- (b) the impact on domestic energy prices and the tension between exports and domestic supplies;
- (c) the implications for the development of new gas fields;
- (d) the impact on economic sovereignty, diplomatic relations and national security of a foreign government being a major holder of critical energy infrastructure;
- (e) the impact on emissions and compliance with Australia's climate obligations;
- (f) decommissioning liabilities of Santos' existing assets;
- (g) the character of the bidders in the XRG Consortium, with regard to their internal governance and track records; and
- (h) any other related matters.

Question negatived.

BILLS

Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Amendment (Ban Unethical Contractors)

Bill 2025

First Reading

Senator BARBARA POCOCK (South Australia) (11:57): I move:

That the following bill be introduced:

A Bill for an Act to amend the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: I present the bill and move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator BARBARA POCOCK (South Australia) (11:58): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

Senator BARBARA POCKOCK: I table an explanatory memorandum and seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

The Greens are taking action to prevent unethical suppliers—like PwC—from securing government contracts.

This Bill is a strong response to the PwC tax leaks scandal and the recent decision to let them tender for government contracts again.

A strong response that has been sorely lacking from this Government.

The Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Amendment (Ban Unethical Contractors) Bill 2025 will strengthen our procurement framework by preventing unethical contractors from winning government contracts.

It will put new requirements on procuring officials to not give contracts to entities or persons who have engaged in unethical conduct.

This should be the bare minimum—we need a national debarment regime.

Australia's Commonwealth procurement framework is weak in comparison to similar countries.

A national debarment regime is not a radical or untested concept.

At least 20 other jurisdictions have a government-wide exclusion framework.

This Bill is the first step towards excluding unethical suppliers from winning government money.

I call on the Government to support this Bill that would establish a national debarment framework with a public register, bolstering integrity and improving transparency.

Australia's lack of a government-wide exclusion framework is an issue.

This has become especially clear after the PwC tax leaks scandal.

PwC is the epitome of an unethical supplier.

They colluded with foreign multinationals to defraud our tax system.

This was one of the most shocking breaches of public trust in recent memory.

They have continuously refused to cooperate with government inquiries.

They have not provided key documents to this chamber.

They are still under active investigation by the Australian Federal Police and the Tax Practitioners Board.

Yet there was nothing in our procurement rules to prevent them from contracting to government.

PwC was never banned from bidding for government contracts but, in the absence of a debarment regime, instead voluntarily stepped aside through a 'mutual agreement'.

The Commonwealth does not currently have a clear power to ban a firm that monetised confidential Treasury information.

This needs to change.

The need for this Bill is overwhelmingly evident as a result of PwC's unethical behaviour.

Despite strong opposition from the Senators involved in this matter, the Department of Finance has allowed PwC back into the fold of government contracting.

Last month, the Department of Finance announced their decision to greenlight PwC for government contracts, despite them misusing confidential government information to help multinational companies avoid tax laws.

Under this Bill's proposed changes, any potential supplier or tenderer who has engaged in unethical conduct that has, or is likely to have, an adverse impact on the integrity of, or public confidence in, the Commonwealth will be prevented from getting government procurement contracts for up to 5 years.

This is consistent with the first Greens additional recommendation in the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee's inquiry into management and assurance of integrity by consulting services, which recommended that the Government exclude PwC from government contracting for five years.

There is currently no effective deterrent.

This government has betrayed the Australian people who had very rightly held the expectation that the rogue consulting firm PwC would be held to account.

Letting PwC back into the fold of government contracting sends a message that you can rip off the system and face no real consequence under a Labor Government.

This decision is gutless.

It has undermined public confidence in government procurement.

We need to have stronger rules in place to prevent this from happening again.

Over the past decade, calls have been growing for a national debarment regime in Australia.

Many comparable jurisdictions have debarment and suspension regimes, including Western Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Commission, and the World Bank.

However, in Australia, there is no government-wide exclusion framework at the Commonwealth level.

In 2017, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) recommended that Australia should adopt a debarment regime to prevent bribery and corruption.

In 2018, the Senate Economics References Committee's inquiry into foreign bribery recommended that the Australian government implement a debarment regime.

In 2020, the Australian Law Reform Commission's report *Corporate Criminal Responsibility* recommended the development of a national debarment regime to restrict corporations convicted of criminal offences from obtaining government contracts.

According to the ALRC: "allowing criminally convicted corporations to enter into government contracts may undermine public trust in government, endanger public health and safety and increase the risk of misuse of public funds".

Recent submissions to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Reference Committee's consulting inquiry called for a broad Commonwealth debarment regime.

The Community and Public Sector Union said that, in reference to the Western Australian regime, a "similar broad debarment and suspension regime should be developed at a Commonwealth level to be a strong stick to dissuade consultancies from engaging in unethical behaviour".

In addition, the Justice and International Mission Unit, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia said that they support the Commonwealth Government "developing a whole-of-government policy to provide for penalties when a consultant engages in unethical conduct or breaches the required integrity standards".

Suppliers are required to abide by the Commonwealth Supplier Code of Conduct, but it does not apply to potential suppliers, only those who are under contract with the Commonwealth. There is already cause for terminating individual contracts, but nothing to signal to potential suppliers that unethical conduct is not acceptable.

A debarment regime would help to maintain public confidence in procurement by preventing irresponsible suppliers and tenderers from securing government contracts.

Commonwealth expenditure on procurement is substantial.

In 2023-24 there were 83,171 contracts published on AusTender with a combined value of \$99.58 billion.

This is a staggering amount of money that is spent with very little central oversight.

Labor vowed to crack down on consultants. They had a pre-election pledge to cut spending on external contractors, including consultants.

What do we get instead?

In 2024-25, Labor spent almost \$1 billion on outsourcing work to consulting firms.

This is more than the last year of the Morrison government.

This is a business-as-usual approach from Labor following the PwC scandal and a continued lack of transparency by a government which claims to be spending less, while in fact spending even more.

We know that outsourcing public service work to the private sector costs three times as much as hiring public servants to do the work.

It also erodes our public service.

This Bill would prevent unethical contractors from getting government contracts.

This Bill does not require the Minister to intervene in individual procurement decisions. This would risk politicisation and overreach.

Instead, it strengthens the procurement rules to make it clear that government agencies must not reward bad behaviour with contracts.

This Bill would also require a publicly available register of excluded entities to be created. This would hopefully be an effective deterrent against unethical behaviour.

The Greens believe in transparency in government, and we believe that government contracts should go to suppliers and tenderers that can demonstrate ethical conduct.

This Government has recognised that it can use its purchasing power for good.

The *Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Act 2025* ensures that businesses with 500 employees or more are required to meet gender equality targets to win government contracts.

In announcing that bill, Minister Gallagher said that the Government was using its purchasing power to better support gender equality outcomes.

While the Greens welcomed those changes, the Government must also use its purchasing power to ensure ethical procurement.

It must send a signal that access to public procurement markets requires compliance with laws and regulations, and ethical behaviour.

This Bill would do just that.

I commend the Bill to the Senate.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Housing Australia Amendment (Accountability) Bill 2025

First Reading

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (11:58): At the request of Senator Bragg, I move:

That the following bill be introduced:

A Bill for an Act to amend the *Housing Australia Act 2018*, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator ASKEW: I present the bill and move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (11:59): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

Senator ASKEW: I table an explanatory memorandum and seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

I am pleased to be given the opportunity to introduce the Housing Australia Amendment (Accountability) Bill 2025.

This bill stands to serve the Australian people, and ensure their tax dollars are spent responsibly, with the oversight of the entire Parliament, not simply at the whims of one Minister or political party.

At its core, the aim of this Bill is to provide parliamentary oversight on material changes to directions made under subsection 12(1) of the *Housing Australia Act 2018*, which together constitute the Housing Australia Investment Mandate.

The Housing Australia Investment Mandate includes the Home Guarantee Scheme, which Labor have expanded under the guise of solving Australia's housing crisis, all while experts and industry say it will only make the problem worse.

They have done this via a simple instrument that is not disallowable.

This is not in the spirit of delegated legislation, and Australians deserve better.

This Bill will give them better.

When the Coalition first introduced the Home Guarantee Scheme, it was a sensible and targeted policy that aimed to help low-income Australians who had low or no funding for a deposit.

The Labor Government have degraded this original idea for political purposes.

Under Labor, the Home Guarantee Scheme will now have no income caps on participants, no caps on placements available, and the prices of eligible properties will rise significantly.

These are material changes that deserve scrutiny.

Fundamentally, changes of this scope and scale should be subject to the oversight of elected officials.

We are not sent to this place to wave through the government's latest brain wave.

Yet under this government, despite the protests of many, the Home Guarantee Scheme will be significantly expanded, and there's nothing anyone can do about it.

The Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation Committee has previously declared that non-disallowable amendments to the Housing Australia Investment Mandate Direction do not satisfy the committee's expectations regarding the circumstances of their exemption from disallowance.

On 16 June 2021, the Senate resolved that:

"...delegated legislation should be subject to disallowance to permit appropriate parliamentary scrutiny and oversight unless there are exceptional circumstances and any claim that circumstances justify exemption from disallowance will be subjected to rigorous scrutiny with the expectation that the claim will only be justified in rare cases."

Moreover, in 2016, the Australian Law Reform Commission criticised the ever-expanding reach of delegated legislation, declaring:

"Important questions of policy, particularly when they affect individual rights, are often considered inappropriate subject matter for delegated legislation... The Law Council said that significant matters... should instead be set out in primary legislation, not in regulations"

The Albanese Government's use of delegated legislation dovetails with the growing body of evidence that they are one of the least transparent governments in Australian history

Recent work by the Centre for Public Integrity revealed the Albanese Government is less transparent than the Morrison Government, despite campaigning on a platform of integrity.

Under Labor, Freedom of Information transparency has significantly declined, with only 25 per cent of requests fully granted under Labor, down from nearly half in 2021-22.

Rejection of freedom of information requests spiked to 24 per cent in the government's first term.

The proportion of documents granted in full dropped from almost 60 per cent in 2012 to 25 per cent in the year to July 2024.

Official reviews of these decisions to block information found that only 45 per cent of the refusals were made on legitimate grounds, meaning more than half the justifications for secrecy were flawed.

Anthony Albanese said in 2019 when he was the Opposition Leader:

"We don't need a culture of secrecy. We need a culture of disclosure... Reform freedom of information laws so they can't be flouted as they have been by this government."

How times change.

I have been on the receiving end of these Labor redactions many times. Reams of documents blacked-out, the truth kept behind a veil of Labor secrecy.

Withholding the truth and exploiting delegated legislation are all a symptom of a much bigger disease that has affected this place.

And that is the disease of taking Australians for granted.

I remind all my colleagues: We in the Senate have a responsibility to represent Australians' best interests and uncover the truth.

Why is the government trying to stop this?

It is unacceptable.

Dr Catherine Williams, research director at the Centre for Public Integrity, said Labor's actions suggested a:

"deliberate effort to avoid scrutiny... The Senate is being blocked from fulfilling its constitutional role of holding the government to account. This trend is dangerous for democracy"

Our Parliament and democracy are not a plaything for those with power.

On 14 June 1951, Sir Robert Menzies said:

"Parliament is... an instrument of reasoned progress, largely because there are both Government and Opposition; the hammer and the 6 anvil, forging ideas and making laws."

This is what Australians believe. This is why they hold our Parliament and democracy in such high regard. They want us to do our jobs and ensure every dollar they give us is spent responsibly and appropriately.

That is why they vote us in.

This Bill will ensure that every government, no matter their political stripes, will be able to be held accountable for the directions they give under the *Housing Australia Act 2018*.

It is a Bill that will make our democracy better.

I commend the Bill to the Senate.

Senator ASKEW: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

DOCUMENTS

Australian Securities and Investments Commission

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (11:59): At the request of Senator Bragg, I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister for Finance, by no later than midday on Tuesday, 9 September 2025:

(a) any documents that detail the total amount of expenditure on domestic and international travel by the Board of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025; and

(b) a breakdown of the total amount of expenditure, specifically travel undertaken by:

- (i) the Chair, the Deputy Chair and the Commissioners,
- (ii) the Chief Executive Officer, and
- (iii) any other executive director within ASIC.

Question agreed to.

Internet Content Bills

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia—Australia's Voice Whip) (12:00): I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, by no later than 5 pm on Friday, 12 September 2025, copies of all letters, briefing notes, meeting agendas, meeting invitations, meeting notes, emails and text messages between the Minister for Communications (the minister) and/or her office and the Australian Communications and Media Authority and between the minister and/or her office and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts in relation to the discharge of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024 from the *Notice Paper* on 25 November 2024, analysis of why the bill failed to earn support in the Senate or in the community and preparations for any future legislation dealing with online misinformation and disinformation.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that general business notice of motion No. 167, standing in the name of Senator Payman, be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [12:04]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....34

Noes.....21

Majority.....13

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Blyth, L.
Cadell, R. P.
Duniam, J. R.
Henderson, S. M.
Kovacic, M.
McKim, N. J.
O'Sullivan, M. A.
Pocock, B.
Scarr, P. M.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Antic, A.
Bragg, A. J.
Canavan, M. J.
Faruqi, M.
Hodgins-May, S.
Liddle, K. J.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Pocock, D. W.
Sharma, D. N.
Thorpe, L. A.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Brockman, W. E.
Collins, J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Hume, J.
McGrath, J. A.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Payman, F.
Ruston, A.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Waters, L. J.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Ghosh, V.
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Stewart, J. N. A.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Green, N. L.
McCarthy, M.
Polley, H.
Walker, C.

Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L. (Teller)
Gallagher, K. R.
Lines, S.
Mulholland, C.
Sterle, G.
Whiteaker, E.

PAIRS

Babet, R. D.
Cash, M. C.
Chandler, C.
Colbeck, R. M.

Watt, M. P.
Wong, P.
Farrell, D. E.
Sheldon, A. V.

McDonald, S. E.
McKenzie, B. G.
Smith, D. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.

Ciccione, R.
Smith, M. F.
Grogan, K.
Walsh, J. C.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee

Reference

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia—Australia's Voice Whip) (12:07): I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 168 before asking that it be taken as a formal motion.

Leave granted.

Senator PAYMAN: I move the motion as amended:

That the following matter be referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 9 March 2026:

The illegal tobacco trade in Australia, with particular reference to:

- (a) the extent to which black market tobacco products are funding organised crime;
- (b) the extent to which the enforcement efforts of the federal government have been effective at deterring the trade of black market tobacco;
- (c) the extent to which the tobacco excise is beneficial in terms of public health;
- (d) whether present excise settings have contributed to the growth of the tobacco black market, and whether a freeze or reduction of the excise may help to lower demand for black market tobacco;
- (e) the effect the illegal tobacco trade is having on the budget as a result of lost excise revenue;
- (f) the rise of second-order crime committed as a result of the illegal tobacco trade, including the rise in firebombings of tobacconists, and the effect this crime is having on legitimate businesses; and
- (g) any other related matters.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that general business notice of motion No. 168 as amended and standing in the name of Senator Payman be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [12:09]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....23
Noes.....32
Majority9

AYES

Antic, A.
Bragg, A. J.
Canavan, M. J.
Henderson, S. M.
Liddle, K. J.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Payman, F.
Sharma, D. N.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Brockman, W. E.
Collins, J.
Hume, J.
McGrath, J. A.
O'Sullivan, M. A.
Ruston, A.
Thorpe, L. A.

Blyth, L.
Cadell, R. P.
Duniam, J. R.
Kovacic, M.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Scarr, P. M.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L. (Teller)
Faruqi, M.
Green, N. L.
Lines, S.
McKim, N. J.
Pocock, B.

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
McAllister, J. R.
Mulholland, C.
Pocock, D. W.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hodgins-May, S.
McCarthy, M.
O'Neill, D. M.
Polley, H.

Shoebridge, D. M.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Steele-John, J. A.
Walker, C.
Whiteaker, E.

Sterle, G.
Waters, L. J.

PAIRS

Babet, R. D.
Cash, M. C.
Chandler, C.
Colbeck, R. M.
McDonald, S. E.
McKenzie, B. G.
Smith, D. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.

Watt, M. P.
Wong, P.
Farrell, D. E.
Sheldon, A. V.
Cicccone, R.
Smith, M. F.
Grogan, K.
Walsh, J. C.

Question negatived.

DOCUMENTS

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia—Australia's Voice Whip) (12:11): I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, by no later than 5 pm on Friday, 12 September 2025, copies of all letters, briefing notes, meeting agendas, meeting invitations, meeting notes, emails and text messages between the Minister for Communications (the minister) and/or her office and the eSafety Commissioner and between the minister and/or her office and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts in relation to preparations for a legislated digital duty of care.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that general business notice of motion No. 169 standing in the name of Senator Payman be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [12:13]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....33
Noes.....21
Majority.....12

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Blyth, L.
Cadell, R. P.
Duniam, J. R.
Henderson, S. M.
Kovacac, M.
McKim, N. J.
O'Sullivan, M. A.
Pocock, B.
Scarr, P. M.
Steele-John, J. A.

Antic, A.
Bragg, A. J.
Canavan, M. J.
Faruqi, M.
Hodgins-May, S.
Liddle, K. J.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Pocock, D. W.
Sharma, D. N.
Waters, L. J.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Brockman, W. E.
Collins, J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Hume, J.
McGrath, J. A.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Payman, F.
Ruston, A.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Ghosh, V.
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Stewart, J. N. A.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Green, N. L.
McCarthy, M.
Polley, H.
Walker, C.

Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L. (Teller)
Gallagher, K. R.
Lines, S.
Mulholland, C.
Sterle, G.
Whiteaker, E.

PAIRS

Babet, R. D.
Cash, M. C.
Chandler, C.
Colbeck, R. M.
McDonald, S. E.
McKenzie, B. G.
Smith, D. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.

Watt, M. P.
Wong, P.
Farrell, D. E.
Sheldon, A. V.
Ciccone, R.
Smith, M. F.
Grogan, K.
Walsh, J. C.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Repeal Net Zero Bill 2025

First Reading

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (12:14): I move:

That the following bill be introduced:

A Bill for an Act to repeal legislation relating to emissions reduction targets, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator CANAVAN: I present the bill and move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (12:15): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

Senator CANAVAN: I table an explanatory memorandum and seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

I'd like to start by acknowledging the work of my Nationals Party colleague, Barnaby Joyce, who has been leading the charge on this topic through his Repeal Net Zero Bill in the other place, and many of my other Liberal and Nationals Party colleagues who are supporting him in these endeavours.

Australia committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the Glasgow climate change conference in December 2021. We did so on the premise that the whole world was decarbonising and that the major emitters were going to take it seriously, and, four years on, it's obvious that that's not the case.

Since then, energy prices have surged, industries have shut down and other countries are not pursuing net zero emissions. Net zero has left Australia poorer and with less industrial capacity.

Ever since adopting net zero emissions, inflation has gone through the roof in Australia. A big cause of the high inflation has been Australia's high energy prices.

Since signing up to net zero, electricity and gas prices have gone up by 40 per cent.

These price increases have occurred because Australia has shut down its reliable and cheap power stations, like coal, and installed more costly and intermittent renewable alternatives.

A recent report by the Page Research Centre shows that a new coal fired power station remains the cheapest form of electricity generation in Australia. Coal is 35 per cent cheaper than a renewable option backed by gas.

And while the government failed to talk about the cost of energy at their productivity roundtable even once, it is clear that skyrocketing power prices are the real productivity issue. Higher power costs mean everything we do across the economy becomes more expensive.

These higher energy costs are costing Australia its manufacturing industries. In just the three years since Australia signed up to net zero, we have lost our urea industry (the most important fertiliser), our plastics industry and our nickel industry.

These industries were heavy users of fossil fuels, and our net zero commitments are costing Australian jobs and vital industries.

For the first time since the early settlers, Australia cannot feed itself because we must now import fertiliser from China and the Middle East.

Thanks to Australia's high energy prices, we face the threat of losing over 8000 jobs in our smelters and refineries.

Over 10 smelters and refineries are right now asking for government support to stay open because they cannot pay the high (and ever-increasing) energy prices and remain viable.

Already, the Labor Government has announced a \$2 billion subsidy for the Whyalla steelworks, a \$2 billion fund for aluminium and a \$7 billion fund for critical minerals.

At the same time, Labor's net zero carbon tax (the so-called Safeguard Mechanism) puts at least a \$6 billion bill on these smelters and refineries to reach net zero. And this assumes the current carbon price of \$36 per tonne. If carbon prices double (as many expect), the bill could be well over \$10 billion.

So, on the one hand, we tax our manufacturing industry because of their high emissions and on the other we hand out taxpayer assistance to help pay the carbon tax bill!

Despite almost all countries agreeing to pursue net zero emissions at the Glasgow conference, global carbon emissions have continued to rise. Global annual carbon emissions have increased by 1.7 billion tonnes since net zero was adopted.

Since the Glasgow conference, China, India, Indonesia and Mongolia have all increased their annual coal mining output by 1.2 billion tonnes. That is more than double what Australia produces in a year.

The United States has now pulled out of the Paris agreement.

China, India and Indonesia did not sign up to the statement agreed at the last climate conference because it called on countries to limit coal investments.

China now produces more emissions in a fortnight than Australia does in a year.

The plan to reach net zero involves the installation of enormous amounts of wind and solar energy. Because wind and solar are much less dense forms of energy than coal, gas or nuclear, they take up much more land and thus have a bigger impact on our environment.

Compared to nuclear power, solar takes up 60 times more land, and wind around 300 times more land. Even coal-fired power has a smaller footprint than large scale onshore wind and solar.

A report by Net Zero Australia states that a land area of more than 120,000km²/ (or equivalent to half the size of the state of Victoria) would be needed for renewable energy. And, that another 50,000km²/, or 5 million hectares, of agricultural land would need to be reforested for carbon offsets.

All this, while our pristine rainforests are being cleared in the name of environmentalism to construct wind turbines and our prime agricultural land is blanketed with foreign-made solar panels.

Continuing to pursue this net zero lunacy is destroying rural and regional Australia. Regional communities and families are being torn apart so that we can have the most expensive electricity in the world.

The Australian people have been hoodwinked by a Labor government and a Prime Minister who promised a \$275 cut to power bills. Who promised cheap electricity along with prosperity and jobs. We were going to become a green energy superpower—but instead these green projects are falling over (even with huge subsidies), and our critical minerals are not in demand because China and Indonesia use dirty mining techniques and slave labour—undercutting anything we manufacture.

We are destroying our own nation in the pursuit of reducing global emissions—an undertaking impossible and fanciful for a small nation the size of Australia.

Our government should be focussed on improving the lives of Australians, not appeasing international organisations overseas.

It's time we abandon this failing net zero experiment and start putting our nation, our economy and our people first again.

Senator CANAVAN: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Returned from the House of Representatives

Message received from the House of Representatives indicating that the House has made the amendments requested by the Senate to the bill.

Third Reading

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:16): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (12:16): I rise on behalf of the Greens to indicate our party's strong opposition to the Labor Party's most recent attack—in fact, one of the nastiest attacks that I've seen—on multiculturalism, on the rights of asylum seekers and on refugees. What this bill, the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025, seeks to do is to take away from people some of the most fundamental legal rights—to take away the right to natural justice and the right to be heard before incredibly important decisions are made about you, your life, your future and your health. In this case, it's all part of a toxic deportation deal that Labor has done with Nauru.

Last night we discovered that the toxic deportation deal done between the Albanese Labor government and Nauru is not a \$400 million secret deal; it's a \$2.5 billion secret stitch-up between Australia and Nauru to deport some of the most vulnerable people in this country to one of our Pacific neighbours and to treat that country effectively as a dumping ground—a sort of modern, 21st-century, penal colony—knowing full well that Nauru is a tiny island with almost no economy and will be dependent upon Australia's economic support. We are meant to be treating our Pacific neighbours as friends. We're meant to be treating them as equals. We're meant to be treating them as partners. Instead, the Albanese government is literally bribing our Pacific neighbours to become Australia's 21st-century dumping ground and penal colony. It is obscene.

We know who this bill is targeted at: it's targeted at multicultural Australia. It's targeted at people who have come here to this country seeking refuge from some of the worst regimes on the planet—seeking refuge from the extremist government in Iran; seeking refuge, as the Tamils from Sri Lanka have, from facing persecution; seeking refuge from places like Sudan, where the killing and the genocide continue; and seeking refuge, as so many from the Hazara community from Afghanistan have—seeking refuge from the genocide against women and the continued attacks against the Hazara community in Afghanistan. They're the people the Albanese government wants to strip the rights of natural justice away from and deport to Nauru. The Labor government is quite happy to break up families as part of this deal. If women have Australian kids, it doesn't matter to Labor—break the family up, deport mum and leave the kids without a mum. That's what Labor are proposing with this bill, and they are rushing it through without inviting submissions and without asking the broader community their views.

Thankfully, my office put out a call before that short sharp hearing we had last night into this bill and offered to table submissions, in the committee, from organisations like the Refugee Council, the Law Council of Australia, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and multicultural communities, because a Labor dominated committee made a conscious, deliberate decision to not ask for submissions from the community and to only hear from Home Affairs—an appalling decision. Why did Labor make that decision to not hear from the community? Because they were scared about what they would hear.

What has the community said, though? What have the NGOs, refugee advocacy groups and the Law Council said about Labor's bill? I think it's important that we read onto the record just some of their submissions. The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre said:

We believe the removal of legal rights from certain cohorts of people will have impacts beyond refugees and people seeking asylum, standing to marginalise multicultural communities and polarise public debate.

This legislation risks entrenching the perception that certain groups are permanently conditional in their belonging, subject to different rules, and denied the same access to justice. Such a move erodes trust in institutions not only among affected individuals, but across multicultural communities who see these laws as part of a pattern of exclusion.

President, if you'd heard the contribution from my colleague Senator Faruqi earlier, about how Labor now treats people of colour as having only a conditional right to exist in this country—you would have heard it too from my colleague Senator Faruqi, and I associate myself with her comments.

Human Rights Watch said this in relation to Labor's most recent, ugly, nasty, mean attack on people seeking asylum:

Refugees and asylum seekers previously forcibly transferred to Nauru by Australia have died from medical neglect and suicide. Human Rights Watch research has found that people forcibly transferred to Nauru have suffered severe abuse, inhumane treatment, and neglect. This latest deportation plan will put hundreds more lives at risk.

Australia's punitive migration system has already caused immeasurable harm to thousands of people over decades in violation of international law. It is not too late for the government to halt this plan and prevent further abuses.

It's not too late. Labor could still say no to this bill, stop playing the coalition's dog whistle, stop doing worse than the coalition and stop dragging the coalition to places even they wouldn't take this parliament in denying procedural fairness, in compulsory detention and in reopening the abusive deportation arrangements with Nauru. It's not too late for Labor to realise they're taking Australia down the wrong path.

From the New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties:

Removal of the NZYQ cohort to Nauru is morally bankrupt. The NZYQ cohort includes many people who have special needs in order to function in society. In many cases, the reasons they have special needs includes Australia's deprivation of their human rights through inadequate integration support and long term immigration detention. Australia has the resources to provide the necessary supports to these people. Even after paying Nauru the \$400m upfront fee and \$70m annual fee, Nauru will not have the necessary resources to support these individuals. Australia's relationship to Nauru becomes analogous to the relationship between Britain and the Australian colonies from 1788 to the 1850s, where the colonies were a dumping ground for convicts. Payment to third countries for this kind of settlement of criminals should be illegal under international law.

The Refugee Council of Australia, with its broad reach, has spoken about this bill too. It says:

As this legislation was only introduced on 26 August 2025 and is being rushed through Parliament, leading to a lack of scrutiny and devastating implications. The attempt to **remove natural justice and due process for certain groups of people should be a warning sign to all** that the cornerstone of our democracy is under threat.

The Bill appears to be a direct attempt to pre-empt or undermine decisions by Australian courts.

The **Refugee Council strongly opposes the proposed Bill** and the Australian Government's related arrangement with Nauru announced on 30 August 2025.

Will anybody in Labor listen to the Refugee Council? Will anybody in Labor listen to these groups who are saying to you, 'Stop the dog whistling'? We know that Labor's demonisation of asylum seekers and their attack on migrants is one of the reasons the far right, One Nation and others feel empowered to have anti-immigration rallies, like we did on the weekend. They are being fed by Labor's own rhetoric, marginalising and attacking asylum seekers and suggesting that all asylum seekers are somehow criminal—an obscene abuse from a government that should know better but has a history of doing far worse.

The Human Rights Law Centre said:

The Bill will preclude consideration of people's health, the harm they face in Nauru, and whether they will be permanently separated from family in the making of 'third country reception arrangements'. It has been drafted specifically to avoid such considerations being raised and properly considered, by excluding natural justice in the making of 'third country reception arrangements.'

I tell you, Acting Deputy President Ghosh, I pressed Home Affairs about this last night and asked: 'What if one of the directions leading to the deportation which the minister chooses to give and which the government wants to strip natural justice rights from is for a woman to get passports for herself and her children to return to the country from which she had fled persecution? What if the woman, as tragically happens, is suffering from a violent relationship with a former partner and the father of the kids?' She wouldn't be able to say: 'I won't do that. I won't apply for a passport, because I'd have to go to the kids' violent father and expose myself to violence and expose myself to that risk.' You are removing the right to even say that. How do you have a conscience in this? How does every Labor member think that is okay?

What about somebody being forced to be deported to Nauru who identifies as LGBTIQ? They no longer have a right in the deportation process because you're stripping away their natural justice rights to be able to say to the government, 'As an LGBTIQ member of the community, I will likely be persecuted in Nauru.' We know from international reports that Nauru is an unsafe place to be gay. It's an unsafe place. Report after report has said that it's a place where, if you identify as LGBTIQ openly, you face potential violence, you face discrimination and there are no rights protecting you.

But Labor doesn't want to hear. It's stripping natural justice away and preventing anyone from even being able to tell the government about that before they're deported. What about a woman with the care of two kids? You'll remove natural justice so she can't tell the government, 'You deporting me to Nauru is going to leave my kids without a mum.' They may be Australian citizens, but no; they don't want to hear. They want to deport. They want to meet and better the coalition's dog whistle. That's what Labor does. Every time you do this—the attacks against people seeking asylum, Labor's false assertion that they're somehow inherently criminal—it's heard by the far right, and they use it. As in speeches we heard from One Nation earlier, they use what Labor's doing to foment attacks against immigrants, to attack multiculturalism and to demonise people who have come to Australia from overseas.

The Human Rights Law Centre, in its submission, really sums up what Labor is doing here. It says:

In summary, the anti-fairness bill—

and I endorse its characterisation of this bill; it's not a home affairs amendment bill but an anti-fairness bill—

would remove the government's duty to give a person notice, and an opportunity to respond, when deciding to deport them to a third country—effectively allowing the government to ignore health, safety or family separation risks that someone might face if exiled permanently to a country that is not their home; remove the government's duty to give a person notice when issuing them a direction to cooperate with their own deportation, when the failure to comply results in jail time; and retrospectively patch up visa decisions that were made on the basis of wrong information and wrong or outdated law, rather than allowing those decisions to be reconsidered and made again.

The bill is the latest in an ongoing attempt by the Albanese government to deprive migrants and refugees of basic procedural rights that ensure integrity in decision-making and to pre-empt or undermine decisions by our courts. And heaven knows where the \$2½ billion we're giving to Nauru will go. The Nauruan government has form. They've sent some of the money Australia's paid them to the Finks motorcycle gang. If that wasn't bad enough, as Labor is deporting people to Nauru, the Nauruan president has made it very clear that it's his government's intention to send those people back to the country from which they fled, in breach of the refugee convention. And what does Labor say about that? Absolutely nothing, because they are so morally bankrupt.

Senator BROCKMAN (Western Australia—Deputy President and Chair of Committees) (12:32): I too rise to make a brief contribution on the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025, and at the outset I will say that the coalition will be supporting the passage of this bill. We do so because the measures contained in this bill are a necessary protection for Australian society, and our first responsibility as legislators in this place and in the other place is always to the safety and wellbeing of Australian society—in this case, addressing the so-called NZYQ cohort, which, sadly is a great failure of the Albanese Labor government that now stretches back years. I well remember, in the previous parliament, Senator Paterson prosecuting the case against this government's failure of foresight, failure to respond in a timely fashion, failure to perceive the seriousness of the issue at hand in a way that the Australian public demand it.

If we go back to the origins of this case, where the government was given very clear warning that this was a live risk—that the High Court's decision in that case was a live risk and that the government should have prepared itself for the potentiality of that outcome—the government completely failed, as clearly prosecuted by Senator Paterson, to prepare for that risk and to have contingency plans to allow the Australian parliament to deal with that situation. As a result, the Labor Party came late, they came half-heartedly and they came in a way that subsequently has required further and further legislative response. So we see now in this bill a tightening of the law so that members of this NZYQ cohort cannot continue to use our legal system in Australia to endlessly delay, and that is why we will be voting in favour of it.

But, as Senator Cash made very clear in prosecuting the issue in this chamber earlier, this is not a blank cheque to the Labor government, because we have seen before that what they put forward as potential solutions always end up having further problems and it always ends up in a situation where the actual practice of the legislation in operation is not quite what they said it was going to be. Even last night, in the very rapid Senate committee hearing into this bill, Senator Cash unearthed the fact that this deal, so-called, with Nauru is very sketchy. There is not a lot of transparency; there are only a lot of very vague assurances.

What do we know? Officials revealed last night that this deal could cost the Australian taxpayer \$2½ billion. Two and a half billion dollars is an extraordinary sum of money. What else came out last night was that, even with that money on the table, there was a kicker: that Nauru gets to pick and choose who they take. In fact, they are under no obligation to take anyone from the NZYQ cohort at all. I find that to be the most astounding piece of information: that this arrangement has been entered into, seemingly, with no minimum number of individuals set out, and if there is no minimum number, then it strikes me that that number could be zero.

So I think the Labor government has a lot to do in this space to prove that this arrangement is actually going to achieve the outcome that they say they want to achieve—as opposed to merely papering over a problem, which is what we have seen from this government time and time again in this space. Their assurances that they have done the work and have actually fixed the issue have not proven to be correct.

We on this side want to see an outcome in this space. We want to see the Australian community protected. We don't want to see the endless legal battles in courts in Australia. But, sadly, we do have very little faith in this government actually being able to follow through on any of these issues.

Senator GREEN (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Tourism, Assistant Minister for Pacific Island Affairs and Assistant Minister for Northern Australia) (12:37): I rise to make a contribution on this bill, the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025, and I thank all senators who have risen to speak on this bill. I seek to clarify what this bill does and what this bill doesn't do and to ensure that it's very clear what the intention of the government is in putting this bill forward today.

The amendments in this bill are directed at noncitizens who have come to the end of a visa process and are on a removal pathway. The provisions make targeted amendments to expressly exclude procedural fairness from

applying to the exercise of specific powers which deal with the disclosure of information to foreign governments, the taking of action in relation to third-country reception arrangements and the issuing of removal-pathway directions.

Procedural fairness is a fundamental principle in many areas of decision-making. However, there are circumstances where it is neither necessary nor appropriate for it to continue to apply. This bill makes clear that any actions or things done in relation to third-country reception arrangements are not conditioned on an obligation to afford procedural fairness to an affected person. The amendments in the bill and the associated validation provisions reflect the law as it was declared by the Federal Court to be in *TCXM v Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs*.

The amendments will put beyond doubt that the Commonwealth does not need to afford an individual further procedural fairness before establishing an arrangement with a third country, making a visa application on their behalf with that country or directing them to take steps to cooperate with their removal to a third country. In such cases, the purposes and application of the law should be clear to give effect to removal as swiftly and effectively as possible. Excluding natural justice obligations from these provisions will reduce delays to removals of individuals pursuant to third-country reception arrangements. There are no changes to the protections established by the Migration Act for noncitizens who are owed protection. Australia does not remove people to countries in respect of which they have been found to engage with Australia's non-refoulement obligations. These amendments do not change that.

The amendments in this bill do not remove procedural fairness from the processes that support decisions for whether to cancel or refuse the granting of a visa, nor do they affect merits review. The amendments are directed to the final steps in the removal process, throughout which claims to remain in Australia have been considered and rejected at numerous opportunities. Other provisions validate certain decisions that may have been affected by a decision of the full Federal Court in *AJN23 v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs*. In that case, the decision has created legal uncertainty for a range of decisions made by the minister, his delegates and the former Administrative Appeals Tribunal, where the decision-maker relied on an understanding of the law from a previous High Court decision.

The amendments in this bill will validate the relevant decisions so that they are all taken for the purposes to have always been valid. These amendments do not seek to alter the current law on immigration detention following the High Court's decision in *NZYQ*. The Australian community rightly expects that our migration laws are upheld and that those who have no legal right to remain in Australia will depart voluntarily or be removed as soon as possible. These amendments enable this expectation to be met without unnecessary or otherwise avoidable delays. In conclusion, again, I thank the chamber for its cooperation and for the contributions that have been made today. I commend this bill to the chamber.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Kovacic): The question is that the Home Affairs Legislation Amendment (2025 Measures No. 1) Bill 2025 be read a second time.

The Senate divided. [12:46]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Kovacic)

Ayes.....27
Noes.....13
Majority.....14

AYES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Bragg, A. J.
Collins, J.
Dolega, J.
Ghosh, V.
Kovacic, M.
Paterson, J. W.
Smith, D. A.
Walker, C.

Askew, W.
Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Grogan, K. (Teller)
McCarthy, M.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Watt, M. P.

Ayres, T.
Chisholm, A. D.
Darmanin, L.
Gallagher, K. R.
Hume, J.
O'Neill, D. M.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.

Faruqi, M.

Hanson-Young, S. C.

Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Thorpe, L. A.

Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Waters, L. J.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (12:49): In relation to the bill, we will hit a hard marker at 1 pm. In the time we have, I want to address the amendment we will be putting forward. The amendment addresses a known issue in the community safety detention order regime; this is something we were exploring last night during the brief inquiry we had into the bill. The issue is that, when you look at the bill and what will pass the Senate today because the coalition is supporting the bill, the bill doesn't address the threshold for the community safety order regime. The threshold for making such an order at this point in time is too high. This is evidenced by the fact that no applications are in place. More than that, the minister himself has said that the legal bar is so high that, in his view, no-one has come close to reaching the threshold. Given in particular what some of these people are alleged to have done, I think that is incredibly disappointing, coming from a government that should put community safety at the heart of its foundations and principles. But, in effect, Minister Burke has thrown his hands up and said, 'I give up.'

As we have always maintained, community safety is the first obligation of any government. That is why the coalition is very disappointed that this bill does not remedy obvious defects in the community safety detention order regime. I don't believe the government will be supporting our amendment today, but across successive Labor ministers for home affairs—and this is a real disappointment for the Australian people—the Albanese Labor government has not applied for a single preventive detention order in respect of the NZYQ cohort; that is a fact. We now know, and it was confirmed last night in the hearing on this bill, that that cohort currently stands at 354. So, in relation to those 354—particularly in relation to rapists, paedophiles, murderers, armed robbers and a contract killer—not a single order has been applied for not just by Minister Burke during his time as minister but by successive ministers in the first term of the Albanese government.

What was disappointing last night as we explored the bill and asked these questions as to why the bill—as I said, it will pass today because the coalition are lending their support to it. From the evidence heard in the committee last night—and not only then but across successive Senate committee hearings—it is now patently obvious that the government are unable or unwilling to approach the court to put serious criminals behind bars. We need to be very clear here: when we say 'the NZYQ cohort', many in the public don't know what we're talking about. The NZYQ cohort are people who should not be in Australia. They have no right to remain in Australia. They are currently, under this government, at large in the community. They are serious criminals—as I said, evidenced by the fact that the cohort includes rapists, a serial killer, a contract killer, paedophiles and an armed robber. They are serious criminals and they are unlawful citizens. In other words, they should not be here—a court, not the coalition, has found that—and they pose a serious risk to our communities.

The shadow ministers in the other place, both Mr Hastie and Mr Leeson, have tried to work with the government and tried to be constructive, saying to the government, 'If you are actually serious about improving community safety, if you really are worried about the fact that, at this point in time, as Minister Burke himself has said in relation to community safety detention order regimes, the legal threshold is too high, we can put forward an amendment.' As I said, that amendment will go before the Senate today. The effect of the amendment is twofold. The first is it would lower the threshold for preventive detention orders. The first set of changes set out in the amendment circulated by the coalition is about the threshold. These are straightforward, sensible and modest changes. The changes amend the Criminal Code in relation to the legal threshold for making a community safety detention order.

To make a preventive detention order these amendments would require the court only to be satisfied on the basis of admissible evidence in relation to the unacceptable risk and serious harm that the community may suffer. In other words, the amendment removes the statutory form of words to a higher degree of probability. That is actually the issue at this point in time. Parliament, the Senate in particular, has the right to change this. We change it, working with the government—they won't work with us—and we then enable the minister to start making those applications as he should have done.

The change gives greater latitude to the court to make appropriate orders on the basis of the admissible evidence. This statutory form of words is part of the legal threshold that Minister Burke has found so personally troublesome.

Removing the phrase puts more power in the hands of courts, as is appropriate, and sets a more appropriate threshold to allow a preventive detention order to be made.

Items 2 to 4 are complemented by the changes. This would make amendments such that the court need only be satisfied that other, less restrictive measures may not be effective in protecting the community. The current drafting—Minister Burke has said it's not working; the minister has admitted that—requires the courts to be satisfied that such measures would not be effective in protecting the community. The bar is too high; we know that. For the 354 people, zero of these orders have been applied for by the government. It is too definitive and it requires too much work from the courts in terms of certainty.

Asking a court to determine in advance that alternatives would not be effective has apparently been part of the problem that has meant that Minister Burke has not even come close to applying for an order to protect the community. One might say, 'Have a go,' but that's not what this government does. They sit back and make every excuse in the world. Well, guess what? We're saying today that you have an opportunity to end the excuses—to actually make the change and ensure that there is a more appropriate threshold. Ultimately, this is about the safety of the Australian people. It will allow the minister to take confidence—because, clearly, he doesn't have any—that he can legitimately approach the court and ask for an order in the interests of the Australian community.

In the same vein as other amendments put forward by the coalition, these changes to the threshold for preventive detention are drafted with two layers of constitutional protection in mind—so don't raise that issue with us. The first is to ensure that the decision remains in the hands of the court, as we know it has to. This avoids known issues around chapter 3 and detention by the executive, which, as we know, were identified in a line of cases, including in the NZYQ case itself. The second is that, based on the procedure for applying for such an order, it is clear that any potential constitutional risk will crystallise only where the court itself determines to issue a community safety detention order.

The other set of amendments on sheet 3429 address a known issue with mandatory sentencing in section 76DA of the Migration Act. This was drafted by the government but moved by the opposition and passed on a bipartisan basis. These mandatory sentencing arrangements were put in place to, again, ensure that, if the murderers, the rapists, the paedophiles, the armed robbers and the contract killer were not able to adhere to their visa conditions, they would be behind bars; they are criminals.

Surprisingly, despite the clear intention of the legislature, we have now seen numerous instances where the court imposed a one-year sentence of imprisonment—as they have to—and then suspended it wholly. The person does not see a day behind bars. That is an absolute disgrace. They go straight back into the community even though they've been sentenced to jail because they are a criminal. The changes in items 5 and 6 on sheet 3429 would close that loophole. It's pretty simple.

I hope the media are listening, because, seriously, you need to be asking questions of Mr Burke this afternoon about why he can't support these very simple amendments. All our changes do is say that mandatory minimum jail time means mandatory minimum jail time. This is not a change to the policy position of the parties of government. It is, again, a modest change that simply clarifies the drafting of the law to give better effect to the shared intention of both the Labor Party and the coalition. It should not be controversial. None of these amendments should be controversial. Let me be very clear: if the government aren't going to put the Australian people and community safety front and centre, I can tell you right now that the coalition will. That's the point of the amendments.

Limitation of Debate

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Hodgins-May) (13:00): Senators, pursuant to the order agreed yesterday, the time allotted for debate on this bill and two other bills has expired. The question before the chair will now be put, and then the questions to conclude the Committee of the Whole stage will be put.

The CHAIR: The question is that the opposition amendment on sheet 3429 be agreed to.

Opposition's circulated amendments—

(1) Schedule 1, page 11 (after line 19), at the end of the Schedule, add:

Part 3—Community protection

Criminal Code Act 1995

1 Paragraph 395.12(1)(b)

Omit "to a high degree of probability".

2 Paragraph 395.12(1)(c)

Repeal the paragraph, substitute:

(c) the Court is satisfied that a less restrictive measure available under this Division may not be effective in protecting the community from harm by addressing the unacceptable risk; and

3 Paragraph 395.12(1)(d)

Omit "would", substitute "may".

4 Paragraph 395.13(1)(c)

Omit "would", substitute "may".

Migration Act 1958**5 Section 76DA**

Before "If", insert "(1)".

6 At the end of section 76DA

Add:

(2) If the person is over the age of 18, the sentence imposed must require the person to spend the entire sentence of imprisonment in prison.

The committee divided. [13:04]

(The Chair—Senator Brockman)

Ayes.....26
Noes.....36
Majority.....10

AYES

Antic, A.
Bragg, A. J.
Canavan, M. J.
Collins, J.
Henderson, S. M.
Liddle, K. J.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Roberts, M. I.
Smith, D. A.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Brockman, W. E.
Cash, M. C.
Duniam, J. R.
Hume, J.
McGrath, J. A.
O'Sullivan, M. A.
Scarr, P. M.
Whitten, T.

Blyth, L.
Cadell, R. P.
Colbeck, R. M.
Hanson, P. L.
Kovacic, M.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Sharma, D. N.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L.
Farrell, D. E.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
McAllister, J. R.
Mulholland, C.
Pocock, B.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Sterle, G.
Waters, L. J.

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Faruqi, M.
Green, N. L.
Hodgins-May, S.
McCarthy, M.
O'Neill, D. M.
Pocock, D. W.
Smith, M. F.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K. (Teller)
Lines, S.
McKim, N. J.
Payman, F.
Polley, H.
Steele-John, J. A.
Walker, C.
Whiteaker, E.

PAIRS

Babet, R. D.
Chandler, C.
McDonald, S. E.
McKenzie, B. G.
Ruston, A.

Watt, M. P.
Walsh, J. C.
Ciccione, R.
Sheldon, A. V.
Wong, P.

Question negatived.

The CHAIR (13:07): I'll now deal with the amendments circulated by the Australian Greens, beginning with the amendment on sheet 3430, and amendment (7) on sheet 3427. The question is that part 2 and item 10 of schedule 1 stand as printed.

Australian Greens' circulated amendments—

SHEET 3427

(7) Schedule 1, item 10, page 6 (line 32) to page 8 (line 16), **to be opposed.**

SHEET 3430

(1) Schedule 1, Part 2, page 9 (line 1) to page 11 (line 19), **to be opposed.**

The committee divided. [13:08]

(The Chair—Senator Brockman)

Ayes.....33
Noes.....12
Majority.....21

AYES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brockman, W. E.
Cash, M. C.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
McCarthy, M.
Paterson, J. W.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Askew, W.
Brown, C. L.
Chisholm, A. D.
Darmanin, L.
Farrell, D. E.
Green, N. L.
Lines, S.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Whiteaker, E.

Ayres, T.
Cadell, R. P.
Colbeck, R. M.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K. (Teller)
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whitten, T.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Waters, L. J.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Question agreed to.

The CHAIR (13:12): The question now is that the remaining Australian Greens amendments on sheet 3427 be agreed to.

Australian Greens' circulated amendments—

SHEET 3427

- (1) Schedule 1, item 9, page 6 (line 18), omit "before,".
(2) Schedule 1, item 9, page 6 (line 22), omit "before,".
(3) Schedule 1, item 9, page 6 (line 24), omit "before,".
(4) Schedule 1, item 9, page 6 (lines 25 and 26), omit ", whether the arrangement was entered into before, on or after commencement".
(5) Schedule 1, item 9, page 6 (line 29), omit "before,".
(6) Schedule 1, item 9, page 6 (lines 30 and 31), omit ", whether the arrangement was entered into before, on or after commencement".

The committee divided. [13:12]

(The Chair—Senator Brockman)

Ayes.....12
Noes.....31
Majority.....19

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Waters, L. J.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brockman, W. E.
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K.
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whitten, T.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
McCarthy, M.
Paterson, J. W.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Ayres, T.
Cash, M. C.
Darmanin, L.
Farrell, D. E.
Green, N. L.
Lines, S.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Whiteaker, E.

Question negatived.

Bill agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

The PRESIDENT (13:16): The question now is that the remaining stages of the bill be agreed to and the bill be now passed.

The Senate divided. [13:16]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....30
Noes.....12
Majority.....18

AYES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L.
Farrell, D. E.
Green, N. L.
Henderson, S. M.
McCarthy, M.
Paterson, J. W.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Askew, W.
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K. (Teller)
Lines, S.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Whiteaker, E.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whitten, T.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Waters, L. J.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2025

Limitation of Debate

The PRESIDENT (13:20): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The Senate divided. [13:20]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....30
Noes.....12
Majority.....18

AYES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L.
Farrell, D. E.
Green, N. L.
Henderson, S. M.
McCarthy, M.
Paterson, J. W.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Askew, W.
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K. (Teller)
Lines, S.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Whiteaker, E.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whitten, T.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Waters, L. J.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The PRESIDENT (13:22): The question now is that the remaining stages of the bill be agreed to and the bill be now passed.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Payments System Modernisation) Bill 2025

Limitation of Debate

Bill received from the House of Representatives.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:22): I move:

That this bill be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The PRESIDENT: I will now deal with the Committee of the Whole amendments, starting with the amendments circulated by the opposition. The question is that the amendments on sheet 3415 be agreed to.

Opposition's circulated amendments—

(1) Schedule 1, page 4 (after line 33), after item 5, insert:

5A Subsection 11(1)

Omit "by notifiable instrument", substitute "by legislative instrument".

- (2) Schedule 1, item 7, page 5 (lines 6 to 10), omit the item, substitute:

7 Savings provision

Despite the amendments made by this Part, any instrument made under subsection 11(1) of the *Payment Systems (Regulation) Act 1998* that was in force immediately before the commencement of this Part continues in force on and after that commencement.

- (3) Schedule 1, item 29, page 11 (line 3), omit "by notifiable instrument", substitute "by legislative instrument".

- (4) Page 44 (after line 12), at the end of the Bill, add:

Schedule 2—Amendments of the Legislation (Exemptions and Other Matters) Regulation 2015

Legislation (Exemptions and Other Matters) Regulation 2015

1 Section 10 (table item 26)

Repeal the item.

2 Application of amendments

The repeal of item 26 of the table in section 10 of the *Legislation (Exemptions and Other Matters) Regulation 2015* applies in relation to legislative instruments made on or after the commencement of this item.

Question agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that amendment (1) on sheet 3392 be agreed to.

The Australian Greens' circulated amendments—

- (1) Page 44 (after line 12), at the end of the bill, add:

Schedule 2—Reducing conflicts of interest on Reserve Bank boards

Reserve Bank Act 1959

1 Subsection 5(1)

Insert:

ASX listed company means a company any of the shares in the capital of which are listed for quotation in the official list of ASX Limited.

licensed CS facility has the same meaning as in the *Corporations Act 2001*.

participant, in a payment system, has the same meaning as in the *Payment Systems (Regulation) Act 1998*.

payment system has the same meaning as in the *Payment Systems (Regulation) Act 1998*.

2 Paragraph 25AB(2)(c)

Repeal the paragraph, substitute:

(c) a director, officer or employee of an ADI or an ASX listed company.

3 After section 25AJ

Insert:

25AJA Undertaking by Board members

(1) Each person who is a member of the Monetary Policy Board must, before first starting to perform the duties of the office, give the Treasurer a written undertaking that the person will not, within the period of 5 years after ceasing to hold the office, become a director, officer or employee of an ADI or an ASX listed company.

(2) The undertaking must be in the form (if any) prescribed by the regulations.

(3) The Treasurer must cause a copy of the undertaking to be published on the Department's website.

4 Subparagraph 25AM(2)(c)(iii)

Repeal the subparagraph, substitute:

(iii) a director, officer or employee of an ADI or an ASX listed company.

5 After subsection 25B(3)

Insert:

(3A) A person must not be appointed under subsection (3) if the person is a director, officer or employee of an ADI, a licensed CS facility or a participant in a payment system that is an administrator of the system.

6 After section 25E

Insert:

25EAA Undertaking by Board members

(1) Each person who is a member of the Payments System Board must, before first starting to perform the duties of the office, give the Treasurer a written undertaking that the person will not, within the period of 5 years after ceasing

to hold the office, become a director, officer or employee of an ADI, a licensed CS facility or a participant in a payment system that is an administrator of the system.

(2) The undertaking must be in the form (if any) prescribed by the regulations.

(3) The Treasurer must cause a copy of the undertaking to be published on the Department's website.

7 After paragraph 25L(4)(b)

Insert:

(ba) the member is or becomes a director, officer or employee of an ADI, a licensed CS facility or a participant in a payment system that is an administrator of the system; or

8 Application of amendments

(1) The amendments of sections 25AB, 25AM, 25B and 25L of the *Reserve Bank Act 1959* made by this Schedule apply in relation to appointments that are made on or after the commencement of this item.

(2) Section 25AJA of the *Reserve Bank Act 1959*, as inserted by this Schedule, applies in relation to a member of the Monetary Policy Board who first starts to perform the duties of the office on or after the commencement of this item.

(3) Section 25EAA of the *Reserve Bank Act 1959*, as inserted by this Schedule, applies in relation to a member of the Payments System Board who first starts to perform the duties of the office on or after the commencement of this item.

The Senate divided. [13:24]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes.....11
Noes.....31
Majority.....20

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Waters, L. J.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Steele-John, J. A.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Darmanin, L.
Farrell, D. E.
Green, N. L.
Henderson, S. M.
McCarthy, M.
Paterson, J. W.
Roberts, M. I.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whitten, T.

Askew, W. (Teller)
Chisholm, A. D.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K.
Lines, S.
Mulholland, C.
Pocock, D. W.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
McAllister, J. R.
O'Neill, D. M.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Whiteaker, E.

Question negatived.

The PRESIDENT (13:25): The question now is that the remaining stages of the bill be agreed to and the bill be now passed.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Competition and Consumer Amendment (Australian Energy Regulator Separation) Bill 2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (13:27): I rise to speak on the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Australian Energy Regulator Separation) Bill 2025, and I'm delighted to be able to do so with the limited time available to me before we get to two-minute statements.

I think it's important to first point out that Australians continue to struggle under this terrible cost-of-living crisis, which is having such a massive impact on people's way of life and their capacity to live life to its fullest. Sadly, the government can't be believed when it comes to the policies they've put in place with regard to cost of living and, in particular, energy and emissions reductions. They went to the 2022 election with three promises, which I think we should recount for the benefit of all those listening and those in the gallery. The first of those is one we can't forget, and that was the promise to reduce power bills by \$275; the second was the promise that we would have 82 per cent renewable energy generation in our grid by 2030; and the third was a further promise that we'd have 43 per cent of emissions taken out of our environment by the same time. Of course, we're on track to fail all of those, and, in the case of the power price reduction, we are in no way coming anywhere near that. We've gone in the other direction.

Indeed, sadly, Australians were sold a pup when it came to the promises of the 2022 election because any promise of lower power prices is completely a mirage. We know, in fact, that power prices went up by more than \$1,300 on what was promised by the Labor government. Instead of delivering on their promise to cut power prices and take decisive action to lower costs and ensure that there's enough energy in the system to avoid the risk of blackouts, the government is focused on reshuffling the deck chairs and redressing the bureaucracy, and none of those measures offer any relief to households or businesses that are struggling to make ends meet. This bill will separate the Australian Energy Regulator from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. This really does come down to priorities. It's interesting and quite telling, frankly, that the first piece of legislation that the government brought in on this is exactly what I said before—a shuffling of deckchairs on the *Titanic* relating to what bureaucrats are doing what. As I said, this is just separating out the Australian Energy Regulator from the ACCC. It'll do nothing to address what they said was a priority and certainly something Australians have told us, from end to end in this country—that they want the cost of living reduced.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator O'Sullivan): We've reached the hard marker. We'll move to two-minute statements.

STATEMENTS BY SENATORS

Freedom of Information

Senator SHARMA (New South Wales) (13:30): This government has said they would be the most transparent in Australia's history, but earlier this week we found out that they're running from transparency. When Labor came to office they made a clear promise to Australians—that this would be a government committed to transparency, doing things differently. But what we've seen has been the complete reverse of that. Under this government, for the first time ever, in 2022-23, the proportion of FOI requests refused exceeded the proportion of those granted in full. The proportion of FOI requests granted in full remains lower under this government than previous governments, despite its stated commitment to transparency.

The government's proposed changes to freedom-of-information legislation, announced earlier this week, aren't going to strengthen transparency; they're going to weaken transparency. They don't empower citizens. They're going to push them further away from the truth and their right to know. Instead of reform, what's being offered here is more restriction—more fees, more red tape and more excuses to hide away from scrutiny when Australians ask fair and reasonable questions of their government.

This isn't reform. This is retreat. As the shadow Attorney-General, Julian Leeser, said, 'This is a tax on truth or a tax on transparency, a new barrier that will require Australians to pay to access information that rightly belongs to them.' We should always be looking to modernise systems. No-one's arguing with that, but modernisation should be about making things more accessible to the citizens, not less. It should bring government closer to the people, not push them further away. But what's been put forward here entrenches, at the heart of this government, a culture of secrecy—one where scrutiny is seen as a nuisance and one where government is less about serving the people and more about shielding itself from criticism. This is not the kind of democracy Australians expect or deserve.

Racism

Senator McARTHUR (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (13:32): There is no place for hate in Australia, but that's what we saw examples of on Sunday—hateful violence. We've seen the chilling footage. Dozens of men wearing black stormed Camp Sovereignty in Melbourne, a culturally significant site seen as sacred by many, where First Nations people have held a vigil to care for the remains of ancestors. We saw footage of men armed with sticks and rods. We saw brutal beatings of people at the camp. We saw the Aboriginal flag, an official flag, stomped into the mud. But they came to do more than that. They came to stoke fear and they came to silence.

Since Sunday I've been hearing the hurt and anger of so many Australians, both First Nations and non-Indigenous. These thugs set out to attack migrants and First Nations people on the same day. They attacked our newest and our oldest Australians. I've spoken this week with Uncle Robbie Thorpe of Camp Sovereignty, and I thank Senator Lidia

Thorpe for her advocacy in facilitating that conversation. I've also spoken to the Victorian Minister for Treaty and First Peoples and to Indigenous member of the Victorian Legislative Council Sheena Watt.

These kinds of attacks, be they on religious institutions or be they on these culturally significant Aboriginal sites, use hate and violence to divide us. But we will not let them divide us. As Minister for Indigenous Australians, I condemn the violent and reprehensible attack on Camp Sovereignty in the strongest possible terms. I stand in solidarity with those affected, those injured and those impacted at the site, as well as those affected right across this country.

2025 Australian Mayors Summit Against Antisemitism

Sudan: Landslide

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (13:34): What's been tagged as an antisemitism conference on the Gold Coast this weekend is in fact an appalling junket that's been widely criticised as one sided and focusing on supporting Israel rather than taking meaningful action against racism across society, and that racism includes, of course, antisemitism. There have been multiple concerns raised about this summit, including one of its principal sponsors being a significant shareholder in a company called Bisalloy, which, as the genocide continues in Gaza, is directly exporting armoured steel to Israel and directly exporting armoured steel to be used by the Israel Defense Forces and settlers in their continuing unlawful attack on Palestinians in the West Bank. Speakers that are going to this include the former head of the US Neo-Nazi movement. The former head of the US Neo-Nazi movement is at the event, and who else is going? Richard Marles, the defence minister; former Labor prime minister Julia Gillard; Labor mayor of the Inner West Council Darcy Byrne; the human rights commissioner; and the antisemitism commissioner. Where were they all on the weekend speaking out against Neo-Nazis? How dare they go to a conference that is being headlined by the former head of US Neo-Nazi movement.

I would like to extend my and my party's and many millions of Australians' deep condolences to the people of Sudan and the Sudanese diaspora here in Australia. A devastating landslide has destroyed an entire village in the western Darfur region, killing an estimated 1,000 people. It comes on top of the ongoing appalling war in Sudan, now in its third year, which has plunged the country into one of the world's worst human-made humanitarian crises. All of us join in sympathy, condolences and respect with the Sudanese diaspora and those in Sudan suffering.

Migration

Senator BLYTH (South Australia—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (13:36): We must have an uncomfortable conversation about immigration. I stand here as the daughter of migrants. My mother migrated here from Burma; her parents were Indian and Burmese. My father arrived as a ten-pound Pom. They came with little more than determination and belief in the Australian promise—if you work hard, you could build a better life.

We were once seen as the lucky country. Sadly, that no longer rings true. By ignoring the problem or demonising the people raising it, it becomes an issue that will only lead to increasing community anxiety. Under Labor, immigration numbers have surged to levels that are simply unsustainable. It is outrageous because we cannot even house the people who are already here. Families are competing for rentals, young Australians are losing hope of ever owning a home, and our infrastructure is stretched beyond breaking point. This is not compassion; this is chaos. Our immigration program must maintain its social licence.

It's not only about housing. We have seen the admission of migrants with criminal backgrounds and some who would seek to do us harm. We have witnessed outbreaks of unrest; look at the marches around the nation just last weekend. Australians are left asking, 'Who is coming here, and are they coming here to uphold our values?' This erosion of social cohesion breeds fear and suspicion.

Immigration must be managed responsibly. It must be sustainable. It must be in the national interest. But right now, under the Albanese Labor government, it is anything but in the national interest. We are a generous nation, but generosity without responsibility fails both those who are already here and those who are coming to seek a better life in the greatest nation on earth. It is time to restore balance, common sense and faith in the promise that effort in this country is still rewarded. We must have that conversation.

People with Disability

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (13:38): It was a pleasure to attend the Tasmanian Disability Awards last week on behalf of Minister Butler. The evening celebrated the achievements of people with disability and recognised organisations, workers, families and the carers who support them. The awards highlighted the strength, talent and leadership of Tasmania's disability community while reminding us of the work still ahead to build a more inclusive society where every Tasmanian, regardless of ability, can take part fully in community life.

The Albanese Labor government remains committed to supporting people with disability to live healthy, fulfilling lives. At the heart of this is our work to secure the future of the NDIS, ensuring it stays true to its original purpose

of supporting those with significant and permanent needs by guaranteeing its long-term sustainability. Respect for the voices and choices of people with disability is central to this work.

We also know that participation matters. Access to education, training and employment creates opportunities for independence and inclusion and helps ensure that people with disability can contribute their skills and leadership across every part of our community. In Tasmania this means making sure people with disability can access opportunities in our schools, our workplaces and our local communities, no matter where they live.

I'd like to thank everyone who contributed to the Tasmanian Disability Awards, from service providers and advocates to families, carers, workers and organisers, for the vital role you play in making inclusion real and in strengthening our community as a whole. Congratulations to all those who were recognised on the night, and I especially thank the organisers for putting together such a successful event.

Australian Political Parties

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory—Independent ACT Whip) (13:40): Yesterday the Albanese government approved the Ulan thermal coalmine expansion. That's 18 million extra tonnes of coal for export, equivalent to 500 million Sydney-Melbourne flights. The decision comes just before the announcement of a 2035 emissions reduction target. Labor is busy destroying the prospects of a strong target. You can't claim any kind of climate leadership and continue to approve thermal coalmines.

Australians are starting to see through this failure. You just have to look at the North West Shelf approval, which was withheld until after the election. Labor knew full well what that would mean before an election—approving one of the biggest fossil fuel projects in the country. We're seeing a disconnect on climate, on housing, on AI and on caring for nature—the environment, the places we live—and Australians are walking away from the major parties because of that.

At the last election, Independents recorded their strongest vote ever. Communities are increasingly demanding honesty, courage and real change. Communities know that the old way of doing politics is broken, that it's gotten us into an almighty mess as a country. This weekend's Community Independents Project conference is about showing what a better type of politics looks like and how it can deliver real outcomes for communities across the country, because approving more coal and gas proves one thing: the current system is failing us. Australians are taking notice. We have to start to live like we plan to be here for a long time and make decisions that are good for the young people who sit up here every day and watch us talk about issues that affect them.

Child Safety

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (13:42): Child safety is, and should be, Australia's No. 1 priority. I know that it is the focus of the government as well as the opposition and should be for all parliamentarians in this place. As a parent and as someone who can identify with victims-survivors, I think that what we've seen happening in recent times in childcare centres makes everyone sick to the core, when considering the harm that's been done unto young people in our community.

That's why I want to speak about someone I met recently who has highlighted for me the importance of prevention when it comes to protecting young people in our community—children in childcare centres, in schools and in other settings. Prevention is of course so much better than any reactive approach to these matters, and the best form of prevention is empowering and supporting parents to know what to look out for, how to work with kids on how to protect themselves and how to highlight the danger signs.

I recently met with Kristi McVee, the founder of CAPE-AU. Ms McVee is a former detective in the police force. She investigated and dealt with these horrendous incidents that we're talking about here—child exploitation and abuse. She said that her job was, sadly, all about locking up the bad guy, dealing with these people who commit these crimes after they'd been perpetrated and that more needs to be done to prevent and protect in that way. CAPE-AU, which has a great website, cape-au.com, has a range of resources for parents, many of which are available freely: body safety cards, online safety guides, device safety 101—facts and resources to help parents to teach kids what they need to look out for, things to avoid and signs that parents should be looking out for. I encourage all parents, all Australians who are interested in protecting kids and preventing this from happening, to access this site.

South Australia: Marine Environment

Senator MARIELLE SMITH (South Australia) (13:44): A couple of weekends ago, on a visit to one of our favourite beaches in South Australia, I held my children's hands as we surveyed yet another day of devastation caused by the algae bloom. From dead seahorses to sea snakes, with thousands of small fish rotting in the weeds, it was truly heartbreaking for me and my family, as it has been across South Australia. Our community is hurting right now. We have the most beautiful stretches of coastline in the world—pristine beaches teeming with stunning marine life—and it is so hard to watch what has become of it. As this bloom lingers in our coastal waters, we are seeing its

impact spread to tourism, farming and local businesses. This is so far from normal, but climate change means it won't be the last we see of these sorts of devastating events. This is heartbreaking for every South Australian, but it should serve as a reminder to everyone in this chamber that warming oceans and shifting marine conditions could hit any Australian community.

I want to assure South Australians that the Albanese and Malinauskas Labor governments are working side by side right now to provide the support people need not just immediately but into the future. I want to thank Senator Murray Watt for his work and sincere engagement. Our government has announced an additional \$6.25 million, in addition to the \$28 million jointly funded support package for science and research, business assistance, community awareness and support, and clean-up efforts. Peak council bodies are receiving support to service communities affected by the algae bloom.

This is an absolutely devastating event for South Australians. Every South Australian family who loves our coast as much as mine is hurting. We will continue to work together, as South Australians expect, to mitigate the worst of this event and keep looking towards the future.

Tibet Lobby Day

Senator BARBARA POCOCK (South Australia) (13:46): I rise to speak on human rights issues facing Tibetans. Each year, the Tibetan community visits Parliament House on Tibet Lobby Day. On Monday, I had the joy of hearing Tibetan children singing prayers in their own language, but if they did this in Tibet or China they would be punished. There is no freedom of movement, expression, religion or association in Tibet. Not only that—Tibetans who speak up, including in Australia, face transnational repression, surveillance and intimidation.

I had the privilege of hearing directly from members of the Tibetan Australian community about the issues facing them. They told me about their horrible experience in Chinese colonial boarding schools. The Chinese government has ripped at least 800,000 Tibetan children from their families, language and culture. This is so tragically similar to what our own Indigenous Australians have faced with the stolen generations. Yangkyi also told me about how, at just four months old, she was left with her grandparents as her parents escaped Tibet across the Himalayas. We need to call out human rights abuses wherever they occur, and that includes Tibet. Thank you, Yangkyi, Shenphen and Dolma, for sharing your stories with me.

As we mark the 90th birthday of the Dalai Lama, Australia must commit to recognising a new Dalai Lama chosen only through traditional Tibetan practices. There must be no interference by the Chinese government in this sacred tradition. The Greens have always supported the Tibetan people and their right to self-determination, freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

Crime: Illicit Tobacco

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia—Australia's Voice Whip) (13:48): The growing crisis of illegal tobacco and vaping products is engulfing Western Australia. Just last month, WA police warned of a brewing tobacco war after shootings and firebombings took place in Perth. They have said it very clearly: the fines are too small, the profits are too big and criminal syndicates are thriving. Meanwhile, a report from the University of Notre Dame shows that, while more than 100 vape shops have been shut down, convenience stores across Perth are still openly selling vapes under the counter, often a few hundred metres from our schools.

That's why today I moved a motion to refer this very important issue to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee. We need answers about how much money is being funnelled into organised crime, the effectiveness of federal enforcement and whether stronger penalties are required. But, instead of supporting transparency and accountability, the government and the new Greens teamed up to block this inquiry. I ask: why would a party that once prided itself on social justice and standing against corporate greed now side with the government to shut down scrutiny? This is not the Greens we have come to know. Are you really putting politics over people and putting our communities at risk?

We know that illegal tobacco kills people, but it also fuels criminal networks, robs our budget of funding for health and education, and threatens the safety of small businesses. An inquiry would have mapped the scale of the problem and proposed real solutions. WA deserves answers and I'll keep pressing for them. This fight is not just about the harmful effects of tobacco; it's about whether we let organised crime call the shots in our state.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Senator LIDDLE (South Australia) (13:50): The main job of any government is to keep its people safe. Australia remains in the midst of a family and domestic violence epidemic, which is getting worse. New data released by the ABS yesterday revealed that sexual assault rose 17 per cent across Australia between 2022 and 2024. Since 2021, the number of FDV related homicides and offences has risen from 106 to 175. Whatever the number, it's abhorrent.

While the numbers are new, they should not be a surprise to anybody, least of all the Albanese government, given its carriage of the National Plan to End Violence Towards Women and Children and the so-called Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches. Community legal services still turn away more than 1,000 people every day. The \$3.9 billion rapid review response announced last September didn't see the majority of funding flowing until 1 July this year to a sector desperate for action over announcements.

The processing of crisis payments for prisoners on release has been three times faster than those for victims-survivors escaping violence. Add to that the greater access to alcohol, drugs and gambling with the removal of the cashless debit card and the lifting of alcohol restrictions in the Northern Territory. The ABS data said that, in 2024, the Northern Territory recorded its highest number of reported sexual assaults in over 30 years. Children are being targeted by organised offenders, while the nation is fragmented on solutions.

Last week I hosted a panel facilitated by the National Children's Commissioner, Anne Hollonds, on child sexual exploitation and trafficking—a significant issue that largely remains hidden and that people remain uncomfortable talking about. I'm also co-convening a parliamentary friends group alongside Labor Senator Ghosh to drive meaningful conversations because so few people in this place immerse themselves in these issues—but they should.

Australian National Flag

Senator WHITTEN (Western Australia) (13:52): I rise today in absolute disbelief and, frankly, in disgust at the blatant disregard shown by the Labor Party and the Greens towards the Australian people and the Australian flag. Over 46,000 Australians signed a petition, that One Nation presented here yesterday, calling for the burning or desecration of our national flag to be made a criminal offence—46,000 signatures ignored. The Australian flag is not just a piece of fabric; it's the symbol of our history, our values and our freedoms, and the sacrifices made to defend them.

Yet yesterday on Australian National Flag Day, Senator Hanson was prevented from even wearing the flag in the Senate by the Greens. Let that sink in. Wearing the Australian flag was deemed offensive in our own parliament.

This morning on national television, a Greens senator refused to condemn the burning of our flag, calling it 'political expression'. What an absolute disgrace. To make matters worse, another Greens senator floated the idea of wearing the Palestinian flag in the parliament instead. Who's parliament is this? Who do these people actually represent? It sure isn't the everyday Australians who love this country. It sure isn't the families who've lost loved ones in war defending that flag and it sure isn't the people who still believe in pride, patriotism and decency.

This is not free speech. This is cowardice dressed up as progressivism. It's an insult to every Australian who has ever worn the flag on their sleeve in uniform, in sport and in service. The actions of the Greens and the silence of Labor is nothing short of betrayal—a betrayal of our values, a betrayal of our history and a betrayal of our people. Shame on them.

Racism

Senator HODGINS-MAY (Victoria) (13:53): The attack on Camp Sovereignty on sacred First Nations land last weekend was a violent escalation of far-right extremism and white supremacy that has been legitimised by individuals in this chamber.

I urge parliamentarians in this place to look inward. What we say and do in this place matters, and noble words, whether regarding the genocide unfolding in Gaza or the Neo-Nazi marches happening on our streets, mean very little if they are not backed up with actions that support them. This week we have witnessed a clear disconnect between the Albanese government's rhetoric and its actions.

While some individual government MPs have rightly condemned the Nazi organised marches that terrorised black and brown people in our streets, the Prime Minister has said that he has no doubt that there were good people who went along, while his government rams through legislation that targets multicultural Australia and strips the rights of migrants and refugees. When the government allows the far right to set the terms of public debate, it is community that pays the price. It is organisers, First Nations defenders and activists who find themselves on the front lines fighting against racism, protecting country and demanding justice while too often being vilified and criminalised for doing so. When the Prime Minister both-sides a rally where Neo-Nazis and extremists marched under anti-immigration—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator O'Sullivan): Senator Hodgins-May, please resume your seat. Senators, you may object to what is being said but this is not the time for debate and interjections are always disorderly. I ask for silence as Senator Hodgins-May continues her speech.

Senator HODGINS-MAY: When the Prime Minister both-sides a rally where Neo-Nazis and extremists marched under anti-immigration banners, he is legitimising racism. Instead of giving legitimacy to the politics of hate and division, governments should be amplifying the voices—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Hodgins-May, I ask you to withdraw. You're impugning motives there.

Senator HODGINS-MAY: I withdraw. Instead of giving legitimacy to the politics of hate and division, governments should be amplifying the voices of those working for equality and justice, and strengthening, not diminishing, protections for migrants, refugees and First Nations communities. I thank the defenders of Camp Sovereignty and echo their calls for mutual aid and an increased presence on the ground. To those who resist every day, your courage strengthens us all and you show us that change is possible.

Indigenous Australians

Senator THORPE (Victoria—Independent VIC Whip) (13:56): I often speak about the war, genocide and apartheid against First Peoples. Most people understand how this happened in the past; missions and massacres are very straightforward to understand. But many people do not fully understand when I speak of the 2025 version of this war, genocide and apartheid against my people that is happening today. This colony continues to build and maintain systems that harm us. They deliberately make laws and policies that ignore the root cause of poverty; destroy our land and culture; and steal and lock up our babies, our women, our men, and torture and abuse them, resulting in deaths in custody.

First Peoples today are faced with a choice: assimilate or die. It is a slow and sophisticated second wave of genocide that is silent and covered up by government bureaucracy and PR spin. The violence of this system might not be as obvious as a massacre but it is just as dangerous. We are always consulted but our sovereign authority is not respected because they know we will never give consent to destroy our land, our culture and our people. This legacy will continue unless we reckon with the role that governments play in this country as the abuser. No-one tells a survivor of abuse to just keep asking politely, yet that's exactly what governments demand of us while they keep killing us. The colonial frontier massacres mapping project found that around half of all massacres of First Peoples were carried out by police and government forces.

So Brave

Senator MULHOLLAND (Queensland) (13:58): This week is Women's Health Week. Today I'm wearing this badge to recognise the first-ever National Day of Awareness for Young Women's Breast Cancer, organised by an incredible new charity called So Brave. I congratulate Rachelle Panitz and her team for their incredible roundtable here on Monday at Parliament House discussing issues young women diagnosed with breast cancer face, particularly during pregnancy and postpartum.

Each year, 1,000 Australian women under 40 are diagnosed with breast cancer. In fact, it is the most diagnosed cancer amongst young women aged 20 to 39. This is the exact time in life when women are making some of the most critical decisions about their future, work and families. As a new mum, I cannot begin to imagine what a cruel double blow it would be to be diagnosed with breast cancer during pregnancy and how that would upend everything that you thought motherhood would be. I can't imagine the heartbreak that comes with trying to cradle a young-born in one arm while receiving chemotherapy in the other, or the devastation I'd feel if I couldn't breastfeed my child, because chemotherapy medication had contaminated my breast milk.

I think the need for better support and resources for young women and young mums is obviously clear. I encourage everyone to find out more about this charity.

MINISTRY

Temporary Arrangements

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:00): I seek leave to make a statement concerning ministerial arrangements for question time.

Leave granted.

Senator FARRELL: I advise the chamber of changes to ministerial arrangements. Senator Wong will be absent from question time today, on account of ministerial business overseas. In the absence of Senator Wong, I will be the Acting Leader of the Government in the Senate—

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator FARRELL: Thank you, thank you. Ministers will represent portfolios at question time in accordance with the letter circulated to the President, party leaders and Independent senators.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

National Security

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Farrell. Yesterday the Prime Minister told the parliament that reports ISIS brides were being repatriated to Australia were not accurate. Yet last night we learned that the acting chief of the New South Wales Police Force said that his state force is working with federal counterparts to finalise operations relating to the return of Islamic State operatives.

There is a strong concern in the Australian community about these individuals returning to Australia, given they willingly joined the ISIS death cult, a terrorist group who committed genocide against Shias, Yazidis and Christians and used rape as a weapon of war. Given the Prime Minister's sidestepping yesterday, will the minister be clear and honest with the Australian people and confirm whether individuals associated or formerly associated with ISIS are returning to Australia or have returned to Australia in recent months—yes or no?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:01): I thank Senator Cash for her first question. As you said, the Prime Minister has addressed this issue. Of course, the Foreign minister, yesterday, did address the issue extensively in terms of a response to the issues that have been raised regarding the so-called ISIS brides.

The situation in Syria is becoming increasingly unstable. Our security agencies have been monitoring and continue to monitor the situation to ensure that they are prepared for any Australian from this cohort to return home. But, as the Prime Minister and the Foreign minister have said—and let us be very clear about this—the Australian government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cash, first supplementary?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:02): In a statement in this chamber earlier today, Senator Gallagher confirmed security agencies have been monitoring and continue to monitor a cohort of Australians in Syria. As we know, the cohort referred to are the ISIS death cult associates. Minister, can the government confirm if any of that cohort have already returned to Australia?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:03): I thank Senator Cash for her first supplementary question. I thought Senator Gallagher was very clear in what she had said about this situation. Can I repeat: our security agencies have been monitoring and continue to monitor the situation to ensure that they are prepared for any Australian from this cohort to return home. And can I reiterate what said in my earlier answer: the Australian government is not providing assistance to, and will not be repatriating, individuals in Syrian IDP camps.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cash, second supplementary?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:04): Can the government therefore guarantee that no taxpayers' funds at all will be spent on the return to Australia of ISIS associates, including on their travel costs?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:04): I thank Senator Cash for her second supplementary question. I can confirm, and be very clear on this, that the Australian government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps.

Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme

Senator DOLEGA (Tasmania) (14:04): My question is to the Minister for Finance and Minister for Government Services, Senator Gallagher. The former coalition government's robodebt program illegally pursued Australians for debts that they didn't owe. The chapter was the worst failure of public administration in Australia's history. The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme made clear the devastating impact this scheme had on individuals and their families, after the former coalition government hunted them down for money that they didn't owe. Could the minister update the Senate on the settlement outcome that has been reached with the victims of robodebt today?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (14:05): I thank Senator Dolega for the question, and I also acknowledge the role that your union and mine played in advocating against the robodebt scheme and raising concerns around robodebt, particularly the impact it had on your constituents in Tasmania.

We all remember, and we will never forget, the failed robodebt program that those opposite, when they were in government, established to hunt down—I think that was the language used by ministers—people that owed money

for them to pay it back to the Australian government. Of course, the major problem with that was the majority of the 450,000 that were affected by robodebt didn't owe any money. Their government raised debts they never owed and pursued them, using language like 'we will hunt you down and jail you for debts' that they never owed. Not only were they pursuing debts that people didn't owe and demonising some of the poorest and most vulnerable Australians in the language and the way they prosecuted robodebt; they were also using robodebt as a budget savings measure. It was to repair their budget. They made a lot of promises about that.

We see the end result of this—the people that lost their lives; the families traumatised; the individuals who will never, ever get over the biggest failure of public administration in this country, which those opposite presided over. We now know the ongoing harm that has happened to those people affected by robodebt and we have sought to settle this legal matter. The decision taken demonstrates our commitment to address the harms caused by robodebt.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator GALLAGHER: Senator Canavan, I will give you leave to stand here and explain why you think the victims of robodebt should be ridiculed— *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Dolega, first supplementary?

Senator DOLEGA (Tasmania) (14:07): How is the Albanese Labor government continuing to clean up the mess left behind by the coalition's unlawful and disastrous robodebt program? What has the robodebt scheme cost Australian taxpayers to date?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (14:08): Thank you, Senator Dolega, for the supplementary. The settlement we have reached, which is subject to court approval, will make \$475 million available to compensate those affected by the unlawful robodebt scheme. In addition to that, when we look at the total costs, the coalition, when in government, using this scheme to balance their budget, told taxpayers it would save them \$4.7 billion, but in the end it cost over half a billion dollars, not counting the money refunded. To break this down, the scheme was budgeted to save \$4.7 billion. It only delivered a saving of \$406 million, if you'd like to call it that, and it cost \$971 million to implement. That gives you a bit of an idea of the failed budget strategy, in addition to the huge and devastating human cost. The Commonwealth agreed to a \$1.8 billion settlement over the illegal scheme, covering the repayments of debts totalling \$1.76 billion and the initial class action of \$112 million.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Dolega, second supplementary?

Senator DOLEGA (Tasmania) (14:09): Why is it so important to have a well-resourced and capable public service to ensure that this terrible chapter that was robodebt never happens again?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (14:09): I thank Senator Dolega for the question. The total cost of the robodebt scheme has now impacted the budget to the order of \$2.9 billion. This includes the legal settlement cost, including that which is subject to court approval. I note that those opposite went to the last election wanting to slash the Public Service. It shows they haven't learnt the lesson. They haven't learnt the lesson of robodebt, which is not to reduce the capability of the Public Service or diminish them so that they are not able to provide frank and fearless advice or respond to bad policy coming out of executive government. That is the approach that those opposite took to the last election. They were against a well-resourced independent and functioning Public Service. We know what they did when they were last in government, and we've got a great example in robodebt of the costs of the approach that they took.

National Security

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:10): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, Senator Watt. It appears that multiple federal and state government agencies are working on operations relating to the return to Australia of a cohort of Islamic State associates. The acting chief of the NSW Police Force has made clear his state force is working with federal counterparts to finalise operations in relation to the return of Islamic State associates. Is any government department involved in the issuing of birth certificates or travel documents to children born overseas to parents who are Australian citizens and are associates of ISIS? Can the minister advise if there are any other government agencies who are working with state counterparts to finalise operations relating to the return of these individuals?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:11): Thank you, Senator Scarr, for the question. This is obviously an issue that the opposition have concentrated a lot of time on in question time over the last couple of days. As Senator Farrell has already stated, the situation in Syria is becoming increasingly unstable. Our security agencies have been monitoring and continue to monitor the situation to ensure they are prepared for

any Australian from this cohort returning home. I can repeat what Senator Farrell has said, which is that the Australian government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps. More broadly, our government is one that always acts in line with security advice. We'll continue to do that whether it be in relation to this situation or any other.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Scarr, first supplementary?

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:12): I'll be very particular, Minister. Is any government department issuing any birth certificates or travel documents to any children born overseas to parents who are Australian citizens and ISIS associates in preparation or in assistance to, or in any way in connection with, the return of those persons to Australia?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:12): Thank you, Senator Scarr. Again, the information I have to hand is that the Australian government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Scarr, on a point of order?

Senator Scarr: Again, I'll ask the particular—

The PRESIDENT: I think the minister has finished answering. Do you have a second supplementary?

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:12): I will ask the particular question again: is any government department issuing travel documents or birth certificates to children born overseas to parents who are Australian citizens and are ISIS associates—is the government issuing any of these documents?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:13): I refer Senator Scarr to my previous answers.

PricewaterhouseCoopers

Senator BARBARA POCKOCK (South Australia) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Finance, Senator Gallagher. Thousands of Australians have shared the Senate's outrage at the behaviour of PwC over recent years. This is a firm that used confidential government information to help some of the world's biggest multinationals avoid tax—a consultancy firm that wreaked at least \$2.5 million in fees in doing so. Since the discovery of this debacle, PwC has been out of government consulting for just 16 months. On 15 July, the Department of Finance green-lit PwC back into government work despite the fact that there are investigations underway by the AFP and others. You have made no comment on Finance's decision to green-light PwC. Minister, do you support the green-lighting of PwC back into government contracting—yes or no?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (14:14): I thank Senator Pocock for the question and for her ongoing interest in the area of the use of consultants and contractors, alongside the very important work that Senator O'Neill has been doing throughout the last term in this area. Of course, the issues around PwC were extremely concerning to the government, and we made comments at the time. As you say, there are a number of ongoing investigations, so I don't want to get into those. Ultimately it is appropriate that ministers are not involved in procurement decisions. It's a big part of my role as finance minister. I get a lot of feedback about how people would like ministers to get more involved in procurement. I think there are very good reasons why we don't.

My job is to make sure that there is a process around who procures with government and how people can engage with government to win contracts and that those arrangements are proper and appropriate. The decisions about who is eligible to procure from government is a matter quite rightly left to the Public Service. That may be the Department of Finance, through the work that they do essentially coordinating the procurement guidance across the Public Service. That answers your question about that. It is a matter for the department. I've had a number of briefings with the department on their decision. As you'll know, it was a voluntary agreement that was reached for PwC not to seek contracts from government for a period of time as Finance undertook some detailed work and sought commitments and assurances from them. That work has been completed. The advice to me from Finance is that, with all the assurances and undertakings that PwC had given, it was appropriate to allow them to bid for work. That does not necessarily mean they will get work. (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Pocock, first supplementary?

Senator BARBARA POCKOCK (South Australia) (14:16): I don't hear an answer to my question in relation to PwC from your point of view as a minister. Under current laws, unlike 20 other countries around the world that actually do regulate these issues, the government can't ban a delinquent, unethical firm like PwC. Incredibly, at present, it relies on the wrongdoer to agree to ban itself from government contracts. That's like asking a criminal to

agree to go to jail. What a joke. Do you support the Greens' bill introduced today to legislate banning unethical, dodgy contractors like PwC from government work so you've actually got the power to do what you should do? *(Time expired)*

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (14:17): Following the PwC matter and the issues about it being raised, the Department of Finance has done a huge amount of work to improve those arrangements. There's the signing on to the Supplier Code of Conduct now. That didn't exist prior to the PwC matter. This sets out clear behavioural expectations and places a positive duty on suppliers to take proactive action to discourage breaches of the code. Also the notification of significant events clauses in standard Commonwealth contracts were put in place from May 2023. This again provides positive obligations for suppliers to notify the Commonwealth of significant events, including adverse comments or findings by legal or professional bodies. So I would say we have significantly strengthened the government's ability to deal with these matters when they arise, in a much stronger way than existed before the PwC matter.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Pocock, second supplementary?

Senator BARBARA POCOCK (South Australia) (14:18): Labor went to the election promising to cut government consultancy spending. Since then, you have been boasting about savings on consulting contracts. Yet the government's very own data shows that in 2024-25 Labor in fact spent more than the last year of the Morrison government on consultants. Labor's excessive outsourcing of public sector work to the private sector isn't just wasting taxpayer money. As you said in an answer earlier today, it's eroding Australia's Public Service. Why have you broken your promise? *(Time expired)*

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (14:18): We haven't. Indeed, we took \$5.3 billion in savings from departments in relation to external labour and non-wage expenses in our first term. We took a policy to the last election of \$6.4 billion in savings. We have seen a dramatic decrease in the use of the big four consultants compared to what we saw under the former government. And we have rebuilt the Public Service. We've rebuilt it with permanent public servants doing ongoing Public Service work. We have done a range of other things to make it clear to departments about when we think using consultants, outsourcing or using external labour is appropriate. I totally reject any view that we haven't invested in the Public Service. We have, we will continue to do so, and we will deliver the \$6.4 billion in savings we took to the last campaign over the use of consultants. *(Time expired)*

Medicare

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH (Victoria) (14:20): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator McAllister. In its first term, the Albanese Labor government delivered cost-of-living relief that was focused on ensuring Australians, no matter where they came from or where they lived, could access affordable health care. How is the government building on its first-term record to strengthen Medicare and deliver cost-of-living relief to all Australians?

Senator McALLISTER (New South Wales—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme) (14:20): I thank the senator and acknowledge her commitment to Medicare and to public health. In our first term, the Albanese Labor government delivered \$3.5 billion in 2023, which restored access to bulk-billing for the 11 million patients that it covered. We promised 50 urgent care clinics that would deliver bulk-billed care for urgent and non-life-threatening conditions. We promised 50, but how many did we deliver? We actually delivered 87. That's right, colleagues.

Senator Ciccone: How many?

Senator McALLISTER: It was 87, Senator Ciccone. We delivered the largest cut to the cost of medicines in the history of the PBS, with the maximum cost of a script falling from \$42.50 to just \$30. We did this because it is the Labor way. We did this because no-one should have to check their bank balance to see if they can afford the doctor and because health care should be accessible to everybody, no matter how much they make or where they live.

We are building on those foundations. From 1 November 2025, Labor will deliver the largest ever investment in the history of Medicare: \$8.5 billion to expand bulk-billing and create an additional new incentive payment for practices that bulk-bill every payment. We will also expand the availability of free urgent health care by opening another 50 Medicare urgent care clinics. Just this week, of course, the government passed our cheaper medicines bill so that a prescription on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs no more than \$25. This is a 20 per cent cut in the maximum cost of medicines under the PBS.

Now, make no mistakes, colleagues. The Albanese government is building on the foundations that we laid in our first term. We are restoring and strengthening Medicare, which is something that those opposite were unwilling and unable to do in their three terms. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ananda-Rajah, first supplementary?

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH (Victoria) (14:22): The PBS is a proud cornerstone of Australia's universal healthcare system because Australians should never have to choose between the medicines they need and paying bills. How has the Albanese Labor government delivered cost-of-living relief by making medicines cheaper for all Australians?

Senator McALLISTER (New South Wales—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme) (14:23): The Albanese Labor government is delivering even cheaper medicines in our second term. We have successfully passed legislation this week to make sure that a prescription on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs no more than \$25. As I said in my answer to your primary question, this is a 20 per cent cut in the maximum cost of medicines under the PBS. It will save Australians more than \$200 million a year, and pensioners and concession card holders, of course, will have the cost of their PBS medicines frozen at just \$7.70 until 2030. You would have to go all the way back to 2004 for medicines this cheap.

No-one should have to choose between medicines they need and putting food on the table. That is why the Albanese government has consistently delivered on our plan to make medicines cheaper—because we know that that's what the real cost of living looks like.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ananda-Rajah, second supplementary?

Senator ANANDA-RAJAH (Victoria) (14:24): In May, Australians voted to protect and strengthen Medicare. How is the Albanese Labor government focused on delivering the better future Australians voted for? Why has the government chosen this approach?

Senator McALLISTER (New South Wales—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme) (14:24): We're very clear about our approach on this side of the chamber, Senator Ananda-Rajah. When we came to government in 2022, there was a lot of damage to be repaired—damage caused by those opposite. We are repairing it with more bulk-billing, with cheaper medicines and with more urgent care clinics.

Everyone here remembers their approach. They promised no cuts to health. Then what did they do? They cut \$428 million from health in the 2014 budget. Everyone remembers what Senator Ruston said at the time. She said: Everybody would like to think that we could go on in life with universal healthcare, with universal education and with all these wonderful things that over the last 20 years Australians have come to accept as a given. Unfortunately, the credit card is maxed out.

That is the position they took. Well, their six-year freeze on the Medicare rebate ripped billions out of Medicare. We are repairing that damage—strengthening Medicare with more bulk-billing, cheaper medicines and more urgent care.

Closing the Gap

Senator THORPE (Victoria—Independent VIC Whip) (14:25): My question is for the Minister for Indigenous Australians. Minister, after the August meeting of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General, the government's little gammin SCAG—more like standing council for Aboriginal genocide—which you attended, the Northern Territory and Queensland governments publicly rejected their Closing the Gap commitments, while other states are clearly not complying. With all the powers available to you as a federal minister to change this, what is your plan now, when it is clear that letters, meetings and 'strongly urging' do not work?

Senator McCARTHY (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (14:26): I'd like to put on the record that I didn't attend a standing council on Aboriginal genocide. That's the first thing I'd like to put on the record to the Senate. And, yes, the August meeting of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General was an incredibly important meeting and a very difficult one. It was difficult because, as I've said here in the Senate, there are two jurisdictions in particular that have come into government with the view that getting tough on crime means incarcerating everyone, and that means the Northern Territory and Queensland. So, addressing all the AGs all together in the room was incredibly important for me as well as for the Coalition of Peaks, who, at the joint council in June/July, had asked for that to happen. It's not going to change straightaway, but I can commit to this Senate that I will keep going on it.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, first supplementary?

Senator THORPE (Victoria—Independent VIC Whip) (14:27): The NT has the second-highest incarceration rate in the world and is 90 per cent First Peoples. While police can kill us and walk free, you have the power to

overturn any law in the Northern Territory, as the federal government has done before. Will you commit to using your federal powers now to stand up for our people against the racist CLP government?

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, you can't make aspersions against federal, state or territory governments. I'm going to ask to you withdraw that last comment.

Senator Thorpe: Why can't I criticise a racist government, President? With all due respect, they're clearly racist.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, I've had numerous discussions with you—

Senator Thorpe: They're clearly racist.

The PRESIDENT: You're not in a debate with me. I've asked you to withdraw, and that is what I want you to do—simply withdraw your last statement.

Senator Thorpe: I'm stating a fact—that a coroner said that they—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, you will cease to be heard if you don't withdraw.

Senator Thorpe: The violence of the colony—I withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Minister McCarthy.

Senator McCARTHY (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (14:28): Senator Thorpe, you are correct in terms of the Australian parliament's role with the Northern Territory. It is a legislative assembly. It, like the ACT, can be intervened on, and we saw that with the 2007 intervention into the Northern Territory. And you're right: there is power within the self-governing act and beyond. But what I've said on the public record is that we have to be responsible about what our response is to them. I'm very conscious of the powers we have, but just because we have great power does not mean we should use it unwisely. So, yes, I am looking at every option, to answer your question.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Duniam?

Senator Duniam: On a point of order—I'm reluctant to do it—it's Senator Thorpe's top. You've previously ruled that, if a senator is wearing a top with a slogan on it, you would invite them to put a jacket over it or something like that. I noticed you did so on 16 June 2023 to Senator Thorpe. You might invite her to do the same this time.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe has addressed the issue herself, but I will come back to the chamber and make a statement on this because slogans are what you can read or see that are recognised as offensive. Senator Thorpe was wearing two flags which hang in this chamber.

Senator Duniam: There's a slogan on it.

The PRESIDENT: I couldn't see the slogan. Perhaps I need my eyes checked! But thank you for taking it off, Senator Thorpe—second supplementary question?

Senator THORPE (Victoria—Independent VIC Whip) (14:30): I'm sure the Seed Mob president will forward you a T-shirt of your own. Minister, First Nations kids are being tortured in prisons right now using spit hoods or spit guards. You could use your powers to overturn dangerous laws and ban torture devices from being used on our kids. Is maintaining the illusion of cooperating with states and territories worth the continued abuse of Aboriginal children?

Senator McCARTHY (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (14:31): I thank the senator for her question. I certainly reject outright that we are privy to abuse. In terms of cooperation, it is essential in every circumstance, where we can obviously. I have met with the Chief Minister and expressed directly to her my concerns in regard to not only the youth who are being incarcerated but the spit guards and spit hoods there. So—

Senator Thorpe: Our kids are suffering!

Senator McCARTHY: Well, this is to answer your question, Senator Thorpe. The Northern Territory government is on notice in regard to that, and I'm certainly going to keep this Senate informed as to what we are doing in those circumstances.

National Security

Senator KOVACIC (New South Wales) (14:32): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, Senator Watt. Has the government met with representatives from Save the Children to discuss the repatriation of ISIS associates and/or their children?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:32): Thanks, Senator Kovacic. As I've said, the Australian government is not providing assistance to the cohort that's been referred to in reports, and I've got nothing further to add to my previous answers.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Kovacic, first supplementary?

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: I'm very sorry, Senator Kovacic. It's extremely disrespectful of people on your own side to be yelling and talking over you whilst you were invited to make your first supplementary question. Please continue.

Senator KOVACIC (New South Wales) (14:32): Minister, has the government been briefed by Save the Children in relation to the repatriation of ISIS associates and/or their children?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:33): Again, these questions are all predicated on certain assumptions, and I repeat the point that the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Kovacic, second supplementary?

Senator KOVACIC (New South Wales) (14:33): Minister, in your answer to Senator Scarr, you said:

... the Australian government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps.

I ask the question again: Is any government department issuing travel documents or birth certificates to children born overseas to parents who are Australian citizens and are ISIS associates? Is the government issuing any of these documents?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:33): Again, the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

National Security

Senator WHITTEN (Western Australia) (14:34): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, Murray Watt. The government has denied any part in repatriating the ISIS brides. The deputy police commissioner of New South Wales has told estimates that they are working with the Commonwealth on this very issue. Is the deputy police commissioner mistaken, or has the government been in discussions with New South Wales police over the repatriation of the ISIS brides?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:34): Thanks, Senator. Obviously, various comments have been made, and that's a matter for the New South Wales police as to what they say. But the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Whitten, first supplementary?

Senator WHITTEN (Western Australia) (14:34): The government is pushing through legislation to send the NZYQ cohort to Nauru at a cost of \$2.5 billion. Would the government consider sending future ISIS brides to Nauru, instead of allowing them back into the community after they've joined an explicit terrorist organisation?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:35): The Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Whitten, second supplementary?

Senator WHITTEN (Western Australia) (14:35): This doesn't pass the pub test. We've got the New South Wales police discussing details of bringing these ISIS brides home, and the government sits there saying, 'Nothing to see here.' It doesn't add up. What happened to the government of transparency? You'd better tell the New South Wales police they've got the wrong end of the stick, or the government needs to come clean: how much is this going to cost, when are they coming in, and where are you going to put them? Don't you think Australians deserve answers now?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:35): I'm not going to comment on comments made by the New South Wales police, but the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

Migration

Senator GHOSH (Western Australia) (14:35): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Minister Watt. Australia is a modern nation that has benefited from our embrace of multiculturalism, and you only need to look around this new parliament to see that. Overwhelmingly, people of different ethnicities, different religions and different backgrounds live in harmony. Can the minister explain how a balanced migration policy benefits our great nation?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:36): Thanks, Senator Ghosh, for your question. I think it's an important one.

Australia doesn't have a race based migration system, and nor should we. We dealt with that as a nation 60 years ago. Over the years, Australia has become a great multicultural nation—a place that is world renowned for its welcoming and accepting attitude towards people from all corners of the globe. We're a modern nation that has

benefited from our multiculturalism. Over the decades, migrants to Australia have made incredibly important economic contributions to our country, like the vital trade ties developed with the world and the skills and investment they have brought to our shores. But there are also the benefits you can't measure on a Treasury graph. The cultural impact of living alongside people from different backgrounds and of experiencing different perspectives through welcoming new people to Australia cannot be overstated.

Of course, a growing population needs homes and infrastructure to cope, and that's why the Albanese government has invested so heavily in the housing and infrastructure needed by those living in and moving to Australia. Those efforts to build more homes and infrastructure have been opposed every time by a coalition that did nothing to increase housing supply during its wasted decade in office and now seeks to blame migrants for housing pressures in Australia. The coalition has spent this week dog-whistling and foghorn-blowing to stoke division in our community on migration. The so-called Liberal Party is so busy looking for someone to blame that it has forgotten that half of all Australians were born overseas or have parents born overseas.

Australians know we are strongest as a nation when we stand together, not look for reasons to build walls between each other. And the Albanese government and Labor will always strengthen the unity that makes Australia the best country in the world.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator McKim, your almost running commentary throughout the minister's entire answer was incredibly disrespectful. Senator Ghosh, first supplementary?

Senator GHOSH (Western Australia) (14:38): On the weekend, we saw some of the worst elements of our society fanning anti-immigration sentiment across the country, and this was the latest in a growing trend of fringe groups trying to divide Australians. Can the minister outline what the government is doing to ensure social cohesion is maintained within our society?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:38): The public displays of hate, the violence and the trumpeting of division that we saw on the weekend are not the values Australians hold dear. As public office holders, we have an important role to play in promoting social cohesion. But the coalition are, once again, trying to divide us for their political gain. Just like they've always done, when they run out of solutions they run towards division, dancing to the tune of Senator Hanson and One Nation, rather than backing a strong, unified, modern Australia. All week, we've seen coalition senators falling over themselves to get into the media and blame migrants for housing shortages the coalition oversaw. And, of course, it led to yesterday's interview on the ABC by Senator Nampijinpa Price, someone the Liberals were so desperate to poach from the Nationals and who made a terrible smear on the Indian Australian community. That community makes a huge contribution to our country, and it's one that our side of parliament is incredibly proud of. Senator Nampijinpa Price and the Leader of the Opposition should apologise for these offensive remarks. (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ghosh, second supplementary?

Senator GHOSH (Western Australia) (14:40): Since those protests, there has been a lot of commentary about migration policies and how they interact with other policies in government, like housing. Can the minister explain how the government's policies are helping all Australians and if there is broad support for our approach?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:40): The Albanese government are investing in housing, infrastructure and social services while ensuring we also have a migration system that balances our need for skilled workers with having a sustainable population. This used to be a bipartisan position in Australia, but it's disappointing to now see the Liberal Party fanning the flames on an issue that should be well and truly behind us. I know there are some opposite who know the approach being taken by the Liberal Party is wrong. We've seen Senator Bragg tell the ABC this:

...it's important that we don't beat up on migrants. I mean, it's not a good idea to say that the housing crisis is all because of migration.

And we see other coalition senators—and I'm looking at a few right now—trying to ingratiate themselves with multicultural communities in their home towns, but then this week they came to Canberra and joined One Nation to oppose motions that reject racism, white supremacy and condemnation of immigrants. Australia's social cohesion is precious and fragile, and I urge the coalition to think very hard before they continue scratching at their anti-immigration itch.

National Security

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (14:41): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, Senator Watt. The ISIS associates' children cannot enter Australia without the relevant documents, including birth certificates. Will the Albanese government assist them in entering Australia by issuing those documents?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:42): Again, your question is predicated on certain assumptions, and the government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

The PRESIDENT: Senator McKenzie, first supplementary?

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (14:42): Why did you refuse to say the government has not met with Save the Children in relation to the return of the ISIS associated cohort? Why did you say the government hadn't met with Save the Children?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:42): Surprisingly, I think Senator McKenzie is misrepresenting what I told the Senate. The Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

Senator Cash: So you did meet them? Did you meet them here?

The PRESIDENT: When you've finished, Senator Cash, I'll invite Senator McKenzie to put her second supplementary. The minister has finished, so I'm going to invite you to put your second supplementary.

Senator McKenzie: Madam President, I was rising on a point of order, but the minister answered the question in record time. The point of order being—

The PRESIDENT: No, no, no. Senator McKenzie, it's finished. I've invited you to ask your second supplementary question about three times. Do you have a second supplementary, or should I move on?

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (14:43): Why did the minister say he hadn't been briefed by Save the Children on the return of the ISIS associated cohort, and, if he can't answer it or he doesn't know whether the relevant minister or their agencies have met and been briefed by Save the Children, will he do the Senate the courtesy of taking it on notice?

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Order on my right! Order!

Senator Ayres interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ayres, order!

Senator Shoebridge interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Shoebridge, I shouldn't have to call individual senators. I've called order a number of times.

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:44): Again, Senator McKenzie is misrepresenting what I've said to the Senate, and she really should stop doing so. If she stops misrepresenting what I say, she'll get other answers.

Energy

Senator GROGAN (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:44): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Senator Ayres. Addressing climate change is a key priority of the Albanese Labor government. We have campaigned on our climate targets, and they have been endorsed by the electorate twice. Achieving these targets while delivering low-cost energy for Australian households and businesses requires major renewable and transmission investment. What progress has the government made on delivering renewables and transition projects?

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (14:45): Thank you, Senator Grogan. It's a good opportunity to point out to the chamber that there are representatives from World's Youth for Climate Justice here in the chamber with us. They've been talking to senators and members. Young people—

Senator McKim interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator McKim!

Senator McKim interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Minister Gallagher?

Senator Gallagher: Senator McKim's interjections are disorderly, President, and he wasn't responding to you drawing him to your ruling, so I'm doing it on his behalf.

The PRESIDENT: Senator McKim, I asked you earlier in question time to come to order. You were yelling more loudly than the minister, who is miked up and you are not. This is not a football crowd. It's Senate question time.

Senator AYRES: It is pretty graceless, when young people are having a go, coming to the parliament and expressing their view to members of parliament, senators and ministers, to be howling down an acknowledgement from the government that it is a good thing. Young people get it. Our young people get the imperative about climate change and energy. They also understand the scale of the challenge that is in front of Australia after a decade of policy inaction, disinvestment and capital flight caused by those opposite when they were in government.

We are setting about the task of building a new, low-cost and clean-energy-emission electricity system. There are all sorts of people who endorse this approach. It was endorsed, in fact, by a former leader of the government in the Senate and former Liberal finance minister, Secretary-General of the OECD Mathias Cormann, who said just this week:

What is important for Australia, for countries around the world, is not to continue the debate about whether or not to pursue the net zero objective, but how to do it in the best possible way.

Well, there you go. Over in the House of Representatives, it is the silly-billies Mr Joyce and all these other characters—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ayres, I cautioned you about the use of that term the other day and asked you to withdraw, so I'm going to ask you to withdraw again.

Senator AYRES: I'm trying really hard to use something that's good natured. I will absolutely follow your injunction.

The PRESIDENT: That means you have to follow up with 'I withdraw'.

Senator AYRES: Sorry! I withdraw, absolutely. We're just going to see more of it. We are going to see it clearly here. Senator Canavan's up and about. Maybe we will do that every week, too—every day, maybe. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Grogan, first supplementary?

Senator GROGAN (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:48): I'd also like to draw attention to the fact that we have another great champion of climate change and renewable energy, Anton van Bavel, up in the gallery. In building a new, low-cost, clean-energy system, can the minister tell us what progress has been made on delivering affordable energy since the government's first term in 2022? *(Time expired)*

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (14:48): We have made strong progress, and we are going to continue to make strong progress, even if we've got some of these characters opposite running around campaigning against electricity investment hundreds of kilometres from their homes, with social media memes imported from overseas that they're punching out into regional communities. What have regional communities done to deserve the National Party? What have regional communities done to deserve the white-anting and undermining of their economic progress that the National Party has embarked upon? When will the moderates in the Liberal Party actually stand up for sensible economic policy and sensible climate and energy policy, get with the program and follow the lowest-cost model of modern electricity instead of indulging in this sort of far-right ideological frolic?

The PRESIDENT: Senator Grogan, second supplementary?

Senator GROGAN (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:50): Thank you to the minister for laying that out for us. I think it's important to remember what some of our colleagues on the other side are actually trying to achieve at this point in time and the difficulty they're having in agreeing on anything. The Albanese Labor government has prioritised clear and coherent energy policy. The goal is to give investors and international partners confidence that they can engage. What parts of the community would be affected if Australia keeps incoherently and frequently changing energy policies? *(Time expired)*

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (14:50): It was a very good question, and the truth is that the part of Australia that is hurt most because of the extreme advocacy of Senator Canavan and his colleagues in the National Party and the extreme parts of the Liberal Party is regional Australia. That's where they're out undermining jobs, undermining investment and undermining blue-collar work. There are some over there who actually understand it. Senator McLachlan knows this. He said:

As a young lawyer practising in Port Augusta, I witnessed the consequences of economic disruption and the resulting social impacts ... Rather than debating whether we should have targets, we should be debating how best to bring our people with us and assist them during the transition.

That is at least remotely sensible. I look forward to more of Senator Canavan's net zero obsession. *(Time expired)*

National Security

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:51): My question is to the Minister—

Senator Canavan interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: I'm sorry, Senator Duniam. Senator Canavan, I have called you. Your running commentary is disrespectful.

Senator DUNIAM: My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, Senator Watt. In a statement in this chamber earlier, largely repeated by Senator Watt in this question time, Senator Gallagher confirmed security agencies have been monitoring and continue to monitor a cohort of Australians in Syria. As we know, the cohort is referred to as the ISIS death cult associates. Minister, can the government confirm whether any of the cohort is coming back to Australia?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:52): Thanks, Senator Duniam. I can confirm the comments of Senator Gallagher earlier today to the effect that our security and intelligence agencies have been working and continue to work to ensure they are prepared for any Australian from this cohort returning home. But I also repeat the point that I've made several times now, which is that the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

The PRESIDENT: He's finished the answer, Senator Duniam. First supplementary?

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:53): I note there was no answer given in relation to the specific question. Senator Gallagher went on to say:

Our agencies are aware of ... persons of interest ... in this cohort.

Are any of the cohort subject to warrants issued by Australia related to alleged offences during their time in the Middle East?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:53): Thanks, Senator Duniam, for the supplementary. I again repeat the point that I've made several times today, which is that the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort, and I also—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Duniam?

Senator Duniam: President, on relevance, I was very specific about whether any warrants had been issued by Australia relating to alleged offences in the Middle East, not about assistance being provided.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Watt, I draw you to the specifics of the question.

Senator WATT: Thanks, President, and thanks, Senator Duniam. Again, I can only repeat the advice that I've provided so far, which is that the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Duniam?

Senator Duniam: President, on relevance again, the minister repeated exactly what he said before, which precipitated the first point of order. I would ask you to draw him to the specifics of the question, around the warrants issued.

The PRESIDENT: Certainly. Thank you, Senator Duniam. Minister Gallagher?

Senator Gallagher: On the point of order, President, you have made remarks a number of times indicating that you cannot direct ministers how to answer a question, and I would remind you of that and suggest that Minister Watt is being relevant. He is answering the question that has been asked, but he can't be directed how to answer it.

The PRESIDENT: The minister continued with the same answer he had begun with before the first point of order, on which I drew him back to the question. You are absolutely right: I can't direct ministers to answer questions in a specific way, but I can draw ministers, where appropriate, back to the question, and I remind Minister Watt of that. Senator Henderson.

Senator Henderson: On the point of order, I would just ask you to remind the minister that he must be directly relevant—not just relevant but directly relevant.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Henderson, if you're so keen on doing this job, put your name down as a temporary chair. I've responded to the point of order and drawn the minister back to the question, and it's not a point of order.

Senator WATT: Thanks, President, and thank you to the various coalition senators as well for their guidance as to how I should answer the question. I was actually midway through my answer to the question from Senator Duniam and began by repeating the point that we are not providing assistance to the cohort. But I was also going to confirm again the comments that Senator Gallagher made earlier today—and this goes to part of Senator Duniam's question—that our security and intelligence agencies have been working and continue to work to ensure that they are prepared for any Australian from this cohort returning home.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Duniam, second supplementary?

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:56): That again did not answer the question that was asked, but we'll try this. Senator Gallagher further said that agencies were 'prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety'. What actions can the agencies take to keep Australians safe from the persons of interest in this cohort?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for the Environment and Water) (14:56): I will come to the question directly in a moment, but, again, it is correct that our security and intelligence agencies have been working and continue to work to ensure they are prepared for any Australian from this cohort returning home. Senator Duniam's question seeks information about the activities of our security agencies, and, of course, no Australian government would provide the kind of information that Senator Duniam is seeking as to the activities of our security agencies. Those sorts of activities are kept confidential for a reason; it's because they do go to national security matters, so we don't propose to elaborate on what those activities are other than to say that our security intelligence agencies have been working and continue to work to ensure they are prepared for any Australian from this cohort returning home.

Economy

Senator DOWLING (Tasmania) (14:57): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Gallagher. The Albanese Labor government worked hard over the first term to strengthen the economy, delivering back-to-back surpluses, slashing billions in debt and interest-free payments, and bringing inflation to a four-year low. This has seen the RBA given the room to cut interest rates three times in six months. Mortgage interest costs have fallen collectively by \$800 million since the end of last year. With low unemployment and rising wages, the government is supporting Australians to earn more and keep more of what they earn. As we enter our second term, what is the government doing to further strengthen the economy and deliver for the Australian people?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (14:58): I thank Senator Dowling for the question and for his interest in the economy. I think it's the first question I've had all week, maybe all fortnight, on the performance of the Australian economy, so I thank you for your interest because it is an important area and a priority of the Albanese government. When it comes to our budget, we have delivered the biggest nominal budget turnaround in a parliamentary term on record, and at the same time we've invested in responsible cost-of-living support. The opposition has no economic credibility. The Liberals went to the last election promising higher income tax, more savage cuts and bigger deficits over the forward estimates. Labor's election commitments were fully offset. They improved the UCB in every year and cumulatively by more than \$1 billion compared to the 2022 Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook. We've delivered two surpluses and lowered debt and deficits, placing downward pressure on inflation. We turned two Liberal deficits into two large Labor surpluses—the first back-to-back surpluses in almost 20 years. The 2024-25 deficit is almost half what we inherited, and it is better in every year over the forwards compared to the 2022 PEFO. Debt is \$177 billion lower in 2024-25, and no wonder they aren't interjecting—because this is their record. They broke the budget. They like to think of themselves as the party of good budgeting, but we know we have beaten them on every single measure.

The government has demonstrated significant budget restraint. We've got the budget more than \$207 billion better off than what we inherited. We've banked 70 per cent of revenue upgrades coming into government. We've identified more than \$100 billion in responsible savings and in reprioritising. (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Dowling, first supplementary?

Senator DOWLING (Tasmania) (15:00): The national accounts released yesterday showed that the economy grew in the June quarter both as a whole and, importantly, on a per capita basis. These results, in fact, were better than just about all economists expected. Minister, what does the data tell us about the economy?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (15:00): I thank Senator Dowling for that question too. As he said, the Australian economy grew in that quarter—0.6 per cent in the June quarter—to be 1.8 per cent higher through the year. This is the fastest annual growth rate in almost two years and shows gathering momentum, which is positive news for all Australians. Last financial year, we achieved what no major advanced economy could: continuous economic growth, low unemployment and inflation below 2½ per cent. Australia is one of only six advanced economies that have grown every quarter for the last three years. Thirty-two out of 38 OECD nations have gone backwards for at least one quarter in the last three years, but Australia is not one of them. We have the fastest annual growth when compared to other major advanced economies. Our employment growth has been much stronger than other countries, and that means more Australians in jobs earning more and keeping more of what they earn.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Dowling, second supplementary?

Senator DOWLING (Tasmania) (15:02): Whether it's cheaper medicines, energy bill relief, cutting HECS debts or increased bulk-billing, the Albanese Labor government continues to focus on cost-of-living relief for all Australians. Despite an improving economy, the government knows that cost-of-living stress weighs heavily on the lives of many Australians. How have the government's policies continued to support the economy?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Women, Minister for Government Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (15:02): I thank Senator Dowling for the supplementary. The Albanese government has had a laserlike focus on cost-of-living relief for Australians. I'm sorry Senator Bragg isn't here. Give my best to Senator Bragg, but we've had a laserlike focus on cost-of-living relief. At the election, the Australian people endorsed this approach. They rejected the slash-and-burn approach of the coalition. Not only did the coalition reject most of our cost-of-living measures at every opportunity; the numbers show that their economic record is abysmal. They delivered zero surpluses, after promising them in every year. Their deficits would have been almost \$8 billion bigger had they won the election. We inherited a trillion dollars of debt from the Liberals. Inflation had a six in front of it. It's now got a two in front of it. The numbers speak for themselves. These were an important set of numbers, and the Albanese government remain focused on ensuring that we help Australians with the cost of living. (*Time expired*)

Senator Farrell: I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Gas Industry

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (15:03): In question time earlier in the week, on 1 September, I undertook to provide further information in response to questions about the Darwin liquefied natural gas tank methane leak asked of me by Senator Waters in my capacity as the Minister representing the Minister for Resources. I've written to Senator Waters to provide additional information, and I table my letter to the Senate for the information of all senators.

MOTIONS

Gas Industry

Senator WATERS (Queensland—Leader of the Australian Greens) (15:04): I seek leave to move a motion relating to that very issue, the Darwin LNG plant, as circulated in the chamber.

Leave not granted.

Senator WATERS: Pursuant to contingent notice standing in my name, I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent me moving a motion to provide for the consideration of a matter, namely a motion to give precedence to a motion relating to the Darwin LNG plant.

In question time on Monday, Minister Ayres undertook to get back to me and the Senate to clarify whether the leaking gas storage tank at Santos's Darwin LNG site would be used when the Barossa gas field starts up shortly. My office has been seeking answers all week from the minister, and, just before question time, I received a letter—which I acknowledge the minister has just tabled, thank you—but it doesn't answer my question. But it is urgent that this question is answered. It is critical that ministers are accountable to this place. That means that, when they say they will come back to the chamber with a clarification, they actually do so and then they provide something that does, in fact, clarify.

So let me put this issue in the simplest terms possible. There is a storage tank, which is currently empty, that we know was leaking heat-trapping methane for 19 years. And there is a new, dirty gas field—the dirtiest of all Australia's gas fields—that's able to start feeding methane into this leaking tank. And the federal government is saying, 'It's got nothing to do with us'—even though they approved the gas field that would use this leaky tank. Minister King hasn't answered—in full knowledge that this storage equipment is faulty—whether she will stop dangerous methane being stored there or pause the gas field approval until the leak is fixed. So I have to conclude that this government is fine to allow methane to leak into our atmosphere and accelerate global heating as well as expose the Darwin community to the associated health risks.

Why would the government allow this preventable destruction on our climate and our community? Because Santos are currently trying to sell this broken storage tank and the Barossa gas field to the United Arab Emirates government, and they don't want to cop a discount on the asking price. Why would Minister King not require the tank to be repaired or replaced? As a major donor, stakeholder and future employer, Santos had the government introduce legislation on their behalf and for their financial interests in the last parliament. So turning a blind eye to a gas leak until it gets the Northern Territory government's approval in two weeks time was apparently an easy choice for the minister.

The federal government may not have jurisdiction over the gas tank, but they do have power over the Barossa gas field and over ensuring that no gas flows from that project until the leak is fixed. They can choose to act in the interests of people and the environment rather than gas company profits, and it's about time they made that choice.

It's a good thing that the Commonwealth has oversight here, because this week, on the radio, the head of the Northern Territory EPA, Dr Vogel, said, 'Due to the low environmental risks and the high costs associated with fixing the leak, Santos has made the decision not to repair the tank.' Even the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority doesn't want to protect the environment or the health of the community. They, too, want Santos to make good coin, it seems.

So, Minister, let's just get it clear, on the *Hansard*, that the federal government is going to let the Barossa project pump its dirty gas into a leaking tank. The people of Darwin will appreciate the clarification—although I doubt they'll appreciate the exposure to dangerous chemicals or having to pay for the clean-up of natural disasters that companies like Santos are causing with the help of this Albanese government.

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (15:08): As I indicated to Senator Waters in response to her question earlier this week, this does largely seem to be a matter for the Northern Territory's EPA regulator. What we know about the situation in Darwin is that this tank is currently not in operation. It was subject to an engineering investigation in 2020 when approval was sought from Northern Territory WorkSafe to extend the life of the Darwin LNG facility. The appropriate regulatory approvals are in place. Importantly, it has an approved safety case. The methane emissions that you've referred to are reported under the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Scheme, and there is a monitoring program in place.

The licence to recommence operations of the tank is up for renewal on 18 September, and, as I've been advised, works are being done to refurbish the tank for future use. The DLNG plant is located onshore in the Northern Territory. As such, operation of the tank is a matter for the NT government. We will continue to urge Santos to work with the Northern Territory regulator to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the tank. NOPSEMA, the regulator that Minister King is in charge of, has no jurisdiction to regulate the DLNG facility. And, of course, what's important here—

Senator Waters interjecting—

Senator AYRES: I understand that the Greens political party comes to this with a set of preconceived views about gas altogether, but it's important, when you're exercising your authority as a minister, to do it with precision and in relation to the powers that you actually have. Otherwise, you end up in the territory that poor old Mr Morrison ended up in during the last government—pretending to be various ministers of state and not telling anybody. It's important to do it precisely and it's important to do it within your powers. That's what the minister has done here. That's consistent with the way that NOPSEMA has conducted its activity here. There are legislative frameworks in place to administer and regulate all of this work. On that basis, I move:

That the question be now put.

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

The Senate divided. [15:15]

(The Deputy President—Senator Brockman)

Ayes.....26
Noes.....12
Majority.....14

AYES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Ghosh, V.
McAllister, J. R.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Ayres, T.
Chisholm, A. D.
Darmanin, L. (Teller)
Duniam, J. R.
Green, N. L.
Mulholland, C.
Ruston, A.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

Brockman, W. E.
Ciccione, R.
Dolega, J.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K.
O'Neill, D. M.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Waters, L. J.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:18): The question now is that the suspension of standing orders is moved by Senator Waters be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [15:18]

(The Deputy President—Senator Brockman)

Ayes.....11
Noes.....27
Majority16

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Pocock, B.
Waters, L. J.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Shoebridge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Steele-John, J. A.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brockman, W. E.
Ciccone, R.
Dolega, J.
Ghosh, V.
Hume, J.
O'Neill, D. M.
Smith, M. F.
Walker, C.

Askew, W.
Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Dowling, R.
Green, N. L.
McAllister, J. R.
Polley, H.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Ayres, T.
Chisholm, A. D.
Darmanin, L.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K.
Mulholland, C.
Ruston, A. (Teller)
Stewart, J. N. A.
Whiteaker, E.

Question negatived.

BILLS

Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Tackling the Gender Super Gap) Bill 2025

First Reading

Senator HUME (Victoria) (15:20): by leave—I move:

That the following bill be introduced:

A Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to superannuation and taxation, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator HUME: I present the bill and move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator HUME (Victoria) (15:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

Senator HUME: I table an explanatory memorandum, and I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

The *Tackling the Gender Super Gap Bill* goes to the heart of fairness, equity and recognition of the sacrifices made within Australian families. It represents a step towards ensuring that every Australian can look forward to a dignified and secure retirement, especially women.

This Bill amends superannuation legislation to give spouses the option to split their collective superannuation balances evenly between them. The partner with the higher superannuation balance will be able to roll over an amount from their fund to their spouse's super fund, to make the two funds more even.

Financial security in retirement should reflect a lifetime of shared contributions, not just paid employment. This Bill is a proactive measure designed to tackle one of the most persistent and unfair challenges in our superannuation system: the gender super gap.

While estimates vary, women retire with significantly lower super balances than men, between 20-25% lower. Why? It's rarely the result of personal choice, but rather it stems from deep-seated structural realities in our society.

According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, one-third of the gender pay gap can be attributed to time spent caring for family and interruptions in full-time employment. Women are more likely to take time out of the paid workforce to care for children, to care for elderly parents, and to shoulder unpaid responsibilities that keep families, and indeed our economy, running.

When one partner, typically the mother, takes time away from work to raise children, her superannuation savings often halt for years, even decades, while her partner's continues to grow. This is the 'motherhood penalty' in action, leaving women financially vulnerable in their later years.

As the Prime Minister himself has acknowledged, "No mother should be penalised for taking time away from work to do the most important job there is".

And let's be honest: those decisions, those sacrifices, benefit both partners in a relationship.

They are not individual choices, they are family choices. So why should the financial security that comes at the end of life reflect only one person's income, rather than the partnership that made that life possible?

This Bill creates a simple and voluntary mechanism for fairness, making it possible for couples to split their superannuation balances evenly.

The person with the larger balance can add to the super fund balance of their spouse using money already in their super, rather than through making additional contributions from outside of super, so that they can both enter retirement on an equal footing.

It's important to understand that this bill is splitting super balances—not super contributions.

There is a mechanism already exists to make contributions on behalf of a spouse, however, its take-up is astonishingly low, with only 1.1% of Australians using it in 2021-22. Why? Because the process is clunky, complex, eligibility is very limited, there's a lack of awareness, and critically, there are no real incentives for most people to use it.

Splitting balances—using a roll over from one fund to another—is a genuine structural change that will directly tackle the gender super gap, one of the most systemic structural failures of the superannuation system.

And it uses existing mechanisms to do so.

Already in Australia, equitable splitting of superannuation is considered in divorce proceedings. This used to require a court order, but that is no longer the case. There are now standard forms and recognised tax treatments of a rollover amount from the super account of one partner to another at the end of a relationship.

So why not allow it to occur during the relationship? Why not make this proactive, voluntary planning a simple and accessible part of the whole system from the outset, allowing couples to make these decisions for themselves?

Let me be clear—this bill doesn't force anyone to do anything. It simply gives families the option to share what they've built together, in recognition of unpaid labour, broken work patterns and professional sacrifices that so often falls to women.

This Bill explicitly recognises the economic partnership at the heart of most families. It empowers couples to plan for retirement together, allowing a more even distribution of superannuation during the accumulation phase.

To maintain integrity in the superannuation system, this Bill includes guardrails and limitations on how this mechanism can be used.

First, the amount transferred from one spouse to another is not considered to be a contribution, rather is treated as an amount "rolled over". This distinction is important to ensure that the amount transferred between spouses does not attract or avoid any additional taxes.

Second, the amount rolled over from one spouse to another retains its original characteristics; specifically it retains the original fund's proportion of concessional and non concessional components. This is an important guardrail because it means that when someone dies the money transferred doesn't have additional tax benefits for beneficiaries.

Third, the ability to roll over an amount from one spouse to another is not available to those transferring from or to a defined benefit scheme.

Fourth, the ability to roll over from one spouse to another is not available to those already in a pension or drawdown phase. Both spouse's funds must be in accumulation phase.

Fifth, the mechanism can only be used by individuals who have only one superannuation account. This is an important integrity measure to avoid potential unintended consequences for persons that have multiple funds.

Sixth, the amount that can be rolled over from one spouse to another is limited in two ways:

(1) The amount rolled over cannot leave the original fund with a lower balance than the receiving fund, and;

(2) The amount rolled over cannot cause the receiving fund to have balance higher than the transfer balance cap

For example, if Person A has \$5.5million in their superannuation fund and Person B has \$500K, Person A can roll over up to \$1.5million to Person B, bringing Person B's balance up to \$2.0million (which is the general transfer balance cap for the current financial year).

Alternatively, if Person A has \$2million in their superannuation fund and Person B has \$500K, Person A can roll over up to \$750K to Person B, bringing both balances to \$1.25million.

The limits on the amount that can be rolled over from one spouse to another are a ceiling, not a floor. Spouses may choose, for whatever reason, to roll over an amount that is lower than the spousal redistribution limit. If within the rules, a couple has the opportunity to make their balances equal, but it is entirely up to the couple how much they want to transfer between them.

For instance, a couple could choose to do a one off, single lump sum roll over, or alternatively take the opportunity to utilise the mechanism each year to make spousal redistribution roll overs of smaller amounts, or not do it at all.

This is all about choice; allowing couples to manage their collective retirement savings to reflect their collective choices throughout their lives.

The benefits of this reform are clear and far-reaching.

This Bill is about more than just superannuation, it's about closing the gender super gap.

Even though the gender pay gap on average weekly earnings has closed from 18.5% in 2014 to 11.5% in 2025, the gender retirement gap remains stubbornly wide.

Tax office data shows that the difference between average super balances of men and women over every age category, was 26% in 2014. In March 2025, Minister for Women Katy Gallagher reported that women still have 21.3% less super than men.

When you unpack the tax office data further, the gap is worse for older women approaching retirement.

This contributes to the alarming fact that women over 55 are the fastest-growing group experiencing homelessness in Australia. As members from both sides of this place have rightly observed, the relationship between lower retirement savings and homelessness for older women is direct and clear.

While the difference between men and women's super balances is lower for women in their 20's and 30's, between the ages of 40 and 64 the gap is most pronounced, averaging 23-24%. This gap has hardly changed over nearly a decade of data.

This inequality serves no-one and reflects the structural inequalities within our society.

Let me be clear: the goal here is not to penalise men or privilege women. It is about acknowledging the value of caregiving and ensuring that those who take on these vital responsibilities are not financially disadvantaged in retirement.

A more equitable superannuation system benefits not just women, but families, communities, and the economy as a whole. This is good for wives, good for husbands, good for families.

The gender super gap isn't going to close on its own. It requires deliberate, equitable policy interventions like the one set out in this Bill.

The changes to superannuation that have been proposed and contemplated by those opposite are only about how the government can get their hands on more Australians super.

But those sorts of changes do nothing to support the integrity of the system, it only risks it.

If Labor wants to do something for super, they should be looking at making the system fairer.

It is a well acknowledged fact that more work is needed to equalise super balances between men and women. Including just recently by Rebecca Pritchard, a Senior Financial Planner with Rising Tide, she said more changes were needed and that "A lot can be done on the gender side of things. The gender superannuation gap is still hideous".

This Bill is an opportunity for the Parliament to improve retirement outcomes for all Australians and help tackle the gender super gap.

Let's not accept a system that punishes women for caring for their children. Let's not allow inequality in retirement to be inevitable. We can change it, and why not do it now?

I urge this Parliament to support this Bill for a fairer, more dignified retirement for every Australian.

I commend the Bill to the Senate.

Senator HUME: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

National Security

Senator HUME (Victoria) (15:21): I move:

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

What answers they were indeed today. I don't think I've ever seen—certainly not in the last few weeks—government ministers look so profoundly uncomfortable as they did responding to questions from the coalition about this issue. It is an issue that they clearly do not want to talk about. The inconsistencies in the answers that were given in this chamber and in the other, by both the Prime Minister and Minister Gallagher, and in the answers now by New South Wales police are stark. It was absolutely extraordinary to hear that the New South Wales police are now saying that they are working with the federal government, with federal agencies, to bring home ISIS associates from Syria. It is a concern that their security agencies are gearing up to bring home ISIS associates from Syria.

Can I remind those of you in the chamber exactly who these people are. We're not talking about refugees. We're not talking about people who have been taken hostage. We're not talking about people who have been dragged away kicking and screaming by a terrorist organisation. These are people who have voluntarily, willingly and with enthusiasm gone to join a terrorist organisation overseas to fight against our interests. This is an organisation that we have listed as a terrorist organisation. That has been done entirely intentionally.

Let me remind you of just some of the awful atrocities that have been committed by ISIS. They include things like the 2015 Paris terror attacks, the 2016 bombing in Brussels, the truck in Nice running over innocent pedestrians as they went about their business in 2016 and the Crocus City Hall attack in Russia in 2024. ISIS is a very well-funded, well-organised organisation that has committed genocides of Yazidis, Shia Muslims and Christians. They have publicly distributed videos of beheadings of soldiers, journalists and aid workers. They've destroyed cultural sites and brought down a Russian passenger jet. This is one organisation, and these Australian citizens have actively gone over to join them in their fight. Now we hear that security agencies are gearing up to bring them home.

The government has said that they have nothing to do with this. That is an absolute nonsense. You could see Minister Watt squirming in his seat today. He would not answer the question as to whether this government has enabled the security agencies to provide travel documents and birth certificates to the children of these Australian citizens that have gone to join a terrorist organisation of their own volition. Where are these people going to be resettled? Are they going to be next to your house? Are they going to be next to your kids' houses or your parents' houses? Where are they going to be? How can we be assured that they won't continue radicalising others? Let's remember that ASIO have told us that the terror threat has moved up just in the last 12 months alone from possible to probable. It should be of concern to all of us that we are now bringing back into this country people who have been radicalised and whose families have been embedded in this terrorist organisation, sometimes for years, but would now rather like to come home.

Do you want to risk that for your families? I don't want to risk it for mine. Yet this is a government now that is not just enabling it but is hiding the truth from all of us. We've got very inconsistent answers. The New South Wales police say one thing, the Prime Minister says another, and Senator Gallagher says another. We heard evidence last night that was contrary to all of it. This is extraordinary. What a cover-up. I remind you that there was a terrorist attack in New Orleans just over New Years. A man drove a truck into a crowd, and then he got out of that truck, and he killed policemen. He shot them down, and he shot down innocent bystanders. There were 14 people dead. He was radicalised by ISIS. These are the people that you are inviting back to our country. These are the people you are enabling. (*Time expired*)

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (15:27): We've just seen from that contribution the continuing efforts from the Liberal and National parties and their representatives to increase fear and alarm in our country. It was wholly rejected at the last election. People are sick and tired of the noise and the unnecessary anxiety that's introduced into Australian society by alarmist rhetoric of the kind that you've just seen here and the over-the-top dramatic responses to clear, concise and accurate answers from our ministers today to reassure the Australian people that our agencies that protect our country are doing their jobs for us.

As Australians we stand up, we salute our flag, and we honour veterans—veterans who fought for this country, served this country and underpin the democracy that we get to experience. It's valuable that we do that. We respect them. But what we've seen from those opposite today is a break with tradition, asking questions of detailed matters regarding national security in a way that is not only alarmist and fearmongering but dangerous to this nation. Of all the jobs we have in here in the parliament, the most important one for us as federal senators and members is the protection of our sovereignty, the confidence of our nation to be able to move freely and safely around in this great community that we call home. We are able to do that, despite attacks in a very volatile world from bots from agencies

in other countries that want to undermine our harmony and that are doing everything they can to disrupt and to break the social contract toward peace for people here in Australia. Buying into that narrative of malign foreign actors is what we saw from the opposition here today. They're breeding fear and alarm, and there's something profoundly wrong at that.

What we saw in the questions that they're asking is them picking at the scabs of differences instead of declaring confidence in our security forces. Our security agencies are doing their job. They're doing it very quietly, very confidentially and very carefully. They are making assessments, by the moment, about our national security, and they're not coming in here and telling people on that side of the chamber and on the crossbench every thought that they're ever having. In fact, they're giving very detailed, careful briefings to the people who the Australian people have elected—that is, to our leaders, who meet in a secure cabinet room to get confidential information—to enable the security agencies to do what they need to do.

What we do know is that, in Syria, the situation is becoming increasingly unstable, and our security agencies have been monitoring, and they continue to monitor, that situation to ensure that they're prepared, as they always have to be, for anything that could happen in the world that affects our country. The Australian government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps. The reporting otherwise is incorrect, and that has been amplified, profoundly irresponsibly, by an opposition that should know so much better than what we've seen on display here today.

Just last week—on evidence from ASIO, after serious and careful work—for the first time since the Second World War, this country, under the Albanese leadership, this Labor government, sent away the Iranian ambassador. And why did we do it? Because we wanted to send a very clear message: 'You cannot influence what happens in our country. If you do, we will reject you.' It sends a message to those who want to try and interfere in our country.

We should have confidence in all the agencies that do that work on our behalf—all 10 of them. I applaud the National Intelligence Community agencies: the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service—all of them are doing a good job. That is—(*Time expired*)

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia) (15:32): As Senator O'Neill has revealed in her own actions, Labor has had a very uncomfortable day. Labor senators have had a very uncomfortable day. And what we saw from Senator Murray Watt from Queensland was a brevity in answering questions from coalition senators that is usually absent. And why was Senator Watt exercising brevity in responding to coalition senators' questions today? Because the government is exposed and the government is vulnerable.

Yesterday the Prime Minister told the parliament that reports that ISIS brides were being repatriated to Australia were 'not accurate'. Last night, instead, we learned that the acting chief of the NSW Police Force was working with federal counterparts to finalise operations relating to the return of Islamic State associates. The coalition, in question time today, asked the government to be clear and honest with the Australian people and confirm whether individuals associated or formerly associated with ISIS are in fact returning to Australia or have returned to Australia in recent months—yes or no? We were curious to ask those questions at two o'clock today because earlier today Senator Gallagher, a very senior Labor senator, had confirmed in this Senate chamber that security agencies have been monitoring and continue to monitor a cohort of Australians in Syria. So we wanted to know, quite rightly, more information about that, because this goes to the heart not just of our national security but of the local communities across our country.

So why else would Labor be embarrassed today? Why else would Labor be uncomfortable today? Why would Labor senators be red-faced today? Because today we have learnt—splashed across our national newspapers, quite rightly—that the former Victorian Labor premier accepted an invitation and took himself off to Beijing with the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the authoritarian leader of North Korea and the President of Russia. There is silence from Labor senators. You can see it in their faces; they are embarrassed.

Senator O'Neill: On a point of order with regard to impugning the motivations of a senator: the senator should withdraw. He should not take the silence, which is respect for the work of the Senate, as an acceptance of any of the falsehoods he's perpetrated in his speech. Anything personal should be immediately withdrawn.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I do not think there was a personal reflection in what Senator Smith said. I will listen very carefully.

Senator O'Neill: Point of order—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I have taken advice on this.

Senator O'Neill: I ask you to look at the statement from Senator Smith that indicated that silence was acceptance of his position and that we were shamed by that. Our silence is simply respect for the Senate, and it's been completely mischaracterised. I believe he should withdraw because of that.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I will take this under advisement. However, in my hearing of what Senator Smith said, I do not believe at this stage that he has breached standing orders. I will give Senator Smith the call but I will consider the matter, and, if appropriate, I will come back to you directly or via the President to the chamber. Point of order, Senator Polley?

Senator Polley: I, too, would like you to take that under advisement and to report back to the Senate. When you abide by the standing orders, that should not be taken as a reflection. I ask that he withdraw those comments.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I have already said I have taken the matter under advisement. That was an unnecessary point of order. I'd already taken advice from the Clerk on the issue that Senator O'Neill had raised. However, because it has been raised by Senator O'Neill I said I would take it under advisement.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Those interjections demonstrate with great clarity the level of uncomfortableness that Labor senators experienced today. I'd like to applaud former Queensland premier Annastacia Palaszczuk—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator McAllister?

Senator McAllister: Senator Smith again asserts that Labor senators, who are appropriately seeking advice from you on the way the standing orders interact with the comments he is making—Senator Smith's comments just now suggest that that, again, in some way communicates a view about his speech. That is obviously not the case but it also seems to invoke the same problem that Senator O'Neill and Senator Polley have drawn your attention to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I will clarify the matter again with the clerks, but, honestly, in my hearing of what Senator Smith said, I do not believe he impugned anyone's motives. I will take further advice. I stand by my previous ruling.

Senator DEAN SMITH: I applaud the courage that's been demonstrated by former Queensland Labor premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, former federal Labor member Michael Danby, former prominent Labor senator and minister Graham Richardson and former prominent New South Wales state Labor parliamentarian Michael Costa, who have all agreed that the decision by Dan Andrews, the former Labor premier of Victoria, to go to Beijing to participate in the celebrations for the 80th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II—and that is an interpretation that the Chinese Communist Party seeks to make over those events which is very, very wrong. Those Labor former premiers and federal parliamentarians have demonstrated great courage and, in fact, protected Australia's national interest by calling out the poor judgement that Mr Andrews has made in choosing to go to China.

We have to be very conscious that we are dealing with a significantly changed geopolitical environment. The most recent *Defence strategic review* document makes it very clear. It says that Australia's interests are now more challenging and that we are dealing with a competition with China that is being framed by an intense contest of narratives and values. (*Time expired*)

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (15:40): It was a situation today where, as usual, those on the opposition like to read certain newspapers to get the formation of their questions for question time in this place and the other place. It is irrelevant whether there is any truth or substance; they will still come in here and peddle the same nonsense that they did during the last term of government. They were rejected at the last election for that strategy, which is to divide Australia and cause anxiety and concern when it is unnecessary and without any substance. When you ask a question in this place and a minister gives you an answer, you may not get the answer that you want because it may not fit in with your conspiracy theory. But a minister is bound to give you the information to the best of their knowledge, and that was repeatedly given by the ministers who responded to the opposition's questions.

We all know from the contribution that my good friend Senator O'Neill made previously in relation to Syria about the issues and concerns that we share along with many other countries. We know because our agencies, our intelligence and security agencies, monitor the situation, as agencies do globally. Their role is to keep us all safe. There is one job that they have, and that is to keep Australian citizens safe, and that's what they've been doing. I chair a committee that has oversight of the Australian Federal Police. I know the work that they do. I have confidence in every one of those agencies.

We showed some respect when Senator Smith made the surprising contribution that was just delivered. We sat in silence but we're not going to sit here and have people assert that we are ashamed of our ministers and of our intelligence agents that have given that advice to this government. We're not going to sit in silence, because what those opposite are doing is nothing less than what they were doing during the last term of government—that is, whipping up anxiety in the community, like the racist undertones from their former leader, Mr Dutton, in relation to his concerns about going out for dinner in Melbourne. We know how that worked out for the opposition.

We will always put the interests of Australian citizens first and foremost—every single time. All Australians have a right to feel safe and secure in their country, which is why the intelligence and security agencies constantly monitor any threat from any nation. We know, because we get reports on the sorts of activities that are going on, there's so much uncertainty globally. Quite rightly, that's why we're on alert. That's why the agencies are on alert. That's why people in this chamber and the other chamber have a responsibility to put Australians first, not to take political cheap shots, trying to make an issue where there is none. It is, frankly, very sad that elected members of the senior parliament in this country in the opposition would use such tactics when people are already afraid to watch the news. Young people have anxiety because of what's going on around the world. We need to instil confidence in our intelligence and security agencies and the AFP because they do their jobs each and every day to keep us safe. As we know with our local police forces lately, they put their lives on the line every single day. (*Time expired*)

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (15:45): What we saw in question time today was a government that is just not being fair dinkum with the Australian people. We've seen it on a number of fronts in its first term and this week. We've seen the government proposing a truth tax which would penalise Australians who simply want to know what is going on here in Canberra. They are now going to have to pay extra fees to lodge freedom-of-information requests. We have seen this government ignore, time and time again, orders for the production of documents in this place. It is now almost a well-established fact that this government is the least transparent government in a generation.

Now, here in question time, very simple questions that were asked about the management of Australia's borders and the security of Australians were not answered. Not only were they not answered but the minister looked shiftily, sounded shiftily and acted shiftily in his answers to these very simple questions. We know from public reporting and from other governments who seemingly are more transparent than this one that there is something going on here with the consideration of so-called ISIS brides, women that have voluntarily gone to associate with a terrorist organisation, one of the most vile terrorist organisations in modern times. We know now that there is something going on about those people potentially coming back to this country. We know that because the acting New South Wales chief of police told the New South Wales parliament that the police force of New South Wales was working with Commonwealth authorities on the potential relocation of these ISIS brides. It's good that the New South Wales government is being transparent with its people. It's good that the New South Wales government agencies are being upfront with the New South Wales parliament—as they should be—and are letting their people know. It is just unbelievable that the federal government can't show the same level of transparency, especially given that they are the primary responsible body in this space. Obviously, if anything happens, it's good that local police forces are being engaged, but the decision-making here, the actual responsibility here, for bringing anybody back to this country in these circumstances, lies with the Australian government.

My heart does go out to any children that have been innocently captured in this terrible situation. We know from previous examples involving ISIS that sometimes there are completely innocent children that have either gone there with their parents or even been born in these other countries and raised in a terrible, shocking environment of violence, intimidation and oppression. I don't want to see any child punished for the sins of their parent, so obviously there has to be a degree of compassion in these cases. But that does not obviate the government's paramount responsibility to put the security of Australians first. We have to be assured that the safety and security of Australians is taken care of first, and a competent government should be able to reasonably explain to the Australian people, through their parliament, what it is doing to ensure the safety and security of Australians.

There are a lot of questions here about how this cohort is being managed. The government continue to rest back on what can only be described as weasel words, saying they are not giving any assistance to this cohort. But there is a lot that is maybe being done that is short of assistance that the government refuses to reveal. One of the major questions for me is: are Australian authorities able to go to the place—to Syria, or to somewhere close by—and actually interview and assess the risks of individual people outside Australia? That is a key question. Traditionally we have been able to do that. But there is a very dire security circumstance over there now, and some of the reporting suggests that the current plan is for people to come here, and then we'll do the assessment. I'm very worried about that, because I don't understand, then, if an unacceptable risk is found, what we could do about it, if they're already here. We've seen this many times with illegal boat arrivals as well.

I would just hope the government will be transparent. It would be against their practice, but it would be much better for the Australian people if you could just be upfront and fair dinkum with us all.

Question agreed to.

PricewaterhouseCoopers

Senator BARBARA POCKOCK (South Australia) (15:51): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Finance (Senator Gallagher) to a question without notice I asked today relating to consulting services.

Well, what a disappointment, what a disgrace, what a bunch of sideways answers—and I really call them not answers but responses that failed to address my questions. This government has said it would bring in a significant package of reforms that would crack down on misconduct in the wake of PwC's tax scandal. What do we have instead? We have PwC back at the trough. Where is your outrage now, Labor? Where is this government's commitment to meaningful reform? The two consulting inquiries made 52 recommendations between them, which were agreed to by both Labor and the Liberals. There is tripartisan agreement about what needs to change, but right now Labor are all talk and no action.

Here's one thing the government needs to do straightaway: ban dodgy contractors from getting government work. Integrity in our public institutions depends on it. One of the most extraordinary things to come out of the PwC tax leak scandals was the revelation that the Commonwealth does not actually have the power to ban a supplier for unethical conduct, and the minister confirmed it today. This is astonishing. In 20 other jurisdictions, including Western Australia, Canada, the UK and the US, there are debarment regimes that ban unethical contractors—laws that prevent suppliers who are convicted of corruption, bribery or fraud—from receiving public money.

Australians would be shocked to know that we currently don't have these protections in place. Well, the Greens are taking action. We've got a gift for Labor. We've got a bill that's here right now that can help. We want to close the legal loophole that allows suppliers who behave unethically to get away with it. It's unacceptable that the government must currently rely on the wrongdoer to agree to ban themselves from undertaking future government contracts. It's absurd. It's obscene. This is like having to ask a criminal for permission to send them to jail. It beggars belief.

Australians are outraged that PwC has been greenlit. They are the epitome of an unethical supplier, and it's an insult to the MPs and to the senators across this chamber who have worked on two parliamentary inquiries examining what went wrong with PwC. PwC were never fully banned from getting government work. They still had contracts with government agencies worth at least \$11 million throughout the mutual agreement period, which lasted just 16 months. This has exposed Australia's lack of a government-wide exclusion framework as a huge issue. Many stakeholders have said it's time: the OECD, the Law Reform Commission, the CPSU, the Tax Justice Network and even a previous Senate inquiry. They all recommended a federal debarment regime. That's why earlier today I introduced a bill to do just that. It's a practical bill that will establish a debarment framework at the Commonwealth level in Australia, and I call on the major parties to support it.

Then there's the issue of spending on consulting. Labor vowed to crack down on consultants and made a pre-election pledge to cut spending on external contractors, including consultants. What do we get instead? Labor spent almost \$1 billion on outsourced work to consulting firms last financial year. This is more than in the last year of the Morrison government. This is a business-as-usual approach from Labor following a PwC scandal. It's a continued lack of transparency by a government which claims to be spending less while, in actuality, spending more. We know that outsourcing Public Service work to the private sector costs three times as much as hiring public servants to do the work. It erodes our Public Service, and we heard the minister say that herself today.

Labor needs to get serious about reducing its reliance on consultants and set strong savings targets. They need to establish an independent regulator to oversee the entire consulting industry in government and they need to cap partnerships at a hundred partners. They need to make sure that firms can't provide both audit services and non-audit services to the same clients, eliminating conflicts of interest. But the first step is they need to support the Greens bill today, to ban dodgy contractors like PwC from accessing the public purse.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Treaties Joint Committee

Report

Senator STEWART (Victoria) (15:56): On behalf of the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, I present the report entitled *Report 227: Nauru-Australia treaty; radio regulations WRC-23*.

Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation Committee

Delegated Legislation Monitor

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (15:56): I present *Delegated legislation monitor No. 6 of 2025* for the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation together with ministerial correspondence, and I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I rise to speak at this tabling of the scrutiny of delegated legislation committee's *Delegated legislation monitor No. 6* of 2025. This monitor reports on the committee's consideration of 20 legislative instruments registered between 12 August and 19 August 2025. In this monitor the committee is seeking further advice in relation to the Competition and Consumer (Notification of Acquisitions) Determination 2025. This instrument supports the new merger control system, which was introduced in 2024 through amendments to the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. Under the merger control system, certain acquisitions of shares or assets must be notified to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission for assessment. In particular, part VI of the instrument determines the notification and public benefit application forms and the information and documents required to accompany these forms.

In *Delegated legislation monitor No. 5* of 2025, the committee first raised concerns about the instrument with the Assistant Minister for Productivity, Competition, Charities and Treasury in relation to compliance with its enabling legislation, the Competition and Consumer Act, under scrutiny principle (a) and the appropriateness of disallowance under Senate standing order 23(4A). Specifically, the committee raised concerns and sought the assistant minister's advice as to the legal basis for exempting only part VI of the instrument from disallowance while the remainder of the instrument appeared to be disallowable. The committee thanks the assistant minister for his prompt correspondence and engagement on this matter. However, the committee retains scrutiny concerns and has resolved to seek further advice as to the legal basis for exempting part VI of the instrument, rather than the instrument as a whole, from disallowance.

In this regard, part VI of the instrument was made pursuant to subsections 51ABY(5) and 51ABZQ(5) of the Competition and Consumer Act. Under the act, 'a determination' made under these subsections is a 'legislative instrument' that is not subject to disallowance. The assistant minister's response included reference to subsection 44(2) of the Legislation Act 2003, which provides that an instrument or a provision of an instrument is not subject to disallowance if an act declares that to be the case. The minister advised that subsection 44(2) therefore accommodates cases such as this, where part of an instrument is not subject to disallowance. However, as subsections 51ABY(7) and 51ABZQ(6) of the Competition and Consumer Act refer to a 'legislative instrument' rather than the 'provision of a legislative instrument', it appears to the committee that this is not an instance where the enabling act specifically provides for an exemption from disallowance for a provision of the instrument. Accordingly, it remains unclear to the committee as to whether the Competition and Consumer Act authorises the exemption of only part 6 of the instrument from disallowance, and the committee would appreciate the assistant minister's further advice on this matter.

The committee continues to monitor the implementation of its outstanding undertakings. The committee is pleased to advise that one undertaking has been implemented in this monitor's reporting period; however, the committee notes that 16 undertakings remain outstanding for more than 90 days and three of these remain outstanding for more than 12 months. Moreover, the committee notes that there are seven undertakings in this reporting period which were made in 2024 and still remain outstanding. As we near the end of 2025, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind ministers and agencies who have made undertakings of the committee's expectations that undertakings given in response to the committee's scrutiny concerns should be implemented in a timely manner.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to continue to raise awareness of the committee's scrutiny principles and expectations, outlined in Senate standing order 23. In my previous tabling statement, I discussed principle (f). Today I would like to discuss principle (g), which relates to the adequacy of explanatory materials. Under this principle, the committee scrutinises each legislative instrument as to whether the accompanying explanatory material provides sufficient information to gain a clear understanding of the instrument. The committee has long emphasised the role of explanatory statements as important materials to assist with interpretation of and, very importantly, access to the law. The committee considers that it is a fundamental rule of law principle that individuals are able to access and understand the law which they are subject to. Clear, detailed and accessible explanatory materials are essential to achieve this aim.

Under principle (g), the committee considers a range of matters. This includes requirements under subsection 15J(2) of the Legislation Act that explanatory statements to legislative instruments must do four things: explain the purpose and the operation of the instrument, describe any documents incorporated by reference, detail consultation undertaken during the preparation of the instrument, and, where the instrument is disallowable, contain a statement of compatibility with human rights. However, the committee also expects that explanatory statements explain a range of other matters, including the legislative authority pursuant to which the instrument was made; how any legislative preconditions were satisfied; the purpose, scope and necessity of broad discretionary powers or delegations of administrative powers and functions; the nature of and justification and safeguards for provisions that contain coercive powers, have retrospective effect or provide for the collection, use or disclosure of personal information; and the nature, extent and necessity of any automated decision-making.

As principle (g) overlaps with many of the committee's other scrutiny principles, issues relating to the adequacy of explanatory materials are frequently raised in conjunction with other scrutiny concerns. In this way, careful consideration of the committee expectations under principle (g) is vital to ensure that the explanatory materials contain sufficient explanation to address the committee's expectations under other scrutiny principles. Further, noting the importance of clear and informative explanatory materials on an individual's ability to access and interpret the law, the committee will continue to monitor this issue and draw attention to its expectations under this principle.

With these comments, I commend the committee's *Delegated legislation monitor 6 of 2025* to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Scrutiny of Bills Committee

Scrutiny Digest

Senator McGRATH (Queensland) (16:04): At the request of Senator Dean Smith, I present *Scrutiny digest 5 of 2025* of the Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills, dated 4 September 2025. I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

DOCUMENTS

Report on Outstanding Orders for the Production of Documents

Senator BRAGG (New South Wales) (16:06): In relation to *Report on outstanding orders for documents as at 30 June 2025*, I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

In taking note of this particular document, I note that it refers to a longstanding request that this Senate has with the minister to disclose information about the payments from the government's housing programs to certain organisations that have been successful in tenders under the Housing Australia Future Fund program.

This original order for production goes back to February of this year. There was no compliance provided. The Clerk gave advice to the minister after the election and then the minister provided voluminous documentation, most of which is blacked out. The provided documentation does not provide the information that is required. I make the point that former senator Patrick would remind me that 'transparency' is a word that is only uttered from the opposition benches. Maybe that is the system that we have now—the executive government of the day now refuses in some form to comply with the orders of the Senate.

I think this is a significant issue for this chamber to give consideration to over the course of this term, because if we are prepared to give up on the orders of the Senate to produce information—financial and probity information—about the expenditure of public funds and the administration of public programs then we are giving up on one of the core functions of this chamber. We are supposed to be able to discover and interrogate the activities of the executive. I fear that unless people have the tenacity to see through to the end then we will actually be giving up on this chamber's authority which it is supposed to have over the executive. I make the point that this is one of many, many orders for production where the government has filed public interest immunity claims or sought other reasons that it should not comply. But, in the last parliament, the Treasurer, Dr Jim Chalmers, was found to have made incorrect public interest immunity claims when those claims were considered by the Information Commissioner. In fact, the Information Commissioner found that in one particular case it didn't have anything to do with being commercial in confidence; it was just the Treasurer seeking to cover up secret lobbying by an organisation that I suspect he knows well—the organisation known as the Cbus super fund.

The question for the crossbench and the opposition over the course of this term is: what are the steps that are going to be taken to ensure that we get the answers for the Australian people? If we give up on trying to get the information on public finances and the administration of public programs then I really question whether we are doing the right thing by the Australian people and whether it is worth flying down here and spending all these taxpayer funds on having these parliamentary sittings.

We need to think very carefully about the system, because right now effectively all we have is a referral to the privileges committee if all the other avenues are exhausted, which could be a very extreme outcome. Other parliaments have other ways of dealing with an executive that is unwilling to provide basic information. I think that is now a conversation we need to have based on the information provided to us by the Centre for Public Integrity, which has analysed all the information on governments between the Keating government and this government relating to their compliance rate on orders for production and also their willingness to provide documents under freedom of information laws. Malcolm Fraser was quite clear, when he introduced the FOI Act, that the people of

Australia would have a better understanding of the activities of the government and the government would be better if there is transparency. So the degradation of the freedom of information laws under this government, and now its proposal to gut the laws, really shows the depths that this government has sunk to. We look forward to debating with other members of this chamber whether there is a better way to do this, because I have to say that so far we're not getting the information that the public would expect us to receive.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Order for the Production of Documents

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:12): I would like to speak to the letter responding to the order for the production of documents relating to the Bunbury continental shelf marine survey. In reading this document, relating to a survey undertaken by the University of Western Australia around renewable technologies in our state, I was prompted to reflect on an email that I received from a constituent, raising with me a matter relating to the area surrounding the University of Western Australia and a project proposed for the area involving renewable electric transport. This constituent is involved in a sailing team called Lost at Sea. Lost at Sea is a blind sailing team that represents WA at regattas and around the world. They work in association with Sailability, the only WA sailing program for inclusive and adaptive sailing. They sail from Matilda Bay next to UWA and support sailors in our local community through international World Sailing events and the Paralympics.

They're concerned right now about the state government's decision to locate a terminal for electric ferries at Matilda Bay, with the location impacting their training ground on the Swan River. This important sporting club has been told that the inclusive program will now have to stop due to risks to sailors. Those risks are from high-speed ferries moving through the area every 15 to 30 minutes. This is, of course, devastating to the sailors who participate in this program. Sailing is an opportunity for independence and, as they have told me so clearly, an opportunity for joy.

I can say one thing: the Greens are very concerned with the current location of the terminal in Matilda Bay. It has several problems. The existing Nedlands Jetty, further down the river, would to me seem a much better place to locate this piece of infrastructure, especially if the ferry service is extended west in future years. We are calling on the government to do better planning and consultation with the community in relation to this project. Indeed, having looked through the consultation papers, it seems clear that, when people were asked to engage, they said quite definitively that, because of these flow-through impacts, they did not want this terminal to be located in this precise location.

In a similar vein, I'd also like to mention the WA state government's intention to build a motorsport racetrack by 2027 at Burswood Park. This project comes with a hefty price tag—some \$217 million—and it will have such a huge environmental impact on Burswood Park. Why is the state government prioritising building a racetrack rather than investing in the urgently needed hospitals, schools and support programs needed for those struggling to find housing? Why is this government spending \$217 million of WA taxpayer funds on a racetrack where we have ambulance ramping as we have never seen it before, when we see a housing crisis that is causing so much stress to so many, when there are good programs run by volunteers and by community workers trying to support people and burning themselves out, because there are not enough supports provided by the government? Funding isn't provided, but funding can be found if priorities are rearranged in line with community needs. This is an arrogant decision from the government to press ahead with this project, and it blatantly ignores the community in suburbs like Victoria Park, Burswood and those just across the river in Claisebrook and East Perth.

I want to conclude by giving a thankyou to the Save Burswood Park Alliance and the hundreds of people who turned up to the recent community meeting. I know we will continue to fight to protect their local green space and to push for the reallocation of public funds towards hospitals and towards housing.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Consideration

Documents reserved for future debate will be listed on the *Notice Paper*.

COMMITTEES

Consideration

Committee reports and government responses reserved for future debate will be listed on the *Notice Paper*.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

Consideration

Auditor-General's reports reserved for future debate will be listed on the *Notice Paper*.

Royal Commission into Aged Care, Quality and Safety

Tabling

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (16:19): I table the Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care's progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care, Quality and Safety.

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Age Assurance Technology Trial

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Economics References Committee

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Minister for Aged Care and Seniors

Freedom of Information Laws

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (16:19): I table documents relating to orders for the production of documents concerning the social media minimum age; the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation; the final report of the age assurance technology trial; the review of the targeted compliance framework; the government's response to the report of the Senate Economics References Committee on ASIC investigation and enforcement; questions on notice relating to aged-care service delivery; the Minister for Aged Care and Seniors' question time briefs; and the government's response to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee's report on freedom-of-information laws.

Royal Commission into Aged Care, Quality and Safety

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of the Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care's progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care, Quality and Safety, I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the social media minimum age, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Age Assurance Technology Trial

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the final report of the age assurance technology trial, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the review of the targeted compliance framework, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Economics References Committee

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the government's response to the report of the Senate Economics References Committee on ASIC investigation and enforcement, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning questions on notice relating to aged-care service delivery, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Minister for Aged Care and Seniors

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning questions on notice relating to the Minister for Aged Care and Seniors' question time briefs, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Freedom of Information Laws

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (16:20): In respect of documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the government's response to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee's report on freedom-of-information laws, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Implementation of the National Redress Scheme—Joint Committee

Membership

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Polley) (16:20): The President has received letters requesting changes in the membership of committees.

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (16:21): by leave—I move:

That senators be discharged from and appointed to committees as follows:

Community Affairs Legislation Committee—

Appointed—

Substitute member: Senator Steele-John to replace Senator Allman-Payne for the committee's inquiry into the provisions of the Australian Centre for Disease Control Bill 2025 and a related bill.

Participating member: Senator Allman-Payne

Implementation of the National Redress Scheme—Joint Standing Committee—

Appointed—Senator Shoebridge

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Representatives.

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (16:21): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (16:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

I am pleased to present the Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025.

Background to the Tribunal

Australia established its own national honours system in 1975 under the Whitlam Government. Prior to this Australian Defence Force personnel were only eligible to receive Defence Honours or Awards—medals—under the United Kingdom Imperial system.

In 1991 the system was updated by the Hawke Government with the introduction of the Victoria Cross for Australia, a number of Gallantry Decorations, Distinguished Service decorations and Unit Citations.

A further unique part of the Australian Honours system was the establishment of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal in Australia in 2011 by the Gillard Government, the only tribunal to independently review decisions made within Defence in relation to defence honours and awards.

The Tribunal has two important functions.

The first is a review function, whereby individuals are able to apply to the Tribunal for review of a decision regarding eligibility for a defence honour, defence award or foreign award.

The second is an inquiry function, whereby the Government can refer issues to the Tribunal for inquiry and recommendation.

A defence honour recognises a form of gallant, courageous or distinguished service, often for bravery in warlike or other specific hazardous operations for individuals or units.

A defence award is usually awarded for length of service or a participation in a specific operation or theatre.

A foreign award is any foreign award given by any country for which an Australian Defence Force member may be eligible, however, this broad definition creates difficulties where the awarding of the award is not actually within Australia's power. As such only those foreign awards that set out in the Regulations will be reviewable by the Tribunal.

The government is committed to continuing this proud tradition to ensure that there is an appropriate avenue of review of Defence decisions when it comes to ADF members and veteran's medallic recognition.

For the past 14 years, the Tribunal has assisted Government to explore 30 unresolved complex issues through its inquiry function and reviewed over 350 individual decisions relating to defence honours, defence awards and foreign awards.

Overview of amendments

After well more than a decade of operation it is necessary to ensure that the Tribunal remains fit for purpose and to address a number of concerns that have been raised by the Tribunal itself and others over time in relation to its operation.

There are no changes made that affect the inquiry function of the Tribunal. This function remains as a Ministerial directed avenue to explore complex issues within Defence Honours and Awards.

However, to assist the Tribunal in their review function, this Bill amends the jurisdiction of the Tribunal as set out in the *Defence Act 1903* in a number of important ways: by updating the time period for which the tribunal can review medallic recognition, by limiting who is able to seek a review of Defence decision to those with a clear interest in such medallic recognition, and by focusing the functions of such a review on eligibility.

The amendments also modernise the operations of the tribunal, including in relation to the time allowed to seek a review of a Defence decision.

Importantly, the Bill will not remove the Tribunal's ability to review refusal decisions relating to defence honours, defence awards or foreign awards. What the Bill will do is redefine the relevant time-periods in relation to reviewable decisions.

Amendments to update time period Tribunal can review

Currently, a person can seek a review by the Defence Honours & Awards Appeals Tribunal when they are dissatisfied with a decision regarding a defence honour, defence award or foreign award concerning conduct or service dating all the way back to the commencement of our involvement in the Second World War—3 September 1939—a time when our Defence Force members were only eligible for Imperial Awards.

The difficulties of making assessments regarding Defence honours and awards for historical actions are considerable, given the senior members of the time are often sadly no longer with us and therefore objective evidence is difficult to obtain and verify. This is the case with nearly all 20th Century conflicts that Australia has been involved in.

There has also been an "end of roll" process undertaken after the conclusion of such major 20th Century conflicts by Australian Defence authorities.

In order to avoid the Tribunal being put in a position where it is having to review Defence decisions where it is having to rely on very imperfect evidence, the Bill amends the time period that the Tribunal can review in three ways depending on the nature of the honour or award and the nature of the operation that the relevant Defence member was participating in.

Going forward, the Tribunal will only be able to review a Defence decision to decline a defence honour, operational service award or foreign award if the application to Defence for the medal was made within 20 years of the relevant operation ending.

Where the Defence decision to decline a defence honour or award relates to an operation that does not have an end date or is not operational in nature, the relevant service said to be relevant for such an honour or award must have been within the last 20 years of an application having been made to Defence.

This gives an applicant a reasonable period of time to apply for a defence honour, operational service award or foreign award, and to seek a review of any refusal decision.

This means if a member served on an operation that ended in 2021, and had sought a decision from Defence regarding an honour or award regarding service in that operation by 2041, they would be able to seek a review of a refusal decision by the Tribunal.

The exception to the 20-year period is for length of service awards. These are awards that recognise a member's length of service with the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

The Bill provides that a refusal decision relating to a length of service award will be reviewable up until the member has, or would have turned, 100 years old. This is an appropriate and inclusive measure and ensures that current and former serving personnel, and their families, and other personal representatives can continue to seek a review of decisions relating to length of service awards for a significant period of time, even after the death of the relevant Defence member, without being entirely open ended.

To provide flexibility and to ensure the framework remains fit-for-purpose, the Bill will enable regulations to shorten these 20-year and 100-year threshold periods in the future.

Amendment to who can seek a review by the Tribunal

The Bill also amends who can make an application to the Tribunal for review. Currently, *anyone* that made the original application to Defence can seek a review of that decision and there is no restriction on who can make such applications to Defence.

With increasing frequency, applications are being made to Defence for the issuing of a defence honour or award or for the upgrading of a defence honour by academics and amateur historians with no connection with the member or their family.

Such applications, subsequent refusals and resultant Tribunal hearings can serve to create unnecessary angst and concern with family members of a deceased Defence member, long since passed away, for no objective benefit. However, if the family themselves wish to have the matter reviewed, that should and will remain open to them.

For a Defence award and foreign award, the Bill provides for a suitably broad range of potential applicants. This includes the affected person, their immediate family member, or if the member is deceased—an executor, administrator, trustee of the estate or other personal representative of the affected person.

For a Defence honour, given the discretionary nature of such medals, only an ADF member that is, or was, more senior in the chain of command, or a ADF member or veteran who was an eyewitness to the action or service, may apply for a review, provided they have the consent of the member under consideration or their immediate family.

An individual will not be permitted to seek a review in relation to a defence honour for themselves.

Amendment to focus review function of Tribunal

The Bill amends the functions of the Tribunal so that its recommendations to Government regarding a defence honour are focused on eligibility for the honour rather than making broader recommendations regarding the honours and awards system, which is properly the scope of the Tribunal if conducting an inquiry, or recommendations concerning other aspects of service or government decisions that are not relevant to the question of eligibility per se.

Amendments to modernise operations of the Tribunal

Currently, there is no time limit on when a review by the Tribunal can be sought after a refusal decision has been made by Defence. This means a review by the Tribunal could be sought now for a decision to refuse a defence honour or award that was made last century.

The Bill creates a six month time limit to seek such a review.

The six month timeframe is significantly longer than the usual period to seek a review of a government decision by a tribunal. This is appropriate as it takes into account that there could be a range of reasons why a person might need more time to prepare for and seek a review.

The Tribunal will also be able to accept applications for review beyond this timeframe in exceptional circumstances, for example, if an applicant has a serious health condition.

In order to avoid a loop of Defence decisions, followed by Tribunal reviews, further Defence decisions and further Tribunal reviews, the Bill also removes the ability for the Tribunal to refer a decision regarding a defence award or foreign award back to Defence. However, the Tribunal retains the power to either affirm the original decision, or set it aside and replace it with a new decision.

The Bill also clarifies that a decision regarding a previously cancelled defence honour, defence award or foreign award is not reviewable by the Tribunal. A cancellation decision is already not reviewable under the *Defence Act 1903*. However, under the current framework, a subsequent application relating to a previous cancellation decision is considered a reviewable decision.

The intent of this amendment is to correct this anomalous situation, by ensuring that a decision regarding a previously cancelled defence honour, defence award or foreign award is not a reviewable decision. A cancellation decision is given high levels of scrutiny, often relates to serious misconduct and is made by the Crown or their representative. Accordingly, it is not appropriate for such decisions to be reviewable.

To ensure transparency, the Bill will also require the Tribunal to prepare an annual report, for tabling in Parliament. The Tribunal already voluntarily prepares an annual report, so this measure formalises this current practice.

The Bill also enables regulations to provide for the conduct of reviews of reviewable decisions or inquiries conducted by the Tribunal.

This measure represents a way to address certain proposals raised by the Tribunal during consultation. The intent is for regulations to be made to support the Tribunal with administrative matters that would better enable the Tribunal to deal with applications made to it.

The Chair of the Tribunal must be consulted before any regulations are made that affect the practice, procedure or operation of the Tribunal. Importantly, and acknowledging the independence of the Tribunal's decision making—the Bill also provides that the regulations must not direct the Tribunal or Tribunal members in relation to the performance or exercise of the Tribunal's or members' functions or powers.

The Bill will commence on proclamation, or six months from Royal Assent.

The application and savings provisions of the Bill generally provide for the current law to continue to apply where the original application to Defence is made before the commencement of the Bill. Those who apply to Defence after the commencement of the Bill and then seek a review of that decision will be dealt with under the new law as amended by the Bill.

Recently, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee held an inquiry into the Defence Honours and Awards system, and made several recommendations to Government for consideration. I would like to thank the Committee for their time and consideration on this matter.

Recommendation six of the Committee's report recommended that Defence and the Tribunal work together to undertake a review of Part VIIIC of the *Defence Act 1903* to improve the Tribunal's review and inquiry functions, whilst ensuring that the Tribunal continued to operate independently.

The Tribunal was consulted throughout the development of the Bill, and while not all of its specific recommendations have been adopted, its input has been invaluable in shaping the legislation, which seeks to largely achieve the same aims as the Tribunal's recommendations.

These amendments will maintain the independent review process but will focus the Tribunal on reviewing contemporary matters where objective evidence and living witnesses can contribute to the review process, instead of historical matters.

The Bill will prevent reviews being undertaken when the member or their family have no involvement or awareness of the application.

The Bill will protect the integrity of the Defence honours and awards system by removing the risks of decisions being made when it is difficult, if not impossible, to refer to proper documentation or speak with decision makers of the day.

The amendments are reasonable, appropriate, and ensures that the Tribunal is focused on reviewing decisions about contemporary actions, with modern functions that are fit for purpose.

Importantly, the amendments proposed as part of this Bill do not prevent the Government issuing recognition to the tens of thousands of ADF members that are recognised annually. Nor does the Bill prevent Defence itself from reviewing or upgrading honours or awards.

Rather, this Bill will provide for the continuation of a proud tradition of recognising ADF members for their service as a prerogative of the Crown, while ensuring refusals are transparent and justifiable before an independent Tribunal.

I commend the Bill.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Polley): In accordance with standing order 115(3), further consideration of this bill is now adjourned to 30 October 2025.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Board of Management Functions) Bill 2025

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Representatives.

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (16:21): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science) (16:22): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

First Nations people have been looking after Country for tens of thousands of years.

They have an enduring connection to the land, sea and sky.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for Country and been a significant part of shaping the environment and supporting the remarkable, unique biodiversity we experience in Australia today.

Their knowledge, connection to place and cultural practices have contributed to the positive environmental outcomes that benefit all Australians.

Our jointly managed Commonwealth Reserves—Kakadu National Park, Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṟa National Park, and Booderee National Park—are located on Aboriginal land. The Traditional Owners of that land are actively involved in the protection of the environment through participation in the management of their land; spaces which both sustain and share the experience of Australia's biodiversity and cultural landscapes.

These reserves are managed by the Director of National Parks under a lease with Indigenous people and through a Board of Management, with a majority Traditional Owner representation. Each of the Boards of Management is currently chaired by a Traditional Owner.

These Boards are responsible for making decisions about the management of Commonwealth reserves.

However, their ability to make decisions stops when a management plan expires.

If that occurs, the role of Traditional Owners in the decision-making processes is removed, reducing that critical involvement in the management of their land.

This Bill will address and overcome this limitation through a minor technical amendment to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The Bill will allow the Board to continue making decisions after a management plan expires, provided those decisions are consistent with the expired management plan—just as they would have been consistent with the management plan while it was afoot.

This is a sensible change that will maintain the Board's decision-making ability until a new management plan comes into effect.

This Bill is being introduced to Parliament ahead of the broader reforms to the EPBC Act to ensure the critical functioning of the Board and the voices of Traditional Owners in management of their land is maintained while we are working to deliver the broader reforms that are required to ensure we have a fit-for-purpose national environmental protection framework.

This is a step towards delivering the government's commitment for more Traditional Owner control over the management of Country and it is consistent with the recommendations of the independent review of the EPBC Act that were provided to but never acted upon by the Coalition government.

Ordered that further consideration of the second reading of this bill be adjourned to the first sitting day of the next period of sittings, in accordance with standing order 111.

Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Returned from the House of Representatives

Message received from the House of Representatives agreeing to the amendments made by the Senate to the bill.

MOTIONS

Albanese Government

Senator HENDERSON (Victoria) (16:23): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) despite the Prime Minister's commitment to transparency and integrity, the Albanese Labor Government has become the most secretive government in recent memory, proposing new freedom of information laws which force Australians to pay a truth tax to access and share information, and

(ii) after repeated opportunities, the Government has refused to rule out a spare bedroom tax to plug Labor's economic black hole and fix its housing crisis; and

(b) calls on the Government to abandon its plans to implement a truth tax and immediately and unequivocally rule out any spare bedroom tax.

One of the great highlights of Labor's three-day, taxpayer funded talkfest, the so-called productivity round table, was the proposal for a spare bedroom tax—a penalty on Australian homeowners with spare bedrooms, a tax on owning your own home and a tax squarely aimed at older Australians, particularly those whose children have moved out of home. This is a radical proposal which has sent shockwaves throughout this country. Under Labor, nothing is off limits, including the family home. That is why so many Australians have genuine fears about how they will be hit by another Labor tax in an attempt to plug its economic blackhole and fix the housing crisis.

The spare-bedroom tax proposal was put forward by the analytics firm, Cotality. It came off the back of a study which showed just over 60 per cent of houses are lived in by one or two people but more than three-quarters of properties have three bedrooms or more. Cotality's head of Australian research, Eliza Owen, suggested a tax could encourage people to downsize and fix the mismatch. As reported on news.com.au, she said:

"Governments could make it more expensive to have more housing than you need and cheaper to live in smaller housing ...

"Strides are already being taken on the supply side to establish well-located apartments in our larger cities that can accommodate smaller households. But shifting demand through tax reform could help the take-up of these news homes."

I have to say—and there's been an astounding response on social media right across this country—this is a pretty outrageous proposal. Thousands upon thousands of people have expressed their outrage, and they've raised a whole number of concerns. The concerns include the cost to older homeowners of downsizing to a smaller home. It's not that simple of course. There's a very big stamp duty penalty whenever anyone sells their home and buys another home. There's also the right to have a spare bedroom for visitors. So many people are concerned that, if this gets traction, you're saying that we cannot have visitors in our own homes. There's also the right to use spare bedrooms for other purposes, such as storage or study. Some have even suggested that husbands and wives may elect or could be forced to occupy separate bedrooms to avoid the threat of a spare-bedroom tax.

We accept this proposal was not put forward by the Labor government. But why is the Prime Minister and the government repeatedly refusing to rule out a spare-bedroom tax? In this chamber, we have asked repeatedly if the government would rule out this proposed tax, and the best that we got was that Minister Wong said that there would be no bedroom inspectors. Well, what a relief! There will be no bedroom inspectors knocking on the door inquiring as to whether every bedroom in the house is currently occupied. I mean the whole thing just sounds like absolute nonsense.

One of the many critics is the AMP's chief economist, Shane Oliver, who said that such a tax would be a huge attack on empty nesters. Mr Oliver said:

"A better approach would be to remove stamp duty to make it easier for empty nesters to downsize and free up their large bedroom house—

and, of course, excess bedrooms—

for families.

This is again from news.com.au. He said:

"And the maths are such that we simply lack enough homes—we have a shortfall of 200,000 to 300,000 dwellings on our estimates—so the key is to make it easier to supply more homes and slow immigration to more sustainable levels, not tax those who have a spare bedroom."

So are homeowners in Labor's firing line? Australians have every right to be very deeply suspicious about Labor's agenda, especially older Australians. The Treasurer, Mr Chalmers, said, after the productivity roundtable, the tax system was 'imperfect'—that was his word—and skewed in favour of older generations. At least some roundtable attendees argued older Australians were able to access concessions through superannuation, capital gains tax discounts and trusts, placing more of a burden on younger workers. That sounds very much like they are certainly coming after older Australians. Mr Chalmers has left the door open to introducing new taxes in the next budget, declaring that it remains to be seen. This, of course, is in stark contrast to the statements of the Prime Minister, Mr Albanese, who has insisted that the government would not implement any new taxes before the next election and would stick to the proposals that were taken to the election and to voters. So we've got a huge conflict between the Prime Minister and the Treasurer. This reportedly is concerning Labor members and senators, because clearly there is some real chest thumping going on between the Prime Minister and the Treasurer.

As I said, Australians have legitimate reasons to be concerned about further attacks on their own homes. There have been lots of discussion and lots of reports and analysis run about the abolition of negative gearing. There are also suggestions floating around about a reversal of the capital gains tax exemption on the family home—again, not by the government but by various economists and other contributors to this debate. Australians should be very concerned, particularly about this increasing rhetoric coming out of the government that older Australians have had it far too good for far too long. This government is actually forgetting that older Australians have worked hard all their lives and have paid taxes all their lives. They've got their nest egg together; they've planned for their retirement. Older Australians have every right to feel deeply concerned that the government is coming after them.

Just consider what's happening in Victoria. Victoria is in an economic crisis courtesy of the Allan Labor government. One of the measures it's introduced is a dramatic lowering of land tax thresholds, which of course has caused absolute chaos in the housing market. One of the impacts of that is that anyone who runs a small business from home and earns more than \$30,000 in income is liable to have land tax imposed on the portion of the home used for that small business. That is pretty alarming. Victorian Labor poo-pooed that whole notion, yet it was subsequently proven, as reported in the *Australian Financial Review*, that more than 400,000 people had been hit with higher land tax as a result of running a business in their own home.

Today is a very good opportunity for the Albanese government to rule out a spare bedroom tax. If this is a ridiculous idea—we think this is a ridiculous idea, and Australians think this is a ridiculous idea—and if the government thinks this is untenable, then it will do the right thing, get out of the shadows, stop feeding the fears of older Australians and rule out a spare bedroom tax.

I also call on the Albanese government to withdraw its regressive truth tax. The Prime Minister promised to bring transparency to government. Instead, Australians are now living under the most secretive government in recent memory. The Prime Minister and the Albanese government talk integrity, but all we see is mounting secrecy. Labor's new proposed freedom-of-information laws represent the biggest restrictions on access to government documents in 15 years. If the legislation passes—and we're going to do everything to make sure that doesn't happen—Australians would be forced to pay up to \$60 simply to ask what their government is doing in their name. Journalists, academics, advocates and, of course, members of parliament will face new costs and barriers, while anonymous requests will be banned altogether, silencing whistleblowers and deterring those fearful of reprisal. The reason is very clear: FOI requests have already exposed uncomfortable truths, and now Labor wants to make it even more

difficult for the truth to get out. Bureaucrats warned Labor that disability groups did not support its rushed NDIS timeline, but the government pressed ahead. Officials raised doubts about Labor's changes to bulk-billing incentives, but that advice was kept hidden. Rather than face scrutiny, Labor wants to bury it.

Regrettably, this secrecy is part of a broader pattern. The Centre for Public Integrity shows that fewer than one in four FOI requests are now fully granted, down from half just two years ago. In parliament, ministers table heavily redacted pages. We just heard a contribution from Senator Bragg; he continues to seek critical documents that are so important in terms of the work he's doing as the shadow minister for housing, and all Labor is doing is trying to hide the truth. This is not good enough.

What is particularly egregious about this is that, when they were in opposition, the Labor Party talked a big game about transparency and they talked a big game about integrity. But we have seen transparency go through the floor under this government. Transparency is not a burden; it is a duty. Labor's excuses about bots and foreign actors are a complete smokescreen. The real effect of these changes will be fewer documents, higher costs and more excuses to keep Australians in the dark. This is a government making it harder to hold power to account. Secrecy is not a sign of strength; it is the refuge of weak governments.

Since coming to office, Labor has presided over a massive spike of FOI refusals. It has pioneered widespread nondisclosure agreements for stakeholder consultation. It's produced a secret manual steering public servants on how to give acceptable answers in estimates. It has repeatedly flouted Senate orders for the production of documents; that certainly occurred when I, as the former shadow minister for education, was seeking critical documents from the Minister for Education and repeatedly got back false public interest immunity claims which had no basis in merit whatsoever. That has also been an increasing feature of this government—dodgy PII claims to get around the truth. We are all here to hold the government to account but I think the government forgets that it is here to serve the Australian people. The truth counts.

We see continuing limited parliamentary scrutiny through changes to the standing orders, and the result of all this is another big truth tax. Whether it's the spare bedroom tax or the truth tax, Australians cannot trust this government. As government spending rises, as electricity prices go through the roof, as the mismanagement of the economy escalates and as debt heads towards \$1.2 trillion, spending is out of control under Labor. Debt is spiralling, and these taxes must be ruled out.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Cox): There are no further contributions. The question is that the motion moved by Senator Henderson be agreed to. A division is required. It being after 4.30, it will be deferred.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Cox): I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Red Cross

Senator MULHOLLAND (Queensland) (16:39): The Red Cross is the world's largest humanitarian network. It boasts an incredible 16 million volunteer members worldwide. For more than 160 years the Red Cross has stood firm in the face of war, famine and disaster to provide emergency care and compassion during crisis. Importantly, it is often the Red Cross that remains on the ground when the gunfire stops or floodwaters subside to help communities heal from wounds that medicine cannot heal, like the lifelong grief, fear and pain associated with living through a traumatic event. In hospitals, refugee camps and shelters around the world, Red Cross teams walk alongside victims through their pain, creating a legacy that spans borders, languages and cultures.

So it was with a sense of profound privilege earlier today that I co-convened the first meeting of the Parliamentary Friends of Australian Red Cross group of the 48th Parliament of Australia. This was a non-partisan event, with members of the opposition and crossbench represented. It was a great opportunity to meet with members of the Red Cross and understand their incredibly important work providing emergency support, critical blood donations and humanitarian aid programs to people impacted by crisis, disaster and conflict.

Since its conception in 1863, the Red Cross has been a beacon of hope in both wartime and peacetime. The Australian Red Cross branch formed in 1914 on the outbreak of the First World War. Today, in 2025, the importance of the Red Cross and their extraordinary commitment to humanity has never been more important. Especially since the unprovoked attack by Russia on Ukraine in February 2022, the efforts of the Red Cross have taken on unparalleled significance. Every day, the Ukrainian Red Cross delivers food, hygiene products, medicines, water, bed linen, diapers, pet food and other essentials. More than 13 million people have received aid assistance from the Ukrainian Red Cross since the war started and more than 300,000 people have been trained in first aid to help this effort.

This incredible work in some of the harshest and most dangerous places in the world right now has not come without a toll on the Red Cross itself. Twenty-three of Ukraine's local Red Cross offices have been destroyed during the conflict. Despite this, the Ukrainian Red Cross has expanded its scope during the conflict and is now playing an integral part in infrastructure restoration, where possible, and psychological rehabilitation.

The horrific destruction Russia is unleashing in Ukraine might be 13,000 kilometres away from our shores, but I'm proud to say that Australians are standing by our ally. Through the Ukraine Crisis Appeal, Australians have helped provide relief, shelter, clean water, health care and cash assistance. In fact, more than \$20 million in public and private donations has been provided by Australians to support the Ukraine Red Cross efforts, and Australia has deployed expert delegates with expertise in health care, logistics and other wartime efforts to help on the ground in Ukraine.

The Australian government has stood steadfast with Ukraine since 2022. The Albanese government has committed more than \$1.5 billion in military support. That includes over \$85 million in humanitarian assistance, \$63 million to enhance Ukraine's energy security and \$66 million for reconstruction and recovery. That's because to support Ukraine is to uphold international law. The Red Cross is helping uphold morale on the ground in Ukraine, offering a sense of hope to Ukrainians in places where hope has been shattered. So I want to thank the Red Cross for their incredible work and every Australian who has donated to support the efforts of the Red Cross volunteers in Ukraine and around the world.

Medicare

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (16:43): Labor created Medicare, Labor protects Medicare and Labor is strengthening Medicare by making medicines cheaper for every Australian. This week, the Senate passed the Albanese Labor government's cheaper-medicines bill. From 1 January next year, the maximum price for a prescription on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme will fall to \$25. That is the lowest price for medicines in more than two decades. The last time Australians paid no more than \$25 for a PBS script was back in 2004. This reform is a more than 20 per cent cut in the cost of medicines, saving households across the country more than \$200 million each year. And we have not stopped there. For pensioners and concession card holders, the cost of PBS medicines will remain frozen at \$7.70 until 2030. That gives older Australians, people with disability and families on low incomes the certainty that their medicines will remain affordable for the rest of the decade. This is real cost-of-living relief, and it is only possible because of Labor's commitment to Medicare.

Supporting universal access to health care is in our DNA. It was Gough Whitlam who introduced Medibank in the 1970s, Australia's first national health insurance scheme. The Liberal Party tore it down, but Labor built it back. Bob Hawke gave this country Medicare, the universal healthcare system that Australians know and cherish today. And under the Albanese government, we are strengthening Medicare again. We have tripled the bulk-billing incentive, the largest investment in bulk-billing since Medicare was created, and we are rolling out Medicare urgent care clinics across the nation, including two in my home town of Hobart, so families can get help without the long wait at the emergency department. All of this is about one simple idea: no matter your income or your postcode, Australians deserve access to affordable health care.

In Tasmania this commitment makes a real difference. After years of decline, bulk-billing rates in our state are rising again, the Hobart Medicare urgent care clinics are giving families a new option for after-hours and urgent treatment and now, with the cheaper medicines bill, Tasmanians will see another cut in out-of-pocket costs at the pharmacy counter. When I speak to people in Hobart, in Glenorchy and across southern Tasmania, they tell me about the strain of rising health costs. Whether or not to fill a script is not a decision Tasmanians should have to make.

By lowering the cost of medicines, we are not only helping family budgets; we are also helping people stay well. The evidence is clear: when medicines are affordable, people are more likely to take them as prescribed. That means fewer trips to the hospital and better long-term health outcomes. This matters, especially in Tasmania, where chronic conditions, like heart disease, diabetes and respiratory illnesses, are more common than the national average. Affordable medicines mean better health for our communities, fewer preventable hospital admissions and a fairer deal for families who already face higher health needs.

The contrast could not be clearer. Labor has always been the party that builds, protects and strengthens Medicare. From Whitlam's Medibank to Hawke's Medicare, from Albanese's bulk-billing reforms to cheaper medicines today, Labor has never walked away from the principle that health care should depend on your Medicare card, not your credit card. The Liberals opposed Medibank, they opposed Medicare and they continue to vote against the reforms that make our health system stronger. That is the difference. The cheaper medicines bill shows once again that only Labor can be trusted to protect Medicare and to make sure that every Tasmanian, whether you live in Hobart, in

Strahan, in Launceston or on the east coast, gets the care they need, when they need it and at a price they can afford. Labor created Medicare, Labor protects Medicare and Labor will also always strengthen Medicare.

Vietnam: Migration

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia) (16:48): I rise to mark an extraordinary milestone in our national story: the 50th anniversary of Vietnamese settlement in Australia. Half a century ago, following the fall of Saigon in 1975, Australia opened its doors to one of the largest refugee intakes in our history. In the years that followed, tens of thousands of Vietnamese families arrived on Australia's shores, many with little more than courage and determination. They came seeking freedom, security and the chance to build a new life. In the context of the time, their arrival challenged us as a nation. There were doubts and debates about whether such a large and sudden wave of immigration could succeed. But succeed it has, beyond every measure.

Vietnamese Australians are now one of the great success stories of our great multicultural society. From Cabramatta in Sydney to Footscray in Melbourne and Girrawheen in Perth, vibrant Vietnamese communities have flourished. They combine their traditions, their work ethic, their entrepreneurial spirit and, of course, their incredible cuisine. Vietnamese Australians have become leaders in business, medicine, education, the arts and public service. They have raised families, built thriving small businesses and sent their children to universities and into professions where they've served with distinction.

The contribution of Vietnamese Australians to the economic and social fabric of this country has been immense. We also cannot forget the sacrifices of many Vietnamese Australians who have served in our Defence Force, in policing and in frontline emergency services, continuing their proud tradition of loyalty to the country that gave their families refuge.

The 50th anniversary is also an opportunity to acknowledge the hardships that have been endured. Many who came here carry deep trauma from conflict, from separation and, of course, from very dangerous journeys across the seas. Their perseverance and resilience deserve the highest respect.

It is here that I wish to recognise one particular leader, Dr Anh Nguyen OAM, President of the WA chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia and co-founder and project leader for the Vietnamese community cultural centre which will soon be built in Girrawheen and with which I've had a very close association and which, of course, is very close to my electorate office. For decades, Dr Nguyen has worked to support new arrivals, preserved cultural traditions and built stronger connections between communities. He has championed initiatives that bring people together, from cultural festivals that showcase Vietnamese traditions to programs that support young people, families and seniors in Western Australia. His service has strengthened not only the Vietnamese community but the wider multicultural fabric of my home state.

The Vietnamese settlement experience demonstrates that, when Australia maintains strong borders and a fair, properly-modelled migration system, the rewards are shared by the whole nation. The children and grandchildren of those first arrivals are now among our best examples of what opportunity, freedom and community can achieve. As we mark this milestone, we celebrate a community that has given so much to Australia and a country that was made better by opening its doors 50 years ago—a country that was made better because it challenged its fears and anxieties.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Vietnamese Australians across the nation on this important anniversary, and I use this opportunity to reaffirm, with gratitude, all those things that bring a shared national value to our country. Of course, at the heart of that, on this occasion of the 50th anniversary, I celebrate the wonderful Vietnamese community and acknowledge their great courage in very, very difficult times 50 years ago.

Syria

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (16:53): First, could I associate myself with those remarks from Senator Dean Smith on our wonderful Vietnamese Australian community. I would also, once again, in a Queensland context, note the passing this year of a wonderful Australian, Dr Cuong Bui, who contributed so much to our beautiful country.

I have risen on a number of occasions in this parliament to talk about the situation in Syria and, in particular, the persecution of minorities in Syria—Christian minorities, Alawites, Druze and other minorities in Syria. I gave a speech on 25 March 2025 on this issue, having attended a memorial service which was held in King George Square in my home state of Queensland. I gave a speech on 23 July 2025, after having discussions with members of the Queensland Syrian Christian community following the suicide bombing of the Mar Elias church in Damascus, where I saw horrific images of what occurred in the course of that bombing and heard firsthand the devastating impact on members of our community with loved ones in Syria.

Subsequent to the last sitting in parliament, I met with members of the Syrian Druze community. There have been horrific events occurring in Syria where members of the Druze community have been specifically targeted. In particular, I refer to the situation in the city of Suwayda in southern Syria. When I met members of the Druze Australian community in my home state of Queensland, they told me about how desperate they were for aid to reach their loved ones in Suwayda, which was, effectively, blockaded from any assistance. They talked about loved ones who couldn't access food or water. They sent me horrific footage of what happened in Suwayda in mid-July, with the targeting of members of the Druze community. They called for action on behalf of the Australian government.

I do note that an aid convoy arrived in the city of Suwayda under the auspices of the United Nations. I want to emphasise that the Australian government must do everything it can to make sure that aid continues to flow to Suwayda, to the Druze community and to all other ethnic minorities within Syria who are the subject of persecution. In this respect, I also note a story from Reuters which just came out which I think puts a very bright light on the situation in Syria. Syria has actually detained members of its own defence and interior ministry suspected of violence in Suwayda. I quote from this article:

Syria has interrogated and detained members of its defence and interior ministries suspected of committing abuses against civilians in the predominantly Druze province of Sweida in July, the committee investigating the violence has said.

There were hundreds of people who were murdered in Suwayda. I've seen some of the footage, which is so disturbing, including of the hospital in Suwayda. It was very disturbing.

I think that at this point in time the Australian government needs to do everything it possibly can, through all multilateral international forums, to make sure those responsible for the violence are held accountable, and to protect all ethnic minorities in Syria. Christian, Alawite, Druze—all ethnic minority communities in Syria need to be protected. The fact that the government has gone to the step of arresting members of its own defence ministry and interior ministry underlines the problem. We have to use this parliament to maintain a bright light on the actions of the Syrian government, make sure that people are held accountable, and do everything we possibly can to make sure that those vulnerable ethnic communities in Syria are protected. I once again call for the Australian government to open up humanitarian pathways in Syria, especially for women and children with loved ones in Australia.

Tasmania Police

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (16:58): In this sitting of parliament, I have been talking about the pretty disturbing stories about the Tasmanian police service. This is not about the majority of hardworking, dedicated police officers that we have, who put their lives on the line for Tasmanians every day. This is about some rotten apples in our police force who are involved in cover-ups and, in some cases, campaigns of intimidation against some of their own serving police officers who are just trying to do the right thing.

Today I'm going to tell you the story of Christine. Christine had been a loyal and effective admin officer for Tasmania Police for over a decade. In 2019 she was the licensee of the Police Academy bar. According to Christine, the books were a mess, so she set about sorting it out. A few weeks in with a new boss, Christine was approached by a senior officer who told Christine he was providing free drinks to other police personnel at the bar. Christine told him he would need to send an email so that she could square the books. Her request was met with anger and then retribution.

What the Tasmanian police did to this hardworking, loyal, ethical and intelligent woman is absolutely appalling. When Christine escalated her concerns to the deputy secretary, she was stood down and told to work from home. Christine was told she was being investigated for gross misconduct and, then, in a shocking example of overreach, Christine's home was raided by the Tasmania Police Serious and Organised Crime Division and Tasmania Police's professional standards unit. When this raid took place, Christine's autistic son's computer was confiscated but hers was not taken. This was despite being told by Christine's partner that their son was enormously reliant on his computer. A police officer even said that they were 'going to put his mum in jail'. To say that in front of an autistic child is absolutely shameful. I should note here that Christine's son is still extremely traumatised by the event and, when people visit—and I have been there—he retreats to his room until the coast is clear.

For Christine, the matter of working from home and deleting generic networked emails from a shared networked email account—meaning several other state service employees were also using this email account—went before the Magistrates Court of Tasmania. Christine's case was thrown out from lack of evidence—of course! The search warrant had redacted the justice of the peace's name. That's all you need in Tasmania—a justice of the peace to sign off on a search warrant. Christine has subsequently found out that the justice of the peace was not registered on the Department of Justice's website.

When Christine eventually returned to work, instead of getting support, she faced humiliation, discrimination and a breach of the antidiscrimination laws. I'll just remind you again that the reason Christine was being put through this was that she needed to account for the free alcohol consumed by the Tasmania Police Academy bar. Christine

was told that, because she was on the autism spectrum—this is shocking—she would be required to buy signs that indicated a person with autism was working. This was both humiliating, as you can imagine, and completely unnecessary. Christine was banned from using the same tearooms, toilets and entrances as her colleagues. Within a month, Christine was stood down again. This time, as the criminal matter for deletion of networked emails didn't stick, a state service breach of code of conduct was applied. The pattern was clear to Christine. This wasn't process; it was pressure. It wasn't just pressure; it was bloody bullying. I'll call it—it was absolute bullying.

In 2021, Christine was cleared of any wrongdoing. When she approached the legal counsel for the Tasmanian Integrity Commission, Christine told her story and asked for help. The department then commissioned an independent investigation into Christine's case. That report was completed and given to the secretary of the department in February, but Christine had to wait until May to discover she was cleared of any wrongdoing. During this time, the department deleted all of Christine's emails, so she had no evidence of what happened, and, even after being cleared in May, she was not allowed to return to the workplace until the following January.

When Christine did return, she once again faced discrimination and exclusion. Despite formally lodging complaints about the raid and other mistreatment, Christine was unable to access the Tasmania Police's professional standards unit for help or support because officers within this unit were involved in the misconduct being complained about. Even after sending her complaints through to the acting commander of the professional standards unit, nothing happened. She was repeatedly told her complaints had been registered, and only through right-to-information requests and the involvement of the ombudsman did she discover that none of the complaints had been recorded or investigated.

Christine's case raises serious and alarming questions. If complaints about Tasmania Police misconduct cannot be properly registered or investigated, how on earth can victims of more serious crimes, like sexual assault by their own, come forward and trust that their complaints will be taken seriously? This is a pattern of systemic failure here. Victims have been left without protection, and abusers have remained in positions of power. There's Eden Westbrook's case, the Sue Neill-Fraser case, the Helen Bird case and Sally's case, which I spoke about on Wednesday, to name just a few—and there are more to come.

Current oversight bodies, including the Tasmanian Integrity Commission, lack sufficient powers to address corruption or systemic abuse. Christine went to see the legal counsel of the Tasmanian Integrity Commission and was told by the counsel that they don't investigate corruption, as it isn't in their act. Can you believe that, Australia? We have an integrity commission, as it's called, in Tasmania, and it doesn't investigate corruption! How laughable and how shameful for Tasmania and its government! They don't investigate Tasmanian police because—wait for it—they have a quid pro quo arrangement with the police. That is the Tasmanian police doing investigations for the integrity commission. They're just like Defence, regulating themselves and marking their own homework. It is absolutely shameful! By the way, the Tasmanian Integrity Commission has never held a public hearing or even done a prosecution. That is what Tasmania has to rely on. Shameful, isn't it?

Christine loved her job and was good at it. Just because she needed a paper trail so that booze wasn't being lifted from the academy bar without proper accounting, her career in the Tasmanian police service is now over.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Colbeck): I remind honourable senators that the legislation committees will meet to consider estimates commencing on Tuesday 7 October 2025 at 9 am.

Senate adjourned at 17:06