



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Hansard**

**MONDAY, 12 AUGUST 2024**

## **CORRECTIONS**

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

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**PROOF**



## **FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

### **FIRST SESSION**

#### **Governor-General**

Her Excellency the Hon. Samantha Joy Mostyn AC

#### **House of Representatives Office Holders**

*Speaker*—Hon. Dugald Milton Dick MP

*Deputy Speaker*—Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP

*Second Deputy Speaker*—Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP

*Members of the Speaker's Panel*—Dr Michael Randolph Freeland MP,  
Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Andrew Damien Wilkie MP,  
Ms Rebekha Carina Che Sharkie MP, Hon. Scott Andrew Buchholz MP,  
Ms Lisa Marie Chesters MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, Mr James William Stevens MP,  
Mr Terry James Young MP, Ms Karen Lesley Andrews MP,  
Ms Alicia Emma Payne MP, Ms Marion Rose Scrymgour and Ms Zoe Anne McKenzie

*Leader of the House*—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP

*Deputy Leader of the House*—Hon. Mark Christopher Butler MP

*Manager of Opposition Business*—Hon. Paul William Fletcher MP

*Deputy Manager of Opposition Business*—Hon. Kevin John Hogan MP

#### **Party Leaders and Whips**

Australian Labor Party

*Leader*—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP

*Deputy Leader*—Hon. Richard Donald Marles MP

*Chief Government Whip*—Ms Joanne Ryan MP

*Government Whips*—Mr David Philip Benedict Smith MP and Ms Anne Maree Stanley MP

Liberal Party of Australia

*Leader*—Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP

*Deputy Leader*—Hon. Sussan Ley MP

*Chief Opposition Whip*—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP

*Opposition Whips*—Hon. Melissa Lee Price MP and Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP

The Nationals

*Leader*—Hon. David Kelly Littleproud MP

*Deputy Leader*—Senator Perin McGregor Davey

*Chief Nationals Whip*—Hon. Mark Maclean Coulton MP

*Nationals Whip*—Mr Samuel James Birrell MP

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### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Aly, Hon. Dr Anne	Cowan, WA	ALP
Ananda-Rajah, Dr Michelle	Higgins, Vic.	ALP
Andrews, Hon. Karen Lesley	McPherson, Qld	LP
Archer, Mrs Bridget Kathleen	Bass, TAS	LP
Bandt, Mr Adam Paul	Melbourne, Vic.	AG
Bates, Mr Stephen James	Brisbane, Qld	AG
Bell, Ms Angie Marion	Moncrieff, Qld	LNP
Belyea, Ms Jodie Anne	Dunkley, Vic.	ALP
Birrell, Mr Samuel James	Nicholls, Vic.	NATS
Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles Guy	McMahon, NSW	ALP
Boyce, Mr Colin Einar	Flynn, Qld	LNP
Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan	Monash, Vic.	LP
Buchholz, Hon. Scott Andrew	Wright, Qld	LP
Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Burnell, Mr Matthew Paul	Spence, SA	ALP
Burney, Hon. Linda Jean	Barton, NSW	ALP
Burns, Mr Joshua Solomon	Macnamara, Vic.	ALP
Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP
Byrnes, Ms Alison Joy	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Caldwell, Mr Cameron Mackenzie	Fadden, QLD	LNP
Chalmers, Hon. Dr James Edward	Rankin, Qld	ALP
Chandler-Mather, Mr Max	Griffith, Qld	AG
Chaney, Ms Katherine Ella	Curtin, WA	IND
Charlton, Dr Andrew Henry George	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Chester, Hon. Darren Jeffrey	Gippsland, Vic.	NATS
Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie	Bendigo, Vic.	ALP
Clare, Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Coker, Ms Elizabeth Ann	Corangamite, Vic.	ALP
Coleman, Hon. David Bernard	Banks, NSW	LP
Collins, Hon. Julie Maree	Franklin, TAS	ALP
Conaghan, Mr Patrick John	Cowper, NSW	NATS

### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Conroy, Hon. Patrick Martin	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Coulton, Hon. Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	NATS
Daniel, Ms Zoe	Goldstein, Vic.	IND
Dick, Hon. Dugald Milton	Oxley, Qld	ALP
Doyle, Ms Mary Judith Jacinta	Aston, Vic.	ALP
Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, KC	Isaacs, Vic.	ALP
Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, Qld	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Entsch, Hon. Warren George	Leichhardt, Qld	LP
Fernando, Ms Cassandra Juanita	Holt, Vic.	ALP
Fletcher, Hon. Paul William	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Freeland, Dr Michael Randolph	Macarthur, NSW	ALP
Garland, Dr Carina Mary Lindsay	Chisholm, Vic.	ALP
Gee, Hon. Andrew Robert	Calare, NSW	IND
Georganas, Mr Steven	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Giles, Hon. Andrew James	Scullin, Vic.	ALP
Gillespie, Hon. Dr David Arthur	Lyne, NSW	NATS
Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald	Moore, WA	LP
Gorman, Hon. Patrick Possum	Perth, WA	ALP
Gosling, Mr Luke John Anthony	Solomon, NT	ALP
Haines, Dr Helen Mary	Indi, Vic.	IND
Hamilton, Mr Garth Russell	Groom, Qld	LNP
Hastie, Hon. Andrew William	Canning, WA	LP
Hawke, Hon. Alexander George	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Hill, Mr Julian Christopher	Bruce, Vic.	ALP
Hogan, Hon. Kevin John	Page, NSW	NATS
Howarth, Hon. Luke Ronald	Petrie, Qld	LP
Husic, Hon. Edham Nurredin	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Jones, Hon. Stephen Patrick	Whitlam, NSW	ALP
Joyce, Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard	New England, NSW	NATS
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, Qld	KAP
Kearney, Hon. Gerardine Mary	Cooper, Vic.	ALP
Kennedy, Mr Simon Peter	Cook, NSW	LP

### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Keogh, Hon. Matthew James	Burt, WA	ALP
Khalil, Mr Peter	Wills, Vic.	ALP
King, Hon. Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, Vic.	ALP
King, Hon. Madeleine Mary Harvie	Brand, WA	ALP
Landry, Hon. Michelle Leanne	Capricornia, Qld	NATS
Lawrence, Ms Tania Natalie	Hasluck, WA	ALP
Laxale, Mr Jerome Alexandre Alain	Bennelong, NSW	ALP
Le, Ms Dai Trang	Fowler, NSW	IND
Leeser, Mr Julian Martin	Berowra, NSW	LP
Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith	Fenner, ACT	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Lim, Mr Bon Cheng	Tangney, WA	ALP
Littleproud, Hon. David Kelly	Maranoa, Qld	LNP
Marino, Hon. Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Marles, Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, Vic.	ALP
Mascarenhas, Ms Zaneta Felice Antoinetta	Swan, WA	ALP
McBain, Hon. Kristy Louise	Eden-Monaro, NSW	ALP
McBride, Hon. Emma Margaret	Dobell, NSW	ALP
McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis	Riverina, NSW	NATS
McIntosh, Mrs Melissa Iris	Lindsay, NSW	LP
McKenzie, Ms Zoe Anne	Flinders, Vic.	LP
Miller-Frost, Ms Louise Jane	Boothby, SA	ALP
Mitchell, Mr Brian Keith	Lyons, TAS	ALP
Mitchell, Mr Robert George	McEwen, Vic.	ALP
Mulino, Dr Daniel	Fraser, Vic.	ALP
Neumann, Hon. Shayne Kenneth	Blair, Qld	ALP
O'Brien, Mr Edward Lynam	Fairfax, Qld	LNP
O'Brien, Mr Llewellyn Stephen	Wide Bay, Qld	LNP
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John	Gorton, Vic.	ALP
O'Neil, Hon. Clare Ellen	Hotham, Vic.	ALP
Pasin, Mr Antony	Barker, SA	LP
Payne, Ms Alicia Emma	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Pearce, Mr Gavin Bruce	Braddon, TAS	LP

### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas	Moreton, Qld	ALP
Phillips, Mrs Fiona Evon	Gilmore, NSW	ALP
Pike, Mr Henry Jon	Bowman, Qld	LP
Pitt, Hon. Keith John	Hinkler, Qld	NATS
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Price, Hon. Melissa Lee	Durack, WA	LP
Rae, Mr Samuel Thomas	Hawke, Vic.	ALP
Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Reid, Dr Gordon James	Robertson, NSW	ALP
Repacholi, Mr Daniel Peter	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Roberts, Ms Tracey Gardner	Pearce, WA	ALP
Rowland, Hon. Michelle Anne	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Ryan, Dr Monique Marie	Kooyong, Vic.	IND
Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine	Lalor, Vic.	ALP
Scamps, Dr Sophie Anna	Mackellar, NSW	IND
Scrymgour, Ms Marion Rose	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Sharkie, Ms Rebekha Carina Che	Mayo, SA	CA
Shorten, Hon. William Richard	Maribyrnong, Vic.	ALP
Sitou, Ms Sally	Reid, NSW	ALP
Smith, Mr David Philip Benedict	Bean, ACT	ALP
Spender, Ms Allegra May	Wentworth, NSW	IND
Stanley, Ms Anne Maree	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Steggall, Ms Zali	Warringah, NSW	IND
Stevens, Mr James William	Sturt, SA	LP
Sukkar, Hon. Michael Sven	Deakin, Vic.	LP
Swanson, Ms Meryl Jane	Paterson, NSW	ALP
Taylor, Hon. Angus James	Hume, NSW	LP
Tehan, Hon. Daniel Thomas	Wannon, Vic.	LP
Templeman, Ms Susan Raye	Macquarie, NSW	ALP
Thistlethwaite, Hon. Matthew James	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Thompson, Mr Phillip Bruce	Herbert, Qld	LNP
Thwaites, Ms Kate Lynne	Jagajaga, Vic.	ALP

### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Tink, Ms Kylea Jane	North Sydney, NSW	IND
Vamvakinou, Ms Maria	Calwell, Vic.	ALP
van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes	Forde, Qld	LP
Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier	Bonner, Qld	LP
Violi, Mr Aaron Anthony	Casey, Vic.	LP
Wallace, Mr Andrew Bruce	Fisher, Qld	LNP
Ware, Ms Jennifer Lesley	Hughes, NSW	LP
Watson-Brown, Ms Elizabeth	Ryan, Qld	AG
Watts, Hon. Timothy Graham	Gellibrand, Vic.	ALP
Webster, Dr Anne Elizabeth	Mallee, Vic.	NATS
Wells, Hon. Anika Shay	Lilley, Qld	ALP
Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien	Clark, TAS	IND
Willcox, Mr Andrew John	Dawson, Qld	LNP
Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Wilson, Mr Richard James	O'Connor, WA	LP
Wolahan, Mr Keith	Menzies, Vic.	LP
Wood, Hon. Jason Peter	La Trobe, Vic.	LP
Young, Mr Terry James	Longman, Qld	LNP
Zappia, Mr Antonio	Makin, SA	ALP

### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye  
Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees  
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic  
Parliamentary Budget Officer—S Helgeby



## ALBANESE MINISTRY

TITLE	MINISTER
<b>Prime Minister</b>	The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
<b>Minister for the Public Service</b>	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
<b>Minister for Women</b> (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
<b>Minister for Indigenous Australians</b>	The Hon Linda Burney MP
<b>Cabinet Secretary</b>	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
<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 Indigenous Australians</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy</i>
<b>Minister for Defence</b> (Deputy Prime Minister)	The Hon Richard Marles MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Defence Personnel	The Hon Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Defence Industry	The Hon Pat Conroy MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<b>Minister for Foreign Affairs</b> (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
<b>Minister for Trade and Tourism</b> (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
Minister for International Development and the Pacific	The Hon Pat Conroy MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Trade</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon Tim Watts MP</i>
<b>Treasurer</b>	The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
<b>Minister for Small Business</b>	The Hon Julie Collins MP
Assistant Treasurer	The Hon Stephen Jones MP
Minister for Financial Services	The Hon Stephen Jones MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>
<b>Minister for Finance</b>	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
<b>Special Minister of State</b>	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<b>Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</b> (Leader of the House)	The Hon Tony Burke MP
<b>Minister for Skills and Training</b>	The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Employment</i>	<i>The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>
<b>Minister for Education</b>	The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Early Childhood Education	The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP
Minister for Youth	The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Education</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>

TITLE	MINISTER
<b>Minister for Health and Aged Care</b> (Deputy Leader of the House)	The Hon Mark Butler MP
Minister for Aged Care	The Hon Anika Wells MP
Minister for Sport	The Hon Anika Wells MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care</i>	<i>The Hon Ged Kearney MP</i>
<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 Indigenous Health</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy</i>
<b>Minister for Climate Change and Energy</b>	The Hon Chris Bowen MP
<b>Minister for the Environment and Water</b>	The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister</i>
<b>Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government</b>	The Hon Catherine King MP
<b>Minister for Communications</b>	The Hon Michelle Rowland MP
<b>Minister for the Arts</b>	The Hon Tony Burke MP
<b>Minister for Northern Australia</b>	The Hon Madeleine King MP
Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon Kristy McBain MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Carol Brown</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Regional Development</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>
<b>Minister for Social Services</b>	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
<b>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>	The Hon Bill Shorten MP
<b>Minister for Government Services</b>	The Hon Bill Shorten MP
<b>Minister for Housing</b>	The Hon Julie Collins MP
<b>Minister for Homelessness</b>	The Hon Julie Collins MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</i>
<b>Attorney-General</b>	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
<i>Assistant Minister for the Republic</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<b>Minister for Resources</b>	The Hon Madeleine King MP
<b>Minister for Industry and Science</b>	The Hon Ed Husic MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>
<b>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</b>	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
<b>Minister for Home Affairs</b>	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
<b>Minister for Cyber Security</b>	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
<b>Minister for Emergency Management</b>	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs	The Hon Andrew Giles MP

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

## SHADOW MINISTRY

Title	Shadow Minister
<b>Leader of the Opposition</b>	The Hon Peter Dutton MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Women</b>	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
<b>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</b>	Senator James Paterson
<b>Shadow Minister for the Public Service</b>	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
<b>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians</b>	Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Senator the Hon James McGrath</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Industry, Skills and Training</b> (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Resources</b>	Senator Susan McDonald
<b>Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy</b>	Ted O'Brien MP
Shadow Minister for Energy Affordability	Melissa McIntosh MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Agriculture</b> (Leader of the Nationals)	The Hon David Littleproud MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Water</b> (Deputy Leader of the Nationals)	Senator Perin Davey
<b>Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry</b>	Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam
<b>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</b> (Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
<b>Shadow Minister for Trade and Tourism</b> (Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	The Hon Kevin Hogan MP
Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific	The Hon Michael McCormack MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Trade</i>	<i>Rick Wilson MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>Senator Claire Chandler</i>
<b>Shadow Attorney-General</b>	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
<b>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</b> (Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
<b>Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business</b>	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Education</b>	Senator the Hon Sarah Henderson
Shadow Minister for Regional Education	The Hon Darren Chester MP
Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education	Angie Bell MP
Shadow Minister for Youth	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education</i>	<i>The Hon Nola Marino MP</i>
<b>Shadow Treasurer</b>	The Hon Angus Taylor MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	The Hon Luke Howarth MP
Shadow Minister for Financial Services	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>Senator Dean Smith</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Government Services and the Digital Economy</b>	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Science and the Arts</b> (Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	
<b>Shadow Minister for Social Services</b>	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
<b>Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Housing</b>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Homelessness</b>	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Home Ownership</i>	<i>Senator Andrew Bragg</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>Pat Conaghan MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</i>	<i>Senator Hollie Hughes</i>

Title	Shadow Minister
<b>Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care</b>	Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
<b>Shadow Minister for Sport</b> (Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)	
<i>Shadow Minister for Regional Health</i>	<i>Dr Anne Webster MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>	<i>Senator Hollie Hughes</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, Aged Care and indigenous Health Services</i>	<i>Gavin Pearce MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</b> (Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
<b>Shadow Minister for Communications</b>	The Hon David Coleman MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</b>	Senator Susan McDonald
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon Darren Chester MP
Shadow Minister for Western Sydney	Melissa McIntosh MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</i>	<i>Tony Pasin MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Defence</b>	The Hon Andrew Hastie MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Defence Industry</b>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Defence Personnel</b>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs</b>	The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Phillip Thompson OAM MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Industry</i>	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Personnel</i>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Finance</b>	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
<b>Shadow Special Minister of State</b>	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Finance</i>	<i>Senator the Hon James McGrath</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Government Waste Reduction</i>	<i>James Stevens MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Home Affairs</b>	Senator James Paterson
<b>Shadow Minister for Cyber Security</b>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Emergency Management</b>	Senator Perin Davey
<b>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</b>	The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Shadow Minister for Community Safety, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs	The Hon Jason Wood MP
Shadow Minister for Child Protection and the Prevention of Family Violence	Senator Kerryne Liddle
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>Pat Conaghan MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Multicultural Engagement</i>	<i>Senator Paul Scarr</i>
Each box represents a portfolio. <b>Shadow cabinet ministers are shown in bold type.</b>	

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*Monday, 12 August 2024*

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Milton Dick)** took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

## **COMMITTEES**

### **Petitions Committee**

#### **Report**

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (10:01): I present the 29th report of the Petitions Committee for the 47th Parliament.

*The report read as follows—*

#### **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

#### **PETITIONS COMMITTEE**

#### **REPORT No. 29**

#### **Petitions and Ministerial Responses**

**12 August 2024**

#### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Chair Ms Susan Templeman MP

Deputy Chair Mr Ross Vasta MP

Mr Sam Birrell MP

Ms Alison Byrnes MP

Ms Lisa Chesters MP

Mr Garth Hamilton MP

Ms Tracey Roberts MP

Ms Meryl Swanson MP

This committee is supported by staff of the Department of the House of Representatives

#### **Report summarising the petitions and ministerial responses being presented.**

**The committee met in private session in the 47th Parliament on 5 June, 26 June and 3 July 2024.**

#### **1. The committee resolved to present the following 72 petitions in accordance with standing order 207:**

##### ***Petitions certified on 5 June 2024***

From 4 petitioners—requesting the development of a nuclear fusion energy industry in Australia (**EN6260**)

From 7 petitioners—regarding laws relating to nuclear fusion technology

(**EN6261**)

From 2602 petitioners—regarding the World Economic Forum and the World Health Organisation (**EN6265**)

From 4 petitioners—requesting that new Australian residents be conscripted into the Australian Defence Force (**EN6266**)

From 58 petitioners—requesting the introduction of a castle law in Australia

(**EN6268**)

From 10 petitioners—requesting that the Australian Government cut ties with the International Criminal Court (**EN6269**)

From 28 petitioners—requesting the establishment of soft plastic recycling processes (**EN6270**)

From 20 petitioners—requesting that the Australian Government suspend funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (**EN6271**)

From 9 petitioners—regarding access to online gaming servers (**EN6272**)

From 19 petitioners—requesting recreational vaping be prohibited (**EN6273**)

From 88 petitioners—requesting funding for the Parents of Deaf Children organisation (**EN6275**)

From 35 petitioners—regarding legislation relating to hate speech (**EN6279**)

From 6 petitioners—regarding the seeking of informed consent from patients undergoing psychiatric treatments (**EN6280**)

From 4 petitioners—requesting that Australians be able to access online poker tournaments (**EN6281**)

From 52 petitioners—requesting a reduction in immigration numbers

(**EN6282**)

From 1154 petitioners—regarding privacy concerns relating to the *Digital ID Act 2024* (**EN6286**)

From 136 petitioners—requesting that the Australian Government support the International Criminal Court prosecutor's application for an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant **(EN6288)**

From 9 petitioners—requesting that the Royal Australian Airforce procure an Airbus A400M aircraft **(EN6290)**

From 171 petitioners—regarding changes to age limits for the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) **(EN6294)**

From 537 petitioners—requesting that people who have served in the Israel Defense Forces be prohibited from returning to Australia **(EN6295)**

From 18 petitioners—regarding concerns relating to the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024 **(EN6296)**

***Petitions certified on 26 June 2024***

From 15 petitioners—regarding law enforcement tactics **(EN6274)**

From 90 petitioners—requesting the establishment of a royal commission into the family court system **(EN6299)**

From 291 petitioners—requesting a reduction in long-term net overseas migration numbers **(EN6300)**

From 1855 petitioners—requesting that the Australian Government take actions to protect biodiversity and prevent proposed vegetation clearing around Kin Kin Quarry **(EN6301)**

From 109 petitioners—requesting that a federal election be called **(EN6302)**

From 7 petitioners—regarding concerns relating to the *Digital ID Act 2024*

**(EN6304)**

From 23 petitioners—requesting legislative changes to require companies to delete personally identifiable information **(EN6305)**

From 15 petitioners—requesting improvements in the treatment of mental health conditions **(EN6306)**

From 198 petitioners—requesting that the use of metaldehyde in slug and snail bait be prohibited **(EN6309)**

From 36 petitioners—requesting improvements to the reliability of mobile and internet connectivity in Cabonne, New South Wales, and surrounding areas **(EN6310)**

From 186 petitioners—requesting support to recruit qualified pharmacists from overseas **(EN6312)**

From 6 petitioners—requesting that the Australian Government support independence for the Kanak peoples of New Caledonia **(EN6317)**

From 651 petitioners—requesting temporary residency for students affected by changes to age limits for the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) **(EN6320)**

From 25 petitioners—regarding supermarket prices **(EN6321)**

From 28 petitioners—requesting the establishment of a regulatory body for laser hair removal services **(EN6322)**

From 10 petitioners—requesting more affordable skin cancer checks and associated treatments **(EN6323)**

From 16 petitioners—requesting early access to superannuation **(EN6327)**

From 5 petitioners—requesting reconstruction of an intersection on the New England Highway **(EN6328)**

From 4 petitioners—requesting the implementation of regulations relating to broadcast quality standards for livestreaming of sporting events **(EN6329)**

From 17 petitioners—requesting an increase to the cap on Contributory Parent visas (subclass 143) **(EN6334)**

From 7 petitioners—requesting an increase to Australia's refugee intake

**(EN6335)**

From 746 petitioners—requesting changes to regulations relating to access to hospitality venues for companion animals **(EN6338)**

From 18 petitioners—regarding immigration and housing availability

**(EN6341)**

From 4 petitioners—regarding concerns relating to radiation **(EN6342)**

From 23 petitioners—requesting the utilisation of fixed line National Broadband Network infrastructure around San Isidore, New South Wales **(EN6343)**

From 35 petitioners—regarding childcare services **(EN6344)**

From 65 petitioners—regarding access to safe drinking water **(EN6350)**

From 4 petitioners—requesting further support for youth mental health programs **(EN6352)**

From 1284 petitioners—requesting an extension of the *Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012* exemption for the cruise industry **(EN6353)**

From 6 petitioners—requesting that Australia's economic policies be reformed **(EN6355)**

From 77 petitioners—requesting that consumers be given the right to opt-out of their personal data being collected and used to train artificial intelligence by social media platforms **(EN6356)**

From 13 petitioners—requesting that Medicare rebates be made available for services provided by provisional psychologists **(EN6357)**

From 6791 petitioners—requesting changes to working conditions, remuneration and HECS-HELP loan indexation for Higher Degree by Research students **(EN6358)**

From 18 petitioners—regarding the use of sonar technology **(EN6359)**

From 5 petitioners—requesting the prohibition of mouthwash **(EN6360)**

From 26 petitioners—requesting an increase to the pension income test threshold **(EN6362)**

From 26 petitioners—requesting that funding of the Australian Broadcasting Commission be ceased **(EN6363)**

From 14 petitioners—regarding the Australian Government's trade relationship with China **(EN6365)**

***Petitions certified on 3 July 2024***

From 1331 petitioners—regarding the availability and compounding of the medications semaglutide and tirzepatide **(EN6367)**

From 6 petitioners—requesting an easing of restrictions relating to the employment of internationally trained teachers **(EN6368)**

From 40 petitioners—requesting legislation to preserve koala populations and habitats **(EN6372)**

From 10 petitioners—regarding COVID-19 vaccinations **(EN6375)**

From 18 petitioners—regarding immigration policies **(EN6376)**

From 204 petitioners—regarding concerns relating to the activities of the Bhartiya Janata Party within Australia **(EN6377)**

From 19 petitioners—requesting that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps branch of the Iranian Armed Forces be proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the Australian Government **(EN6378)**

From 54 petitioners—requesting the establishment of a database to monitor adverse reactions to veterinary products **(EN6380)**

From 18 petitioners—requesting a cap on personal income tax deductions **(EN6383)**

From 787 petitioners—requesting a reduction in processing times of Partner visa applications **(EN6385)**

From 721 petitioners—requesting that the House of Representatives Standing Orders be amended to prohibit the use of personal mobile phone devices by Members during Question Time **(EN6386)**

From 72 petitioners—requesting a transition period for students affected by changes to age limits for the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) **(EN6390)**

From 19 petitioners—regarding the deportation of long-term Australian residents under Section 501 of the *Migration Act 1958* **(EN6391)**

**2. The following 12 ministerial responses to petitions were received.**

***Ministerial responses received by the Committee on 3 July 2024***

From the Minister for Home Affairs to a petition requesting a ban on imported goods produced by Uyghur forced labour **(EN4746)**

From the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs to a petition requesting that volunteer work be included as specified work in the Working Holiday Maker program **(EN5448)**

From the Minister for Foreign Affairs to a petition regarding funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency **(EN5901)**

From the Attorney-General to a petition requesting additional funding support for the Innovation Youth Centre **(EN5926)**

From the Minister for Foreign Affairs to a petition requesting that Australia reinstate funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and cut diplomatic ties with Israel **(EN5938)**

From the Minister for Communications to a petition requesting measures to restrict explicit material in public and school libraries **(EN5982)**

From the Minister for Health and Aged Care to a petition requesting Medicare coverage for skin cancer checks **(EN6040)**

From the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government to a petition regarding the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard **(EN6047)**

From the Minister for Health and Aged Care to a petition regarding medicinal cannabis cost issues and access through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme **(EN6049)**

From the Minister for Foreign Affairs to a petition requesting that Australia cease funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency **(EN6057)**

From the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs to a petition regarding the Parent visa program **(EN6085)**

From the Minister for Health and Aged Care to a petition requesting the establishment of an independent committee to oversee decisions of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (EN6113)

**Ms Susan Templeman MP**

**Chair—Petitions Committee**

## PETITIONS

### Presentation

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (10:01): I present the following 72 petitions:

#### Nuclear Energy

The House has wrongly agreed on many petitions that fusion will not be available until 2050. Helion Energy, an overseas private and government-funded company, has committed to having its fusion reactor demonstrate commercial viability in 2028. The House has wrongly agreed to define fusion as "Nuclear" in error to the Australian legislations and Acts the House is obliged to manage. All acts or definitions by ARPANSA and ANSTO define nuclear as "fission"—no mention of Fusion. The laws need repealing and FISSION and FUSION alignment to international laws. The FIA (Fusion Industry Association) in 2023 has postulated that commercial fusion will be available by the 2030s. In the IAEA's fusion conference report in 2023, they postulated that International nuclear (Fission) Laws like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty do not consider fusion, ARPANSA Authorities can grant licenses for fusion, which is not explicitly covered by the Nuclear Act or described by an ARPANSA definition. Fusion power stations can be considered under Australian laws as compact cyclotrons (about 250 MeV), and these are used to treat proton beam cancer.

We therefore ask the House to request the authorization of funding and granting of licenses for fusion development and research for further industry development, which is not explicitly covered by the Nuclear Act or the ARPANSA definition of nuclear. We ask for funding and granting of licenses for fusion power plant design, development, legal definition programs to UNSW, UQ, UA and ANU to build and negotiate international information sharing. with the US ,UK under AUKUS.

from four citizens (Petition No. EN6260)

#### Nuclear Energy

The House has wrongly agreed on many petitions that fusion will not be available until 2050. Helion Energy has committed to having its fusion reactor demonstrate commercial viability in 2028. The House has wrongly agreed to define fusion as "Nuclear" in error to the Australian legislations and Acts the House is obliged to manage. All acts or definitions by ARPANSA and ANSTO define nuclear as "fission"—no mention of Fusion. The laws need repealing, and FISSION and FUSION need alignment with international rules. The IAEA's fusion conference report in 2023 postulated that International nuclear (Fission) Laws do not consider fusion, ARPANSA Authorities can grant licenses for fusion, which is not explicitly covered by the Nuclear Acts or described by an ARPANSA definition. Fusion power stations can be considered under Australian laws as similar to compact cyclotrons (about 250 MeV), and these are used to treat proton beam cancer.

We therefore ask the House to Request to create the laws and funding and granting of licenses for an Australian Fusion Science and Technology Organisation to carry out fusion development and research for further industry development, which is not explicitly covered by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation under the Nuclear Act or the ARPANSA definition of nuclear. We ask for funding and granting of licenses for fusion power plant design, development, and legal definition programs to UNSW, UQ, UA and ANU to build and negotiate international information sharing. with the US ,UK under AUKUS.

from seven citizens (Petition No. EN6261)

#### World Health Organization

To recognise the WEF and WHO as terrorist organisations by definition and due to their actions in the past, currently and future threats they plan to impose.

Their threats and actions can only be defined as terrorism. From the planning and executing of the alleged COVID-19 pandemic, lock downs and dangerous vaccines. A trial on humanity to progress with their terrorist "2030 New World Order Agenda". Doubling of wealth of billionaires.

Their infiltration of governments globally, bribery, scams like global warming, introducing digital ID's and CDBC's to terrorise and control humanity. Poisoning the air we breathe, the food we eat, the vaccines and threats of future pandemics, and the culling of the human population amongst other things.

We therefore ask the House to recognise the WEF and WHO as terrorist organisations to benefit ALL Australians and hopefully the planet.

from 2,602 citizens (Petition No. EN6265)

#### Migration

War with communist China is inevitable given the financial crisis caused by the unnecessary covid-19 jabs & lockdown policies. Such a global loss of wealth always causes major wars. Australia needs to take steps beyond just buying more military equipment, & have trained people ready to fight for Australia in hot war conflict zones. Australia will be attacked, (we have to see & accept reality here), mandatory conscription is the best way possible to increase head count quickly in our armed forces.

Therefore lets mandate everyone applying for a permanent residence in Australia, must do two years full time in the armed forces (regardless of ability), before receiving their PR visa.

We therefore ask the House to pass a new law to mandate conscription to the armed forces, for a minimum period of two years, as part of the award procedure for a permanent residence visa for Australia.

from four citizens (Petition No. EN6266)

### **Security Legislation**

Every Australian deserves the right to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their property

Castle Law (or the Castle Doctrine) is a principle grounded in the fundamental right to self-defence. Introducing Castle Law in Australia would give victims the right to use whatever force necessary to protect themselves, others within the premises and their property if faced with an intruder(s). Giving victims the right to defend themselves without fear of prosecution puts the rights of victims before the rights of criminals.

We therefore ask the House to do all in its power to legislate Castle Law in Australia.

from 58 citizens (Petition No. EN6268)

### **International Criminal Court**

The International Crimes Court has shown that it is biased and racist, The court has called on the arrest of a countries prime minister and foreign minister because they are Jewish. October7 Hamas (Gaza's Elected Government also world recognised as a terrorist organisation) committed Genocide on Israel. It entered Israel with no political agenda rather a religious agenda which was to kill every Jew they could find. they raped and killed their way across Israel not to change policy or for politics but simply because they hate Jew's. Israel has rightfully responded, it has entered Gaza to wipe out these genocidal maniacs, they are doing everything they can to minimise civilian deaths, however, when the terrorists are using human shields, operating out of hospitals and schools, firing from locations extremely close to UN buildings and are supported by their civilian population as in any war civilians have died, this is sad, however, this is unavoidable and a by product of war. This is not Genocide. The ICC has not sought arrest warrants for the US Government for its response to September 11, it has not sought arrest warrants for China for its mass slaughter of civilians, It has not sought arrest warrants for Myanmar for its slaughter of the Rohingya people... Only Jewish leaders

We therefore ask the House to publicly condemn the International Crimes Court and cut all ties with it until they retract and apologise for its attempts to arrest the Israeli Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

from 10 citizens (Petition No. EN6269)

### **Waste Management and Recycling**

We currently have a huge demand for soft plastic recycling with over 90% of current soft plastics ending up in landfill. We can all do better to take small steps in the right direction. By getting a nationwide consideration for the efforts made to recycle or repurpose soft plastics we can make a huge difference to Australia's impact on the environment.

We therefore ask the House to support better investment into soft plastic recycling alongside better incentives for companies to utilise paper packaging or recycled packing where possible

from 28 citizens (Petition No. EN6270)

### **International Humanitarian Assistance: Occupied Palestinian Territories**

We object to a limited portion of our taxable income being delivered to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The problem is that donations to UNRWA are voluntary and not essential to honour Australia's United Nations membership. Moreover, guarantees of UNRWA staff neutrality and confidence in its supply chains are yet to be confirmed. Furthermore, the purpose of developing the Occupied Palestinian Territories is to implement the 'two-state solution' and residents of a hypothetical State of Palestine can't be Palestinian refugees. UNRWA is for Palestinian refugees only and not sovereign citizens within their theoretical national border. Finally, Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (HAMAS) is a prescribed Terrorist Organisation whose illegal invasion on October 7th 2023 into Southern Israel is responsible for placing UNRWA's staff neutrality and supply chain confidence into considerable doubt and uncertainty.

We therefore ask the House to permanently suspend financial support to UNWRA and instead demonstrate more confidence in the ability of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the International Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement (ICRC) to provide for residents in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. We believe that Australia has supported UNRWA long enough. Please stop all donations to UNWRA. We thank the House for their honourable service to Australia.

from 20 citizens (Petition No. EN6271)

### **Online Gaming**

As an online game reaches the end of support, game company's will shut down all servers preventing people from playing online games they paid for or purchased goods. Stealing is a crime and so should this as they essentially steal from the games players. Games that are shutting down in Australia must be required to either keep a server open or allow self hosting servers.

We therefore ask the House to prohibit game company giants from preventing players from accessing the online platform or functionality by offering to keep a server or servers open or allowing players to self host servers themselves. People pay hard

earned money to enjoy playing online games or games with online functionality, we as a people believe that this is wrong and action must be taken. We ask that you consider our request seriously, Thank you.

from nine citizens (Petition No. EN6272)

### **E-Cigarettes and Vaping Products**

We, the undersigned citizens of Australia, are concerned about the rising prevalence of recreational vaping, especially among young people. Vaping carries significant health risks, including nicotine addiction and respiratory issues. The marketing tactics of vaping companies often target minors and mislead consumers about product safety.

Given the growing evidence of vaping's dangers, we believe it is crucial to take immediate action to protect public health, particularly the health of young Australians. Recreational vaping poses a clear danger that must be addressed through legislative measures.

We therefore ask the House to

1. Ban the sale and distribution of recreational vaping products across Australia.
2. Implement strict penalties for violations of this ban, including fines and potential imprisonment for those selling or distributing recreational vaping products.
3. Conduct comprehensive public health campaigns to educate the public, especially young people, about the dangers of vaping.
4. Support research and development of effective cessation programs and resources for those addicted to vaping products.
5. Enforce stringent regulations on marketing practices of all nicotine products to ensure they do not target minors.

By taking these steps, we can reduce the health risks associated with recreational vaping and protect the well-being of all Australians, especially our youth.

from 19 citizens (Petition No. EN6273)

### **Hearing Health**

The Parent-led Organization for Deaf Children (PODC) has provided vital support, resources, and advocacy to families with deaf children for over 60 years. Recently, we, along with other similar organisations, were notified that we will be defunded by June 30, 2024. Defunding PODC will result in increased isolation, mental health issues, and systemic barriers for these families, especially those in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and remote communities. Defunding will strain health and education systems, ultimately costing taxpayers more. We urge the Australian government to maintain funding so that we can support these vulnerable families effectively.

We therefore ask the House to reverse the decision to defund PODC and similar organisations. Continued funding is essential for us to provide vital services and support to families of DHH children. Defunding will lead to increased isolation, mental health issues, and systemic barriers for these families, especially in CALD and remote communities. Maintaining our funding will help prevent long-term negative impacts on health and education systems, ensuring these families are not left without necessary support.

Thank you for your consideration and action on this crucial matter.

from 88 citizens (Petition No. EN6275)

### **Freedom of Speech**

We oppose the proposed new hate speech laws that would impose criminal penalties for vilifying vile people. Freedom of speech is already severely restricted in Australia, and we don't need any more restrictions or harsher penalties applied to those who speak the truth. It is clear that the aim of this legislation is to preemptively shut down criticism of Western involvement in a war in the Middle East, be it against Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen or Iran. Criticism of war will be deemed anti-Semitism as a way of demonising dissidents, similar to what we saw during the so-called pandemic. Other countries have recently passed "hate speech" legislation, proving that we already live under a de facto one-world government. It is not about protecting vulnerable people but attacking anyone who stands for good. These laws would allow lawmakers to hide behind vulnerable groups so that their policies are immune to criticism. Any attempt to outlaw specific phrases would be particularly odious.

We therefore ask the House to not pass any hate speech bill that would impose criminal penalties or further curtail freedom of speech.

from 35 citizens (Petition No. EN6279)

### **Mental Health**

Prevalence of uninformed psychiatric treatments posing risk of aggravated crimes in Australia

We therefore ask the House to make informed consent to patients mandatory for psychiatric treatments in Australia

from six citizens (Petition No. EN6280)

### **Gambling**

#1 Online Poker has been sorely missed by millions of Australians for the best part of a decade



#2 The gambling bill has not eliminated online poker it has just taken the industry into a darker place on the web rather than out in the open light for all to enjoy. There are now many illegal online poker operators, operating illegally.

#3 Operators like Pokerstars brought in a lot of tourism and foreign money during major Australian tournaments.

#4 The industry could pay tax within Australia via Australian account deposits, such could fund a government online gambling department commission to enable.

#5 Most people within Australia don't have access to casinos or pubs to play poker, and if they do, most games are run for the benefit of the local pub with less than a 10% chance of walking away with even money, virtually running as a local pub scheme at the local pub to sell drinks to patrons stuck at the pub playing the only local poker game they have access too.

Such means everyone loses except the pub selling beer and spirits encouraging the consumption of alcohol via stamping drink cards which can give you an advantage over other players for buying 5 drinks or more

#6 You can have a lot of fun playing poker online for as little as 20cents which won't even buy you a redskin lolly at the local grocery store today

#7 There's no discrimination online

We therefore ask the House to revise online gambling laws  
from four citizens (Petition No. EN6281)

### **Migration**

Immigration needs to be cut immediately. Significantly more than the numbers stated. Australian Citizens are going homeless because housing has been made unobtainable to rent due hundreds of migrants and students snapping them up. Skilled migrants and students are coming here not to work in skilled jobs but simply just drive Uber. Look at examples of how mass immigration ruined countries in the EU, Europe, Fiji and so on.

These deals with India and China need to be stopped. Only individuals that truly make a difference in the economy should be allowed in for the foreseeable future.

It is ruining Australia and the Albanese government needs to fix this atrocious mess they have made.

We therefore ask the House to cease all immigration to a 1/10th of what it is now. Allowing only essential, skilled workers that have jobs lined up prior to arrival, in meaningful positions.

Housing for these individuals should be an earned privilege with a minimum investment of time before a purchase can be made.

Make living in Australia a privilege to be proud of, not visa off the back of a cereal box that is handed out to everyone in the world.

from 52 citizens (Petition No. EN6282)

### **Personal Information and Privacy**

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the implications of the Digital ID Bill 2024, which poses significant risks to personal freedoms, privacy, and equitable access to services for all Australians. The Bill introduces extensive measures for the collection, storage, and use of biometric and personal data, raising serious privacy and data security concerns. Additionally, the broad powers granted to the Digital ID Regulator and System Administrator risk government overreach and the potential erosion of individual liberties.

Furthermore, the Bill's provisions do not sufficiently address the digital divide, potentially marginalising Australians in remote areas or those lacking digital literacy. There are inconsistencies with existing legislation, such as the Privacy Act 1988, the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979, and the Surveillance Devices Act 2004, which could lead to regulatory confusion and increased compliance burdens. Given the potential for significant adverse impacts on privacy, equity, and civil liberties, we believe it is imperative to reconsider the Bill's current form.

We therefore ask the House to Federal Parliament to: Conduct a comprehensive review, enhance privacy and data security measures, ensure voluntary participation, address accessibility and inclusivity, limit government overreach, and enhance transparency and accountability.

By addressing these critical concerns, we aim to safeguard the privacy, freedoms, and equitable treatment of all Australians, ensuring that the implementation of a digital ID system enhances rather than undermines our democratic values and rights.

from 1,154 citizens (Petition No. EN6286)

### **Israel**

Australia has an opportunity today, as a signatory to the Rome Statute, to honour and act in accordance with its obligations under international law to ensure Israeli officials are held to account for their responsibility for the war crimes committed in Gaza. The principles of integrity, morality and justice demand that we depart from siding with Israel and US, who continue to enact, support and justify genocide and apartheid.

The people of Gaza have suffered through almost eight horrifying months of genocide while Western governments shamefully remain silent and continue to provide diplomatic and military cover for the state of Israel.

We therefore ask the House to support the International Criminal Court's application for arrest warrants for both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Minister of Defence, Yoav Gallant. We call on the government:

- to support the court's investigations into war crimes in Palestine.
- to rescind the Morrison Government's 2020 request to block ICC investigations into the situation in Palestine.
- to take active steps to cut ties with the Israeli Government, to sanction both the criminal state and its officials, military officers, and any Australian serving with the IDF for violations of international law.
- to expel the Israeli Ambassador and recall the Australian Ambassador to Israel.
- to immediately cease all export permits for weapons components where Israel is the end user.

from 136 citizens (Petition No. EN6288)

### **Defence Procurement**

The Royal Australian Air Force has a capability gap in heavy tactical airlift. With only 8 Boeing C-17A Globemasters and production ended, the RAAF urgently needs more heavy lift capability. The Airbus A400M is a current build, modern and capable aircraft.

A fleet of 4-8 aircraft would greatly enhance the RAAF capabilities and enable a wider ability to respond to disaster and humanitarian emergencies. A perfect example being the current crisis in New Caledonia, the French Air Force have operated many A400 flights in and out of the country, however the RAAF is limited to using the smaller and less capable C-130J Hercules.

With the modern world constantly changing and potential threats moving closer to home, Australia needs more heavy lift capability to ensure the safety of our nation.

We therefore ask the House to urgently consider purchasing Airbus A400M aircraft  
from nine citizens (Petition No. EN6290)

### **International Students**

This petition is regarding the current students who are studying the Skill 1 master coursework level degree. These professions generally require an internship to complete to meet the competencies standard and to become qualified professionals in Audiology, laboratory science, Occupational therapy, and Speech pathology. Every country has different norms regarding this criterion. Because of this age restriction whoever has been pursuing these courses will be unable to achieve these competencies standards which is a need of the profession. It will damage their whole career, and the money, and time they put into upgrading their skills and career. They need time to complete these needs, so they require the 485 visas. If they have no accreditation certificate, they will not be able to register themselves somewhere else in another country and might have to start from the beginning again. This will impact their whole life and career.

We therefore ask the House to please look the needs of the current students who already pursuing their study and about to finish this end of the year or next midyear. Because of this restriction, only 4-6 months prior to finish their study will damage whole career and life. It's a humble request to please allow current students to apply for 485 visas until 45 or 50. Please allow them to fulfill their competencies requirement and achieve their accreditation to become qualified professional.

from 171 citizens (Petition No. EN6294)

### **Israel**

The International court of justice recently confirmed that war crimes are being committed in Gaza by Israel Defence Forces. We citizens of Australia are very concerned that these war criminals will be allowed to return to Australia. After witnessing the slaughter of over 15000 innocent children we do not want the morals and integrity of our society to be tarnished by allowing in entry of those who hold no regard for the lives of innocent women and children. The safety of our country must come first.

We therefore ask the House to Ban all Israeli Defence personnel who are returning to Australia after fighting in Gaza.  
from 537 citizens (Petition No. EN6295)

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme**

I am asking the house to stop this NDIS bill amendment from going through the house as it does not represent what we, as a community need. Saying that you want someone like myself receiving 8 hours a day support is unrealistic when you as an individual have personal goals you want to pursue. You would be unable to achieve any personal life goals when you are with 2 other people that could be potentially could be high/if not higher needs.

This will only give the participant the support time for meals plus any bed time routine in the morning and at the end of the day.

To have a quality of life and having a significant disability, it shouldn't be near impossible to prove to someone every single year that you require the level of support and create the level of anxiety when dealing with the scheme.

We therefore ask the House to decline this bill as it does not meet the expectations or gives people like the freedom to live a normal a fulfilling life with the right support in place even though some people like myself and my partner needing around the clock support.

from 18 citizens (Petition No. EN6296)

### Law Enforcement

I believe that the citizens of Australia deserve the best possible outcomes to a safer community. Dangerous tactics such as entrapment tactics used by law enforcement are known statistically to escalate Dangerous behaviour or situations rather than de-escalate them. It isn't setting a good example to employ entrapment tactics as it is known to be provocative and encourages criminal activity rather than deter it.

Simply provoking or encouraging any criminal conduct to be committed is absolutely against the very things law enforcement is supposed to stand for. I believe the Australian citizens nationwide deserve a law enforcement that stands against provoking and encouraging a crime to being committed. I believe law enforcement needs to be the example and uphold their values for not encouraging criminal activity through entrapment tactics that are known very well to create situations where criminal activity is committed that otherwise would not have occurred if law enforcement didn't encourage or provoke the offence to be committed.

As an Australian citizen myself I feel law enforcement agencies need to set a better example and stand against encouraging or provoking criminal activity to be committed.

On behalf of the Australian citizens nationwide I believe we deserve to have law enforcement set a standard in values and ethics that don't encourage or provoke criminal activity.

We therefore ask the House to ban law enforcement agencies from using entrapment tactics in their line of duty. It's important to show solidarity against it.

from 15 citizens (Petition No. EN6274)

### Family Law

A royal commission into the treatment of domestic violence, the hague convention and child abduction and and child sexual abuse within the family court system is important for several reasons:

1. This would provide an opportunity to thoroughly investigate and examine the practices and procedures within the family court system. This would ensure that any shortcomings or failures in handling cases of domestic violence and child sexual abuse are identified and addressed. It would also hold responsible parties accountable for any misconduct or negligence.

2. The family court system plays a crucial role in safeguarding the well-being and rights of victims of domestic violence and child sexual abuse. This would identify any systemic issues or barriers that prevent victims from accessing justice or receiving appropriate support. By addressing these issues, the commission can contribute to better protection and support for victims.

3. The effectiveness of existing legal processes and make recommendations for improvements. This could include changes to legislation, policies, and procedures that would enhance the court's ability to handle cases involving domestic violence, the hague convention and child abduction and child sexual abuse.

4. Implement strategies and educational initiatives to judicial officers of the court by examining the root causes and contributing factors in its findings, the commission can recommend appropriate preventive measures.

We therefore ask the House to commence a royal commission into the treatment of domestic violence, the hague convention and child abduction and child sexual abuse within the family court system.

from 90 citizens (Petition No. EN6299)

### Migration

The 2024 Budget states that a 3% rental vacancy rate is considered a balanced rental market. The Budget also states that 3% is Australia's long-term average rental vacancy rate. However, record immigration has seen the rental vacancy rate fall to record lows. This petition seeks to return balance to the rental market and relief to Australian families struggling with the increased cost of living.

We therefore ask the House to reduce the Net Overseas Migration (NOM) to the long-term average of approximately 80,000 per year until the national rental vacancy rate returns to the average of 3%.

from 291 citizens (Petition No. EN6300)

### Kin Kin Quarry

Situated in Noosa Hinterland, an internationally recognised UNESCO Biosphere, the Kin Kin Quarry is seeking approval to clear approximately 9ha of critical habitat, including remnant rainforest, habitat recognised as critical to the survival of Koala (endangered), habitat for Grey-headed Flying-fox (vulnerable), habitat for Greater Glider (endangered) and specimens of Scrub Turpentine (critically endangered) for large scale quarry expansion. The proposal will have clearly unacceptable impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance, particularly EPBC listed flora and fauna, threatened ecological communities and migratory birds. Sited on geology dated to the Early to Middle Triassic period, known as the 'Kin Kin Beds', this area is highly biodiverse, comprised of eucalypt open forest and dense closed canopy notophyll vine forest. The proposal is not congruent with the values of the community or the EPBC Act. Furthermore, the quarry in question is subject to a pending legal matter in the Planning and Environment Court, as such a decision to approve this action could potentially be unnecessary should the outcome result in reduced or ceased quarry operations.

We therefore ask the House to take immediate action to ensure the biodiversity of the site and our Noosa region is protected into the future. As a matter of significant public interest, we call upon the Environment Minister Hon Tanya Plibersek to deem

EPBC referral 2023/09594 (Kin Kin Quarry vegetation clearing for ongoing operation) clearly unacceptable under the Act and impose a ban on the quarry operator Cordwell Resources from proceeding with this action.

from 1,855 citizens (Petition No. EN6301)

### **Labor Government**

We the citizens of Australia have zero confidence in the ALP government and their abilities to perform and deliver results for the citizens in their respective portfolios.

We therefore ask the House to allow this petition so the citizens can be counted and recognise the government has lost the confidence of the people, we ask for a federal election to elect a government to act in the interests of the people of this great land, Australia.

from 109 citizens (Petition No. EN6302)

### **Personal Information and Privacy**

At present, in order to use the new Australian Digital-ID service, one must first possess a particular electronic device, then in order to download the Australian Digital-ID application, one must be registered with, provide personal information and maintain a relationship with one of two foreign corporations (Google/Apple). If government considers this service essential and offers it to all Australians, perhaps at some stage even making it mandatory for certain sections of the Australian population, then firstly it would not be proper to have the ability to use of this service dependent on purchasing and owning commercial electronic gadgets which otherwise one may not have or need; and secondly, this being an official and genuine Australian service, it would be neither proper nor respectable, nor even safe, to condition its use on forging ties with foreign corporations.

We therefore ask the House to find and implement appropriate technological solution(s) so that: 1) The use of an Australian Digital-ID will not be conditional on owning certain commercially-available electronic devices; and 2) Should the downloading of software still be required for the purpose of having an Australian Digital-ID, then that software should be available without the need to register and forge a relationship with a foreign corporation, but instead through an official Australian government website.

from seven citizens (Petition No. EN6304)

### **Personal Information and Privacy**

Whilst there are privacy protections for Australians online, they are insufficient and data breaches are affected many times more citizens than they should.

The recent breaches of Optus and Ticketek have demonstrated companies retain personal information of former customers for decades after any relationship had ended which gives hackers a bigger trove of personally identifiable information than should otherwise be.

This includes all businesses including medical, telecom, insurance, financial, retail, online, and so on.

We therefore ask the House to enshrine in legislation the requirement for companies to purge personally identifiable information of citizens when there is a reasonable belief that there is no longer a relationship between the parties and there is no legal requirement to keep the information any longer.

Failure to do so should impose both civil and criminal charges.

from 23 citizens (Petition No. EN6305)

### **Mental Health**

In any year in Australia, an estimated 1 in 5 people aged 16-85 will experience a mental disorder (ABS 2022). A person's mental health affects and is affected by multiple factors, including lower (by SES status) access to services (health and/or other services), living conditions and employment status, and affects not only the individual but also their families and carers (Slade et al. 2009; WHO 2021). Mental health and physical health are related and people with mental illnesses are more likely to develop physical illness and tend to die earlier than the general population (Lawrence et al. 2013).

We therefore ask the House to improve mental health treatment in Australia

from 15 citizens (Petition No. EN6306)

### **Metaldehyde**

Products containing the Schedule 7 Dangerous Poison Metaldehyde are a common cause of accidental and intentional poisoning of dogs and cats in Australia. Being freely available to purchase, it is a common poison in homes. Being attractive to dogs, it is readily consumed, and so is an effective poison when it is intentionally given. Many pets have been killed due to either accidental or intentional exposure to this poison, including one recent instance in Greater Sydney in June 2024 where five pet dogs from one household died in one week from being intentionally poisoned by a neighbour.

With less toxic alternatives to Metaldehyde, such as ferric phosphate being available, there is no reason that this poison should remain on supermarket and hardware shelves for unregulated purchase.

Additionally, with the increased data surrounding impacts to native animals and drinking water, this poison has also been identified as an environmental pollutant, with Metaldehyde being successfully banned or heavily restricted in a number of countries, including Britain, Ireland, Germany and Switzerland.

We therefore ask the House to ban, or heavily restrict, the use of Metaldehyde in snail and slug pellets for sale in Australia. from 198 citizens (Petition No. EN6309)

### **Telecommunications**

The shire of Cabonne, located in Central West, NSW, comprises several small towns and villages with a population of roughly 13,760.

Poor mobile/internet connectivity is common throughout the Cabonne Shire, in most areas mobile signals are non-existent which is the cause of great concern for residents, landholders, and business operators.

Cabonne faces the following issues due to the lack of mobile/internet connectivity

Difficulty calling for assistance in the event of an emergency

Several blackspots along the roads connecting Cabonne

Difficulty accessing online banking and making transactions

Difficulty of communication between emergency services

Unable to operate businesses effectively

Inability to make effective communications from agricultural properties

The Albanese government's termination of the Mobile Blackspot Plan adds to the uncertainty. Cabonne is an area prone to natural disasters (recently, the floods of 2022) these communities must be connected and brought into the 21st century.

We therefore ask the House to examine the situation of mobile/internet connectivity in Cabonne and the effects it has on its people and communities and call on the Federal government to commit to putting the measures in place to provide sufficient internet and mobile connectivity to villages of Cabonne Shire.

from 36 citizens (Petition No. EN6310)

### **Skilled Migration**

There are around 1500 KAPS Qualified Overseas candidates who have completed their English requirements and also some of them are registered with AHPRA who are waiting to get invited, or to get sponsorships. But they are getting none of it. One major reason for that is, due to the reduced number of state allocations observed during this FY (2023-24) and also another reason is lack of awareness among employers about how to process the sponsorships for offshore individuals.

We therefore ask the House to increase the state allocations and provide more targeted rounds to hire pharmacists, because as immigration increases, it is obvious that even healthcare workforce needs to be increased to maintain the quality of life. And also, proper guidance and support should be provided to the pharmacy businesses about how to sponsor offshores as they bring more experience from their diverse backgrounds.

from 186 citizens (Petition No. EN6312)

### **New Caledonia**

We the Australian people are witnessing colonial power being enforced in what is known as New Caledonia (Kanaky) approximately 3,283 km away from our own country. What should be a country striving for independence according to the Matignon Agreements, which were signed on 26 June 1988, that aimed to ensure stability. Along with the Nouméa Accord, signed 5 May 1998, were to set the groundwork for a 20-year transition that was to see a gradual transfer of competences to the local government. More than 20 years later we see French Nationalist, French Militia and French Police shoot at, capture, kill and torture the indigenous people of Kanaky, the Kanak people. We, Australia as a founding member of the United Nations should not stand silent and allow for the lives and rights of our Melanesian neighbours to be lost nor the morals of our French allies. This atrocity is detrimental in our pursuit for stable relations in the south pacific and will certainly condemn future influence and preservation of culture in the South Pacific region.

We therefore ask the House to take action and a formal stance against the atrocities taking place in New Caledonia (Kanaky). We implore the Australian government to engage President Macron in it's reasonable capacity and show support for the Kanak people.

from six citizens (Petition No. EN6317)

### **International Students**

Requesting TR Visa for onshore students who have already arrived before existence of new rule about 35 years

We therefore ask the House to kindly consider the onshore student who have already reached here for studies before the implementation of new rule about TR Age limit

from 651 citizens (Petition No. EN6320)

### **Grocery Prices**

To the Australian Government,

I urge you to take immediate action to address the exorbitant prices charged by Coles and Woolworths. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, these corporations have taken advantage of vulnerable consumers, hiking prices to unprecedented levels.

It is unacceptable that essential items have become unaffordable for many Australians, particularly those on fixed incomes or struggling to make ends meet. The duopoly of Coles and Woolworths has resulted in a lack of competition, allowing them to dictate prices without fear of consequences.

We therefore ask the House to impose a significant surcharge on these supermarkets unless they reduce prices to pre-COVID levels. This surcharge would serve as a deterrent against price gouging and encourage fair pricing practices.

The surcharge revenue could be invested in supporting small businesses and promoting competition. Hold these corporations accountable for their actions and ensure that Australians are not exploited further.

Take immediate action to address this issue, putting the interests of Australians above those of corporate giants. Implement a surcharge that will force Coles and Woolworths to reduce prices and bring relief to millions of Australians struggling to afford basic necessities.

from 25 citizens (Petition No. EN6321)

### **Health Care**

Laser hair removal is an unregulated industry, and poses a risk of significant harm to consumers due to technicians and clinics not having a regulatory body to establish safety protocols and oversee complaints.

We therefore ask the House to establish a regulatory agency that oversees and regulates laser hair removal services Australia wide.

from 28 citizens (Petition No. EN6322)

### **Skin Cancer**

It costs \$242 for a scrape or biopsy on a mole skin check or a mark that could be cancerous. You don't get much at all back on Medicare and with the cost of living someone on pension cant afford \$242 to check one spot and hopefully they don't have more as it's \$242 per spot. I have a family history, like many, that have skin cancer in their family history.

We therefore ask the House to really think about lowering the price or making it a bulk billed service, people would be likely to get regular checks.

from 10 citizens (Petition No. EN6323)

### **Superannuation**

The cost of living crisis in Australia is completely out of control. People need financial help immediately.

We therefore ask the House to pass a new law so all Australians with Super accounts, can access up to \$25,000 of their funds immediately without any conditions, fees or charges.

from 16 citizens (Petition No. EN6327)

### **New South Wales: Roads**

The intersection of the New England Highway, Old Ballandean Rd and Bruxner Way, north of Tenterfield NSW, is a notoriously dangerous intersection with 6 crashes in the last 5 years. In February 2024, there was a fatal collision between a truck and a car which resulted in the death of 17-year-old Jackson Clarke, a well-loved member of the community. He was school captain at Tenterfield High School, as well as an incredibly talented athlete and musician. The intersection itself is highly dangerous, with both Bruxner Way and Old Ballandean Rd entering the highway just below the crest of a hill, resulting in essentially no visibility to the north. Additionally, to the south there is a bend in the road which results in a large blind spot. These factors have contributed to the collision rate at this intersection, and certainly contributed to the fatal collision which took Jackson from us too soon. While there has been a speed reduction implemented, it is not sufficient as collisions will continue until the intersection has been reconstructed to allow visibility to traffic both on the highway and entering the highway. The New England Highway is a Federal Highway and therefore falls under Federal funding.

We therefore ask the House to provide sufficient funding for the redesign and reconstruction of the intersection, allowing the intersection to be constructed in such a way to save the lives of Tenterfield's young people.

from five citizens (Petition No. EN6328)

### **Subscription Video on Demand**

We call on the Australian government to enact legislation ensuring that streaming companies provide a minimum broadcast quality standard for sports events. Currently, there is no law, regulation, or oversight by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to enforce broadcast quality standards for Australian or international streaming companies.

Key Issues:

**Low Broadcast Quality:** Recently, Paramount Plus Australia broadcasted the Australia vs. Bangladesh World Cup qualifier in 480p quality, which is unwatchable on modern TVs. Similarly, Optus Sport often provides a maximum quality of 720p across most devices. Whilst others claim to be 1080p but are a 720p video wrapped in a 1080p video codec.

**Inconsistent Quality Promises:** Streaming services like Kayo Sports raise prices, promising 4K broadcasts, but this quality is only available for select matches.

**High Costs for Sports Fans:** To watch the sports Australians love, we need to subscribe to 3-4 different streaming services, costing up to \$100 AUD per month. We deserve better.

We therefore ask the House to Introduce

1. Minimum Broadcast Quality of 1080p: Streaming companies must be required to provide a minimum broadcast quality standard that is suitable for viewing on modern televisions.

2. Transparency & Accountability: Streaming services should be transparent about the quality of broadcasts they offer & be held accountable for delivering the promised quality & should be punished to failure to deliver. Refunds or discounts should be offered to paying customers if they fail to deliver.

Improved Customer Service: Should provide a high level of customer service to address streaming issues promptly and effectively.

from four citizens (Petition No. EN6329)

### **Migration**

Although it has been previously recognised by parliament that parental migration schemes appear to have poor fiscal outcomes on the Australian economy due to a variety of factors, I would argue that by not granting more visas now the work force will end up suffering as a result in the future. I work in a critical care unit in PA hospital. I am a cardiothoracic scrub nurse, which unfortunately is an exceptionally hard to find skill set. We are constantly understaffed and overworked due to the uniqueness of our speciality. Unfortunately I will be leaving the work force at the end of the year. I am 34, with 2, soon to be 3, children. Even with subsidies, childcare is simply not affordable.

Skilled migrant workers, which make up a large percentage of the Australian workforce, are being forced out because of this. Having grandparents available as a childcare option is an incredibly undervalued resource.

I also personally feel this new cap ensures less women will be able to return to work after childbirth.

We therefore ask the House to significantly increase the 143 visa cap in order to reduce current wait times. In addition to this, we ask that an on-shore bridging visa be added for parents listed on the 143 visa queue so that they may begin to relieve the childcare burden on Australia families while waiting for a visa grant notice.

from 17 citizens (Petition No. EN6334)

### **Asylum Seekers**

We urge the House to increase Australia's refugee intake on compassionate grounds. As a nation built on the contributions of immigrants, we have a moral obligation to extend a helping hand to those seeking refuge from war, persecution, and the devastating effects of climate change.

Australia's success is rooted in its rich diversity, and we have the opportunity to further strengthen our vibrant tapestry by welcoming more refugees into our communities. In these uncertain times, it is crucial that we demonstrate compassion and leadership in addressing the global refugee crisis.

Many of those seeking asylum are facing dire situations, fleeing from violence, oppression, and environmental catastrophes. By increasing our refugee intake, we can provide a safe haven for these individuals and families, offering them the chance to rebuild their lives and contribute to our society.

Australia has a proud history of offering protection to those in need, and we must continue this tradition. By opening our doors to more refugees, we not only fulfil our humanitarian obligations but also enrich our communities with diverse perspectives, skills, and experiences.

We call upon the House of Representatives to increase Australia's refugee intake. Let us stand together as a nation and send a powerful message of hope and solidarity to those seeking refuge on our shores.

We therefore ask the House to increase refugee intake on compassionate grounds

from seven citizens (Petition No. EN6335)

### **Food Standards**

Across Australia, people have petitioned to update the laws prohibiting dogs from entering pubs, cafes, etc...The current prohibition does not fit how people live with their dogs, and is inconsistent with progressive, scientific, and highly regulated countries around the world.

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (administered by FSANZ) bans dogs from entering or passing through any enclosed area of a food business, forcing businesses to either operate outside the law (risking fines), or turn customers away (losing revenue).

An official application to FSANZ was rejected last year, citing a lack of current scientific evidence. However, the evidence is there, and FSANZ is aware of it. Countries like New Zealand, the U.K., and those in the broader European Union allow dogs into dining areas (at the business owner's discretion), banning them only from preparation areas.

Why is FSANZ's code inconsistent with these countries? On what basis is FSANZ maintaining the distinction between indoor and outdoor dining areas, where other countries do not? Is FSANZ truly delivering "world leading food standards", as their Mission Statement claims?

It's time they re-evaluate the evidence, update the code to a true "world leading standard", and allow businesses the individual freedom of choice to let dogs in.

We therefore ask the House to require FSANZ to conduct a review of clause 24 of Standard 3.2.2 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, with a view to giving food businesses the discretion to allow companion dogs in indoor dining areas (consistent with other jurisdictions, such as New Zealand).

from 746 citizens (Petition No. EN6338)

### **Migration**

The citizens of Australia nationwide require oversight between immigration department decisions relating to migrant intake and the housing minister department to ensure that immigration numbers and housing availability data match without jeopardising the housing security of the Australian citizens nationwide and or the immigrants migrating to Australia. It is paramount that we as Australians continue to uphold and maintain the security and well-being of the Australian citizens and the migrants. It is absolutely irresponsible and harmful to put any human being Australian citizen or migrant in a position where they will very likely face the grim reality of the Australian housing affordability and availability crisis that is very well known. The Australian citizens nationwide deserve an explanation as to why this has occurred and how its going to be assured that these immensely irresponsible migration intakes will not continue to put more migrants and Australian citizens nationwide at even more risk of homelessness.

It appears that supply and demand issues are not taken seriously as it looks to be causing significant damage rippling throughout the nation. Australian citizens nationwide but also human beings in general should never be faced with these preventable issues.

We therefore ask the House to implement and securely establish an independent oversight department that compares current housing availability data to the expected immigration intake numbers and approves or declines immigration department decisions based on housing availability to provide safety to the Australian citizens nationwide and the intended migrants.

from 18 citizens (Petition No. EN6341)

### **Public Health**

Concerned about health risks from Winegard Sensar antennas interacting with boosters, extenders, repeaters, and EFTPOS machines in SA Government-owned caravan parks.

Experiences include symptoms such as ringing ears, burning ovaries, persistent ringing ears, dry mouth (indicating potential damage to salivary glands), forehead pain, and heightened sensitivity to radiation.

We therefore ask the House to Urge for safety measures and regulation of radiation devices/levels in public areas.

from four citizens (Petition No. EN6342)

### **Broadband**

We are currently served by NBN Satellite and Fixed wireless due to the change to Multi Technology Mix (MTM) and it being determined fibre to the node (FTTN) would not be possible. Prior to this change we were meant to be served by fibre to the premise (FTTP) and fibre was built along Kapooka Road by NBN Co for this purpose however it has sat unused all these years. Areas that were FTTN have been and continue to be over built with FTTP, but we have not had our technology reviewed and remain on NBN Satellite and Fixed wireless. This leads to fewer high-speed options and residents paying more (often for a worse product) due to less competition then if FTTP was an option. Many residents still serviced by ADSL. If NBN Co were to shift us to FTTP this would also have the flow on benefit of increasing the performance of NBN Satellite and fixed wireless services for those who actually warrant being served by it. NBN Satellite and Fixed wireless technologies are meant to be for rural areas with large distances between premises and that just doesn't fit with the layout of our village with many houses closer to the road than other suburbs served by FTTP in town (Springvale).

We therefore ask the House to work with NBN Co to change the premises within San Isidore NSW back to be within the NBN fixed line footprint so we can start using that fibre built years ago.

from 23 citizens (Petition No. EN6343)

### **Child Care**

Mothers of Australia are gravely concerned that this new law being proposed to

Institutionalise Government run Child Care will damage society. Because it is robbing Australian mothers of the opportunity to rear their own children at home. The government's attention and priority should be to reduce inflation, living costs and housing costs in order for mothers to nurture their children up till primary age at home. The government is dismissing a mothers role in society by insulting their primary role in their home with a cheap replacement and alternative. Mothers feel immense guilt having to drop their children off to support their families and not being able to have an option due to rising costs. These incentives damage families and future generations will be disconnected with their parents

We therefore ask the House to reprioritise the reduction of the cost of living instead of implementing laws to take our children off us at a younger age. Mothers want to keep and raise their small children but are forced to work because of the cost of living.

This demand has left children feeling abandoned by their parents and losing their safe place which is their home from a very young age. It is insulting to think how \$10 a day will supplement workers or ease the pressures economically on every household. This is unfair to children's personal health & development with their mothers being taken away; instead mothers have to be slaving away losing time with their precious babies.



from 35 citizens (Petition No. EN6344)

### **Water Quality**

Our tap water, the very essence of life, has been tainted by harmful chemicals—perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). These insidious forever chemicals, detected across every state and territory, pose a grave threat to public health. Classified as carcinogenic by US authorities, there exists no safe threshold for human exposure. These chemicals accumulate in human tissue and lead to the onset of life threatening illnesses. This contamination endangers the well-being of Australians, undermining our fundamental right to clean and safe drinking water.

We therefore ask the House to take immediate and decisive action to safeguard our communities. It is imperative that the government initiates a comprehensive program to eliminate PFOS and PFOA from our water supply systems. We demand stringent regulations and enforcement measures to ensure the eradication of these toxic substances. Additionally, we urge the implementation of robust monitoring protocols to prevent future contamination and protect the health of current and future generations.

Let us not gamble with the health and safety of our citizens any longer. Together, let us ensure that every Australian can drink water without fear of exposure to carcinogenic chemicals. It is the duty of our government to prioritize the health and well-being of its people above all else.

from 65 citizens (Petition No. EN6350)

### **Mental Health**

Youth mental health is one of the highest rising issues within our generation, and such causes of it are social media. I am asking for change because the future generations will be at stake if THIS generation is too unstable, with body image, depression, etc. The consequences will be dire.

We therefore ask the House to provide more funds to mental health programs(such as Brainstorm Productions).

from four citizens (Petition No. EN6352)

### **Cruise Ship Industry**

We, the undersigned, call on Catherine King, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, to urgently review and extend the exemption for cruise vessels under Section 11 of the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012.

Currently, this exemption allows cruise vessels exceeding 5000 gross tonnes, capable of at least 15 knots, and carrying at least 100 passengers, to operate freely between Australian ports, except between Victoria and Tasmania. This exemption is set to expire on 31 December 2024.

The cruise industry in Australia faces numerous challenges, including high port fees and stringent regulatory constraints. If the exemption expires, cruise lines will need to apply for licences under the Act, adding significant burdens to an already struggling industry. Forward cruise line passenger capacity in Australia is projected to drop by 30% in the coming years.

The cruise industry is vital to our economy, generating over \$5 billion annually and supporting 18,000 jobs. The expiration of this exemption will further impact the economy, local cruise industry, competition, and consumer pricing.

We therefore ask the House to prioritise this review and extend the exemption for at least five more years. This will aid in providing the cruise industry with stability and confidence to better serve Australia's unique economic interests within this space.

Your prompt action is essential to support the cruise industry, protect jobs, and ensure affordable and competitive cruising options for Australian consumers.

from 1,284 citizens (Petition No. EN6353)

### **Economy**

Modern economic theory applied across first world countries is fundamentally flawed and Central Bank policy of using monetary and fiscal adjustments to control the economy is sub-optimal.

Many oppose these ideas or wish for the dissolution of these institutions, however, this is naive and such people never provide direct solutions. This is naive because of lessons learnt during the Great Depression when interest rates were raised by politicians instead of lowered.

However, I propose methods which are improved over a two-feature Fiscal and Monetary policy model.

We therefore ask the House to adopt two policies to protect Australia's economic future and promote the wealth of the Australian middle class:

Policy 1: Introduce a system similar to the 1960s Bank of Japan's 'Window Guidance'. This sets lending targets for commercial banks and directs credit growth on a sub-sector basis each month. It allows precise economic control, unlike a market-wide approach that can lead to over-concentration of capital in high-risk sectors like real estate. This should be applied cautiously to avoid excessive market intervention, with input from expert economists.

Policy 2: Gradually re-peg the dollar. Currently, middle class wealth relies on real estate, which less find affordable. A new approach could involve backing the dollar with a range of assets like gold, oil, gas, copper, and securities, providing a low-volatility alternative to real estate (gold on it's own—not enough in reserves). This could safeguard wealth and improve the quality of life for Australians without relying on real-estate to do so.

from six citizens (Petition No. EN6355)

### **Artificial Intelligence**

On June 26 2024, Meta will take private data from Australians to train their AI. Data collected as far as 2007. Unlike the European Union, Australians have not been given the option to opt-out for this.

Meta is a multi-billion dollar organisation with no headquarters in Australia, applying US legislation to do this. It is planning to profit at the expense of the personal data of Australians who they expect to give it for free and without questioning. We should be given the right to opt-out from this enforced policy.

Many of us provided this information as a way to communicate with our relatives and families, unaware that this organisation was planning to use it for their own profit in the future. We deserve the right to not consent to this.

We therefore ask the House to order Meta and any social media channel now and in the future to allow users to opt-out from their private data being used to train AI created by these organisations.

from 77 citizens (Petition No. EN6356)

### **Medicare: Psychology Services**

The mental healthcare system is currently extremely strained, with mental health support difficult to access. Psychology services take months to access; in cases where urgent care is required, outcomes can be severe. Over 6000 provisional psychologists Australia-wide have difficulty providing services due to charging low rates to incentivise patients. A small rebate in the 30-50\$ range will allow provisional psychologists to spend more time assisting patients and promoting career paths in mental health to support the burdened mental healthcare system.

We therefore ask the House to create a medicare rebate of \$30-50 for provisional psychologists.

from 13 citizens (Petition No. EN6357)

### **Universities**

The Universities Accord laid out 47 recommendations, several of which relate to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student working conditions. These recommendations are yet to be addressed.

The raising of the Research Training Program (RTP) stipend is of the utmost importance. The current minimum stipend awarded is \$32,192, an amount that is \$11,771 below the national minimum wage.

For the period of our study, typically three to three and a half years but sometimes four, we work full-time hours without proper remuneration, superannuation, and are unable to make HECS-HELP contributions. The current RTP stipend is unviable for many students, limiting their autonomy and pushing them to seek other career paths. Consistent with the accord's recommendations, we are not requesting the stipend be considered a wage. However, we believe the minimum wage is a viable living standard for HDR students. Furthermore, more can be done to address the HECS-HELP burden on HDR students.

We therefore ask the House to :

- Increase and tie the Australian Research Training Program stipend to the national minimum wage without reducing the number of available RTP scholarships

- Freeze HECS-HELP loan indexation for the duration of HDR candidature

- Deduct the average Australian employee yearly % contribution from HECS-HELP loans upon HDR completion

The federal government aims to contribute 3% of GDP to research and development. HDR students are at the frontline of Australia's research and development now and into the future. If we are to make this future in Australia, we need to be properly supported now.

from 6,791 citizens (Petition No. EN6358)

### **Use of Technology**

New and emerging technologies some from Nikola Tesla's time, are and can be used by the Government and private enterprise to torture innocents including children, the technology is capable of transmitting electricity to stimulate nerves and muscle causing huge amounts of pain, this can range from burning to electric knives. The use of sonar on Australian citizens should be banned and laws created as well (ultra low / high frequencies).

We therefore ask the House to create and have the laws policed.

from 18 citizens (Petition No. EN6359)

### **Health Care**

More & more studies are confirming what those in the know already knew. Mouthwash destroys mouth bacteria, causing gut problems, which then cause immunity problems, which then leads to cancers, jab injuries etc. Decreased good bacteria in the mouth creates a terrible chain reaction leading to a shortened life span. Ideally mouthwash should be banned in Australia, or at least explain the dangers clearly on the labelling, so people can be informed of the risks.

We therefore ask the House to pass a law to ban mouthwash in Australia.

from five citizens (Petition No. EN6360)

### **Taxation**

Why are Pensioners being penalised for working to try and save some money

We therefore ask the House to stop penalising Pensioners for working and earning extra money to get in front. I paid \$400+ in Tax a fortnight ago and lost \$438 in Centrelink Payments and my wife lost \$380. I am 100% sure that other Pensioners are in the same boat. What happened to Albo's promise that he would look after Pensioners?

from 26 citizens (Petition No. EN6362)

### **Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

There's currently a big push in the UK to stop public funding of the BBC in the UK. Why? Because the UK people felt the BBC helped cause the C19 pandemic by spreading fear, anxiety, stress among the population along with other reasons like political bias & the TV licence fee etc.

We therefore ask the House to pass a new law to stop public funding of the ABC & pass another new law to prevent Bigpharma purchasing the ABC in the future.

from 26 citizens (Petition No. EN6363)

### **Trade with China**

Australian commodities has helped China expand its military. China now threatens not only Taiwan, but the whole Pacific area including Australia. I doubt China could be stopped if China decided to invade Australia. It may already be too late.

We therefore ask the House to pass a new law to ban any trade between Australia & China.

from 14 citizens (Petition No. EN6365)

### **Therapeutic Goods Administration**

We, as members of a group of over 54,000 Australians prescribed semaglutide or tirzepatide to treat life-threatening medical conditions, urge the House of Representatives to reconsider the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) decision to ban compounding replicas of Ozempic and Mounjaro. This decision undermines the Therapeutic Goods Act's intent to allow compounding to ensure access to essential medications during shortages.

Our key concerns are:

1. This ban denies over 20000 Australians access to this vital treatment during a global shortage. Semaglutide-based medications have shown unprecedented efficacy in treating type 2 diabetes and health conditions such as obesity and cardiovascular disease. These conditions affect over 7 million Australians.

2. The TGA claims that other alternatives will be available, but the timeline does not support this, with the ban starting in October 2024. The approved alternative, Wegovy, is not yet available and the supply of Ozempic remains unstable, listed as in short supply until at least December 2024 on the TGA's website.

We therefore ask the House to urgently request the following actions from the Parliament:

Direct the TGA upholds its mandate to secure access to therapeutic goods for all Australians by facilitating the availability of semaglutide and tirzepatide through all legitimate and safe channels until the shortage ends. They could establish approval mechanisms for registered compounding pharmacies to provide compounded semaglutide and tirzepatide under strict safety protocols. Alternatively, the Minister for Health could implement an emergency approval pathway for compounding pharmacies to supply semaglutide and tirzepatide until supply issues are resolved.

from 1,331 citizens (Petition No. EN6367)

### **Education Workforce**

Thousands of migrant teachers in Australia struggle to register due to strict Teacher Registration Board (TRB) guidelines. These teachers hold bachelor's degrees in subjects like Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and Mathematics from their home countries and gained teaching experience on the job. However, in Australia, TRBs require teaching experience to be part of the degree program. Without this, migrant teachers must spend significant time and money—several years and thousands of dollars—on new degrees that meet TRB standards.

This situation is financially and temporally prohibitive, especially for migrant teachers from the subcontinent who cannot afford additional years of full-time study. Consequently, many work in childcare centers with a Level 3 Early Childhood Education Certificate, which is less costly and time-consuming than higher degrees.

We therefore ask the House to review the obstacles faced by overseas-trained teachers to gain registration in Australia and follow the below actions to ease the registration process.

1. Reduce the IELTS English language requirement from 7.5 to 7.0, matching the English standard for doctors.
2. Accept other recognized English language tests like PTE or OTE, with scores equivalent to IELTS 7.0.
3. Allow overseas teachers with a bachelor's or master's degree and three years of experience who meet the English requirements to join a six-month accelerated transition program.
4. Structure this program into two phases: three months for educating overseas teachers about the Australian teaching system, legal obligations, and lesson preparation, and three months for supervised, school-based training.

These changes would enable thousands of qualified migrant teachers to join the Australian school system, easing the teacher shortage.

from six citizens (Petition No. EN6368)

### **Koalas**

We should protect the koalas because they are only native to Australia and their habitats are being destroyed. Also, they are on track to going extinct by 2050. Imagine if your house being destroyed for some lumber. This is what koalas go through on a daily basis, having their homes cut down for wood.

We therefore ask the House to make laws to stop companies taking down areas where koalas live to preserve their lives. While also making shelters for koalas that don't have a home or have been affected by deforestation to help them stay alive and well.

from 40 citizens (Petition No. EN6372)

### **Public Health**

Bird flu & E.coli cases are sweeping the planet at the moment & cases are going to hospital.

In order to understand the risks to humans, the public has to know the Covid-19 vaccination status of all those hospitalised with bird flu & E.coli, ie: how many C19 jabs did they take? if data shows it's the vaccinated only being hospitalised, people can understand their risk profile better. This is in everyone's interests to know.

We therefore ask the House to pass a law so we know the Covid-19 vaccination status of people taken to hospital in Australia due to bird flu or E.coli. (This can be done without identifying individuals).

from 10 citizens (Petition No. EN6375)

### **Migration**

Migrants are taking our jobs, our homes, our roads. Enough is enough now! Australian born people are unhappy and scared for their future.

We therefore ask the House to stop immigration

from 18 citizens (Petition No. EN6376)

### **Bharatiya Janata Party**

We, the undersigned, are profoundly concerned about the activities and influence of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and associated extremist groups in Australia. The BJP, led by Narendra Modi, is notorious for its extreme right-wing policies that have undermined democracy and human rights in India. Its actions have led to widespread discrimination, religious imposition, and violence, including mob lynchings and the suppression of dissent.

The BJP, in collaboration with the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), promotes an extreme form of Hindu nationalism, marginalizing other religious communities and fostering an environment of intolerance and violence. Their attempts to extend influence abroad, including Australia, threaten our nation's safety, security, and multicultural harmony. Investigations have revealed attempts by the Indian government under BJP leadership to interfere in Australian politics, engage in espionage, and monitor the Indian diaspora. Such actions compromise Australia's sovereignty and the safety of its residents.

Australia prides itself on being a multicultural society where people from diverse backgrounds live in harmony. The BJP's divisive ideology and actions jeopardize this harmony and pose a significant threat to social cohesion.

We therefore ask the House to

Ban the Activities of the BJP and Associated Groups

Investigate and Prosecute Illegal Activities

Protect the Rights and Safety of All Communities

Publicly Condemn Foreign Interference

Enhance Monitoring and Oversight

from 204 citizens (Petition No. EN6377)

### **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is a military organisation in Iran responsible for state-sponsored terrorism worldwide, and is the primary force behind the oppression, torture, and murder of the Iranian people, including women and LGBTQI+ individuals, who have been specifically targeted and brutalised. This includes the murder of Mahsa Amini in 2022, which sparked global protests. The IRGC was designated as a foreign terrorist organisation by the US government on April 15, 2019, and by the Canadian government in June 2024. Notably, the IRGC is also responsible for the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752, resulting in the tragic loss of 167 innocent lives. In 2022-2024, the IRGC has been implicated in sponsoring riots and violent unrest worldwide, including in countries such as Sweden, Netherlands, and Greece, in addition to its longstanding support for terrorist proxies like Hezbollah and Hamas. As the IRGC's purpose is to export the Islamic Revolution beyond Iran's borders, it is crucial to recognise its terrorist activities. Currently, Australia designates Hezbollah and

Hamas as terrorist organisations, but failing to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organisation would render these designations ineffective, allowing the IRGC to legally operate, raise funds, recruit, and provide resources for terrorism globally.

We therefore ask the House to declare and designate the IRGC as a terrorism organisation in Australia (including the associated Basij Force and Quds Force organisations). Also, we request an investigation into the potential financial sources of the IRGC in Australia that assist them with violation of sanctions.

from 19 citizens (Petition No. EN6378)

### **Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority**

1. Currently the government and APVMA does not disclose details of reported alleged adverse experiences that are caused to our pets particularly from flea, tick and heartworm products.

2. It would improve transparency of the APVMA's Adverse Experience Reporting Program (AERP) and reduce the potential for manipulation and corruption.

3. It would inform farmers, veterinarians and pet owners of the possibility of adverse experiences that have allegedly occurred previously from APVMA approved veterinary products which could assist in choosing products they administer.

4. The database should list alleged adverse experiences by brand name of product as often there are multiply ingredients in products and it cannot be established which ingredient has caused the alleged adverse experience.

5. Existing medical conditions of animals that have an alleged adverse experience should be included in reports to the AERP as this could provide valuable research information to improve the safety of products and warnings provided to consumers.

6. Product information leaflets should include details of how to report an alleged adverse experience to the AERP to reduce under-reporting and improve the accuracy of the AERP publicly accessible database.

7. Reports of alleged adverse experiences to the AERP should be assessed impartially without any influence from the manufacturers of products that have allegedly caused the adverse experiences.

We therefore ask the House to direct the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) establish an Australian publicly accessible database of reported alleged adverse experiences (by brand name of products) from APVMA approved veterinary products.

from 54 citizens (Petition No. EN6380)

### **Income Tax**

It is often reported that multi-millionaires are able to avoid paying any income tax. This leads to the low income earners being forced to provide a higher proportion of the government's income than they should.

We therefore ask the House to introduce a cap on deductions allowed on income tax returns. A cap of \$200,000 would be more than enough to allow the vast majority of Australian citizens to be unimpacted while stopping the people who should be paying the most tax from avoiding it entirely.

from 18 citizens (Petition No. EN6383)

### **Migration**

The Partner Visa program is essential for the reunification of families and the strengthening of the social fabric of our communities. However, the current processing times for Partner Visa 820 (temporary onshore) and Partner Visa 309 (provisional offshore) have reached unprecedented lengths, often exceeding 18 months for majority of offshore applicants. Many applicants are separated from their partners and families, leading to prolonged periods of uncertainty and anxiety.

These extended delays are causing significant emotional, financial, and social strain on applicants and their families, who are seeking to build their lives together in Australia.

Impacts:

Prolonged separation from loved ones results in significant emotional distress, affecting the mental well-being of applicants and their families.

Applicants often face financial challenges due to the ongoing visa application costs while waiting for decision.

Long processing times disrupt family dynamics and can delay important life events such as marriages, births, and other future decisions.

The extended wait times can impact the Australian economy as applicants who could contribute to the workforce are left in limbo.

We therefore ask the House to take immediate action to reduce the processing times for Partner Visa categories. Specifically, we request to allocate additional resources, including staff and technology, to expedite the processing of Partner Visa applications.

Transparent communication and provide regular updates to applicants regarding the status of their applications and expected processing times.

We, the undersigned, respectfully submit this petition to express our deep concern regarding the prolonged processing times for Partner Visa 820 and 309 categories.

Thank you for your consideration.

from 787 citizens (Petition No. EN6385)

### **Parliamentary Standards**

The Speaker and House of Representatives' Standing Orders both go to great lengths to remind Members constantly of respectful behaviour, except in the case of the use of mobile phones during Question Time.

Members are constantly on their phones during Question Time and disengaged from the House proceedings during this important time.

In any other workplace in Australia this practice would be frowned upon, if not banned. The use of mobile phones during Question Time also sets a poor example to any visiting school students who have recently likely had a mobile phone ban at school. It sets a poor example to all.

In keeping with other parliamentary practices designed to set a standard for respectful debate and behaviour in the House, Members should refrain from using their mobile phones during Question Time so they can fully engage in the debate, show respect and pay attention to Members who are speaking by not being distracted by mobile phones.

We therefore ask the House to amend the Standing Orders to reflect that the use of mobile phones during Question Time by any Member of the House of Representatives be considered unparliamentary behaviour.

We also ask that, similar to current standards of unparliamentary behaviour consequences (e.g. Standing Order 94a), any breach, i.e. if a Member uses a mobile phone during Question Time, The Speaker of the House will have the authority and discretion to warn and/or expel the Member from the House for the remainder of Question Time on that sitting day.

from 721 citizens (Petition No. EN6386)

### **International Students**

As per the Changes to TGV proposed July 2024 effect the maximum age for both streams reduce to 35 which dramatically dropped from 50. However, numerous 35+ aged students pursuing education in Australia with target to apply TGV, resulting crash from suddenly notice. Most education courses require more than 2 years and students need amount of time to prepare student visa prior to their enrollment. There should be compensation option for those who affect.

Besides, the propose change may not proper solution to reduce permanently temporary as timeline mismatched for age cut-off PR applicant 45 with propose limit at 35. This propose solution may be considered from mislead perspective of data. Also, referring to responding of EN5790&EN5774 stated that 94% of TGV applicant are aged 35 and younger. Not only overlook the quantitative and segmentation factors, But also mixing applicants without working experience with those who gained experiences before further study in their 30-50.

Most importantly, the international students aged of 35+ are credible matured. They can help build stronger communities, contribute tax, and share skills from their experiences.

We therefore ask the House to please consider the transition period for international students in gap 35-50 those who already enrolled their course before 2025 to apply the TGV. Or alternatively, provide an option to apply another new subclass visa for transition gap.

Furthermore, long-term strategy visa should be repositioning to provide students with number of experiences to further amplify their career skills and sharing theirs to community.

from 72 citizens (Petition No. EN6390)

### **Visa Refusal or Cancellation**

The current law allows the Minister for Immigration to cancel the visa of anyone failing the character test, regardless of how long they've lived here. In 2019 alone, over 800 people were deported under this law (source: Department of Home Affairs). Many were sent back to countries where they had no existing family or support networks. We believe that it's time we reassess this policy and consider its human impact. We urge our government officials not only to reconsider my partners case but also review these laws that displace long-term residents from their homes and families

We therefore ask the House to reconsider these pending cases and stop the harsh laws against long-term Australian residents under the 501

from 19 citizens (Petition No. EN6391)

Petitions received.

## **PETITIONS**

### **Responses**

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (10:01): I present the following 12 ministerial responses to petitions previously presented:

### **Human Rights: China**

Dear Ms Templeman

Thank you for your correspondence of 6 March 2023 enclosing Petition EN4746, with 548 signatures, concerning the banning of imported goods produced by Uyghur forced labour.

The Australian Government's policy on anti-slavery is to appoint an independent

Anti-Slavery Commissioner to work with the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) and coordinate work across government and with industry to eliminate modern slavery in Australia and global supply chains.

The Commissioner will publish an annual list of countries, regions, industries, and products with a high risk of modern slavery, including forced labour. Developing a prohibition for the import of forced labour goods is an extensive whole-of-government exercise that begins with the establishment of this list.

The Attorney-General, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, and AGD has the policy lead for this matter, and the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force, will continue to work closely with them on this issue.

Thank you for bringing Petition EN4746 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Home Affairs, Ms O'Neil**

### **Working Holiday Maker Program**

Dear Ms Templeman

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 October 2023 enclosing Petition EN5448, with ten signatures, concerning a request for volunteer work within the charity sector to count as specified work in the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Working Holiday Makers, holders of a Working Holiday (subclass 417) or Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa are not required to work at all, but may choose to work for the duration of their stay in Australia, in any location, industry and role they choose, including volunteer or charity work. WHMs can also choose to undertake three and six months of 'specified work' to be eligible to apply for a second and third WHM visa respectively.

To be eligible, the work must be in a region, industry and type specified in a legislative instrument for the relevant visa subclass.

For the purposes of specified work in the WHM program, volunteering can only be counted if it is bushfire or flood recovery work carried out in affected regions of Australia. Further information on specified work is available at: <https://homeaffairsgov.au/what-we-do/whm-program/specified-work-conditions>.

On 2 September 2022, Minister O'Neil announced a comprehensive review of Australia's migration system to ensure it better meets existing challenges and sets a clear direction for the coming decades. The review panel provided its *Review of the Migration System Final Report 2023* to Minister O'Neil on 21 March 2023, outlining reform directions for the Australian Government's consideration.

On 27 April 2023, Minister O'Neil released for discussion *A Migration System for a More Prosperous and Secure Australia—Outline of the Government's Migration Strategy*.

This document maps the Government's approach for a better targeted, more efficient and outcomes-focused migration system. It will be used to facilitate consultation with stakeholders including state and territory governments, unions, industry, migrant and civil society groups, in the development of the Government's final Migration Strategy.

Any future changes to the WHM program including in relation to the specified work framework will also be considered in this context, and take into account stakeholder views, immigration risks, labour market impacts and protections for vulnerable workers.

Thank you for bringing Petition EN5448 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Giles**

### **International Humanitarian Assistance: Occupied Palestinian Territories**

Dear Ms Templeman

Thank you for your email of 18 March 2024 regarding petition number EN5901 concerning funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

Australia has lifted the temporary pause on funding for UNRWA following steps to strengthen the integrity of UNRWA operations.

The decision to pause an additional \$6 million in funding was taken after serious allegations were made, resulting in UNRWA's dismissal of staff alleged to have been involved in the Ha mas terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023.

The nature of the allegations warranted an immediate and appropriate response. The Australian Government has been working with a group of donor countries and with UNRWA on the shared objective of ensuring the integrity of UNRWA's operations, rebuilding confidence and ensuring aid flows to Gazans in desperate need.

Australia and our partners welcome the decisive actions from UNRWA and the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to strengthen the integrity of operations. This includes the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services' investigation of the allegations, and the independent review into UNRWA and the principle of neutrality, led by former French Foreign Minister, Catherine Colonna (Colonna Review).

We welcome UNRWA's immediate work to deliver an action plan for donors, including Australia. The plan includes strengthened internal controls to ensure its neutrality, including rigorous requirements of staff.

The Colonna Review found UNRWA was "irreplaceable and indispensable" and pivotal in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services to Palestinians. It also found UNRWA had robust principles and processes to safeguard neutrality. There was no finding that UNRWA's operations have been captured by Hamas or other terror organisations or that there has been diversion of funding.

Australia has finalised an updated funding agreement that includes stringent conditions such as guarantees of staff neutrality, and confidence in supply chains.

These steps provide the necessary confidence that the \$6 million we have dispersed for urgent humanitarian relief will go directly to those in need, satisfying Australia's rigorous funding controls, sanctions and legal requirements.

Australia's decision is in line with steps taken by Canada, Sweden and the EU. It is expected that more countries that have paused will take a similar approach, as we have seen recently in the case of Japan and Germany.

Only UNRWA has the infrastructure to receive and distribute aid on the scale needed right now in Gaza. We urge Israel to recognise its mandate and work transparently to support its integrity.

Since 1951, successive Australian governments have funded UNRWA.

We mourn every Israeli and Palestinian innocent life which has been lost in this conflict and will continue to use our voice to support steps towards peace in the region.

Israelis and Palestinians want and deserve to live their lives in peace, security and dignity. I appreciate you taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Wong**

### **Innovation Youth Centre**

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 March 2024 regarding petition number (EN5926) in relation to additional funding support for the Innovation Youth Centre.

The Innovation Youth Centre is currently receiving \$1.49 million (GST exclusive) through the Safer Communities Fund Round Six grant program. The grant agreement between the Commonwealth and Innovation Youth Centre identified that this funding was provided on a non-recurrent basis and the project activities were due to be completed by 30 April 2024. I have been advised that the Innovation Youth Centre has completed their project, and submitted the end of project report on 16 May 2024. This report is currently under review and final payment will be made on acceptance of the report by the Commonwealth.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that local communities can provide support and assistance to young people at risk from engaging in the criminal justice system. I continue to consider ways that this support can be provided in a transparent, fair and equitable way for all communities across Australia. Since October 2022, the Australian Government has committed more than \$159 million to improve community safety and security across Australia through community-based crime prevention and justice reinvestment initiatives.

The Innovation Youth Centre has been encouraged by the Attorney-General's Department to monitor the Australian Government's GrantConnect website (<http://help.grants.gov.au>) which lists all current Commonwealth grant opportunities. The Innovation Youth Centre has also been provided with advice to review available grants provided by the Victorian Government. Information on these programs can be found at: [www.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs](http://www.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs).

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the **Attorney-General, Mr Dreyfus**

### **Middle East**

Dear Ms Templeman

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 May 2024 regarding petition EN5938 in relation to funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and cutting ties with Israel.

Australia has now lifted the temporary pause on funding for UNRWA following steps to strengthen the integrity of UNRWA operations.

The decision to pause an additional \$6 million in funding was taken after serious allegations were made, resulting in UNRWA's dismissal of staff alleged to have been involved in the Hamas terrorist attacks of 7 October.

The nature of the allegations warranted an immediate and appropriate response. A total of 16 countries announced suspensions: Austria, the United Kingdom, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and the United States.

The Australian Government has been working with a group of donor countries and with UNRWA on the shared objective of ensuring the integrity of UNRWA's operations, rebuilding confidence and ensuring aid flows to Gazans in desperate need.



Australia and our partners welcome the decisive actions from UNRWA and the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to strengthen the integrity of operations. This includes the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services' investigation of the allegations, and the independent review into UNRWA and the principle of neutrality, led by former French Foreign Minister, Catherine Colonna (Colonna Review).

We welcome UNRWA's immediate work to deliver an action plan for donors, including Australia. The plan includes strengthened internal controls to ensure its neutrality, including rigorous requirements of staff.

The Colonna Review found UNRWA was "irreplaceable and indispensable" and pivotal in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services to Palestinians. It also found UNRWA had robust principles and processes to safeguard neutrality. There was no finding that UNRWA's operations have been captured by Hamas or other terror organisations or that there has been diversion of funding.

In disbursing the \$6 million to UNRWA's flash appeal, Australia has finalised an updated funding agreement that includes stringent conditions such as guarantees of staff neutrality, and confidence in supply chains.

These steps provide the necessary confidence that the \$6 million in urgent humanitarian funding will go directly to those in need, satisfying Australia's rigorous humanitarian controls, sanctions and legal requirements.

Only UNRWA has the infrastructure to receive and distribute aid on the scale needed right now in Gaza. We urge Israel to recognise its mandate and work transparently to support its integrity.

Successive Australian governments have funded UNRWA, since 1951. After taking office, the Albanese Government doubled Australia's annual funding to UNRWA to \$20 million.

In response to the call for Australia to cut ties with Israel, Australia has a long-standing relationship with Israel, which has endured over many years. Embassies and diplomatic staff are essential to maintaining official channels of communication between governments.

Throughout this crisis, Australia's position has been clear and consistent and we have consistently urged all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law. We expect Israel to comply with the International Court of Justice's rulings on provisional measures, including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance.

I appreciate you taking the time to write in regard to this very important matter.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Wong**

### **Public Libraries**

Dear Ms Templeman

Thank you for your email of 14 May 2024, regarding Petition EN5982 which proposes that comprehensive measures are implemented to ensure that children are not exposed to sexually explicit publications in public and school libraries.

The Australian Government shares the petitioners' concerns regarding the need to protect Australian children from exposure to inappropriate content. Keeping children safe is a shared goal across governments, industry and the community.

The National Classification Scheme (the Scheme) regulates the classification and availability of films, computer games and certain publications within Australia. Australians rely on the Scheme as a trusted source of information to inform their media choices, particularly in relation to content shown to children.

The Scheme is a co-operative arrangement between the federal, state and territory governments. Under the Scheme, the Government is responsible for the classification of content, and the states and territories are primarily responsible for the enforcement of classification requirements through their own complementary legislation.

Currently, publications are not required to be classified in Australia unless they meet the definition of a 'submittable publication'. A 'submittable publication' is defined as an unclassified publication that contains depictions or descriptions that:

- a) are likely to cause the publication to be classified RC (Refused Classification); or
- b) are likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult to the extent that the publication should not be sold or displayed as an unrestricted publication; or
- c) are unsuitable for a minor to see or read.

On 29 March 2023, I announced that the Government would reform the Scheme to make it fit-for-purpose in a modern media environment. A public consultation process was recently undertaken to inform the development of options for these reforms, which included consideration of current arrangements for the classification of publications and whether further refinements are required to meet community expectations, standards and evidence of harms. Feedback received through this process is currently under consideration.

Thank you for bringing the concerns of this petition to my attention. I hope the information in the response is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Communications, Ms Rowland**

### **Medicare**

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 May 2024 regarding petition number EN6040 on Medicare coverage for skin cancer checks.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting Australians to access high quality and affordable health care by providing both free and subsidised health care services. This includes providing Medicare benefits (rebates) for privately rendered services listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and free hospital services for public patients in public hospitals, via agreements with the states and territories.

While there are no specific MBS items for skin cancer screening, a skin check may be undertaken as part of a standard consultation, for which an MBS rebate is claimable. For example, MBS item 23 is a Level B attendance by a GP and attracts a Medicare rebate of \$41.40. In addition, there are several MBS items relating to the diagnosis and treatment of benign lesions, malignant lesions, and melanoma, depending on size, severity and site (MBS items 31356 to 31383). For Medicare benefits to apply, an MBS service must be clinically relevant, and all elements of the item descriptor must be satisfied. It is up to the treating doctor to determine which, if any, MBS items apply in a patient's circumstances. Information on all Medicare services subsidised by the Government, including the Medicare fee and benefit, as well as the clinical requirements, is listed on the Government's MBS Online website at [www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au).

Although the Government is responsible for setting Medicare benefits to assist patient access, it has no direct power to determine the fees charged by doctors, including whether the doctor bulk bills their services. Medical practitioners are free to set their own value on their services and the actual fee charged is a matter between the doctor and the patient. Practitioners are encouraged to consider the personal circumstances of their patients when determining the fees they charge, and many do so.

To support GPs to bulk bill their patients, the Government provides a bulk billing incentive for services for patients with a Commonwealth Concession Card and children under 16 years of age.

The Government's investment of \$3.5 billion to triple the bulk billing incentive, which commenced on 1 November 2023, applies to the most common GP consultations:

- all face-to-face general attendance consultations more than 6 minutes in length
- all telehealth general attendance consultations which are between 6 and 20 minutes in length
- longer telehealth phone and video general attendance consultations where a patient is registered through MyMedicare.

More than 11 million Australians are eligible for these new incentives.

To assist people in making better informed choices about their health care options and help address the sometimes unanticipated out-of-pocket costs some patients may face, the Government has developed the Medical Costs Finder (MCF). The MCF is an online tool to provide information to consumers to assist them in understanding the typical costs of commonly sought in-hospital and out-of-hospital specialist services delivered in a private setting. The MCF currently shows general information on typical costs for over 1,300 in-hospital and out-of-hospital specialist services across different geographical regions in Australia. The MCF can be accessed on the Department of Health and Aged Care website at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au) by searching 'Medical Costs Finder'.

In addition, you may be interested to know that routine population-based screening for melanoma or other skin cancers is not currently recommended due to insufficient evidence that it reduces mortality. Instead, Cancer Council Australia encourages people to become familiar with their skin, including skin not normally exposed to the sun, and consult a doctor if they notice any change in shape, colour or size of a lesion, or the development of a new lesion. For further information, Cancer Council Australia's position statement can be viewed on their website at [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au) by searching 'position statements sunsmart'.

The Government recognises that all cancers, including skin cancer, have a significant impact on the Australian community and is committed to improving outcomes for those affected by these cancers through investment in prevention, treatment, and research. The Government launched Australia's first national cancer plan (plan) on 2 November 2023. The Plan aims to provide a national approach to cancer control by identifying priorities for action over the next two, five and ten years to improve the lives of people affected by cancer. Cancer Australia will oversee and report on the plan's implementation against shared measures of success. For more information about the Plan, please visit the website at [www.australiancancerplan.gov.au](http://www.australiancancerplan.gov.au).

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mr Butler**

### **New Vehicle Efficiency Standard**

Dear Chair

Thank you for your email of 14 May 2024 regarding Petition (EN6047), regarding the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (the Standard), which requests the House of Representatives to consider the Standard, in the context of 4WD vehicles.

As you are aware, both the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard Bill 2024, and the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2024, received Royal Assent on 31 May 2024.

Until now, Australia has been one of the few advanced economies in the world without a fuel efficiency standard for new vehicles. By introducing this critical regulatory reform, Australia can meet its mandated emissions reduction targets and

Australian motorists will be able choose from a wider range of more efficient, modern vehicles, including 4WDs. Consumers will also benefit from reduced fuel costs, with savings estimated to be around \$95 billion by 2050.

Australia is committed to reducing emissions to meet our legislated target of net zero by 2050 policy and its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Light vehicles account for 11.4 per cent of Australia's emissions, and so it is critical that the Government moves to decarbonise the light vehicle fleet.

In relation to large vehicles such as 4WDs and electric vehicle technology, the Standard is technology neutral and suppliers of light vehicles can choose to meet their average fleet emissions target by supplying a range of fuel efficient, low and zero emissions vehicles. This means that while manufacturers are required to improve the average efficiency of new cars they sell, they can still supply the types of vehicles preferred by consumers, including 4WDs and other large vehicles.

Based on more than 12 months of extensive consultation, the Government made a number of targeted adjustments to the final settings of the Standard to give industry more time to prepare and to make it easier for manufacturers of large Sp01is Utility Vehicles and 4WDs, as well as light commercial vehicles, to meet their emissions target.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Ms Catherine King**

### **Medicinal Cannabis**

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 May 2024 regarding petition number EN6049 on medicinal cannabis cost issues and access through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for everyone that needs it.

I am aware many Australians are experiencing difficulties with the cost of medicinal cannabis, and patients are reporting benefits since commencing the medicine.

The Australian Government enables access to affordable medicines by listing medicines on the PBS that have been recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC). The PBAC is an independent and expert body, comprising doctors, health professionals, health economists and consumer representatives. Under legislation, the Government can only list a medicine on the PBS when the PBAC recommends doing so. Similarly, the Government relies on the advice of the PBAC before changing an existing PBS listing.

When the PBAC evaluates applications for PBS subsidy, it is legally required to consider effectiveness and cost of the medicine, compared to alternative treatments. There is no legal provision for subsidised supply of a non-PBS-listed medicine, or for a PBS-listed medicine outside the terms of its listing (or specific restrictions). No exceptions are permitted for individual patients, even in particular cases where the medicine might be beneficial or recommended on clinical grounds.

Medicinal cannabis products are regulated as medicines in Australia. Medicines are not generally made available on the PBS to treat conditions for which they have not been approved for use in Australia by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). This is important because the PBS listing process relies in part on the assessment of quality, safety and efficacy that serves as the basis for TGA registration.

The TGA provides safe and legal access to medicinal cannabis in appropriate circumstances. Sativex® (nabiximols) is registered by the TGA for moderate to severe multiple sclerosis but is currently not listed on the PBS. Epidyolex® (cannabidiol) is registered by the TGA for seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome or Dravet syndrome and is also PBS-listed for these indications.

Currently, most medicinal cannabis products are 'unapproved', but the TGA can permit any medical practitioner to prescribe an unapproved medicinal cannabis product for an individual patient, through the Special Access B Scheme. In addition, under the Authorised Prescriber Scheme, a suitably authorised doctor can prescribe products without obtaining patient-by-patient approvals from the TGA.

A pharmaceutical company is a private entity that makes its own decisions about availability, pricing of its medicines in the private market (outside the PBS), and whether it will apply for PBS subsidy. The Government cannot compel companies to apply for TGA registration or PBS listing.

Patients and treating doctors can contact companies responsible for 'approved' and 'unapproved' medicinal cannabis products, to ask if they will consider submitting applications for particular medical conditions. Specific medicinal cannabis products and company names are available at [www.tga.gov.au/medicinal-cannabis-products-active-ingredients](http://www.tga.gov.au/medicinal-cannabis-products-active-ingredients).

The Office of Drug Control also publishes a comprehensive list of Australian medicinal cannabis manufacturers and suppliers licensed under the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967*. This list (with contact details) is available at [www.odc.gov.au/manufacturers-and-suppliers-medicinal-cannabis-products](http://www.odc.gov.au/manufacturers-and-suppliers-medicinal-cannabis-products).

While speaking with any pharmaceutical company, patients or treating doctors can ask if access to the medicine is available at reduced cost, through a compassionate access program. Decisions about these programs are a matter for each pharmaceutical company. Treating doctors can also apply to the drug and therapeutics committee of the local public hospital to seek assistance with cost. Private health insurers are also free to pay benefits under general treatment cover for the full price of a medicine, noting this is a commercial decision for each health insurer.

Medicines not on the PBS are dispensed as private prescriptions and patient charges for private prescriptions are a matter for each pharmacy to determine. As price competition applies to medicines not available on the PBS, I encourage patients to discuss the price of private prescriptions with their pharmacist, including if they have found a cheaper price elsewhere.

For people experiencing chronic pain, information is available on the Pain Australia website at [www.painaustralia.org.au](http://www.painaustralia.org.au). Some patients who experience pain find it helpful to contact the Pain Link telephone helpline on 1300 340 357, which is staffed by volunteers with personal experience of pain.

All aspects of patient care, including recommendations about appropriate treatments and interpretation of PBS eligibility and access, are the responsibility of the patient's treating doctor.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mr Butler**

### **International Humanitarian Assistance**

Dear Ms Templeman

Thank you for bringing petition EN6057 regarding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to my attention.

I know the conflict in the Middle East is deeply distressing for many Australians, particularly those with a connection to the region and loved ones directly impacted.

Since 1951, successive Australian governments have funded UNRWA.

Australia has now lifted the temporary pause on funding for UNRWA following steps to strengthen the integrity of its operations.

The decision to pause an additional \$6 million in funding was taken after serious allegations were made, resulting in UNRWA's dismissal of staff alleged to have been involved in the Hamas terrorist attacks of 7 October.

The nature of the allegations warranted an immediate and appropriate response.

The Australian Government has since been working with a group of donor countries and with UNRWA on the shared objective of ensuring the integrity of UNRWA's operations, rebuilding confidence and ensuring aid flows to Gazans in desperate need.

Australia and our partners welcome the decisive actions from UNRWA and the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to strengthen the integrity of operations. This includes the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services' investigation of the allegations, and the independent review into UNRWA and the principle of neutrality, led by former French Foreign Minister, Catherine Colonna (Colonna Review).

We welcome UNRWA's immediate work to deliver an action plan for donors, including Australia. The plan includes strengthened internal controls to ensure its neutrality, including rigorous requirements of staff.

The Colonna Review found UNRWA was "irreplaceable and indispensable" and pivotal in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services to Palestinians. It also found UNRWA had robust principles and processes to safeguard neutrality.

There was no finding that UNRWA's operations have been captured by Hamas or other terror organisations or that there has been diversion of funding.

Australia has now finalised an updated funding agreement that includes stringent conditions such as guarantees of staff neutrality, and confidence in supply chains.

These steps provided the necessary confidence that the \$6 million we have disbursed for urgent humanitarian relief will go directly to those in need, satisfying Australia's rigorous humanitarian controls, sanctions and legal requirements.

Australia's decision is in line with steps taken by Canada, Sweden and the EU. It is expected that more countries that have paused will take a similar approach.

Only UNRWA has the infrastructure to receive and distribute aid on the scale needed right now in Gaza. We urge Israel to recognise its mandate and work transparently to support its integrity.

We will continue to use our voice to advocate for urgent humanitarian assistance to reach Palestinians in Gaza in desperate need, and to address the protracted refugee crisis in the region.

I trust this information will be of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Wong**

### **Migration**

Dear Ms Templeman

Thank you for your correspondence of 3 June 2024 enclosing Petition EN6085, with 1,059 signatures, concerning the Parent migration program, its balance of family test and the positive impact grandparents can have in the lives of their grandchildren.

The Australian Government acknowledges the important role family migration plays in allowing Australian citizens and permanent residents to reunite with their family members, delivering social outcomes for Australia and contributing to social cohesion by strengthening family and community bonds in Australia.

The permanent Parent visa program within the Family Stream consists of Contributory and non-Contributory visa subclasses. For program year 2024-25 (commencing on 1 July 2024), 8,500 places have been allocated to the permanent Parent visa program. This number has been retained from program year 2023-24.

The Government is aware of concerns related to processing times for Parent visa:

- The number of places allocated to the permanent Parent program is decided annually as part of the permanent Migration Program planning process. The Government determines the number of places for the Migration Program following public consultations, and sets the program with Australia's immediate and longer-term economic and social needs in mind.
- Processing times for permanent Parent visa applications are impacted by a range of factors, including the number of places allocated to a program each year within the broader migration program and the level of demand. High volumes of permanent Parent visa application lodgements, which for a number of years exceeded annual migration planning levels, have impacted on processing times for permanent Parent visas.
- The Balance of Family (BoF) test requires applicants to demonstrate at least half of their children are lawfully and permanently resident in Australia or, alternatively, that more of their children reside lawfully and permanently in Australia than in any one single country overseas. The BoF test determines the extent of the parent's links to their children and ensures only those with close ties to Australia are eligible for a Parent visa.

For those not able to meet the BoF test, the Government facilitates short term family reunification through temporary visas:

- The Sponsored Parent (Temporary) visa (SPTV) (subclass 870) allows parents of Australian sponsors to visit Australia for up to three or five years at one time, for a combined maximum stay of up to 10 years.
- Visitor visas are available for the purposes of a short term stay in Australia, including family visits. Visitor visa policy also allows for parents of Australian citizens or permanent residents to be granted Visitor visas (subclass 600) in the Tourist stream with visa validity periods greater than the standard 12 months.

Thank you for bringing Petition EN6085 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Giles**

### **Medical Workforce: Governance**

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 3 June 2024 regarding Petition number EN6113 seeking an independent committee to oversee decisions of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Aphra) and the Medical Board of Australia (the Board).

I note the concerns raised that decisions of Aphra and the Board may create distress for healthcare practitioners involved in a notifications process.

All Australian Health Ministers (Ministerial Council) share oversight of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (National Law). Ahpra is accountable to the Ministerial Council through implementation of the National Law. In addition, there are further mechanisms in place to oversee operations of the National Scheme.

Ahpra and the National Boards administer and must comply with the National Law. Ahpra's *Governance and accountability framework* sets out its overarching regulatory structures and management processes to assure the public that it operates within the prescribed requirements of the National Law. Further information about the framework is available at [www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/What-We-Do/Governance-and-Accountability-Framework](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/What-We-Do/Governance-and-Accountability-Framework).

Ahpra and the National Boards work to protect the health and safety of the public by ensuring that registered health practitioners are suitably trained and qualified to practice in a competent and ethical manner. Decisions made by Ahpra and the National Boards are subject to review by the courts, state-based administrative tribunals and the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (NHPO).

The NHPO is an independent authority which provides ombudsman, privacy and freedom of information oversight of the National Scheme, including Ahpra and the National Boards. The NHPO does not intervene in decisions relating to individual practitioners but works with Ahpra to improve its service delivery and complaints handling processes. Further information about the NHPO is available at [www.nhpo.gov.au](http://www.nhpo.gov.au).

The Government acknowledges that health practitioners can experience distress while undergoing a notifications process. In 2021, Ahpra and the National Boards commissioned an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to explore practitioner distress while engaging with the regulator.

The EAG made 15 recommendations and proposed 33 actions which are being implemented progressively over 2023 to 2025. The findings have been published in the *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* and further information is available at [www.ahpra.gov.au/notifications/has-a-concern-been-raised-about-you/improving-the-notifications-experience](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/notifications/has-a-concern-been-raised-about-you/improving-the-notifications-experience).

To ensure the National Scheme keeps pace with community expectations, Health Ministers agreed to undertake an *Independent review of regulatory complexity of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme* (the Review). The Review recently commenced and will examine key aspects of the National Scheme and deliver recommendations that will improve regulatory outcomes for health practitioners and the community. Further information about the Review, including its terms of reference, is available at [www.health.gov.au/our-work/independent-review-of-complexity-in-the-national-registration-and-accreditation-scheme](http://www.health.gov.au/our-work/independent-review-of-complexity-in-the-national-registration-and-accreditation-scheme).

A key area for the Review is examining options for implementation of a stewardship framework that promotes a best practice, whole-of-system approach to improve the collective management of the National Scheme. This aligns with recommendations from the *Independent review of Australia's regulatory settings relating to overseas health practitioners*. A stewardship approach will better enable Health Ministers to set clear expectations and facilitate opportunities to improve the performance of the regulatory system.

Outcomes of the Review will be delivered in early 2025 and will provide direction on further governance arrangements required to ensure the National Scheme continues to align with community expectations.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mr Butler**

## PETITIONS

### Statements

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (10:01): The petitions in today's report are all e-petitions that closed for signature since the committee's last report to the House, on 1 July. The largest petition received over 6,500 signatures and requests greater support for higher degree research students, including an increase in the Australian Government Research Training Program stipend.

Other topics in today's petitions include a request that an approval mechanism be put in place for compounded semaglutide medications and a request to extend an exemption for cruise vessels under the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012. Also among today's petitions is a request to review the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code to allow businesses to let companion dogs into indoor dining areas. There's also a request to ban members of the House from using mobile phones in question time, and there are several petitions relating to visa processing times or visa conditions.

While acknowledging that House petitions must refer to a matter on which the House has the power to act, the topics covered in petitions are one indicator of the range of issues of concern to the citizens and residents of Australia. I thank the House.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Housing

**Dr HAINES** (Indi) (10:03): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the importance of affordable and well-located housing in regional, rural and remote Australia and the fundamental human right to shelter;

(2) notes the:

(a) housing crisis is getting worse, with rents and house prices reaching record highs across regional Australia in the first half of 2024; and

(b) National Housing Accord's target of building 1.2 million new homes over five years from 1 July 2024 contains no specific targets for regional, rural and remote Australia;

(3) acknowledges that:

(a) there is a housing affordability and availability crisis in regional, rural and remote Australia;

(b) this Government has no housing policies specifically targeted at addressing the housing needs of regional, rural and remote Australia; and

(c) the Housing Australia Future Fund and the Housing Support Program contain no dedicated funding or targets for regional, rural and remote Australia; and

(4) calls on the Government to:

(a) commit to providing 30 per cent of all housing funding to regional, rural, and remote Australia, which would reflect a fair share of funding for the regions; and

(b) establish a dedicated regional housing infrastructure fund to provide the critical infrastructure the regions need to unlock new housing.

The headlines of the housing crisis in Australia are becoming more and more troubling. The number of Australian homeowners in mortgage stress has hit 30 per cent, and it will rise further. More than three-quarters of renters are in extreme rental stress, and, according to the Rental Pain Index, two towns in my electorate, Wodonga and Alexandra, are among the 10 most stressed towns in Victoria for renters. At the same time, we know the government is set to miss its target of 1.2 million new homes by 2029 by at least 20 per cent. Unfortunately, this crisis is not going to be over for a long while yet.

Last week was National Homelessness Week, and I met with the Ovens Murray and Goulburn Homelessness Network, who represent organisations across north-east Victoria, including Beyond Housing. In the last year alone, Beyond Housing has worked with almost 3,000 people in the region experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. More than 1,200 of these people have never reached out before. That means more people than ever are sleeping rough in parks, in cars or along riverbanks or are couch surfing in overcrowded or, indeed, unsafe homes.

While we may not garner the same attention as the major cities, we are absolutely experiencing the housing crisis in regional, rural and remote Australia. Fundamentally, we need more homes—more well-located homes close to where people study and work. We need more medium-density housing in regional Australia to support the tens of thousands of new jobs that will be created in coming years in health care, in education and in the energy transition. We need governments to build more social and affordable community housing to support those who are doing it the toughest.

But, while the government has announced a series of measures aimed at addressing the housing crisis, I am unconvinced that these measures will go anywhere near what we need to address the crisis in regional and rural Australia. The Commonwealth must fund projects that unlock new housing supply specifically in regional Australia. Too often it's the lack of sewerage and utilities holding back new homes. It's not glamorous, but it's expensive. More Commonwealth support is desperately needed.

That's why I welcome the government's \$1.5 billion Housing Support Program, which will fund upgrades to utilities, roads and community infrastructure and projects that assist with planning capacity. This program, though, was created after I made the case strongly to the Prime Minister for exactly this sort of initiative, and I'm pleased two areas in my electorate will benefit under the funding announced last month. The City of Wodonga received \$410,000 for the Wodonga Growth Strategy, and Murrindindi shire received \$968,000 to open up land for new housing in the town of Alexandra. But this program is too small, and the design of these programs puts regional councils at a disadvantage. I'm concerned that too little of this funding will make its way into the regions.

That's why I've proposed the regional housing infrastructure fund. Modelling shows that the regions alone require \$2 billion to fund the infrastructure required to meet our National Housing Accord targets, yet we've only got a \$1.5 billion program for the whole nation. With \$1 billion of this funding being given to the state and territory governments to fund their own housing priorities, we have no guarantees this funding will be shared fairly between regional areas and the cities. Regional communities deserve and expect better, and they want a commitment to fair federal funding when it comes to fixing the housing crisis.

Thirty per cent of Australians live in the regions, and that's why I've consistently called for 30 per cent of housing funding to be quarantined for regional, rural and remote Australia. I introduced my unlocking regional housing bill to do exactly this—to guarantee a fair share of funding for towns like Benalla, Wodonga, Wangaratta and so many like them. The government didn't allow debate on this bill, but I will keep pushing.

We're more than two years into the 47th Parliament, and the housing crisis is getting worse. The cost of mortgages is crippling for so many families, homelessness is at levels we have not seen in my lifetime and young people don't think they will ever own a home. Solving this crisis won't be easy. I recognise the government's significant investment in tackling the problem, but, if we don't ensure that a fair share of this funding makes its way to regional Australia, we will see these communities held back a generation. We'll see the housing divide widen between the cities and the bush, and I can't accept this. *(Time expired)*

**The SPEAKER:** Is the motion seconded?

**Ms Sharkie:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:08):** I thank the member for Indi for bringing this motion forward and acknowledge her long-serving commitment to the people of regional Australia. She talked about 30 per cent of Australians being in the bush. As Queenslanders, we actually have 50 per cent living outside that south-east corner. So we take it very seriously. That's why Labor still believes in the Australian dream of owning your own home. Labor understands the importance of having a safe and stable place to call home—either owned, being paid off or with an affordable rate. Labor understands that Australians need to feel their homes are secure during a turbulent economic time without sacrificing their long-term financial security.

That's why the Albanese Labor government has made substantial investments in fixing the housing mess that was left behind after a decade of neglect by the opposition. We still see the LNP housing policy. It's much the same. Summed up in three words: let it rip. That's it. Labor's goal is different. It's building 1.2 million homes by the end of the decade.

*An opposition member interjecting—*

**Mr PERRETT:** Sorry; was that an apology you wanted to make to the parliament for your shameful neglect of housing? No. You are still not able to apologise for that neglect.

It's an ambitious goal, but we are training the workforce to get the job done. We're funding more apprenticeships. We're providing fee-free TAFE places in the construction industry and training tradies. We're cutting red tape so construction projects can get moving and we're developing the infrastructure needed for new developments and social housing such as roads, sewerage, energy and water connections needed to facilitate new developments.

As per the Constitution, the Labor government is working in partnership with the states and territories. The Help to Buy scheme is an innovative policy that will give 40,000 Australians on low and middle incomes the opportunity to purchase that dream home. The scheme will support the purchase and construction of new and existing homes, including houses, house-and-land packages, townhouses and apartments. The scheme assists participants with overcoming what can seem to be insurmountable problems, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney. If you are renting and saving for a deposit and servicing a mortgage, that is a big challenge. Under Help to Buy, participants will have a smaller deposit, small home loan and lower mortgage repayments. Help to Buy will turn the dreams of homeownership into reality for 40,000 Australians. It will also provide long-term financial relief and security. Thankfully, all the state and territory leaders have committed to passing it.

Our housing reforms also include the Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee, which is part of the expanded Home Guarantee Scheme. It has already helped more than 110,000 people into homeownership in two years—double the number of people supported under the former LNP government. Let's talk a bit more about the Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee. It is a targeted initiative to support eligible homebuyers with getting into their own homes more quickly. There will be 10,000 places available in the scheme from 1 July this year through to the end of June 2025. Administered by Housing Australia, it stands as guarantor for part of the homebuyer's loan from a participating lender. What does this mean for the first-home buyer? It means assistance with purchasing their first home with as little as a five per cent deposit and with no need for mortgage insurance. There is also a great deal of flexibility for prospective buyers. They can select from an existing house, a town house or apartment, a house-and-land package, land and a separate contract to build a house or even an off-the-plan apartment or townhouse. This scheme is directly supporting hardworking regional Australians into their own homes.

The LNP take the bush for granted, whilst the Albanese government highly values regional Australia. These communities are central to our plan for a prosperous and resilient future. We are committed to boosting jobs, infrastructure and skills that will enhance our thriving regional communities. The Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee is just another example of the multifaceted approach that Labor is taking to solving this horrific housing crisis.

The Housing Australia Future Fund is the single biggest investment in social and affordable housing in more than a decade. We've negotiated a \$9.3 billion five-year national agreement on social housing and homelessness with the states and territories to reduce homelessness, to provide crisis support and to build and repair social housing. As part of this, we've doubled Commonwealth homelessness funding to \$400 million every year. The Albanese government's ambitious housing reform agenda has made significant progress in solving the housing challenges that were left to us. This is despite the opposition and the Greens political party blocking housing initiatives that would make a positive impact in communities around the country. That's why this government will keep working hard to fix the housing crisis and to get more Australians into their own homes.

**Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (10:13):** I commend the member for Indi for again bringing the need for affordable and well-located housing in the regions as well as rural and remote Australia to the parliament. This is not the first time the member for Indi or I have spoken on this issue. On several occasions in the last year, I relayed the concerns of my electorate regarding housing affordability and availability. Put simply, we are in the middle of the housing crisis and everybody knows that. That's not an issue that relates just to the suburbs in inner metropolitan areas; it's very much felt in regional Australia. But it is a crisis of our own making.

One of the most fundamental principles in economics is supply and demand. Even people who don't have an economic qualification understand that. I don't think the government is strongly addressing that we've had record migration levels; that, in 2023, net overseas migration contributed to a net 518,000 people; and that, between 2007 and 2020, average net migration was sitting around 226,000 people. We now have double the long-term average with respect to net migration, which is naturally putting huge pressure on housing.



To be very clear, I'm not opposed to migration, but it must be done within the capacity of our country to absorb the net increase. A housing shortage unequivocally demonstrates that we do not have sufficient capacity to house our current population, let alone an ever-increasing population. And while the impact of this is being experienced in the cities, it is very much being experienced in the regions. We are being crippled by housing shortages in the region. I must say that I think much of the housing policy and the conversations in this place, particularly by the government, have been city centric, and they have not been thinking about the housing challenges in the region.

The *Guardian* recently estimated that 190,000 households are waiting for social housing. The result of this demand-supply imbalance is what we would expect—fewer houses available with higher housing prices and higher rents. I have generational families in Mayo being priced out of the market in the regions where they grew up, where their parents grew up and where their grandparents grew up. Until recently, these family members had a realistic expectation that they, too, would one day be able to own a home in the region, but not anymore.

More concerningly, this trend is worsening. The Domain June 2024 rental report showed a quarter-on-quarter increase of 0.8 per cent for houses and 4.3 per cent for units in Adelaide. The regions fared much worse. The report showed a year-on-year increase of 10.8 per cent and a staggering 52.7 per cent increase over the last five years in Mount Barker, in my electorate. Similarly, another regional centre in my electorate, Victor Harbor, has experienced a rental increase of over 50 per cent over the last five years. The LGA of Alexandrina, encompassing the Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island, has experienced a 20 per cent annual increase in rent and a five-year increase to 76.5 per cent. These figures are absurd, and they're forcing people into poverty.

This motion draws attention to the obvious omission in the government's response to housing—that is, none of the policies or initiatives specifically address or accommodate the housing crisis that is felt in the regions. I very much support the member for Indi's call on the government to commit to providing 30 per cent of all housing funding to regional, rural and remote Australia, which is proportionate with those of us who live there, and the establishment of a dedicated regional housing infrastructure fund. We have a new minister. I hope the new minister listens to this and thinks about the regions when thinking about housing. We need to change the city-centric policy approach and have a sensible discussion about migration intake. Our regions matter, and they are hurting. Our regions deserve a representative share of government investment.

**Ms ROBERTS** (Pearce) (10:18): Today I rise to speak about an issue that is central to the wellbeing of our communities: affordable housing in regional, remote and rural Australia. This is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about ensuring that every Australian, regardless of where they live, has access to the security and stability that a home provides. It is about creating opportunities, fostering wellbeing and strengthening the fabric of our society.

Housing affordability is a challenge that resonates across the nation but is particularly acute in our regional, remote and rural areas. These communities are the backbone of our nation, contributing significantly to our economy, our culture and our way of life. Yet, despite their importance, these areas often face unique challenges that can make accessing affordable housing a significant hurdle. Geographic isolation, limited infrastructure and fluctuating local economies are just a few of the obstacles that can make finding a secure and affordable home more difficult in these regions.

Today I am pleased to share with you some key initiatives that the Australian government has put in place to address these challenges and improve access to affordable housing in these regions. These initiatives are part of a broader strategy aimed at ensuring that all Australians, regardless of where they live, can find a place to call home. One of the cornerstone initiatives is the Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee, the RFHBG, designed to help eligible homebuyers purchase a home sooner. Administered by Housing Australia on behalf of the federal government, the RFHBG allows eligible first-time homeowners in regional areas to purchase a home with as little as a five per cent deposit without the burden of lenders mortgage insurance. This initiative is about giving young Australians and families in our regions a fair go, helping them overcome the financial hurdles that often stand in the way of homeownership.

Since the election of the Albanese Labor government, more than 100,000 people have been helped into homeownership with the Home Guarantee Scheme, including over 13,000 single women and more than 15,800 through the Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee. We are particularly proud that this scheme has been expanded to allow friends, siblings and other family members to apply jointly under these guarantees. This expansion reflects our understanding that homeownership can be a communal goal and recognises the diverse ways in which Australians support each other.

But homeownership is just one part of the equation. The government is also acutely aware of the need to increase the supply of affordable housing more broadly, particularly in regional, remote and rural areas. This is where our Housing Australia Future Fund, the HAFF, comes into play. It is a commitment to boosting a supply of affordable housing across the country. Over the next five years, the HAFF will deliver 30,000 new social and affordable homes,

with a significant portion of these homes targeted for regional, remote and rural areas. These homes are not just numbers on a page; they represent a commitment to the wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens. A portion of these homes will be specifically allocated for women and children fleeing domestic violence, veterans at risk of homelessness, and the maintenance and improvement of housing in remote Indigenous communities. We recognise that these groups face unique challenges, and we are committed to providing them with the safe, secure housing that they need.

In addition to increasing housing supply, the government has also introduced the Help to Buy shared-equity scheme, a pivotal program aimed at low- and middle-income Australians. This scheme provides a government equity contribution of up to 40 per cent for new homes and up to 30 per cent for existing homes. In regional and remote areas, where incomes may be lower and housing costs may be higher relative to these incomes, this scheme is helping more people get a foot in the door, quite literally, of their own home.

This government is also taking steps to ensure that our existing social housing stock is well maintained and expanded when needed. For example, in 2024-25, Western Australia will receive \$190.2 million from the Commonwealth under the NASHH, which will support the delivery and maintenance of approximately 1,400 public housing dwellings in my electorate of Pearce alone. This comprehensive approach is essential to ensuring that no-one is left behind.

As we move forward, it is important to remember that these initiatives are part of a broader long-term strategy. We know that the housing challenges we face didn't happen overnight. The Albanese Labor government is committed to working closely with the states and territories, local governments, community organisations and the private sector to deliver better housing outcomes.

**The SPEAKER:** The time allocated for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### **Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games**

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Chief Government Whip) (10:23): I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the efforts of Australia's Olympic Team at the 2024 Olympic Games; and
- (2) wishes the best of luck to the Australian Paralympic Team competing in the 2024 Paralympics between 28 August and 8 September 2024.

Like a lot of Australians, we've been up late and up early to watch the Paris Olympics across the last two weeks, and what a show we have seen! From archery to wrestling, we have watched the world's greatest sportspeople compete on what must be said was a magnificent stage in Paris and across France. We saw 14 days of human endeavour, pitching muscle, intellect, drive and teamwork to go higher, stronger and faster. And it would be remiss of me not to say out loud that on this side of the House we've had the member for Hunter's journey to inspire us into the Olympics—our very own Olympian, who also shared with us the trials and tribulations of trying to qualify to be one of those athletes to represent their country on the world's biggest stage.

It has been quite a fortnight, led by Australia, competing with the best in the world. And what an Olympics we have had: 18 gold, 19 silver, 16 bronze—53 medals in all, the best ever in our 'away' Olympics; it is extraordinary. Those medals were won across 14 sports. Whether in the pool, on the track, on the field, on the court, on the pitch, on the floor, in the velodrome, in the River Seine, in the streets of Paris, at the Marseille marina or at the Nautical Stadium, our Australians have done us incredibly proud. They've pitched themselves against the best in the world and done their country very proud—their families and themselves.

This year we sent 460 athletes to the Olympic Games: 256 females and 204 males, a 55.6 per cent female team. I know many members on this side of the House want to celebrate that. Our youngest athlete, Aria Trew, in the skateboarding, is 14, winning a gold medal in the park. And our eldest, Shane Rose, in the equestrian events, is 51. There were Australians competing at their fifth Olympics: Eddie Ockenden, Edwina Tops-Alexander, Joe Ingles, Patty Mills, Lauren Jackson and Melissa Wu, competing at the top of their game across five Olympics. What an extraordinary achievement.

And of course we in this country need to pay tribute to all those competitors, not just those who brought us home those beautiful coloured medals, particularly the gold ones, but all our athletes. I was up late last night watching the Opals, because those who know me well know team sports are where my passion runs deepest. To watch our Opals win the first medal since 2012 and bring home that bronze was extraordinary—to see Ezi Magbegor play the most magnificent game of basketball on the world stage. We had many, many heroes in Paris.

To finish this morning, the closing ceremony, with Jessica Fox elected to the IOC Athletes' Commission, was also an extraordinary thing to see. To see our Jessica, the most successful Australian Olympian ever, elected to represent athletes is also extraordinary.

At the 1924 Paris Olympics, Australia sent 34 athletes. They were all men. This year we sent, as I said, 460 athletes, and we competed across an enormous number of sports. So there are many things to celebrate, but for me some of the special moments worth mentioning were: Nina Kennedy winning gold in the pole vault; Mollie O'Callaghan winning three gold, one silver and one bronze in the pool—extraordinary; and Arisa Trew, who I mentioned. But Saya's gold in the BMX: what a moment for that young lady and a moment for her family, not to mention the Fox sisters and the Stingers. Who could miss the Stingers in the women's water polo? What troopers they are, bringing home the silver after an extraordinary Olympics. The women in the pool, the women on the track and the women in the field: an extraordinary performance by the Australian women, an extraordinary performance by the Australian team.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander):** Is the motion seconded?

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

**Mr VIOLI (Casey) (10:29):** The Casey electorate has been well represented at the Paris Olympics: Harry Garside in boxing, Simon Clarke in cycling, Tayleb Willis in athletics, Mitch Iles in shooting and Kelland O'Brien in the men's track pursuit cycling team. They're all incredible athletes, and I've been following their journey on social media and have seen how dedicated and hardworking they all are. It was a proud moment on 8 August when our community woke to the news that Lilydale High School and Mooroolbark East Primary School alumnus Kelland O'Brien had won gold in the men's track cycling pursuit against Great Britain. Not only are they gold medallists but the Australian team that Kelland is a part of also broke the world record time in Paris—such an amazing achievement for our nation.

It is crucial that we don't just celebrate the gold. There is much to be celebrated in the years and years of dedication that these athletes and their families have endured to get themselves on the world stage. Our community is so proud of fellow Lilydale High School alumni Harry Garside and his journey to the Olympics. Harry began his boxing journey at Lilydale youth club, and I commend him for opening up about the emotions of falling short of his dream in Paris. You made our nation and your home town proud, and I can't wait to see what is next for you, Harry.

Simon Clarke grew up in the Hills, attending Selby Primary School and Billanook College. He credits our hills as the cycling playground that ushered in his development in the early days. All that practice came in handy as Simon competed in the longest race in Olympic history in Paris. In 2016, Simon was on the Australian team for Rio and was the only Australian to finish the race.

Mitch Iles represented Australia for shooting, having trained at the Melbourne Gun Club in Yering. I recently had the opportunity to fire at clay targets, and I completely understand Mitch's love for this sport. It's very addictive. Mitch became Australia's third youngest Olympic shooter in Rio. Congratulations, Mitch, on representing Australia, Yering and the Melbourne Gun Club in Paris.

Last, but certainly not least, Tayleb Willis was our youngest local Olympian at just 21 years of age. He proved his talent and skills against some of the world's best athletes, with a time of 13.63 seconds in his first race. Tayleb was a regular recipient of the local sports champion grant throughout his childhood as he made his way through national championships. It is amazing to see him now representing Australia at such a young age. It was a proud moment for his family, for our community and for his high school, Mooroolbark College.

Congratulations Kelland, Harry, Simon, Mitch and Tayleb for representing Australia and our community on the world stage. We are so proud of your achievements in Paris.

I am also looking forward to the Paralympics later this month, where Healesville local Bridget Murphy will be competing in the para-equestrian dressage. Her whole team is based in the Yarra Valley, and we're looking forward to cheering them on and other locals as more teams and athletes are announced.

While these Olympics have been significant for our success, it is also a significant moment for the families and parents that have sacrificed so much for their children. What we see in Paris is the platform for the next Olympics as young people are inspired by the athletes and everything that they have given to their country.

I was lucky enough last weekend to be at the Lilydale Swim club for their presentation. I support the club and sponsor their club championships. There are some young athletes, including Kynon, who we lost count but think broke 20 club records in the last 12 months. I know he is aiming for the Olympics in four years time. In talking to his mother, you can see the love she has for Kynon but also the sacrifices she is already making so he can chase his dream of the Olympics. Seven days a week he is training in the gym and the pool and working on his nutrition. It's a big financial burden and time burden on his family. But when you talk to his mum you see the pride that she has

in him chasing his dream. We know behind every athlete is a family and a community that are giving so much so they can live their dreams.

Congratulations to every Australian who competed at the Olympics. You represented our country with such pride. We are proud of you. Best of luck to the next generation who are already thinking about four years time.

**Mr REPACHOLI** (Hunter) (10:34): Sport unites us. It brings together families, friends and entire communities. Sport connects our nation as a whole and, at the recent Paris Olympics, it brought the entire world together. This is the remarkable power of sport. In Australia, the Olympics are so powerful they've kept us awake late into the night and had us getting up in the early hours of the morning because we love it. Sport is part of our identity. It is deeply woven into the fabric of our nation. The Olympics and Paralympics hold a special place in our hearts because they only come around once every four years. Very few moments unite this country more than when we rally behind our athletes competing in the green and gold. I've watched people right around Australia gather around their TVs and watch on their phones, all to witness our champions showcase what they're capable of on the world stage.

Congratulations to Australia's 2024 Olympic team. You've made us proud. With 18 gold medals, 19 silver medals and 16 bronze medals, it's been our most successful games ever. Supporting our athletes is a significant part of what it means to be an Australian. That support is well deserved because what our athletes achieve is hard earned. From a young age they dedicate their lives to their sport, training year after year and often sacrificing time with family and friends. These sacrifices are immense, but, for all athletes, there is no prouder moment than when they are representing Australia. When you're at the Olympics, wearing the green and gold with the backing of this great country, the moment is bigger than anything and all those sacrifices become worthwhile. I know this feeling very well because I've been lucky enough to compete in five Olympic Games. It should have been six, but unfortunately 2024 just wasn't my year. I gave it my best and missed out by one point. Even though I didn't make the team this year, I know what it means to compete at the highest level, supported by your teammates and the entire nation. It's the proudest moment of all.

We must not underestimate the achievements of the Australian Olympic team. We punch well above our weight in the world of sport—way, way above it. At the Olympics, we may be a relatively small country by population, but you wouldn't know it by looking at our medal tally. A few of the highlights for me included watching my good friend Penny Smith win a bronze medal in the women's trap shooting at Chateauroux. Congratulations, Penny; you're an absolute superstar. There was Kaylee McKeown's performance in the pool. Another highlight was seeing a normal sized athlete like Matt Denny win an Olympic bronze medal in the discus. And who didn't shed a tear when seeing Saya Sakakibara win the gold medal in the women's BMX. The story of her and her brother is what Olympic dreams are made of. Plus, her interview after winning gold was a pearler. Anyone who can drop the f-bomb five times in an interview gets my full respect!

Another highlight is the story of Mijain Lopez Nunez. He's not an Australian athlete, but his story is well worth telling. Representing Cuba, Mijain made Olympic Games history by becoming the first athlete in any sport to win gold in the same event at five consecutive Olympic Games, in the Greco-Roman wrestling men's 130-kilogram category. That is absolutely amazing. And let's not forget the Hunter electorate athletes who gave their all in Paris. Genevieve Janse van Rensburg from Singleton powered through the modern pentathlon to finish 13th, and Wallsend's Jacqueline Nichele finished 10th in the women's 71-kilogram weightlifting, with a total of 209 kilograms.

There's more inspiration to come, as another group of athletes are about to begin their journey: our Australian Paralympic team. I wish them all the best of luck as they compete in the 2024 Paralympics beginning on 28 August. Once again we will be united and inspired. You will do us all proud.

I've spoken to many up-and-coming athletes from the Hunter, and I know this Olympics was an exciting moment for them, with the Paralympics set to inspire them even further. These events invigorate athletes not just across Australia but across the world. Congratulations to all our Olympic athletes and best of luck to our Paralympic athletes. Thank you to the athletes, their coaches, their support staff, their families, their friends and their workplaces. I'd like to give another mention to the Opals. Congratulations on winning the bronze yesterday. It's been 12 years since they did that. Lauren Jackson, you're the GOAT. You're the absolute best. Congratulations on your achievements throughout your career and enjoy your retirement. Cheers.

**Ms STEGGALL** (Warringah) (10:39): It is such a great honour to be able to be in this space to congratulate the outstanding success of our elite sportspeople who competed at these 2024 Paris Olympics. It is the most successful medal tally ever, but more importantly I think it's the spirit that's shining through from this team. I want to give huge congratulations to Anna Meares for her outstanding leadership, previously as an athlete and now as the chef de mission for this incredible team. We've seen some truly astonishing performances in swimming, road cycling,

canoe slalom, equestrian, shooting, athletics, rowing, sailing, tennis and so many more. All the competitors at this year's games should be so proud.

But what I really want to talk about is that it is something truly special to be an Olympian. It's often a dream formed at a really young age by these athletes. They dare to dream, and they dare to set their sights on something that might seem so incredibly impossible. Then these athletes dedicate years and years to training and to travel. They sacrifice what many others take for granted. Their families and friends prioritise their needs. It is incredibly hard and gruelling.

Unfortunately, society sometimes focuses too much on the cream on top, the medals. It is an incredible privilege. It is a tiny percentage that make it to the metal dais. Too often, we focus on that, and we don't focus on the heroism of sport, which is often happening far away from the limelight. The amazing heroism of sport is often in the hard moments. It's when the dreams are shattered. It's when you pull a hammy. It's when you fall or it's that slight bit of luck when things just didn't go your way. It's in those hard moments, when those dreams are shattered, that athletes have to find the strength, the dedication and the perseverance to come back and to come back stronger, faster and harder. They actually put in that extra training towards their goals.

So my message is: huge congratulations to everyone who has had their dreams of becoming an Olympian come true and then has had that extra cream—maybe being a medallist—on top. But my message to Olympians also is: all those skills you have worked so hard for, over so many years, are incredible assets to you. As an Olympian myself, having been to four Olympics as an athlete and a fifth one as an administrator for the Court of Arbitration for Sport, I know so well how much those skills you develop as athletes will serve you well in life—your dedication and your ability to train, to focus, to work hard and to take criticisms, because there are always plenty from the outside world. There are always plenty of armchair critics looking at performances, but it's only you who truly know what you've put into it.

We also know sport brings us together. I've looked in wonder at the refugee team that has performed at the Paris Olympics. It's been some years now that they've been going to the Olympics, and I congratulate Cindy Ngamba, who won a medal in boxing—the first ever medal for the refugee team. It is hard to imagine how it would feel to be displaced from your country but still have that opportunity to bring that plight to light.

From an Australian perspective, it's been incredible to watch the Australian women really do us proud. As a female ex-athlete, I have to take some note of that, because women have had to fight hard for that equal opportunity to participate in sport and to be recognised in sport. It's still not there when it comes to fully equal funding and recognition in terms of pay, for example, because training and juggling your commitments is a full-time job, and it's incredibly hard. We've now seen female athletes competing for over 100 years at Olympic events. If you go back to the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, we had Sarah 'Fanny' Durack and Mina Whaley compete in the 100-metre freestyle. They finished in first and second place respectively, and they were inspired to do so in protest of the New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association's assertion at the time that women should not compete in competitions when men were present. We've certainly come a long way, but so much more is needed.

I must also do a shout-out to Warringah constituents: Rowena Meredith competing in rowing; Sariah Paki and Sharni Smale competing in rugby sevens; Shaun Connor competing in sailing; Clare Wheeler competing in football; and Sienna Green, Bronte Halligan, Sienna Hearn and Tilly Kearns competing in the water polo—congratulations on such an exciting silver medal.

I have a great love for the Olympics. Please don't forget the Winter Olympians. They do Australians proud as well, on the winter stage.

**Ms ROBERTS** (Pearce) (10:44): Today I rise to speak on this extraordinary achievement and to honour the dedication, the perseverance and the triumphs of the Australian athletes who have made us all proud in the 2024 Olympics. This has been the most successful games in Australian history and has once again showcased the spirit of cooperation, unity and the sheer will to excel.

First and foremost, let us extend our heartfelt congratulations to every Australian Olympian who competed in these games. Your hard work, discipline, and unwavering commitment have brought glory to our nation and inspired millions. Each one of you has demonstrated what it means to pursue excellence, to overcome obstacles and to represent your country with honour. This year's Olympics has been especially remarkable, from the electrifying atmosphere in the stadiums to the breathtaking performances on the fields and tracks, in watercourses and on courts. We have witnessed moments that will be etched in our memories forever. Our athletes not only have competed but have set new benchmarks, broken records and redefined what is possible. We celebrate some of the standout achievements: 18 gold, 19 silver and 16 bronze, ranking us fourth in the world.

My personal congratulations must go to our very own Pearce resident, Charlie Senior, who achieved bronze in boxing. Well done, Charlie. We are very, very proud of you. The resilience and prowess shown by our swimmers,

who brought home a spectacular haul of medals, is awe-inspiring. Our track and field athletes, with their extraordinary speed and strength, have set new records and captivated the world with their performances. And who can forget the outstanding feats in cycling, rowing, skateboarding and gymnastics, where our athletes have truly shone on the global stage.

I'd also like to take a moment and recognise the wonderful women in our Olympic team. We have come a long way since the first modern Olympics in 1896, where women weren't allowed to compete. Today our Australian women Olympians have accrued a fantastic medal tally, sitting third on the women's medal tally and ninth on the overall medal tally—an absolutely incredible feat.

Behind every medal, every victory and every personal best there is a story of relentless effort, countless hours of training and unwavering support. We must acknowledge the coaches, trainers, support staff and families who have been the pillars of strength for our athletes. Your dedication and encouragement has been instrumental in their success. This celebration is not just about medals and the records but also about the values that sports instil in us: teamwork, perseverance, integrity and respect. Our athletes have embodied these values, set an example for the younger generation and for all of us. They have shown that, with determination and hard work, dreams can indeed become a reality.

The 2024 Olympics have also highlighted the importance of unity in sportsmanship. In a world often divided by differences, sport has the unique power to bring people together to foster understanding and friendship. Our athletes have not only competed fiercely but also formed friendships with competitors from all around the world. The spirit of unity and mutual respect is something that we can all be proud of. As we celebrate these incredible achievements, let us look into the future with optimism and hope. The success of our athletes serves as a reminder of what we can achieve when we come together as a nation. It inspires us to continue supporting and nurturing the talent of our future Olympians, to invest in sports at all levels and to promote a healthy and active lifestyle for all Australians.

Speaking of investing in sports, the Albanese Labor government has invested almost \$500 million over the next two years—the largest Olympic and Paralympic sport investment ever—as we head towards Los Angeles in 2028. This doubles the funding going towards Paralympic sport and is on top of our \$200 million Play Our Way fund for women's and girls' sports infrastructure.

In closing I would like to express my deepest gratitude and admiration to all our Olympians. You have made history. You have made us all immensely proud. Your legacy will inspire generations to come, reminding us all that greatness is within our reach if we dare to dream and work hard. I'm looking forward to the Paralympics, which will start on 28 August. I send all the athletes, their families and coaches all the very best, and I wish you strength, determination and success in the upcoming competition. Thank you once again. Congratulations to team Australia for an unforgettable Olympic performance. Let us continue to celebrate this incredible achievement and look forward to even greater successes in the future.

**Mr KENNEDY** (Cook) (10:49): What a historic Olympics for Australia, with a record 18 gold medals. It's fantastic to watch Australia punch above its weight, but it's also fantastic to watch my electorate of Cook punch above its weight. Cook accounts for just 0.4 per cent of Australia's population but counts for almost three per cent of Australia's Olympic athletes. That's a sixfold increase. I'd like to recognise the 12 athletes and two coaches who hail from my home electorate of Cook.

Firstly, there is the Stingers water polo team, who picked up a stunning silver medal. I was in a packed Cronulla RSL on Saturday night to watch the Stingers's gold medal match. There was yelling, screaming, a few drinks and a lot of local pride. I'd like to recognise two players and their coach. The first one is Danijela Jackovich. She is originally from Chicago and a talented basketballer and biomedical engineer who now calls Cronulla home. She's a scorer for the Cronulla Sharks and was competing in her first Olympics. Congratulations, Dani. Keesja Gofers is a Sydney born water polo player who lives in Dolls Point and who is competing in her third Olympics. She also won silver and bronze medals in the World Aquatics Championships. Congrats, Keesja. Lastly, Australia's head coach and Cronulla Sharks stalwart is Rebecca 'Bec' Rippon. She did an amazing job coaching the girls and is a former bronze medal winner herself.

Next is the men's water polo team, the Aussie Sharks, who made it to the quarter finals and lost a nailbiting penalty shootout to the US. I'd like to recognise five athletes who made their Olympic debut and their coach. Angus Lambie was born and raised in the Sutherland shire and started water polo at age 11. A winner of multiple AWPL titles, Angus played in his first major international tournament in 2023. Chaz Poot began his aquatic journey winning state gold medals in nippers and transitioned to water polo at 14. He debuted through the Sutherland Shire Water Polo Association. Matthew Byrnes, also from Cronulla, debuted internationally at 18 years old, representing Australia in the junior water polo water championships, and made his senior debut in 2022. Marcus Berehulak, who plays for the Cronulla Sharks as well, made his international debut in 2022. Born in Serbia, Milos Maksimovic

played water polo at just aged 10 and moved to Australia in 2022, joining the Cronulla Sharks. Vedran Cirkovic is our national coach for the men and has made Cronulla and Australia his home for the last seven years, after immigrating from Serbia.

Next I'd like to acknowledge the women's rugby sevens. Cook has the largest number of female rugby and rugby league players in New South Wales, and two exceptional players represented Australia in the rugby sevens. Tia 'Dolly' Hinds grew up in Sydney playing for Maroubra Magic. She participated in the Tokyo Olympics and won gold in the Birmingham Commonwealth Games. Bridget Clark plays for the Burraneer Women's Rugby Club. Bridget impressed in the 2024 Hong Kong sevens in the bronze medal match against France. These women performed extremely well, with a heartbreaking defeat to the USA in the bronze medal match, losing in the dying seconds. I know they may be disappointed, but they did Australia and Cook incredibly proud.

Next is the men's rugby sevens. Born in Caringbah, Nathan Lawson debuted for Australia in the Tokyo Olympics and has since become a key player for the national sevens team. Nathan was a huge contributor, scoring an amazing breakaway 50-metre try in the bronze medal match. In the men's 1,500 metres, we had Olli Hoare, an exceptional and accomplished athlete, having won the 1,500-metre final at the Commonwealth Games. It certainly is worth shouting out Olli's mental health advocacy, which I find very inspiring. Olli finished fifth at the Olympics this year. Congratulations, Ollie.

In gymnastics we had Breanna Scott, inspiring to all gymnasts in Cook. Breanna was a key member of the Australian team that won silver in the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. In Paris the Australian gymnastics team finished in 10th place. The team missed out on qualifications for the finals by the smallest of margins—only 0.533 points. Well done to Breanna and the team.

To the 12 athletes and two coaches from Cook, we are incredibly proud of you and we look forward to welcoming you home very soon.

**Ms COKER** (Corangamite) (10:54): There has been so much to celebrate at these Olympics—our most successful Olympics in history. So many young Australian Olympic athletes have reached the unreachable in the past fortnight. Look at Arisa Trew, who at just 14 rode her way to history in the skateboard park final in Paris. Arisa's gold medal makes her the youngest ever medallist by 94 days, taking the mantle from Aussie swimmer Sandra Morgan for her outstanding performance in the 4x100-metre freestyle relay way back in 1956. Arisa is also the youngest medallist so far to compete in any event in Paris.

In my own electorate of Corangamite there were four athletes who took it to the world stage. They include high jumper Joel Baden, from Clifton Springs, who worked hard to make this year's team. He debuted at the Rio Olympics in 2016 and, after missing selection for Tokyo, immediately went to work. His training paid off, and he went on to clear the 2.33 metre mark, moving him to No. 3 all-time in Australian history and booking his ticket to Paris. Before heading to Paris, Joel said his journey had been a mixed bag, filled with moments of extreme frustration and disappointment and of incredible highs and elation felt when you tap into your potential and hit a personal best.

But some of the sweetest moments at these Olympic Games were not about outright victory. Torquay's Kyra Cooney-Cross, the Matildas' star midfielder, showed her mettle in an 11-goal thriller in Nice. Rower Ria Thompson, from Point Lonsdale, competed strongly in the women's quad sculls. Trap shooter and local superstar Catherine Skinner showed the world her precision under pressure. Moments like these foster a new generation of hope—a generation that understands it is not just about winning; it's the taking part that counts. The essential thing in sport and life is the lessons learnt of resilience, determination, integrity and self-discipline—not just for yourself but for your team.

I'm proud to be part of the Albanese government, who continue to do our part to inspire new sporting champions by investing in facilities to support athletes of all abilities. Our sportspeople have given us many moments of national inspiration, and we must seize that opportunity for the next generation by investing in community sporting facilities, particularly in fast-growing regions like mine in the electorate of Corangamite in Victoria. My community and I have worked hard to achieve outstanding investment in sporting facilities. In Armstrong Creek, the budget reaffirmed this commitment with \$6 million for the Armstrong Creek indoor sports stadium to cater for basketball, netball and volleyball. On the Bellarine we have fought hard to secure the North Bellarine Aquatic Centre, which will soon feature an indoor pool. In Torquay we will soon see the Surf Coast Aquatic and Health Centre providing amazing facilities for local sportspeople. The Albanese government wants young people everywhere in Australia to have the facilities they need and the support they need to choose the sport they love, whether it be at community level or at elite level.

As our athletes strive for their dreams, I hope they continue to bring many more moments of national pride. Who will forget Molly O'Callaghan in the 200-metre freestyle, storming home to take gold over her training teammate Ariarne Titmus? It was one of the most anticipated all-Aussie showdowns of the Paris Olympics and it lived up to

the hype. The 20-year-old produced a brilliant final lap to power ahead of world-record-holder Titmus and complete a classic one-two finish—Australia's first at the Olympic Games since Ian Thorpe and Grant Hackett back in 2004. And we watched on as Molly invited Ariarne to share the podium. What mateship, what commitment and what good will.

I give a big thanks to the people of France for hosting these games. We look forward to watching the Paralympics over coming weeks—an incredible inspiration once again. And, from the bigger Australian family, may all Olympians feel our love, our support and our gratitude for all that they do.

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:59): Every four years the Olympics and the Paralympics roll around, and they're truly wonderful reminders of how great it is to be an Australian. What an outstanding effort by our Olympians over the past fortnight! A record haul of gold medals and a record haul of medals more generally. As our Olympians finish their campaign, our Paralympians get ready to make their mark on Paris over the next few weeks.

I'm looking forward to the Paralympic Games, and I had the pleasure recently of meeting with our Paralympic team, as the co-chair, with the member for Moreton, of the parliamentary friends of the Olympics, to celebrate their leaving for Paris. If we look at our Olympic athletes over the past couple of weeks—whether it's our Matildas, our Rugby Sevens, our swimmers, our athletes, our cyclists, our rowers, our sailors—right across the Olympic family, our athletes did us proud. Australia shone bright in the city of lights.

We take a bit of a look back at some of the fundamental principles of what the Olympics are all about. One of the great things about sport is it's a unifier. You see the camaraderie of athletes—Olympians—from right across the world at the Olympics, and it shows us what a great unifier sport is. That is what is so terrific—that we see people go out to achieve their best in representing their country. Not every athlete is successful at winning a medal. We frequently focus on the winners and those who receive our silver and gold medals, but I take this opportunity to acknowledge all of those other athletes that competed, didn't get a medal, yet went out there and tried their best, represented their country. In many cases, many of these people achieved personal bests, and what more could you ask in the environment of the greatest sporting event on the planet, that you go out and compete and represent your country and achieve a personal best? I think we should hold those and every other athlete at an equal level to those who have won medals, because they have done an extraordinary job to deliver on the biggest stage of achieving success.

I take the opportunity to mention a few of the athletes that have come from the great city of Logan. Logan swimmer Mollie O'Callaghan was the darling of the Paris Olympics, winning more gold medals than any Australian, and with her winning streak she now holds the equal second most gold medals of any Australian in Olympic history—five golds, tied with Ian Thorpe, one medal behind Emma McKeon. Throw in her silver medals and her bronze medals, and it was an outstanding swimming meet for Mollie.

We also look at Logan village mum Amanda Jennings, who will be competing in the Paralympics. She competed previously in 2016, receiving a silver medal in the paracanoe. Unfortunately, she has had health issues in the meantime, but now will represent Australia in para-archery at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

Logan City BMX Academy rider Izaac Kennedy made it to the final but sadly lost out on a medal, and I should also take the opportunity to mention Logan Martin and his efforts in the BMX. An adductor injury forced Meadowbrook all-rounder Ash Moloney to pull out of the decathlon after three events, but he'll certainly go back around again.

To all of these athletes and many more: congratulations on your tremendous success at the 2024 Olympics, and we look forward to the Paralympics starting in a couple of weeks time.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### **Cost of Living**

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:04): I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges that Australians are struggling through a cost of living crisis and are being failed by the Government;
- (2) notes that Australians have lost tens of thousands of dollars over the past two years through no fault of their own, with:
  - (a) workers paying 20 per cent more in personal income tax;
  - (b) real wages collapsing by nearly nine per cent;
  - (c) living standards falling by eight per cent;
  - (d) household savings reducing by almost ten per cent;



- (e) prices on goods rising by around ten per cent;
- (f) inflation remaining higher than any other developed nation; and
- (g) homeowners with a typical mortgage of \$750,000 being some \$35,000 a year worse off; and

(3) calls on the Government to address the economic pressures being placed on Australian families.

Australians are struggling through a cost-of-living crisis. Inflation has been far too high for far too long, and the prices on everything from energy to insurance to household goods have skyrocketed. Our standard of living, as a consequence, has declined for ordinary Australians. In the last two years, we've seen hardworking families being turned against by this government. They have turned to this government also to look to receive some relief or at least in some sense to ease the pain of the burden that they are facing. Yet we have seen three failed budgets and clear evidence that Labor has no plan to reverse the current economic pressures and restore Australia's standard of living.

Instead of addressing the issues that are the root cause of inflation, Labor have made budgetary decisions which will only cause inflation to worsen. We now lag behind other developed nations in reducing the inflation rate, and it is now almost entirely homegrown, as the Reserve Bank has noted. While other countries have begun to cut rates, Australia is the only G10 nation where core inflation has gone up compared with December last year. What we have seen from this government is the continued throwing of fuel on the fire by adding \$315 billion in extra spending in the recent budget—more than \$30,000 for every single household. These cost-of-living pressures do not seem to be letting up any time soon either. This persistent homegrown inflation is being coupled with the economy grinding to a halt, and it is clear that Australians are being failed by the Albanese Labor government. The situation is just continuing to get worse.

Let's look at some of the numbers. Prices have gone up by 10 per cent, and for working households prices are up by over 18 per cent; personal income tax collections have risen by some 20 per cent; real wages for employees have collapsed by nine per cent; living standards have collapsed by eight per cent; household savings are down by 10 per cent; and a family on a typical mortgage of \$750,000 is now around \$35,000 a year worse off. As I've said before in this place, you don't listen to what the government and the Labor members in this chamber say; you look at what they do, because nine times out of 10 they are two completely and utterly different things.

Households are paying the price for this, and so are small to medium businesses. We are seeing the impact of this cost-of-living crisis across my electorate of Forde. Households are going to great lengths to keep their heads above water. They are digging deep into their savings and sometimes taking on an extra job or two in order to cover the bills—so much so that a record number of Australians now have multiple jobs. I know from talking to the food banks and other community organisations that help people in need that they have never seen this many people coming through the door. Many are people who they have never, ever seen before, and they are coming from areas of my community which generally you would regard as well to do.

That is the bad news. What is the good news? That there is an alternative: what a coalition government would provide and what this country needs. We need to see governments manage their budgets in a responsible way, and that is exactly what a coalition government has demonstrated time and time again. We need to get back to a basic economic agenda that will get us back on track. We will make sure that government spending doesn't outpace economic growth, ease the administrative burden on business, and get out of their way by reducing red and green tape and, more importantly, by providing affordable, reliable energy so that we can put downward pressure on energy prices, because the cost of energy is in every single thing that we do. Australian households are paying a high price for Labor's bad economic policies, wrong priorities and poor decisions. The government must immediately address the economic issues being placed on Australian families.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander):** Is the motion seconded?

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

**Mr GEORGANAS (Adelaide) (11:10):** We all know that Australians are doing it tough, and they're doing it tough right now. I hear this, as I'm sure all of you do, when I go doorknocking, at street corner meetings and when I meet with constituents and move around the community. That is why this Albanese Labor government has put measures in place. That is why this Albanese Labor government's No. 1 priority is easing the cost-of-living pressures. There is no doubt that that is the focus of this government. You can see that through the actions that this Labor government has taken. That is why we have given every Australian taxpayer a tax cut and why we are giving every household \$300 off their energy bills.

We know there is more to do; there is no doubt. Inflation is still higher than we would like, but it's less than half its peak and significantly lower than what we inherited from the opposition. We've delivered the first back-to-back surplus in almost two decades, which the Reserve Bank governor has said is helping in the fight against inflation.

We're also on track for a larger-than-forecast surplus, which could be the largest back-to-back surplus on record. All of this helps the economy. It stabilises it and tries to push inflation lower.

If you look at the budget we delivered in May, it was specifically designed to help take pressure off Australians and make a real difference to people right across the country. That is why the Albanese Labor government is providing \$3.5 billion in energy bill relief to all Australian households and to one million eligible small businesses. More than 10 million households will receive a total rebate of \$300, and eligible small businesses will receive a rebate of \$325 on their electricity bills throughout the year.

This government's current energy bill relief plan has moderated electricity price increases. In the year to June quarter 2024, electricity prices rose six per cent. Electricity prices would have risen 14.6 per cent without our energy rebates. That is a really big difference. This budget recognises that households and small businesses are doing it extremely tough and remain under pressure. When you look at the budget, it extends and expands that relief. Wholesale electricity prices in the national electricity market have fallen eight per cent in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the same time last year, as more cheap renewable generation is rolled out to deliver the government's 82 per cent renewable energy target.

We know that, if the previous government actually had an energy policy over the last 10 years, there would have been more investment in renewables, more people taking active business within renewable energy and more sources to gain renewable energy, and, therefore, prices would have been much lower. It's as if the world only began in May 2022 for the opposition. They forget those 10 years and the things they put in place that brought us to the position we're in. We all know how well the opposition went with energy plans while they were in government.

The government will also cut \$3 billion in student debt, which is a real difference for students. The budget makes the HECS-HELP system fairer for three million Australians. This means that HECS debts will never grow faster than wages. This change will support 29,157 people with a HECS debt in my electorate of Adelaide.

The Albanese Labor government has invested almost \$4 billion to deliver cheaper medicines—this is all money in people's pockets—to ease pressure on household budgets governance by freezing the PBS co-payment and adding more medicines to the PBS. Residents in my electorate of Adelaide have already saved \$3,000,742 thanks to this government's commitment to delivering cheaper medicines. Pensioners and concession cardholders in Adelaide won't pay more than \$7.70 for their PBS medications for the next five years.

We are also investing \$1.9 million to help nearly one million Australian households with the cost of rent by increasing the maximum rates of Commonwealth rent assistance by 10 per cent. This will benefit 7,580 people in my electorate. *(Time expired)*

**Mr STEVENS** (Sturt) (11:15): I would like to start by thanking the member for Forde for bringing this important motion to the chamber for us to have the chance to debate it this morning. Unfortunately, for two years now, we have had this ongoing debate in this chamber. I have spoken on many similar motions about the cost of living, hoping that our government will take it seriously and do something tangible and concrete to address the terrible pressures that Australian families and small businesses are under. Whilst the previous speaker from the government has conceded that people are doing it tough out there and that, as he goes about his electorate, the No. 1 thing he hears back from his constituents is that they are doing it tough and that cost-of-living pressures are very serious, that message is clearly not being heard by the senior leaders in his own government.

We have a situation where for the average family, whether it is when meeting their mortgage payments or their rent, when they pay the grocery bills or when they open a letter from a utilities company, unfortunately the common feeling is: 'How am going to meet these costs? How am I going to pay this bill? What sacrifices do we have to make in our family budget to make it stack up? The long weekend holiday at the caravan park is off now because it just doesn't fit within the family budget like it used to because all of these other costs are going up so dramatically.'

We have seen in the last week a very concerning development where there's tension and criticism between our independent Reserve Bank and the Treasurer and the government because that independent RBA are starting to be a little more clear with the government about the sorts of challenges that they are dealing with alone when it comes to pressures in our economy and inflation in our economy and the fact that this government is leaving the Reserve Bank to do all the heavy lifting. That is a nightmare for the average Australian because what can the Reserve Bank do? Regrettably, they have one lever and it is the cost of money in our economy. It's increasing the cash rate and therefore interest rates commensurately throughout the economy. No-one in this chamber, I expect, is aware of any family that's saying they can possibly afford to bear any further increases in interest rates. But the minutes of the RBA meeting just last week indicate that at that meeting they very seriously considered whether they should increase the cash rate further and have sent a very clear message that, regrettably, this government is not heeding that they might have to increase interest rates even more. That is the last thing that Australian families can possibly bear right now. They need interest rates to come down. The RBA can't do that if there is such an imbalance between monetary

policy and fiscal policy in our country right now. What the RBA need is for the government to listen to them. They are independent. They are not political. They are not into game playing or messaging through the media. They are clearly, though, trying to send a message to this government that this government's policies are not supporting what the RBA is trying to do, which is fight inflation.

We have got inflation running so hot. When you compare other similar economies around the world to ours, we are running at the highest. There are a lot of pressures, unfortunately, that only indicate that pressure is upwards on inflation. This is a government that went to the last election saying it was going to ease the cost of living. Nothing but the opposite has occurred. They said that they were going to reduce electricity prices by \$275. I challenge anyone to report back from a constituent that's told them that, since Labor came to power, their bill has fallen by \$275. Even with a blatant blunt-force \$300 energy reduction rebate on everyone's bill, no-one is anywhere near that \$275 reduction. Mortgages are up dramatically. Rents are up dramatically. Average household costs, particularly for groceries, are up dramatically. Power bills and other utilities are up, up, up under this government. This is the complete opposite of what they said they would do for the Australian people at the last election.

So I thank the member for Forde for bringing this motion to the chamber, but, more importantly, I hope that this government will listen to it and finally take some concrete action to address the dramatic cost-of-living crisis that has befallen the average Australian family.

**Ms MASCARENHAS** (Swan) (11:20): I do recognise that the cost of living is the No. 1 issue in my community and across Australia. Household budgets are doing it really tough. The thing is that we had a moment in our history where we could have had a government that was working towards the way that we build our nation to deal with times of crises, and, frankly, we did not see that under the coalition government. The challenge that we're facing at the moment is a balancing act of making sure that we provide support to the community while also having spending restraint. Labor acknowledges these pressures. This has been our No. 1 issue. It is our No. 1 priority. This is the reason why every single taxpayer across Australia is getting a tax cut. It's not just some; it's everyone. That was effective from 1 July.

If I cast my mind back to when we announced this policy at the beginning of this year and think of the coalition's response, it was initially to oppose it. Then it was, 'Oh, wait, no—let's backtrack.' Then it was, 'Let's just introduce it and change it so only the richest get tax cuts.' Then they say that they would change it, and then they waved it through. So what we initially saw was a coalition that was prepared to throw low- and middle-income earners under the bus.

But what we did was have a look at our policy. Treasury said that there was a way to look at our tax cuts and implement them in a way that would not be inflationary but would actually provide targeted support to those who needed it most. The truth is that that's what responsible governments do. They have a look at policies, they listen to the frank and fearless Public Service and they work out what is right for our communities. So we did have a change in our policy, but this is a policy that will help communities but also not put additional inflationary pressure on our nation.

We are also looking at targeted energy relief, and so every household across Australia will be getting \$300 off their electricity bill. In Western Australia, because we have the state and federal Labor governments working together, Western Australian households will be getting \$700 off their electricity bills.

What we also saw under the previous government was a government that was prepared to basically keep wages down. If you think about it, they were basically putting the screws on incomes for workers and our lowest-paid workers. We, the Albanese Labor government, have helped 2.6 million low-paid workers get a pay rise, and they're up to their third consecutive pay rise. We did this because we know that households are doing it tough and it was our lowest-paid workers that did the heavy lifting during the pandemic.

We're also strengthening Medicare. We're doing this because we understand that all Australians, irrespective of what their income is, should have access to a good-quality healthcare system. We also looked at our medication expenses. So we saw a reduction in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme co-payment from \$42 to \$30. But we also introduced 60-day dispensing, where people are effectively getting double the medicine without needing to go and visit a GP and without needing to go to a pharmacist. This is something that's tangibly helping families.

The other thing we introduced was around HECS relief. We had seen, from a university debt perspective, that this was linked to CPI, but wages weren't increasing as quickly as CPI. So now we have a policy that looks at the consumer price index and also the wage price index, and whichever of the two is the lowest is what HECS will be indexed at. With this policy we have effectively wiped \$3 billion of debt. We're also looking at cheaper groceries by strengthening the food and grocery codes. Each of these policies, whether tax cuts, cheaper medicines or HECS debt relief, is tangibly helping households.

**Mr HAMILTON** (Groom) (11:25): It may well be that Australians find themselves, in the coming months or a little longer, facing another election. And there is no doubt, as this motion and the speakers from both sides have pointed out, that cost of living will be the issue. I would put to the Australian people that there is a significant question they need to be asking themselves at this coming election: are you better off today than you were when Labor came to government? Across the board, no matter where we look, the resounding answer is no. New homes are 19.7 per cent more expensive than they were when Labor came to government; bread, 19.5 per cent; and milk, 18.8 per cent. Two areas that we talk a lot about in this place are gas and electricity. The price of gas has gone up by 21.3 per cent and electricity by 20.2 per cent. We have seen a 30 per cent increase in insurance premiums.

All these costs are bearing down on Australian households. And it's across the board. We're feeling it right across the economy. I would say to the Australian people—as they go into those booths, whenever that day comes, and they ask themselves that question, am I better off?—that they need to know that where we are today is no accident. We are here, worse off, because of a series of deliberate decisions made by this Labor government. We can pin it back, somewhat humorously, but it is painful humour, to the 6,000-word essay the Treasurer wrote about 'remaking capitalism', about how he was going to throw away the knowledge, the ideas, the experience of the past; the Treasurer alone knew better. He was going to show us how to do things. Well, here we are. What a failure.

We could speak to Labor's immigration policy, a policy deliberately designed to keep us out of recession. We are in a per capita recession. Our immigration policy is designed purely to keep us out of that. And it's an absolute shame, because of course the impact is on young homeowners, trying to get a house. We could talk about Labor's price caps policy in the gas industry, which has done what every price cap policy has done for more than 2,000 years, and that is to reduce supply and drive up prices. That's a deliberate decision. We could talk about their IR legislation, which is driving down productivity. The Minerals Council of Australia's explicit accounts of how that will happen in evidence presented to the Economics Committee should be reading for everyone; it is reading for the ages.

We've got \$315 billion of additional spending that the RBA now acknowledges is driving up inflation. And we have a government that boasts of two surpluses yet in its own budget papers confirmed that the cost of that last surplus is 10 years of deficits. This is a deliberate design—short-term-ism making things worse in the long term. We are not here by accident. We're not worse off by accident. This is where Labor wanted to take us.

Worst of all was the great promise Labor made to get real wages moving again. Wages did move again—they went backwards by nine per cent under Labor, who turned its back on the labourers who used to build the Labor Party, walked away from those at the lower income levels. I spent last Friday night at Tony's Community Kitchen watching people come in to receive donated food. What was shocking was the number of working people, the number of those whose dollar would have gone far enough to be able to look after their own not that long ago. To the Australian people—as you look across the economy and as you look across the pain you're feeling—ask yourselves, 'Are we better off than we were before Labor came to government?' What you need to know is that there is another way. They're easy decisions. There's \$315 billion of cash that's going out the door. These are decisions the government has made with a short-term approach. There is a moral argument for making tough decisions when it comes to the economy, because inflation bears down unevenly on our economy. It's renting pensioners and young Australians who are getting hurt the most by Labor's absence of moral courage when it comes to dealing with these issues. They are hurting Australians by design. It's an absolute disgrace, and shame on this government.

**Mrs PHILLIPS** (Gilmore) (11:30): We know that people are doing it tough, and that's why the Albanese government is taking unprecedented steps to help ease the cost of living. I'm pleased to see individuals, families, students and seniors across my electorate of Gilmore already benefiting from a range of measures, announced in this year's budget, that are aimed at easing financial stress in the home while placing downward pressure on inflation. From 1 July 64,000 taxpayers in Gilmore will receive an average tax cut of \$1,405. That's money going straight back into the pockets of hardworking locals in my electorate to help with the cost of living. Many households in Gilmore have already started receiving their \$300 energy rebate, and I've been contacted by happy constituents who have received notification from their energy provider that their electricity bills will also be going down, which is even better news.

With an older population, accessible and affordable health services play a critical role. Since the Batemans Bay urgent care clinic opened in December 2023, we've seen more than 6,000 patients walk through the doors—all bulk-billed. Soon we're opening a Medicare mental health clinic at nearby Moruya. We've recently developed a fantastic and much needed regional endometriosis and pelvic pain clinic at Melton. All of these important health services are free and are helping to reduce cost-of-living pressures. Thanks to the Albanese government, Gilmore residents have saved more than \$2 million on cheaper medicines, and people who access the PBS are saving even more, thanks to our freeze on the maximum costs of PBS medicines. Pensioners and concession cardholders will have more money in their wallets because, for the next five years, they won't pay more than \$7.70 for a PBS script. Gilmore pensioners

and seniors are saving in many other ways as well, thanks to cost-of-living measures announced in the recent budget: an increase in Rent Assistance, a 12-month freeze on deeming rates, a wage increase for aged-care workers and more HomeCare packages.

We know families are doing it tough. That's why we're helping out with tax cuts, wage increases for our lowest paid workers and a further 10 per cent increase in rent assistance. That's an average increase of \$19 per fortnight for 8,235 people in Gilmore. And that's not all. Our government's CHOICE supermarket price monitoring is helping make supermarkets more competitive and allowing consumers to make price comparisons so they save money at the check-out. These are real, practical savings. These are effective cost-of-living measures.

Students are also receiving a leg up with \$3 billion wiped from HECS and apprentice loans across the country, including for 13,200 locals in Gilmore. Again, this means more money going into the pockets of our young people to help with their cost of living. Let's not forget how students are now saving with fee-free TAFE in industry skill shortage areas, and the new Commonwealth prac payments for nurses, teachers and social workers, meaning they can now earn money while they learn.

Many families in Gilmore run small businesses, meaning they're feeling the pressure at home and at work. This government has not forgotten them. By helping small businesses in these tough economic times, we are helping ordinary, hardworking Australians. Eligible small businesses are receiving their \$325 electricity rebate, and just last month a number of small to medium operators in my electorate of Gilmore received energy efficiency grants of up to \$25,000 to help reduce their operating costs. Last week, I visited the champion microbrewery Dangerous Ales in Milton, where our grant will help the operators set up a power-saving digital glycol monitoring system. The owners are a young family and we are helping to ease the cost the cost-of-living for them in both their home and their business.

People of all ages and from all walks of life in my electorate are already reaping the benefits of this government's responsible cost-of-living measures. These are real savings; this is money in the pockets of locals when they need it most.

**Dr SCAMPS (Mackellar) (11:35):** As I rise today, the cost of living is the pressing issue for most Australians. Between mortgage rate increases, the cost of groceries, fuel and energy bills—the list goes on—everyone is doing it tough. As a policy area, this issue is complex. The causes are many and varied, and there are many possible solutions. But one of the most significant pain points—electricity prices—there is an obvious solution. It's not an easy one, but it's a very clear one. Today, I will focus on electricity prices.

Households and businesses across Australia are currently paying way too much for energy because the majority of it is still generated from fossil fuels. The CSIRO and AEMO have categorically shown in their latest GenCost report that renewable energy is the cheapest form of energy, even after transmission and storage capacity have been factored in. Renewables are also expected to remain the lowest cost power source for decades to come. Yet Australia still gets 50 per cent of our energy from old, unreliable coal-fired power plants, which are increasingly breaking down. The market operator has made it clear that coal-powered station breakdowns and rising coal prices are the main cause of skyrocketing electricity prices. The fact that the solution to the high energy bills and the solution to the climate crisis are one and the same present a remarkable opportunity for Australia.

Australians want and demand cheap and reliable energy now—not in 20 or 30 or 40 years time. I recently attended a Smart Energy Council conference, where I heard really exciting updates about how rapidly long-duration energy storage is progressing, including both batteries and other technologies such as compressed air energy storage. Also, very significantly, it was very exciting to hear how rapidly the prices for batteries are coming down, getting cheaper and cheaper almost by the day. Australians know there is no time to waste on transitioning to clean, green energy. They voted for it at the last election, voting for non-party, climate focused candidates in record numbers. They expect action.

People also understand there is an incredible economic opportunity on our doorstep—one Australia is uniquely placed to exploit. That economic opportunity is clear and substantial. We have already seen a 25 per cent additional renewable energy capacity added to our system during this term in parliament, taking the amount of electricity being generated by renewables to almost 40 per cent. It is highly significant that the wholesale energy price has come down as a result of this transition to renewable energy. Over the course of the last year, the rapid growth in renewable energy generation slashed the wholesale cost of power in the national energy grid. It also dramatically reduced our reliance on coal-fired power.

The transition to clean, cheap, renewable energy is already underway. We have abundant natural resources in Australia. We have one of the sunniest and windiest continents on earth. We have more than enough renewable resources which we can harness to meet our energy needs. We have the space, and we know it is the cheapest form of energy.

Personally, I'm very keen to see further development of household solar and a much greater deployment of both household and community batteries so that families and businesses can benefit directly from cheaper energy prices. When each Australian business and household generates enough solar power to power themselves during the day and have battery capability to keep the lights on at night, energy bills will get lower and lower and, hopefully one day, even cease to exist, as will fuel bills, as everyone transitions slowly to electric vehicles.

We can't ignore the giant distraction— (*Time expired*)

**Mr RAE** (Hawke) (11:40): The opposition, led by the member for Forde, is attempting to rewrite history here. The economic challenges we face today didn't just emerge two years ago. They began a decade ago, when the former Liberal government took office. This marked the onset of a period characterised by economic stagnation, with sluggish wage growth, declining productivity and the accumulation of over \$1 trillion of Liberal debt. Under their watch, Australia has faced a decade of missed opportunities, where promises of economic prosperity fell short, leaving ordinary families to bear the brunt of poor policy decisions. These failures set the stage for the economic challenges we are facing today. When the Albanese government was elected, inflation was already rising rapidly as the former Liberal government was caught asleep at the economic wheel.

However, through our careful budget measures and a clear focus on easing inflationary pressures, we have seen a significant improvement. Inflation has dropped by more than half from its peak and is now well below the levels we inherited from the previous Liberal government. This isn't just a statistic. It is a real weight off the backs of Australian families. Our budget strategy has played a crucial role in achieving this progress, delivering the first back-to-back budget surpluses in nearly two decades. These surpluses reflect the careful financial management of the Albanese Labor government and are actively contributing to easing inflationary pressures.

Our approach is about more than just controlling inflation. It's about doing so in a way that does not harm the very people that we seek to serve. Our economic plan has been carefully crafted to fight inflation without damaging the Australian economy. We've prioritised cost-of-living relief, understanding that Australians are under immense pressure. From energy rebates to rent assistance, from affordable child care to tax cuts for every single Australian taxpayer, each of these measures has been crafted to deliver real and sustainable relief for Australian families and for our economy.

In fact, cost-of-living relief measures alone have reduced inflation by half a percentage point, easing the burden on households all across our country. Take, for example, the impact of our energy rebates. Without these rebates, electricity prices would have risen by 14.6 per cent over the past year. Instead, they increased by six per cent, thanks to our targeted support. In child care, an area where costs have historically been a heavy burden on families, we've seen prices fall by 5.7 per cent, where they would otherwise have increased by nearly 15 per cent.

The Albanese Labor government is not just talking about economic relief. We are actually delivering it, and our efforts extend beyond the immediate relief. We're laying the groundwork for a stronger, more resilient economy that will benefit all Australians for the years to come.

A tax reform agenda is a prime example of this long-term vision. We've introduced tax cuts that provide meaningful relief to Middle Australia, ensuring that the average worker will pay less tax each year under our plan, compared to the old Morrison government plan. This is not just about putting more money back into the pockets of hardworking Australians—although it is. It's also about building a fairer tax system where everyone pays their fair share and where the benefits are felt by those who need them most. Over 2.9 million Australians who were excluded under the Morrison government's plan are now getting a tax cut. In my electorate of Hawke, over 73,000 taxpayers are getting a tax cut under Labor's plan, with a household of two full-time workers saving an average of \$2,856 each year. That means more cash in their bank accounts every fortnight. That's not even mentioning the \$3 billion in student debt relief our government has delivered, benefiting over 17,000 people in Hawke, or the \$4 billion in cheaper medicines, saving Hawke residents nearly \$1.8 million.

The Albanese Labor government is committed to carefully and responsibly managing the economic challenges facing our country. We're tackling inflation, delivering cost-of-living relief and setting up an economy that is fairer and more prosperous for all Australians.

**Mr PEARCE** (Braddon) (11:45): In the lead up to the last election, Prime Minister Albanese made a simple deal with every Australian. He said that, if he were elected Prime Minister, all he asked for was that his government be judged on three simple criteria. This is what the Prime Minister said:

I measure the strength of our economy by how it works for people. So for me there's a simple test ... Do you feel better off ... Are you finding it easier to pay your bills? Are you more certain of your future and, importantly, that of your children?

He said all this. As I travel around the great electorate of Braddon, in the north-west, west coast and King Island regions of the great state of Tasmania, it's blatantly clear that Prime Minister Albanese and his government have

failed on each and every single one of these criteria. Families and businesses are struggling as they've never struggled before.

Under this Labor government, the self-inflicted cost-of-living crisis continues. There are many horror stories, whether it's groceries, petrol, diesel, electricity, housing, mortgages or the cost of doing business—the list goes on. I'm hearing every single day that life is much, much tougher now than it was even during the height of the global financial crisis. Households and businesses have copped 12 interest rate increases since Labor came to government. On a mortgage of around half a million dollars, that means \$14,000 more per year on your repayments. Around half of all Tasmanian mortgagees and renters are now in mortgage or rental stress, and that is a fact. One in five are spending more than half of their earnings on their mortgage or their rent.

But this mismanagement goes further because, under this government, there's less money in their pockets to pay the mortgage itself. We're paying 20 per cent more in personal income tax. Our real wages have collapsed by nearly nine per cent. Living standards have collapsed by nearly eight per cent. Household savings have collapsed by almost 10 per cent, and still the Albanese government spruiks its May budget as the cost-of-living relief budget. It was an opportunity to demonstrate that they finally understood the extent of the harm that their policies were causing to families and businesses right around the country. Regrettably, it's fallen well short.

In another demonstration that Labor has no understanding of our region, only around 55 per cent of the residents of Braddon receive a taxable income. Forty-five per cent of them pay no tax at all. They rely on government benefits or they are retirees who have done the right thing all of their lives—worked hard, saved hard and funded their own retirement. These very Australians are amongst our most vulnerable. They are the ones that are being forced to visit food banks because they can no longer afford to buy food. And what's Labor's response in their cost-of-living relief budget? Give them absolutely zip, nada, nil—nothing.

In response to this claim, Labor spruik their \$300 energy rebate—a rebate paid quarterly in instalments of \$75 over the next year, I might add. But, in the lead-up to the 2022 election, Labor promised to cut power bills for households by \$275. Instead, our energy bills have gone up by an average of 18 per cent. That \$300 rebate doesn't even put a dent in Labor's broken promise to reduce our power bills.

Life under the Albanese government is really challenging. I get that; everyone gets that. In fact, I can't recall a time in my life when so many families or business owners have told me that they've never been more worried about their future. Families can't keep their heads above water any longer, and businesses are telling me that they can no longer afford to operate.

As we lead into this next election, I simply ask all Australians out there, and I want to look down the camera and ask them: Do you feel better off? Are you finding it easier to pay your bills? And are you more certain of your future now and, importantly, that of your children? Three more years under this Labor government is unthinkable.

**Mr BURNELL** (Spence) (11:50): Once again, this chamber had been hit with yet another example of an opposition looking to weaponise a cost-of-living crisis while falling short of offering any actual assistance towards helping those it represents. And it's a shame that the party of Menzies, supposed representatives of the forgotten people, only chooses to remember its constituents when they are politically useful, spending its time in this place jamming the Australian people into a numbers game rather than putting forward an actual plan to assist them. And

I don't wish to dismiss the importance of this matter. The member for Forde has done well in bringing attention to the financial pressures Australians are under. But this difference between his party and my own is that those opposite will just sit and throw stones at every glass house in sight, whereas members on this side, having inherited these conditions, acknowledge the strain our country is under and offer real solutions with real policy to lift that pressure away from the back of everyday Australians.

The government has and will continue to demonstrate this fact, because it is a Labor government. When our communities asked for more relief, we delivered it through our tax cuts in July. That is 91 per cent of my electorate, 67,000 people, saving an average of \$1,217 per year, which is around \$800 more than they would have saved under the plan of those opposite. That is real action, putting more money directly into the hands of Australians, with 11½ million people all receiving a bigger tax cut across the country. Despite this, those opposite remained kicking and screaming, dragged towards supporting these changes by their constituents because their conscience couldn't manage it.

Make no mistake, if they were at the wheel, these changes would not have happened. Those 67,000 people in my community would be receiving no extra help under a coalition government. Tax cuts are not the only means of cost-of-living relief those opposite would prefer shot down. To provide another example, this government is investing \$30 billion into new housing initiatives throughout the next decade. This is funding to get new homes built sooner, to provide the infrastructure needed to support new developments and to build more social and affordable rentals. It is policy to increase the supply of housing in this country, to make the roof over the heads of everyday Australians

more affordable. These are initiatives to address the housing crisis all of our communities currently face. And how does the opposition react to such proposals? They proceeded to threaten billions of dollars to boost the Australian housing supply last year under the Housing Australia Future Fund, with no alternative vision for this country.

We can only assume those opposite would rather see Australia's housing supply in an even worse state. They chose not to offer any solutions themselves nor let this government get on with the job. Unfortunately, this behaviour has become a fundamental characteristic of the opposition. But that hasn't stopped the Albanese Labor government from performing the task at hand, delivering \$300 of electricity bill relief to all Australians, making child care cheaper, delivering a 15 per cent pay rise for early learning employees without increasing costs for parents, strengthening Medicare to deliver increased bulk-billing practices across the country and making medicines cheaper. In fact, in Spencer alone, my community has already saved more than \$2 million since the commitment was delivered.

We're also keeping wages moving forward, with 2.6 million low-paid workers receiving a third consecutive pay rise from July this year—all this with peak inflation halved since coming to government. These solutions put money directly into the pockets of Australians, and they are not the end of the story. My colleagues and I, like all Australians, are acutely aware of the challenge of a rise in the cost of living.

My electorate of Spence is one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged divisions in the nation. It feels this pressure the most, which is why I'm proud to be part of a government delivering real cost-of-living relief through real policy direct to everyday Australians. Could the same be said of those opposite, having held back this relief at every opportunity just to stay political irrelevant? The member for Forde calls for government to address cost-of-living pressures but fails to vote for policy that would do so, because he and his colleagues would rather weaponise the wellbeing of those doing it tough in our communities for the political good of the coalition. Stop spending time turning facts into your political fiction and start offering something for the good of this country.

**The SPEAKER:** There being no further speakers, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

## STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

### Parliament House: Security

**The SPEAKER** (11:55): On 4 July 2024 I made a statement to the chamber on a serious security breach by protesters in Australian Parliament House. I now provide the House with an update. At the request of the presiding officers, the Australian Federal Police conducted an investigation into these events. The investigation is still ongoing. Additionally, the President and I asked the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services to convene an extraordinary meeting of the security management board to discuss options to enhance security at Australian Parliament House. We requested that both short- and long-term solutions be identified while taking into consideration the recent increase in the national threat level.

I can inform the House that short-term measures have been implemented which strengthen the layers of security around Parliament House and assist in deterring a repeat of the 4 July incidents. Measures include physical, procedural and intelligence based enhancements. Of course, for security reasons, I will not detail the specific measures that have been implemented; however, these enhancements have occurred and are ongoing. Longer-term and more-permanent options are currently being explored and will be informed through engagement with relevant authorities and experts, including by technical specialists from the national security agencies and law enforcement agencies.

Australian Parliament House is a key pillar of our democracy. It is also a source of national pride. The President and I take matters around the respect and safety of the building and its occupants very seriously. The security and access to Australian Parliament House must always be balanced to keep democracy open to the people whilst also protecting those who visit and work in the building and surrounds. I thank the Australian Federal Police and the Parliamentary departments for the work they do to keep our parliament and staff safe. I'm happy to brief members directly with further details if requested. Additional information regarding general security will be distributed later today to all building occupants.

## PRIVILEGE

### Public Accounts and Audit Joint Committee

**Mr HILL** (Bruce) (11:57): I wish to raise a matter of privilege under standing order 51. The matter relates to a concerns notice I have received pursuant to the Queensland Defamation Act 2005 issued to me by Melissa Inglis and Nathan Kershler of Rose Litigation Lawyers, acting on behalf of Mr John Margerison. The notice raises concerns about a number of publications, including an official media release published by the parliament of Australia pursuant to a resolution of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, the JCPAA, and a video of



me answering a question in question time. The notice asks me to retract the publications referred to, including the official media release of the JCPAA, and apologise to Mr Margerison, failing which I can anticipate court proceedings will be filed against me.

The publications referred to in the concerns notice relate to an inquiry undertaken by the JCPAA while I was the chair into procurement and related matters of Services Australia and the NDIA. In essence, my request is that, having reviewed the issues raised, you consider giving precedence to a motion to refer to the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests whether, No. 1, the concerns notice foreshadows court proceedings that could not be pursued without breaching parliamentary privilege such that the House should express a view on this matter and intervene if court proceedings are commenced in order to protect parliamentary privilege and the ability of this House and its members to undertake their work; and, No. 2, the threat of this legal action, presumably on advice, may constitute a contempt of this House by way of improper interference with the free exercise of the JCPAA's authority or functions and the free exercise of my duties as a member and chair of the committee.

As chair of the committee, I was authorised to issue media statements in relation to this and all other inquiries. I was authorised to make public statements regarding the progress of this inquiry. Indeed, as all members would appreciate, the long-established practice of parliamentary committees is that public communication in relation to inquiries is part of the responsibility of any chair of a committee. This ordinarily includes media releases, media interviews and media comment addressing issues in the House, complemented these days by social media. Such communications are made by committee chairs in the course of, for the purposes of, or incidental to the transacting of the business of the committee. As chair of the committee, at every key step I sought procedural advice from parliamentary officials and acted in accordance with the resolutions of the committee and the ordinary expectations of committee chairs. I am taking the concerns notice seriously and consulting with my lawyers, and will respond in due course in good faith. However, I consider that I am obliged to raise this matter of privilege in advance of responding to the concerns notice, as the standing orders require me to do so at the first available opportunity.

I submit that in the circumstances there's a prima facie case that section 16 of the Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987 is engaged. 'Proceedings in Parliament' are defined broadly to include:

all words spoken and acts done in the course of, or for purposes of or incidental to, the transacting of the business of a House or of a committee ...

Section 16 provides:

it is not lawful for evidence to be tendered or received ... concerning proceedings in Parliament ...

The protection of privilege is provided to much or all of the material Mr Margerison's lawyers referred to, and precludes this material being able to be used as evidence—or, frankly, misused in defamation proceedings.

More broadly than just the publications referenced, the precedent that this threat of legal action sets problematic. If the House does not firmly assert and protect privilege in these circumstances, this sort of threat may have a chilling effect if lawyers around the country advise their clients that the threat of legal action will curtail the ability of members of the House—and especially committee chairs—from doing their jobs in the future. Any conduct having a tendency to impair a member's independence in the future performance of his or her duty has been subject since 1987 to the provisions of the Parliamentary Privileges Act. Threatening costly legal action against members acting in accordance with the resolutions of committees and the practice of the House could clearly amount to an improper interference in the free exercise of the duties, and may, therefore, constitute a contempt of the House.

It is obviously important that this House protect itself against all acts or omissions which obstruct or impede the House and the committees in the performance of their functions, which is why I ask you to consider giving precedence to a motion referring these matters to the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests. I table copies of the publications referred to in the concerns notice and will be happy to provide further material to the Standing Committee of Privileges and Member's Interests. I also note that I'm under some time pressure, owing to the threatened legal action, so I request this matter be progressed as expeditiously as possible. Insofar as Mr Margerison is concerned, I will respond to the concerns notice and I will advise in due course of the status of the matter. I thank you for your consideration of this matter, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER (12:02):** I thank the member for Bruce and will consider his statement and tabled material in the usual way. It is important that I consider this material carefully and thoroughly. I reserve the matter for further consideration and, once considered, I will report back to the House as soon as possible. For the benefit of all members, standing order 51 provides the mechanism for the Speaker to consider a privilege matter raised when the House is sitting.

**BILLS****COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2023****Assent**

**The SPEAKER** (12:02): I inform the House 5 July 2024 I personally presented to Her Excellency the Governor-General at Government House the COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 for assent, this being the first bill ready for presentation following the swearing-in of Her Excellency. The Governor-General, in the name of His Majesty, was pleased to assent to the bill, which is now Act No. 54 of 2024.

**Primary Industries (Customs) Charges Bill 2023****Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Bill 2023****Primary Industries (Services) Levies Bill 2023****Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Bill 2023****Primary Industries Levies and Charges Disbursement Bill 2023****Primary Industries (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2023****Australian Postal Corporation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024****Communications Legislation Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Bill 2024****Creative Australia Amendment (Implementation of Revive) Bill 2024****Criminal Code Amendment (Protecting Commonwealth Frontline Workers) Bill 2024****Payment Times Reporting Amendment Bill 2024****Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (More Support in the Safety Net) Bill 2024****Treasury Laws Amendment (Delivering Better Financial Outcomes and Other Measures) Bill 2024****Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill 2024****Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Withdrawal from Amalgamation) Bill 2024****Health Insurance Legislation Amendment (Assignment of Medicare Benefits) Bill 2024****Customs Tariff Amendment (Tobacco) Bill 2024****Excise Tariff Amendment (Tobacco) Bill 2024****National Health Amendment (Supporting Patient Access to Cheaper Medicines and Other Measures) Bill 2024****Assent**

Message from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.

**COMMITTEES****Intelligence and Security Joint Committee****Report**

**Mr KHALIL** (Wills) (12:03): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I present the following reports: the *Advisory report on the Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Omnibus No. 1) Bill 2024—Report, August 2024*, the *Advisory report on the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024—Report, August 2024*, and the *Review of the listing of Ansar Allah as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code—Report, incorporating a dissenting report, August 2024*.

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

**Mr KHALIL:** by leave—In relation to the *Advisory report on the Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Omnibus No. 1) Bill 2024*, this bill contains five schedules which are together intended to support the proper administration of government, law enforcement and oversight processes.

Schedules 1 and 2 of the bill would modernise law enforcement powers to expressly account for 'digital assets'—such as cryptocurrency—being used by criminals. This includes by updating the search warrant powers and proceeds of crime legislation to expressly authorise police to seize digital assets.

Schedule 3 increases the value of the Commonwealth penalty unit from \$313 to \$330 to help ensure that penalties for criminal offences reflect community expectations and deter criminal behaviour.

Schedule 4 creates a new position of Communications Security Coordinator in the Department of Home Affairs to perform certain telecommunications security related functions under the Telecommunications Act 1997.

Schedule 5 includes amendments to the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 (the T(IA) Act) to improve the ability of oversight bodies for state based integrity agencies to access material that has been lawfully intercepted by the agencies within their jurisdiction.

The committee received seven submissions and one supplementary submission to this inquiry, all of which supported passage of the bill.

The committee has made one recommendation to amend the bill. This amendment would broaden the T(IA) Act's existing definition of 'prescribed investigation' in relation to the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission of Western Australia to make it more consistent with other state based oversight bodies. The change was requested by the parliamentary inspector and supported by the Attorney-General's Department.

The committee has also made two recommendations for the government to consider during future reforms of the T(IA) Act, potentially as part of the proposed electronic surveillance reforms.

Firstly, in response to a suggestion by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission of New South Wales, the committee recommends that the government consider whether state based oversight bodies for integrity agencies should have the power to access the stored communications and telecommunications data held by agencies within their jurisdiction, in addition to the access to lawfully intercepted information that the bill provides.

Secondly, the committee recommends that the T(IA) Act be amended to require that ministerial declarations made under sections 110A, 176A, 187A and 187AA of the T(IA) Act be referred to the committee for review. The current oversight arrangements require that all amendments to the primary legislation under those sections—including minor and cosmetic changes—be referred to the committee. However, there is currently no review required for declarations made by the legislative instrument under those same provisions. The committee's recommendation is consistent with the intent of the previous committee in 2015, during its review of the bill that introduced the mandatory data retention regime, that oversight of any 'emergency' ministerial declarations to expand the regime's scope be subject to appropriate scrutiny.

With these recommendations, the committee recommends that the bill be passed. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank the secretariat and all of those who provided submissions to that particular inquiry. I acknowledge the work of the committee members, including the deputy chair, who's with us in the House at the moment.

I commend the report to the House.

In relation to the inquiry into the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024, the committee supports the measures contained in the bill, which would see the operation of the declared areas offence in section 119.2 of the Criminal Code continue for another three years, until 7 September 2027.

The bill would also provide that section 119.3—the provision under which the Minister for Foreign Affairs may declare an area for the purpose of enlivening the offence—ceases to have effect on 7 September 2027.

The committee found no cause for concern in how the provisions have been used since their introduction into Australian law in 2014. Their use only twice to date demonstrates appropriate caution and judiciousness on the part of the government.

The committee's report recommends that the bill be passed with no changes, owing to the need to urgently pass the bill before section 119.2 sunsets on 7 September 2024. However, the committee did make four other recommendations, including that certain matters be considered by the government before the powers are next due to sunset in September 2027.

Firstly, the committee recommended that the government review the list of 'legitimate purpose' exceptions for entering or remaining in a declared area in section 119.2(3) of the Criminal Code and consider whether they are still fit for purpose or should be expanded.

Secondly, the committee also recommended that the government consider introducing a 'grace period' to the offence of entering or remaining in a declared area, which is presently triggered immediately upon declaration of an area. In light of the extreme circumstances that would have likely precipitated the declaration of an area, it cannot be assumed that a person in or near that area would immediately be aware of such a declaration. As such, the committee considered that the government should consider whether a grace period of up to one month could be explicitly provided for rather than relying solely on ministerial or prosecutorial discretion to not charge an individual in such a scenario.

The committee further recommended that, to avoid any potential ambiguity, the government consider including additional legislative safeguards on the Minister for Foreign Affairs's discretion to declare an area, including making more explicit the factors the minister should take into account.

Deputy Speaker Andrews, I know you are familiar with these areas. The declared area provisions, or these laws I should say, while only to be used in extreme circumstances, are an important element of Australia's counterterrorism framework and provide the Australian government with a valuable tool to counter the international terrorism threat and to prevent and deter Australians from joining international terrorist organisations.

On this point, the committee notes that it has now been a decade since the passage of the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Act 2014 and the country is facing a much-changed security landscape. The committee considers that now would be an appropriate time to take stock of the Criminal Code's provisions on foreign incursions and recruitment, including the declared areas regime, and whether they remain fit for purpose in the current security landscape. The committee considers that the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor, INSLM, is best placed to conduct such an inquiry and has recommended that he do so and report his findings to parliament before the declared areas provisions are due to sunset in 2027.

Again, on behalf of the committee with respect to this report, I extend my thanks to those who participated in the inquiry by providing submissions and appearing before the committee at its public hearing. Of course my thanks go again to the secretariat for their work on this inquiry and to my colleagues on the committee, including the deputy chair.

I commend this report to the House.

The last one is the *Review of the listing of Ansar Allah as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code*.

With respect to the review of the listing of Ansar Allah under the Criminal Code, you would be aware, Deputy Speaker Andrews, that an organisation may be specified by regulation as a terrorist organisation provided that the minister for the Australian Federal Police, currently the Attorney-General, is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the organisation directly or indirectly engages in terrorism or advocates the doing of a terrorist act. Listing an organisation triggers the application of offences for supporting or associating with the organisation in specified ways, such as being a member of, recruiting for or providing funding to it.

Section 102.1A of the Criminal Code provides that the committee may review a regulation which lists an organisation as a terrorist organisation and report its comments and recommendations to each house of the parliament. The regulation subject to this review lists Ansar Allah as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code.

In determining whether the regulations for the listing of Ansar Allah should be supported, the committee reviewed the Attorney-General's explanatory statement and statement of reasons supporting the listing of the organisation and other publicly available information.

The committee also invited public submissions on the listing. Four submissions were received from interested individuals and organisations.

On behalf of the committee, I extend my thanks to those who provided submissions to the inquiry.

The committee noted the following information with respect to Ansar Allah.

I should note that Ansar Allah is often known as the Houthis, which is a name referring to their leader and the original founder of the movement. They're known by a number of other aliases of course as well, and many other names have been included in the listing. They are a Zaydi Shia violent extremist organisation that are based in Yemen.

Following the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003, the organisation became increasingly radicalised. Ansar Allah has conducted 19 terrorist attacks since 2022, utilising an array of weaponry. Its violent activity is primarily directed at Yemeni government forces, but the organisation has also targeted civilians, foreign states and foreign owned vessels, especially those going through Bab el-Mandeb in the Red Sea.

Ansar Allah has significantly contributed to conflict in Yemen. It has also demonstrated links to Hizballah and Hamas, which are both currently listed as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code. Ansar Allah's recent targeting of vessels passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, has impacted on global supply chains and contributed to rising inflation and costs of living around the world as some of the economic impacts of their terrorist attacks and activities.

After examining all of the evidence provided to it, the committee considered it is evident that Ansar Allah is directly engaged in preparing, planning, assisting with or fostering the doing of terrorist acts. The committee is satisfied that the appropriate process has been followed, supports the listing of Ansar Allah as a terrorist organisation under division 102 of the Criminal Code and finds no reason to disallow the legislative instrument. I commend this report to the House and once again thank my colleagues for their work on all three reports.

**Mr WALLACE** (Fisher) (12:15): by leave—Coalition members of the committee support the listing of Ansar Allah, otherwise known as the Houthis, as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code, noting that the

opposition first raised this with the government on 9 January 2024, calling on the government to consider listing the Houthis as a terrorist organisation in Australia. The coalition is deeply alarmed at the significant delays in ministerial consideration of this terrorist listing. It took at least 49 days for the decision-making process to list Ansar Allah to be bounced between the Minister for Home Affairs and the Attorney-General, and it took another 28 days for the Prime Minister to write to first ministers in relation to the decision to list. Overall, it took 126 days for the Houthis to be finally proscribed as a terrorist organisation after the initial recommendation of the Department of Home Affairs.

By contrast, for the 2021 listing of Hizballah and the Base, it took only one day for the then Minister for Home Affairs—that would be you, Madam Deputy Speaker Andrews—to consider and approve the listing of those two organisations and they wrote to first ministers on behalf of the Prime Minister on the same day. Similarly, for the 2021 relisting of Al-Shabaab, Hamas's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the Kurdistan Workers Party, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Palestinian Islamic Jihad it also took only six days for the then minister, Deputy Speaker Andrews, to consider and approve the relistings and they wrote to the first ministers on the same day.

The bureaucratic delays evident in this terrorist listing process are very clearly a symptom of the Albanese government's dismantling of the Home Affairs portfolio. It started when it came into office with its machinery-of-government changes. This has resulted in the terrorist listing process being duplicated by two ministers rather than being handled by just the one minister, as was the case under the coalition. This has clearly created friction and confusion in the government as to which minister is chiefly responsible for national security policy.

That confusion will be further amplified by the Prime Minister's decision to also relocate ASIO, in addition to the AFP and the ACIC, from Home Affairs to the Attorney-General's portfolio despite ostensibly leaving policy responsibility for national security with the Minister for Home Affairs. The coalition is deeply concerned by the government's unnecessary and harmful unwinding of the national security architecture that has served our country extraordinarily well since the establishment of the Department of Home Affairs, especially given the government never told the Australian public prior to coming into office that it would seek to unwind the Home Affairs portfolio. The unwinding of the Home Affairs portfolio could not have come at a more unfortunate time, with ASIO making the decision on 5 August 2024 to raise the terrorism threat level to 'probable' for the first time in years.

The listing of terrorist organisations is a serious business. It is one of the principal tools in the counterterrorism toolkit available to the government to protect the Australian public from harm. It enables the government to prosecute any person who finances, associates with, trains with or otherwise supports a listed terrorist organisation. It also enlivens the prohibited hate symbols legislation which makes it a criminal offence for any person to publicly display a symbol associated with a terrorist organisation in certain circumstances.

The coalition committee members are deeply troubled by the fact that it took over 126 days to formally list the Houthis after it was first recommended by the department. This underlines the unnecessary duplication and confusion that has arisen as a result of the government's machinery-of-government changes. The government should immediately restore the Home Affairs portfolio to streamline the terrorist-listing process and reverse the damage done to our national security architecture. If the government chooses not to do so, the coalition will restore the Home Affairs portfolio to its proven and successful settings.

Finally, I want to deal with the current government's failure to take any action in listing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist group. Australia's inaction is at odds with our Five Eyes partners—the United States, which listed the IRGC in 2019, and, most recently, Canada, which announced its listing of the IRGC in June 2024. As the Canadian government has pointed out, the IRGC supports the terrorist activities of Hamas and Hizballah, and the IRGC is widely reported to be a principal financier and military trainer of the Houthis. Coalition members of the committee reiterate the offer of support from the opposition to list the IRGC, including by legislative amendment to the Criminal Code if that is necessary.

It's rare that I get to my feet as the Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. It's rare that I do that because national security is beyond and should be beyond politics. But, where there are instances where the coalition members on the committee feel that the government is not doing what it should be doing to keep Australians safe, it is my duty as the deputy chair to stand up on behalf of all coalition members and make a point that the government is failing on these points in relation to the listing of terrorist organisations, and it needs to smarten up its act.

### **Human Rights Joint Committee**

#### **Membership**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews)** (12:21): On 5 July 2024, the Speaker received advice from the Chief Government Whip nominating Ms Belyea to be a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human

Rights. In accordance with standing order 229(b), as the House was not expected to sit for several weeks, the appointment became effective on that date.

**Mr JOSH WILSON** (Fremantle) (12:22): by leave—I move:

That Ms Belyea be appointed a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

Question agreed to.

### **Membership**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews)** (12:22): The Speaker has received advice from the Chief Government Whip and the Chief Opposition Whip nominating members to be members of certain committees.

**Mr JOSH WILSON** (Fremantle) (12:22): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Ms McKenzie be discharged from the Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water and that, in her place, Mr Kennedy be appointed a member of the committee;

(2) Ms Thwaites be discharged from the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests and that, in her place, Dr Garland be appointed a member of the committee;

(3) Ms Thwaites be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters;

(4) Mr Hill, Ms Thwaites and Mr J Wilson be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and that, in their places, Mr O'Connor, Mrs Phillips and Mr Zappia be appointed members of the committee;

(5) Mr J Wilson be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Migration and that, in his place, Ms Stanley be appointed a member of the committee;

(6) Ms Thwaites be discharged from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Anti-Corruption Commission and that, in her place, Mr Laxale be appointed a member of the committee;

(7) Mr Hill be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories and that, in his place, Ms Burney be appointed a member of the committee;

(8) Mr Hill and Mr J Wilson be discharged from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit and that, in their places, Ms Burney and Mr B Mitchell be appointed members of the committee;

(9) Ms Thwaites be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library and that, in her place, Ms Belyea be appointed a member of the committee;

(10) Ms Thwaites be discharged from the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society and that, in her place, Ms Templeman be appointed a member of the committee; and

(11) Ms Thwaites and Mr J Wilson be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties and that, in their places, Ms Coker and Ms Mascarenhas be appointed members of the committee.

Question agreed to.

### **Migration Joint Committee**

### **Parliamentary Library Joint Committee**

### **Public Works Joint Committee**

### **Membership**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews)** (12:23): The Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Payman has been discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Migration and Senator Pratt has been appointed a member of the committee; that Senator Payman has been discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library and Senator Grogan has been appointed a member of the committee; and that Senator Payman has been discharged from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and Senator Pratt has been appointed a member of the committee.

### **Human Rights Joint Committee**

### **Appointment**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews)** (12:23): The Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House that the Senate concurs with the resolution relating to the variation of appointment of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

### **BILLS**

### **Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024**

### **Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr TEHAN** (Wannon) (12:24): On 5 August 2024, the director-general of ASIO returned Australia's national terrorism threat level from possible to probable. The director-general stated that politically motivated violence, which encompasses terrorism, had joined espionage and foreign interference as our principal security concerns. The director-general's warning was a sobering reminder that we live in precarious times, but unfortunately it comes as no surprise. Increasing social division and threats of violence in our communities have escalated dramatically since 7 October. We have seen teenagers charged with offences that police alleged are motivated by terrorism, the shocking increase in antisemitism and even people proudly displaying the symbols of terrorist organisations on the streets of our cities.

The Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024 is a straightforward proposal to extend for a further three years the declared areas offence in section 119.2 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 that is scheduled to sunset on 7 September 2024. The bill would also provide that section 119.3 of the Criminal Code, the provision under which the Minister for Foreign Affairs can declare an area for the purpose of the offence in section 119.2, cease to have effect on 7 September 2027.

Introduced by the former coalition government as part of the foreign fighters counter-terrorism legislation amendments in 2014, the declared areas offence fulfils a crucial role in the disruption and prosecution of returning foreign terrorist fighters and their associates and allows for the prosecution of suspected terrorists in circumstances where it is challenging to collect evidence relating to the intention elements of more-serious terrorism offences, including in conflict zones. Where an area is declared by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is an offence to enter or remain in that area without a legitimate reason. A declared area is a place where terrorist organisations are engaging in hostile activity. There are very few legitimate reasons for entering these areas, and the offence recognises this by providing targeted exceptions.

The bill would extend for a further three years the declared areas offence in the Criminal Code that is scheduled to sunset in September 2024. Two declarations using these provisions have been made to date: the Mosul District in Iraq and al-Raqqa Province in Syria. Four Australians have been charged under the declared areas offence. There was a significant reduction in the number of Australians travelling to the Syria-Iraq conflict zone after the declarations were made. The provisions likely discourage people who might otherwise have considered entering Mosul and al-Raqqa while the respective declarations were in effect and discourage parents from taking their children into those areas.

Declarations have been used only in the context of the Islamic State, as this has been the only conflict since the commencement of the declared areas framework that warranted the use of the power. But the framework is designed in such a way that it could be used in response to future conflicts. The coalition will always support sensible changes that ensure that our legislation is fit for purpose to enable our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to protect Australians from terrorism, which is why we will be supporting the passage of the bill.

I chaired the Intelligence and Security Committee when this bill was first brought before the parliament, and I'd like to commend the chair, the deputy chair and the committee itself for the way they've very diligently looked again at this legislation and once again put a sunset clause into the bill. This was something that we seriously considered in 2014 and placed the sunset clause into this legislation. This legislation gives the government and the parliament extraordinary powers, and I'm sure it is the preference of everyone in this place that we wouldn't need such legislation. But the harsh reality and the facts are that we still do, and we've seen that come to the fore again with the comments and statements by the Director-General of ASIO and the lifting of the threat level here in our nation.

I heard both the Chair of the PJCIS and the deputy talk about their consideration of this bill, and one of the things that they have called for, which, obviously, the government will have to take into consideration, is a review of the current legislation before the sunset clause kicks in again in 2027. I think that is a very sensible recommendation by the committee. It gives them time to look at what laws were put in place in 2014 and beyond, remembering that those times were incredibly unusual. Islamic State, obviously, were wreaking havoc in both Iraq and Syria at the time, committing some of the most heinous offences, and, sadly, they were trying to appeal to Australians to go over and join their heinous activities. These laws helped stop that flow, and there was a flow which was occurring. We have to make sure that we can deal with such incidents into the future, and that's why these laws are so important.

I commend the PJCIS for its work on this bill. Obviously, there are other things that we as an opposition are looking for the government to do, and I thought the deputy chair of the committee made a fine intervention in that regard. But, in terms of this bill and making sure that it passes through this place, we support it because it was, in fact, a coalition government that put these measures in place in the first instance.

**Mr JOSH WILSON** (Fremantle) (12:31): I too speak in support of the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024. I thank the member for Wannon for his comments and, of course, both the

Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security for their contribution to the report that was just tabled, which is relevant to the bill we're considering.

As the member for Wannon noted, the declared areas provisions essentially give our security, intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and Australia as a whole, the ability to protect Australians, and they do that in a few ways. They have been in place for some time. This bill allows them to continue operating in circumstances where we need that to be the case. It's good that we can consider these things seriously and carefully. It's good we have a committee process that looks at these kinds of legislation open-mindedly and with a preparedness to examine how they were established, how they work and whether or not changes need to be considered. It's good that we can have a sober and serious conversation here about bills like this and what they enable, which is essentially to see that the declared areas provisions continue for another three years.

In terms of how the provisions help to make Australians safe, they operate in a couple of different directions. One of the things about having a declared area put in place is that it stands as a clear signal to the Australian community that that is not a place that Australians should consider going. Essentially it happens where, in some part of the world, you have a listed terrorist organisation engaging in a hostile activity or, as the Director-General of ASIO, Mr Burgess, said, an ungoverned or uncontrolled space where a terrorist organisation is operating. For understandable reasons, those are very dangerous places and we don't want Australians going there.

Declared areas have only been put in place twice, as the member for Wannon noted: once in 2014 in relation to Syria and then again in 2018 in relation to Iraq. So, when we consider things that the member for Wannon properly described as being extraordinary, we should take some comfort and some confidence from the fact that these measures are only being used when it is necessary that they be put in place to keep Australians safe.

There have been a handful of charges made under these provisions and, I believe, only one conviction. But, where these provisions need to be used, it will certainly be to ensure that Australians are safe—and this is the second direction in which these provisions work—from the potential that someone has gone and been in an area that is dominated to some extent by a terrorist organisation, engaged in hostile activity and been involved in the activity or otherwise been affected or influenced by that activity, with the possible outcome that they return to Australia and present a risk to our safety and security.

I know through the committee process that I was also a part of, through the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, that we had expert civil society organisations come and present to us about the nature of this legislation and the framework that it puts in place. That's legitimate. As the member for Wannon noted, that's how our system of parliamentary democracy, including our parliamentary committee system, works at its best—making sure that we do apply scrutiny to measures that inevitably infringe on the rights of individuals. These measures do limit the ability for an Australian to move freely about the world. We don't want that to be the case in circumstances that are anything other than extraordinary. That's why these measures have been used very sparingly and only in those most extreme circumstances.

The civil society organisations that I talk about, like the Human Rights Commission and the Law Council of Australia, legitimately asked questions about how the framework operates. They have made observations to us about some parallel frameworks. In the case of how the equivalent framework works in the United Kingdom, it was closely based on what Australia put in place. We should take some pride in that, in the sense that we've made a contribution to the way that other countries also protect their citizens, but there have been concerns raised about the way in which the framework operates to acknowledge that there might be some legitimate reasons for an Australian citizen to be in a declared area. The regime already has a set of identified exceptions, but it was brought to the attention of the intelligence and security committee that further consideration could be given as to whether or not those exceptions are as broad and flexible as they might need to be. I understand why the intelligence and security committee has made a recommendation that the government give further consideration to that.

The committee has also made a recommendation about the application of a grace period. As the member for Wannon noted, the way that this particular framework operates is that, when a declaration is made, it literally becomes criminal for an Australian to go to or remain in that area from that time unless they have one of the limited defined reasons or exceptions for being there. The United Kingdom framework does have a grace period that is mindful of the fact that, when you go from not being a declared area to being a declared area overnight, there might be people who happen to be there already or someone who is en route to that place in a way where it's not reasonable for them to understand that it has become declared in a short period of time. So the operation of a grace period is not unworthy of consideration. The recommendation of the committee is that the government give some consideration to that. That has been the way that the UK framework has operated.

In essence, this is a measure that has been in place now for some period of time. It was put in place by the previous government. I know that the member for McPherson—who was in the chair before you, Deputy Speaker



Vamvakinou—had some involvement in that. We acknowledge that work. It is something that Australians expect the parliament as a whole, the government and non-government members to work on in a collegiate way. That doesn't mean it's uncontested. That doesn't mean it's unexamined or that it goes without a healthy amount of scrutiny and sometimes even disagreement. But it does mean that, as much as possible, particularly in areas like this—because they are so grave and because they can be so fraught—we bring to that conversation the appropriate level of sobriety and reasonableness.

To conclude and to pick up on what the member for Wannon said about the change in the threat level that was announced by the director-general of ASIO recently, the way that we conduct ourselves on these matters and the way that leaders across the community, particularly legislators and parliamentarians, conduct themselves on these issues matters. The way we talk about them matters. When there are circumstances that are fraught and febrile and there is concern and distress in the community, it's our obligation—all of us—to talk about these things in a way that is measured, considerate and compassionate.

I think the contribution that the deputy chair made before was in that vein. He is right to examine these matters and to have views. They won't always be completely in sync with the government of the day. That kind of contestability is essential to making sure that our decisions have the highest integrity. But, nevertheless, he made that contribution with his characteristic reasonableness and evenness of tone. I think we all know, after some of the circumstances that have been characteristic of 2024, that we need more of that. We need to make sure that, if we want peacefulness, harmony and social inclusion, all of our conduct contributes to that. Certainly our conduct in this place—the tone, the substance and the manner, as well as the respect that we have for one another—is a form of leadership that the community wants to see and can thereby replicate in the way that they approach these things. That's in all of our interests.

**Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (12:42):** I thank the member for Fremantle for his kind words. I return the serve and thank him and the member for Bruce, in particular, and also the chair for their service on the committee. It is arguably, I believe, the most important committee in this parliament. It's been a privilege and an honour for me to serve alongside those three gentlemen, and I wish them well in their future endeavours.

We all know, and often say, that Australia is facing the most geopolitically unstable period since 1945. There doesn't seem to be any difference of opinion on that issue, and, in fact, that goes for the entire world. We've seen war in Europe. We are seeing a war in the Middle East. We have domestic conflicts and revolutions across the Americas, Africa and the Indo-Pacific. Australia remains totally unequipped to contend with the grave national security threats posed by those who would do us harm. Just this month the Director-General of Security raised Australia's terror threat level from possible to probable, highlighting the growing lack of social cohesion, the growing extremism and both physical and digital vulnerabilities.

The government, intelligence, Defence and law enforcement agencies, who are tasked with protecting Australians, must be equipped with the tools that they need. This legislation, building on the coalition's strong record in government, provides just that. The declared areas provisions we're debating today were inserted into the Criminal Code in 2014, through the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Bill 2014. At the time of the passage of that legislation, the Australian Labor Party, the Australian Greens and various Independents and crossbenchers did not immediately come to the table. The Greens, in particular, were ardent in their opposition. These are the same Greens who have joined the rally cries of Hamas terrorists today, the same Greens who have encouraged the vandalism of war memorials, the same Greens who have made it their policy to break down Australia's borders and international alliances, the same Greens who have fuelled deplorable antisemitism and hate and the same Greens that this Labor government want to empower with seats on the PJCIS and on the proposed defence joint standing committee—in what is quickly emerging as a radical coalition of the left.

The provisions in this legislation have been used to declare areas twice in both 2014 and 2018. The areas declared were al-Raqqa Province in Syria and the Mosul district in Ninewa Province in Iraq. In Syria, a civil war devolved into a conglomeration of proxy conflicts, tribalistic terror and a fight between Assad and the rebels desperately clambering for power. In Iraq, the Islamic State terror group sought to destabilise democratic progress in Iraq and across the Middle East. Those travelling to these locations outside of legitimate and official humanitarian, diplomatic or military reasons had no reason to travel to these locations. Despite conflict in Ukraine and across the Middle East, as well as increasing tensions and armed conflict across Africa, Asia and South America, there are no current declared areas listed under this legislation.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security has reviewed and reported on the declared areas provisions on three occasions—in 2018, 2021 and now 2024. On the first two occasions the committee recommended that the provisions be extended. This year a third review tabled this week—in fact, just now—recommended that the bill be passed with a review before the powers sunset in 2027. I think all members would agree that that sunset is vitally important. As the member for Wannon indicated, no-one wants to see these

powers go for a minute longer than they are necessary. The aim of these reviews would be to clarify and strengthen the safeguards, protocols and penalties applicable to those powers which can be exercised by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The declared area offence was designed to fill a crucial gap in the disruption and prosecution of returning foreign terrorist fighters, to deter Australians from travelling to these hostile locations and to break the chain of radicalisation. The Director-General of Security Mike Burgess highlighted the need for a declared area provision in this legislation when he said:

If we look at our security environment and what's happening globally, we continue to keep a close eye on developments in Afghanistan, further into the Middle East and in Africa. We could well see the need to have the government call on this in terms of our toolkit to respond to the terrorist threat in the future. It's a very real possibility.

This legislation is essential for the peace and prosperity of our country. It prevents Australian lives being lost at home and abroad and it prevents one avenue for radicalisation and organised crime. But this legislation is only effective if a competent government exercises its powers appropriately, effectively and swiftly. We must see these powers exercised as a matter of urgency as the conflict in the Middle East continues to escalate.

In particular, the case is mounting to list southern Lebanon as a declared area. When I talk about southern Lebanon, I'm talking about the demilitarised zone south of the Litani River, consistent with the UN Security Council's Resolution 1701. During a PJCIS hearing on 20 May, I asked our security agencies whether it was time to proscribe areas like southern Lebanon under these powers and whether any consideration had been given to this proposal. ASIO advised at the time that while no formal requests for advice had been received on any particular areas it would consider worthy of listing, there were general conversations occurring within government.

As we speak right now, the security situation deteriorates in the north of Israel, and there is a very real risk of a conflagration in Israel and in Lebanon. I would implore the government to look at designating the southern Lebanon area I mentioned earlier as a declared area. Southern Lebanon is controlled by Hezbollah, an organisation which is funded by Iran. They have made very clear what their intentions are, and those intentions are to attack Israel and wipe Israel off the face of the map. When they talk about 'from the river to the sea', that is exactly what they mean: wiping Israel off the face of the map and killing every Israeli in Israel. It would be very prudent and timely for this government to consider a declaration in southern Lebanon to prevent Australians from travelling to that area to take up arms, and I would implore the government to look very seriously at making that declaration and doing it yesterday—as soon as possible. As tensions continue to rise, particularly in the north of Israel and southern Lebanon, it is appropriate to make that declaration, and I urge the government to do it now.

**Ms DANIEL (Goldstein) (12:51):** Lawmakers need to think very carefully before restricting the human rights and freedom of movement of our citizens, and I don't think building in restrictions on a 'just in case' basis, with no specific reasoning or circumstance in mind, stacks up. As security agencies have recently announced, we may be in an environment of heightened terrorist threat, but the Director-General of ASIO himself, Mike Burgess, says the most likely perpetrator is someone acting alone and with no planning. Just yesterday, on *Insiders* on the ABC, he said: 'Remember the most likely terrorist attack in this country right now is an individual that will go to violence with little or no warning and actually little or no planning. It could just be a reaction to language they've heard from someone, including a politician.' This legislation, the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024, will not prevent that kind of attack. I am far from naive or blind to the geopolitical risks affecting the world and the associated risks to Australia. However, governments should not get attached to this kind of restrictive law.

In June 2014, Islamic State, a truly ghastly and gruesome militant terrorist group, took advantage of the Middle East's geopolitical instability and launched a coordinated surprise offensive into Syria and Iraq. Raqqa and Mosul quickly fell. Islamic State captured about a third of Syria and 40 per cent of Iraq. On cue, US led coalition air strikes began. Three years later, Islamic State had lost 95 per cent of the territory it had gained, and the risk it posed to Australia likely diminished correspondingly.

As one assesses the merits of a bill or law, the historical context in which it was drafted must be taken into account. When the Abbott government introduced the declared areas provisions in the wake of this surprise offensive, Australia was facing an urgent security threat of ideologically motivated returning foreign fighters. But history has moved on. Islamic State is no longer the target of this legislation. The declared areas provisions have become an anachronism in a changed geopolitical landscape. Their basis of legitimacy is reduced and is no longer proportionate to the threat we face today—no identified enemy and no particular urgent threat. If there is a specific threat to justify this legislation, the government should articulate it.

In the decade following the enactment of declared areas powers into law, only four Australians have been charged and two area declarations made—al-Raqqa Province in Syria in 2014 and Mosul district in Iraq in 2018—both in

relation to the now defeated Islamic State. The low number of prohibited areas declared using these powers reflect their judicious use, but their underlying potential to be abused or applied excessively remains. I note and accept the government's claim that the declared areas powers led to a reduction in Australians travelling overseas to fight for militant groups and a reduction in those returning. This law may have been effective and legitimate for that specific circumstance, but today not a single area declaration has been enforced for almost five years. The government argues, though, that retaining these powers is essential for ensuring rapid response time in the case of a hypothetical future conflict. Yet, if there is such a circumstance, legislation could be rapidly enacted. Indeed, in the term of this parliament, we have seen legislation tabled and passed within hours on occasion. In principle, therefore, I question whether a hypothetical is sufficient to justify laws that enable a minister to curtail the rights and freedoms of Australians at the stroke of a pen.

Based on the human rights framework of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in April this year, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights reported that the provisions were 'likely to be incompatible with multiple human rights'. While national security can be used as a basis for curtailing civic freedoms, it is questionable whether an unspecified hypothetical future scenario is sufficient to meet this standard. The committee concluded that the declared areas provisions are potentially inconsistent with six human rights: right to equality and non-discrimination, right to a fair trial, freedom of movement, liberty, life and security of person.

The ICCPR guidance considers limitation on human rights to be justifiable where a 'legitimate objective' is substantiated. What legitimate objective is the basis on which the government proposes we vote on extending these powers today? The government owes the Australian people more rigorous substantiation than it has provided—an answer to why retaining the power for a minister to abruptly restrict our freedoms continues to be necessary. The potential for conflict is not a good enough one. Principle is important in politics, and, in principle, this standard has not been met.

Due to the sunset provisions of the 44th Parliament voted to enshrine in this law, the 45th, 46th and now the 47th have each been presented with the question of whether to extend the declared areas sunset clause another three years down the track. The member for Wannon and the member for Fisher have both articulated the need for a sunset clause. So I ask: What is our long-term strategy with this law? Do each of the major parties intend to simply continue to roll over that sunset clause into perpetuity? If the Minister for Foreign Affairs insists these powers are proportionate to our current threat environment, despite the noted views of the human rights committee and the Australian Human Rights Commission, then they should be tabled and established into permanency. The powers should be rightly subjected to parliamentary and public scrutiny to determine whether they are indeed legitimate and proportionate. Our current apparently bipartisan strategy of kicking the can down the road and waiting until it's a different government's problem amounts to poor legislative practice. In a parliamentary sitting week, in which we're also debating legislation that would strengthen the Australian Human Rights Commission, it occurs to me that we should probably start taking their advice seriously, too.

With the above in mind, I also recognise the volatile and unpredictable security situation evolving in the Middle East. As the events following 7 October have shown, overseas conflict has the very real potential to aggravate tensions in Australian society. I have immense respect for the competence of our intelligent professionals and the advice they provide to government, particularly in cases where they judge it necessary to raise our national terrorism threat level, but, if there's a specific threat requiring legislative action, I would be more than prepared to consider it and give it the attention it deserves. In the 48th Parliament, the government must demonstrate greater integrity over this law that we are debating today, which, no doubt, will pass this and the other chamber. The Australian people must be given greater substantiation than we've been presented with. If the government has something to offer on that front, I would be more than willing to hear it.

**Mr KATTER** (Kennedy) (13:00): Ibn Khaldun, the eminent Arabian historian, said in 1365 that he was very surprised that Jerusalem was still predominantly, overwhelmingly, Christian, and that Palestine also was overwhelmingly Christian. How come it's not Christian now? What happened? Constantinople was the centre of the Orthodox Christian religion. About a third of Christians in the world, at the time, were under the auspices of the Christian church in Constantinople. It was the centre, the capital, of Christianity, outside of Rome. Why is it now a Muslim city? We must ask ourselves.

There is an historical constant here. These people come in, they take over and they completely destroy the faith and the values of the people that were there. Anyone can read the history books, if you doubt me for one moment. These people, for 600 or 700 years, took 50,000 Christian slaves a year. If you doubt me, I will say that, if you knew your history, you would know that Peter the Great and Suleiman the Magnificent were the predominant figures—the two outstanding figures—of the Dark Ages. Peter the Great's wife had been a Muslim Christian slave. Suleiman the Magnificent's main wife—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou):** The member for Kennedy is speaking on the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024.

**Mr KATTER:** That is correct—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Would you return to the bill.

**Mr KATTER:** and the terrorists that we are talking about are people of the Muslim faith in the Middle East. I make the point that it's 'Middle East', in inverted commas, because I really think all the people from Indonesia that I know are more Christian than the supposed Christians here in Australia. They are the complete opposite of what we're seeing from the Middle East. I feel sorry for the Middle Eastern people, but they have a constant paradigm in history.

Suleiman the Magnificent had a lot of wives, but he had one wife that he was really in love with. The wives of both these men were Christian slaves. They were very great love affairs. They were very great stories of romance. If you doubt that they were taking 50,000 a year, then how come both the two outstanding people of the Middle Ages were Christian slaves that the Muslims had taken? I emphasise that the Indonesians have been wonderful neighbours to us. They've exemplified far more Christianity than we Australians have.

We're not talking about a diaspora here. The Jews were very prominent throughout many countries in Europe, which led to the terrible pogroms, hatred and everything else that occurred under the Nazis and others. But that was a diaspora; they had been forced out and they spread out. Now, they were persecuted to a point. You say, 'They took this land off them!' What the hell would you have done if you were a Jew in Europe at the start of the 1940s? I'll tell you what: as an Australian, I don't hold my head up very high here, because the ship of shame carrying 700 Jewish refugees landed in England, and they said, 'We don't want you because you're Jews.' They landed in Brazil and they said, 'We don't want you because you're Jews.' They landed in America and they said, 'We don't want you because you're Jews.' They landed in the Caribbean and they said, 'We don't want you because you're Jews.' To the shame of this nation—an empty country—we said, 'We don't want you because you're Jews.' There were some fairly ugly comments by the prime ministers at the time.

Where were they to go? They went to their traditional historic homeland. They returned there. There were a lot of Jews in what we now call Israel, at the time. They weren't anywhere near the predominant group of people there, but they had to go somewhere, and that's where they ended up. The British had to send their convicts somewhere. That's how we started.

I want to move on. Today we have the Middle East, and I use the term 'Middle East' because Muslims from other parts like Indonesia have been very wonderful people, in my opinion. I can give you a lot of evidence to that effect. From the Middle East—and Tony Burke has been made immigration minister, in one of the most extraordinary decisions I have ever seen in 50 years in politics. To put a person in as immigration minister who has 25 per cent of his electorate Muslim—they're 25 per cent of his electorate and they put him as immigration minister. I can tell you, this country doesn't want any immigrants now—54,000 families can't find a home in this country, yet the government continues to bring in half a million people.

They keep emphasising migration. Migration is only a small part of the people coming into this country. The really big slice are the student visas. I ran into a family two years ago—they were very nice people. I said, 'Did you only recently come to Australia?' and they said, 'Yes, we've been here only three months.' I said, 'What was your visa?' They said, 'It was a student visa I came in on.' I said, 'How about your whole family?' They said, 'If you come in as a student visa, you can bring your family in.' Don't talk about migration and humanitarian people coming to Australia—let's have a look at the student visas. Do they go home? No, they don't. Get in a taxi in Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne and ask the bloke what subject he's doing at university. The last time I asked, he was doing hospitality—one unit of hospitality. He looked to me to be about 50 years—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou):** The member for Kennedy may wish to return to the bill. The member for Kennedy may wish to direct his—

**Mr KATTER:** Madam Speaker Vamvakinou, with all due respect, the bill is about bringing people from the Middle East to this country. It's an area of the world that is fraught with murderous, internecine warfare, continuously. And at this very moment, Madam Speaker, for your information, there is a war going on in Yemen with massive losses of life. There is a war going on in Nigeria with unannounced but massive losses of life. There is war going on in Saudi Arabia still, with massive losses of life. That is what this bill is about. You're bringing those people who for whatever reasons seem to have a particular propensity to kill each other when there's no-one else around for them to kill. You're bringing those people as a group into this country.

Let us be positive and say, 'Surely, if you're going to bring people to this country, they should be people that we can integrate into our community in this country.' So it would be quite reasonable that you would seek people that come from a democracy—India's a democracy—and people that have rule of law—India has rule of law.

Christianity—you may not believe in God or anything like that, or any Christian rituals, but as a person belonging to a Western democracy, you have this basic belief that you have to look after your fellow man and you have to make the world a better place. That is the Christian message. It's very simple, it's very clear-cut, and a hell of a lot of people ascribe to it even though they don't believe in God or a deity. I would say the minimum criteria would be you'd have democracy, rule of law, industrial awards, Christianity and egalitarian traditions. The Philippines meets all of those criteria and Poland meets all of those criteria

But they're not the people you're bringing in! You're bringing in people that have no democracy, no rule of law, no industrial awards, no Christianity and no egalitarian traditions! And you've just made the person who is at the mercy of this migrant group—25 per cent of his electorate is Muslim—the immigration minister. The poor beggar, I'd hate to be him coming through to the next election. I tell you what, I wouldn't like to be running for the ALP in the next election when the Australian people get a full understanding of what has happened here. There needs to be some explanation as to why the person put in charge of immigration has got an electorate which is 25 per cent Muslim.

Let me just go back to the Muslim thing again. There are two families in North Queensland who are close friends of mine. One of them was elected a very popular representative on the Cairns Regional Council. He's a lovely bloke, a fabulous bloke and is loved by everyone. You'd say, 'That bloke's a real Christian,' not in the religious sense of the word but in the sense that he's a real good bloke. He'd look after you if you were in trouble. A lot of people come to this country and they integrate into this country. My own hometown had many Afghan people who were camel drivers and became part of the diaspora that we had in rural Australia.

I'll conclude on these notes. Gaza was an area that was set aside after the 1967 Six-Day War. As a result of that war, a lot of Muslim people ended up in that area, which Israel occupied. It was part of Egypt, and Israel occupied it. Egypt invaded Israel. Egypt caused the war—Egypt were totally responsible for the war and they lost the war. The Israelis found themselves in occupation of Gaza, which they didn't want. In 2005 the Israelis walked out of Gaza, and Hamas took control.

Why did Hamas send people across the border to murder people in a peace-loving little country next door? They haven't invaded any other countries. Why would you go in and murder 1,200 people? That's what they do! They murdered 2000 in the Twin Towers in America. How many times do we have to have mass murders before we start deciding there's a bit of a problem here? They picked the fight. It's like if people in Berlin had complained about their treatment by the Russians—you picked the fight, you did the damage and you terrified and destroyed and tortured these people. In this case, unlike the Germans, they publicised it! They publicised their atrocities! There are few instances in human history where people run around publicising their atrocities. In this case they did.

This nation is on the cusp of a change. There are over a million of those people in this country now. If you want to bring people in from other places, I'm your man. Nothing against the religion because the people I've dealt with mostly in my life from Indonesia and those areas have been wonderful people. I couldn't speak more highly of them. I come from a town that had a very significant old Afghan population who integrated and became part of our community.

But the people that are here now are living in definable areas, and it appears to me they have no interest in moving out. You have the Sikh people who come to Australia, and they immediately move out and they will turn a block of open rubbish country into a prolific farm that is contributing to the Australian economy. They don't get any other people to do the work; they do the work themselves. They make this a richer country.

Please, if you've got a choice—and we have a choice! We're a self-governing country; we've got a choice—surely you choose the people that will integrate harmoniously and contribute to the wealth of this nation. (*Time expired*)

**Ms TINK** (North Sydney) (13:15): I want to start my speech today by drawing our country's attention to the fact that the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024 impacts the rights of Australian citizens, and it impacts the rights of all Australian citizens. For this reason, I think that the bill requires scrutiny and deserves true scrutiny. As a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, I want to particularly draw attention to the human rights concerns raised by the committee in relation to this bill and previous bills dealing with declared areas provisions.

Unlike what we just heard from the member for Kennedy, this is not about people entering our country. This is about people leaving our country and travelling to various parts around the world. Ultimately, the view of the committee when we reviewed this legislation was set out in the *Human rights scrutiny report: report 3 of 2024*. It found: 'It has not been demonstrated that the extension of these provisions is compatible with human rights.' The human rights raised by the committee previously in relation to these provisions remain a concern—namely, that the declared areas provisions do not contain sufficient safeguards or flexibility to constitute a proportionate limit on rights and that questions regarding the necessity of the measure have not been addressed.

To be clear, I recognise—and the committee absolutely recognised—that this bill aims to achieve an important objective, that being the protection of Australia's national security interests. The declared areas provisions provide the minister with the power to declare certain areas of a foreign country where a listed terrorist organisation is engaging in a hostile activity, making it an offence to enter or stay in the area without a legitimate reason. The intention of those powers is to enable the disruption and prosecution of returning foreign terrorist fighters and their associates. These provisions are ultimately intended to deter Australians, including families, from travelling to dangerous conflict areas where listed terrorist organisations are engaging in hostile activities and to protect against the possibility of terrorist attacks in Australia. And, to be clear, I wholeheartedly support those intentions and that ambition. However, while this is a legitimate and vital objective, particularly in light of our recently upgraded terrorism threat level, it should not come at the cost of fundamental human rights. We in this place must critically consider whether the measures outlined are proportionate to the stated objective.

The declared area offence provisions engage and limit a number of human rights, including the rights to equality, nondiscrimination, a fair trial, freedom of movement and liberty. When this bill was originally passed in 2014, the Australian Labor Party, the Australian Greens, Independents and various legal, human rights and other interest groups expressed concern with the new offence of entering declared areas. In particular, concerns were raised regarding the limitation on the freedom of movement and the onus of the evidential burden being placed on the defendant through the use of the exceptions to the offence.

Human rights issues were again raised by various interest groups during the 2021 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security review in relation to the declared areas provisions. Again, these concerns questioned the need for the provisions and raised the possible human rights limitations on freedom of movement and otherwise legitimate activities. I don't believe these concerns have been adequately addressed.

In its most recent report, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights reiterated again the concerns that it had raised regarding human rights in relation to the previous bills dealing with the declared areas provisions and drew these again to the attention of the Attorney-General and the wider parliament. In summarising its concerns, the committee stated:

The committee has previously found that while the provisions likely pursue a legitimate objective (namely, that of seeking to prevent terrorist acts), there were questions whether the provisions were necessary, and, in particular, the measures did not appear to be proportionate, and therefore were likely to be incompatible with a range of human rights ... As such, the committee considers that it has not been demonstrated that the extension of these provisions is compatible with human rights.

I also want to note that the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, in its 2021 review of the provisions, recommended that the Criminal Code Act 1995 be amended to allow Australian citizens to request an exemption to travel to a declared area for reasons not listed in the Criminal Code but which are not otherwise illegitimate under Australian law. Ultimately, the government then did not support the exception that was recommended. Thus there may be a number of innocent reasons that a person may want to enter or remain in a declared area that currently would not bring a person within the scope of the legitimate purpose defence.

Despite attempts by the parliamentary joint committee, despite the findings of the inquiry and despite the submissions that were received from others engaged across the human rights movement, the government has not amended this legislation. And while, in times when our nation is facing fear, it is understandable that we will move quickly to adopt legislation that we feel protects us, surely at a time when we have the opportunity to seriously review something and assess whether we got it right the first time is the moment we should be ensuring that we fix any mistakes that may have previously been built into the legislation.

As highlighted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, there is currently a clear lack of sufficient safeguards or flexibility to constitute a proportionate limit on rights as seen in this legislation. For that reason, and as a member of the committee, I cannot support the bill in its current form.

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Attorney-General and Cabinet Secretary) (13:21): I thank my parliamentary colleagues for their contributions to the debate on the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Declared Areas) Bill 2024. The Albanese government is committed to protecting the Australian community against the real and evolving threat of terrorism. The declared areas offence in section 119.2 of the Criminal Code Act 1995, which is currently due to sunset on 7 September 2024, is part of the Australian government's efforts to stop Australians becoming foreign fighters. Where an area is declared by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, it is an offence to enter or remain in that area without a legitimate reason.

A declared area is a place where terrorist organisations are engaging in hostile activity. There are very few legitimate reasons for entering such an area. The offence recognises this by providing a carefully targeted range of exceptions. Although there are currently no areas declared, these provisions remain a necessary component of our framework in the current threat environment. The offence plays a role in the disruption and prosecution of returning foreign fighters and their associates.

The bill would extend the offence in section 119.2 for three years to 7 September 2027. A three-year extension reflects the continued appropriateness of the provisions and is consistent with previous recommendations made by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, including in its report on the bill. This will be the third time the provision has been extended. The bill would also provide that section 119.3, the provision under which that Minister for Foreign Affairs can declare an area for the purpose of the offence in section 119.2, also ceases to have an effect on 7 September 2027. This will align the relevant declaration and offence provisions in the criminal code.

The government welcomes the report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security on the bill and its unanimous recommendation that the bill be passed. The committee made three recommendations for the government to consider following passage of the bill and before the next sunset of the provisions in 2027. The first is that the government consider reviewing the list of legitimate purpose exceptions for entering or remaining in a declared area in subsection 119.2(3) of the Criminal Code. This includes considering whether any additional exceptions should be prescribed by regulations. The government agrees with this recommendation. The government will consider reviewing the list of legitimate-purpose exceptions and will consult agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

The second recommendation is:

... that ... the Government consider an additional exception to the offence of entering, or remaining in, an area that has been declared under section 119.3 of the Criminal Code. The exception would apply where:

- the person is already travelling to, or is already in, the area on the day on which it becomes a declared area, and
- the person leaves the area as soon as practicable, but no later than the period of one month beginning with that day.

The government agrees with this recommendation. The government will consider the proposed additional exception to the offence of entering or remaining in a declared area and will consult agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

The third recommendation is:

... that ... the Government consider reviewing the existing safeguards on the Minister for Foreign Affairs' discretion to declare an area under section 119.3 of the Criminal Code. This would include reviewing the Minister's protocol and the list of factors to be taken into consideration by the Minister for Foreign Affairs before declaring an area.

The government agrees with this recommendation. The government will consider reviewing the safeguards that apply to the Minister for Foreign Affairs' discretion to declare an area and will consult agencies and other relevant stakeholders. The government accepts these three recommendations and will consider these matters following passage of the bill and before the next sunset of the provisions in 2027.

The committee also recommended:

... that the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor review Division 119 of the Criminal Code, with particular attention to the declared areas provisions and their ongoing necessity within the broader counter-terrorism legislative framework.

The committee recommended that the monitor report its findings in relation to the declared areas offence by 7 January 2027. The government agrees in principle with this recommendation. The government is supportive of this recommendation, noting that the monitor can initiate its own review into this matter.

Finally, the committee recommended that the bill be passed. The government accepts this recommendation. The Intelligence Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which is currently before the parliament, would empower the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security to review these provisions before they sunset, ensuring that due consideration is given to the continued utility of the provisions. This bill reflects the government's commitment to protecting Australians against the enduring threat of terrorism. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Third Reading

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Attorney-General and Cabinet Secretary) (13:28): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Australian Red Cross: 110th Anniversary

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (13:29): I am honoured to help celebrate the 110th anniversary of the Australian Red Cross. Since its founding on 13 August 1914, the Red Cross has been a pillar of support and compassion, providing

critical assistance during disasters and promoting dignity for all. In my electorate of Leichhardt, the Mossman branch has been an essential part of our community from the very beginning. They started 110 years ago as one of the founding branches. During Cyclone Jasper, earlier this year, they excelled in their efforts, providing vital relief for the Wujal Wujal community and the surrounding areas and ensuring that everyone had access to essential resources. The tireless work of the Mossman branch and the entire Red Cross network exemplifies the spirit of humanity and of service.

As we mark this incredible milestone, we should acknowledge the dedication of the 16,000 members and volunteers who make the Red Cross's mission possible. I encourage everyone to support the Red Cross in whatever way they can. This milestone is as good a time as any to donate or volunteer, to help support the invaluable work of the Red Cross.

Happy 110th birthday for tomorrow, Australian Red Cross. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to helping all those in need.

### **Makin Electorate: Torrens Valley Christian School**

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (13:30): Last Friday, I had the pleasure of representing education minister Jason Clare at the official opening of the new 11.7 million multipurpose two-storey primary school building at Torrens Valley Christian School in Hope Valley. The new building comprises 15 classrooms, a STEM room, a music room, staff offices, and staff and student amenities. From its humble beginnings as an independent coeducational school with just 14 students in 1980, under the tutelage of Mrs Jenny Sexton, Torrens Valley Christian School has today grown to almost 600 students, from foundation to year 12, thanks to the vision and drive of the school founders and of the early principals Peter van der Schoor, Bob Stunell and Andrew Mackenzie and their leadership teams.

As the member for Makin, I have often visited the school and noted the commitment of the last three principals, Nigel Bennett, Julie Prattis and, currently, Emily Brookes, all of whom have made a unique and personal contribution to the school's ongoing development and its future plans. My congratulations and commendations go to all who contributed towards the modern, well-designed new building, including the school board, the architects and the builders. I know the new facilities will make a real difference to the education and development of current and future students at Torrens Valley Christian School.

### **Interest Rates**

**Ms WATSON-BROWN** (Ryan) (13:32): There was a collective sigh of relief last week when the RBA held off an interest rate hike. But, for so many, this is just a blip in their stress levels—a tiny, symbolic reprieve. Almost two million mortgage holders across Australia are in extreme mortgage stress. Wages are static, sitting at 2009 levels, while everything else goes up. This is untenable and, again, punishes everyday Australians.

The prevailing thesis that inflation will be tackled with interest rate rises simply doesn't stack up. Everyday people are not getting nice pay rises or jet skis. They have no discretionary income to throw around. They hardly have enough to survive. So raising interest rates only penalises those who are already doing it the toughest. It does nothing to curb inflation. It just sucks billions away from mortgage holders to the big banks—a huge transfer of wealth to the banks from everyday, hardworking people. The biggest drivers of inflation right now are rents and house prices. If the government were serious about tackling inflation, they'd freeze rents, stop tax handouts to property investors and get back to the business of building houses. Helping everyday people is the key to tackling inflation, but instead the government doles out more pain to those doing it tough, while giving huge handouts to wealthy property developers and corporations, who are actually driving this crisis.

### **International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica**

**Ms STANLEY** (Werriwa—Government Whip) (13:33): On 11 July 2024, I attended the commemoration for the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica. This year marks the first commemoration since the UN designated 11 July as the annual International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica earlier this year. In the moving event, the lives of those lost were remembered, with the vehement hope that such atrocities do not happen again. The event included speeches from Amir Sahinovic, the honorary consul of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sydney, survivors of the attacks and students from the Bosnian Ethnic School, as well as Imam Imran Bahtanovic. Unfortunately, as evidenced by conflicts since then and those that are happening all around the world today, peace still seems so far away.

Eight thousand three hundred and seventy-two were killed in one day. They were basically men aged 12 to 77. It's sobering to note that to list their names would take almost 12 hours. During the ceremony, we watched 29 years later as the burial of 14 more victims in Srebrenica was taking place. They'd been identified by family DNA evidence. This brings closure for their families and a place to grieve the loss.



I appreciate the opportunity to attend the commemoration and provide my condolences and support to all those who attended.

### **Religious Discrimination Bill**

**Mr HAWKE** (Mitchell) (13:35): In a case of taking out the trash on Friday, the Prime Minister has breached another election promise—to faith communities this time—by indicating that the government will no longer pursue religious discrimination legislation. These vital protections are absolutely needed, and it's been a matter for parliament for many years now that both sides committed at elections to put in place protections from discrimination for people of faith. We have protections for discrimination for so many different things in Australia but no protections for faith communities.

The vital laws which were promised by the Albanese government have been junked quietly in the middle of the Olympics, and this important promise to faith communities has been broken. It is a travesty. It is a travesty that the Prime Minister sought to blame the coalition by saying they provided legislation to the coalition 'a long time ago'—three months—and there is no bipartisan support. I can say to the Prime Minister there absolutely is bipartisan support religious discrimination laws. We put the bill into the House. It was the Labor Party that voted against it while we were in government, and it was their commitment to do the bill again. Now we approach the next election, and the Prime Minister has revealed that he will break his election commitment to faith communities around Australia—and I think it is to their detriment.

When we are going through the most unprecedented time of discrimination in terms of faith because of the war in Gaza, we need these protections in place. We need them in place now, and this parliament should have come together to legislate them. This broken promise is a serious breach of faith for faith based communities in Australia today.

### **Kambah: 50th Anniversary**

**Mr DAVID SMITH** (Bean—Government Whip) (13:36): This year marks 50 years of the great Tuggeranong suburb of Kambah. To celebrate this anniversary, the Tuggeranong Arts Centre is hosting an exhibition exploring the suburb's history through works created by local artists, archival images and documents, and artefacts from residents of Kambah. The project is an initiative of Dr Louise Curham, a local resident who describes herself as an archivist, media artist and researcher. The project continues Louise's work on the Kambah People's Map, first created in 2023. The exhibition includes work by visual artists Leonie Andrews, Dominic Bahmann, Ian Marr, Cathy Morrison, Bec Shaeffer and Barack Zelig, along with paintings by Namadji School students, celebrating Kambah, from its beloved sheep to Canberra's iconic bus shelters. Other materials included in the display are community photographs taken by Lothar Reiss and historic photographs, documents and archived community cookbooks from the ACT Heritage Library.

Kambah 50 opens this Friday 16 August and will run until 12 October. It's one of many events to celebrate Kambah's story so far. I encourage all Canberrans and members of the house to take the time to visit what should be an iconic but nostalgic look into Kambah's history.

### **Fowler Electorate: Braeside Hospital**

**Ms LE** (Fowler) (13:38): I had the opportunity to work with HammondCare volunteers Sinilia Radivojevic and her friend Rebecca on the weekend at the Braeside Hospital for palliative care in Prairiewood in my electorate of Fowler. It was a challenging but rewarding morning as we pushed around 'the trolley of love', as Sinilia called it, to offer patients and their families a cuppa, biscuits and a bit of love-heart marshmallows to comfort them in these most difficult moments. Braeside Hospital was initially set up to provide support for patients dying from cancer. Today the hospital is open to anyone requiring palliative care. Quentin, whose father-in-law is going through palliative care, told me how much the staff and volunteers had added joy, providing extremely high care for his father-in-law. He couldn't speak of them highly enough.

Volunteers like Sinilia have been paramount to the work at Braeside Hospital, and I want to thank her for the work she's doing in our community as well as the many other volunteers, who give up their valuable time to service our community there. But they need more support: support such as volunteers attending to support pushing the trolley of love as well as clothes, jumpers, jumpers, pyjamas and blankets. That's what Quentin wants for his father-in-law as well. I want to take this opportunity to really highlight the amazing work that staff nurses are doing to support those in need at Braeside Hospital in Prairiewood.

### **Williams, Ms Kylie**

**Dr REID** (Robertson) (13:39): I rise to acknowledge an outstanding nurse in my electorate of Robertson, Kylie Williams, who has been named a 2024 finalist for Nurse of the Year in the NSW Health Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards. Kylie is a clinical nurse consultant working at both Gosford and Wyong hospitals, with her

work focused on mental health inpatient units. Kylie has been nominated for this recognition because of her leadership within the mental health team, which fosters a cohesive environment characterised by trust, collaboration and mutual respect. Kylie prioritises the value and support of each member, promoting inclusivity through effective communication and decision-making. Kylie has also spearheaded the comprehensive implementation of the Safewards model of care across all mental health units. Kylie has also developed detailed educational programs, tailored training sessions and provided sustained hands-on support, equipping staff with the necessary tools and strategies to mitigate conflicts and effectively reduce instances of seclusion and restraint.

It is clearly evident that Kylie is an outstanding nurse who goes above and beyond for her profession. Our nurses and midwives are the backbone of our healthcare system and without them hospitals and healthcare facilities would not be able to provide the phenomenal healthcare services to our communities that they do. I congratulate Kylie on this recognition, and I would like to thank her for all her work strengthening our healthcare system on the Central Coast.

### **Lyne Electorate: Sport**

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (13:41): Congratulations are in order to all the Olympic athletes, who've made Australia proud with their efforts in Paris. Athletes of the future are everywhere, and 10-year-old Tamryn Matheson has just claimed the impressive title of best overall at the 2024 Gymnastics New South Wales Country Championships and Winter Invitational in Armidale. She attained very high scores: 8.95, 8.7, 9.0 and 8.95 on the bar. There's a big future for Tamryn, who took home a silver medal for the floor and the bars, fourth place for the vault, fifth place for the beam and, of course, the best overall. I wish her all the very best.

I would also like to acknowledge and extend my congratulations to Harry Cook from Old Bar Public School and to Cooper K from Wingham Public School, who were both selected by the New South Wales state touch team to play in the national touch football championships, which will be held in October. What an extraordinary achievement for these two local boys. I thank Harry, Cooper, Tamryn and also the parents and grandparents of these young athletes for all the support they're giving. They will become our stars of the future and are having a great childhood, meeting lots of friends, getting away from the TV, and growing big and strong.

### **Darwin 9s**

**Mr GOSLING** (Solomon) (13:42): The Darwin Aussie Rules 9s footy championships were held in Marrara on the weekend. What's Aussie Rules 9s you ask? That's where we've got nine players, not 18, per field and it's not on the big, oval Aussie Rules ground; it's on a rugby field or a soccer field. It's a great form of the sport, and congratulations must go to Team Larrakia, who won the division 1 men's competition, and to Team Timor-Leste, who won the division 2 men's competition. Massive congratulations go to the 9s debutantes in the women's division, Team Darwin, who won the competition.

Deputy Speaker Claydon, did you know that Australian Rules football was a demonstration sport at the 1956 Olympics? Not many people know that. We all enjoyed watching the Olympics recently. Imagine if Aussie Rules footie was back at the Brisbane Olympics. It would be fantastic—not the big 18-a-side on the big oval but the nine-a-side on a rugby ground or a soccer ground. Our footie, Aussie Rules, is played in over 50 countries around the world. Vibrant competitions exist across the US, Canada, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. Because most of the world's sporting ovals are rectangular, this form of Aussie Rules, nine-a-side, is perfect, and the punters will love it. In the Territory we know this game well. Aussie Rules 9s—have a look.

### **Moore Electorate: Surf Lifesaving**

**Mr GOODENOUGH** (Moore—Second Deputy Speaker) (13:44): In my coastal electorate of Moore, we are proud of our active surf lifesaving community, numbering 5,000 members and two great local surf clubs, Sorrento and Mullaloo, which are both very competitive in surf sports at a national level. Our surf lifesavers provide an essential community safety service by patrolling 20 kilometres of beaches stretching between Burns Beach and Trigg. They regularly rescue beachgoers in distress and save lives.

I recently met with Rob Doherty and Andy Jones, the respective presidents of Sorrento and Mullaloo, on joining with the City of Joondalup in campaigning for a \$2 million federal contribution towards the interior fit-out of both clubs as part of the planned redevelopment. Our surf clubs are based in ageing buildings which are more than 40 years old, are too small and do not meet the contemporary standards for disabled access. The rundown change rooms, cramped surf rescue storage equipment areas, dated first-aid training rooms and limited gym facilities require refurbishment to be brought up to a modern standard of compliance. With both surf clubs, the local government and the state government all making significant project contributions, I strongly make the case for a \$2 million federal contribution towards the interior fit-out and call upon the Albanese government to commit funds in support of surf lifesaving in Western Australia. (*Time expired*)

### National Science Week

**Ms PAYNE** (Canberra) (13:46): Today is the beginning of National Science Week, and I was very pleased this morning to accompany the Minister for Industry and Science, Ed Husic, and the Chief Scientist, Dr Cathy Foley, to visit the ANU Research School of Chemistry, where the minister announced the new national science priorities. While we were there, we also had the opportunity to visit Samsara Eco, which is a start-up based at the research school led by Vanessa Vongsouthi and Matt Spence. Samsara Eco have developed a technology which can break down plastics with enzymes to be reused in other manufacturing processes. It's a technology that, if fully implemented, will mean that all types of plastic can be recycled infinitely. This is a world-changing technology being pioneered right here in Canberra.

Today I also want to congratulate the ACT scientist of the year, Dr Bjorn Sturmberg, also from the ANU and the School of Engineering. He received this award in recognition of his research on battery storage and grid integration, which will be crucial as Australians moved to EV technology. Dr Sturmberg is also the author of *Amy's Balancing Act*, a fantastic children's book teaching our youngest Australians about the transition to renewable energy. To celebrate National Science Week, I'm really proud to be partnering with Bjorn to donate a copy of this book to every primary school in my electorate of Canberra. Happy National Science Week to all. I say thank you to all of the scientist for what they do each and every day.

### Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey—Opposition Whip) (13:47): Like many, I have been transfixed by the Olympics in the last two weeks and the outstanding efforts of our Australian athletes. Naturally, we are particularly proud of those who come from our communities and, in Grey, we congratulate Leigh Hoffman, the son of proud Whyalla parents Kristen and Rene, who are probably still celebrating his historic win in Paris. Arguably the world's fastest team sprint starter, Leigh was raised in Whyalla, started cycling at 14 and won his first big event at 15. A high achiever from birth, Leigh walked when he was six months old and began running two weeks later. It's perhaps not a surprise he was a 2022 world championship gold medallist. Leigh rode second wheel in Paris to bring home the bronze in the men's teams sprint.

Another champion from Grey is Kyle Chalmers, who is no stranger to the Olympic podium or the Australian consciousness. King Kyle from Point Lincoln can almost single-handedly put Australia in the medals with his freestyle speed and in this, his third Olympics, he showed yet again what a world-class performer he is, winning two silver medals and one bronze medal.

Our women's basketball team took bronze against Belgium in a thrilling match for their seventh Olympic medal. Kadina's Steph Talbot played a major role in the hard-fought game in Paris, while Olympic debutante Isobel Borlase, whose parents are sporting legends from Grey, did some sensational work for the Opals' campaign.

Citius, Altius, Fortius: our Aussie athletes are the living embodiment of the Olympic dream.

### Spence Electorate: Women's Health Forum

**Mr BURNELL** (Spence) (13:49): Late last month, alongside the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, I was proud to be able to host a community-wide women's health forum in Elizabeth. It is great to see the minister in the chamber right now. Together we heard brave and challenging stories from throughout the north from a community ready to break taboos in women's health and fight for real change. On the night it was made clear that the culture of health care needs a major shift. Dozens of women shared the same old story of walking into a health service, often in especially severe pain, just to be told that they were overreacting, as if it's immature for women to expect anything more than painkillers and a hot water bottle despite presenting with devastating symptoms. This medical misogyny only holds my community back. For women in the north already facing barriers to specialist treatment for illnesses such as pelvic pain and endometriosis, being shut out in the first instance because of that bias simply isn't good enough.

I'd like to give a big thank you to all that attended the forum across our community and, again, to the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care for travelling to hear our stories firsthand. I am privileged to be part of a community that raise their voices to see the issues addressed and to be part of a government working to do so on the ground to produce real outcomes.

### Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games

**Mr HOGAN** (Page—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:50): The opening ceremony of the Olympics had a very unfortunate segment. That the organising committee of the Olympic Games felt it okay to mock the religious image of the Last Supper was not okay on any level. The Last Supper, or the Eucharist, marks the sacrament of the Holy Communion and a very important biblical event. I doubt very much that the committee would have considered mocking Muslims or any other religious sacrament. Given they thought it okay to mock Christianity

says a lot in itself. The apology post the event was lukewarm at best—almost a Clayton's apology, where you give an apology that isn't one. To start with 'if anyone has taken offence' was disingenuous given there was outrage across the world at the imagery shown during the opening ceremony.

Secondly, the decision to allow two boxers to compete who had both failed a gender test set by the International Boxing Association and were both disqualified from the boxing world championships in 2023 after chromosome testing came back was not okay. This is unfair to the competitors who demonstrated this in the boxing ring. These are two unfortunate decisions, I believe, made in the Olympics.

Finally, to the Australian team: congratulations on an amazing effort! You did yourselves and our country proud, and for a country with our population to get the medal count we did was phenomenal.

#### **14 for Fitz**

**Mr REPACHOLI** (Hunter) (13:52): I rise to congratulate over 150 dedicated members of the 14 for Fitz who ran and walked the 14-kilometre City2Surf event in Sydney yesterday. This group of 150 friends dedicated their 14 kilometres to remembering Lance Corporal Jack Fitzgibbon, who sadly passed away during a training incident at the RAAF Base Richmond on 6 March earlier this year. The 14 for Fitz included close friends and family of Jack and others from across our community, including Joel and Di Fitzgibbon, who came together to remember Jack and honour his memory by raising awareness and funds for the Commando Welfare Trust. The trust is a special charity providing a financial safety net to support special operation commando soldiers, veterans and their families. The 14 for Fitz began as a simple idea to come together and support one another through grief and quickly evolved into a powerful movement which brought our wider community together for a common cause. Initially setting out to raise \$50,000, 14 for Fitz has doubled this target by raising more than \$100,000. I would like to thank everyone who has backed 14 for Fitz; \$100,000 is a great amount of money that will make a real positive difference to the lives of soldiers, veterans and their families. It is a heartwarming way to ensure that Jack's memory is kept alive.

#### **Peel Health Campus**

**Mr HASTIE** (Canning) (13:53): This is the 12th time I have spoken about Labor's failure to fix the Peel region's local hospital. Labor has been promising to upgrade the Peel Health Campus since 2017. They've delayed, they've fudged the dates, and they've lied about the budget. Here we are, almost a decade later, and we've seen no progress. Before the last state election, former premier Mark McGowan promised to invest \$152 million into the hospital. We were told by the Peel Labor team that everything would be different and that everything would change for the better. Wait times, delays and ambulance ramping would all be fixed. Well, Labor won in a landslide, but nothing has changed. We are yet to see any significant investment into the hospital except for the \$25 million that I secured in 2019 for upgrades to the emergency department. David Templeman, Lisa Munday and Robyn Clarke have not kept their word and delivered for our community.

I've talked to our hardworking nurses and doctors. They'll be on shift, just as they always are, serving our community, but nothing has changed for them. Will they have extra support, more beds or more staff assisting on shifts? No. When Labor was elected in March 2017, ambulance ramping at the Peel Health Campus was 6.9 hours for that month. Last month, ramping totalled more than 443 hours—and that's not even the highest on record. Labor has tried to spin its way out of this mess, but we're not buying it. My community, from Mandurah to Pinjarra and from Waroona to Dawesville, wants action—*(Time expired)*

#### **Boothby Electorate: Grace's Gallery and Gifts**

**Ms MILLER-FROST** (Boothby) (13:55): Art is an important part of our lives as individuals and as a community. Art enables us to express ourselves as individuals and our place in the community and the world. Art enables us to reach out to others, to share our stories, to make connections, to understand, to be understood and to be challenged, entertained, enlightened or puzzled. No matter how art makes you feel, it is a connection.

I would like to thank Grace's Gallery and Gifts, at Glenelg, for inviting me to open their SALA exhibition, entitled *Vibrance*. The exhibition features the following local artists. Grace Lam, whose gallery we were at, is a self-taught multidisciplinary artist and entrepreneur. Grace has Down syndrome, a visual impairment and a hearing impairment. Grace's art is indeed vibrant, brightly coloured and happy, inspired by Australian landscapes and flora. Sue Baker is an established artist working with encaustic medium to make coloured wax pictures that are set using a blowtorch. Tatiana Georgieva is a Belarusian artist and graphic designer whose stunning aquatic themed works feature a combination of mediums. Erin Skull is an emerging photographer working as Ezzabelle, with a focus on stunning extreme close-ups of nature. Georgina Fry is working as the Last Unicorn, using a medium of painting to replicate the inspiration of the natural environment. The exhibition is open until 1 September. I encourage locals to pop in and have a look.

### Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Manager of Opposition Business) (13:56): Why won't this weak Prime Minister stand up to the bullies, thugs and crooks of the CFMEU? We know from media reports that the CFMEU has been infiltrated by bikies and underworld criminal figures. We know that for years CFMEU officials have routinely broken the law and that judge after judge has criticised them for doing so, such as Federal Court judge Justice Tracey in 2017, saying its conduct was 'arrogant and dismissive of warnings given to them that they were acting unlawfully'.

Yet the Albanese Labor government has repeatedly danced to the tune of the CFMEU. They abolished the Australian Building and Construction Commission. They refused to allow part of the union to demerge, even when women workers and union officials in the textile, clothing and footwear section were desperate for this to happen. So much for being committed to women's safety. It's amazing how you can forget your stated principles for \$6.2 million—the amount of CFMEU donations to Labor since the current Prime Minister became leader. Labor must immediately hand back the tainted \$6.2 million. This Prime Minister must stand up to the CFMEU, not use this weak exercise of appointing an administrator. He must immediately deregister the CFMEU and bring back the ABCC.

### Early Childhood Education

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Chief Government Whip) (13:58): In May this year, I met with early education and childcare workers in my office, and they had a really strong message for me. They said they appreciated the fee-free TAFE and that it meant there were more early educators coming into centres in my electorate. Earlier this month, On 23 July, I went to the Gordon and met some of those students. They had a strong message for me. They told me the sector needed a pay rise—surprise, surprise! Last week, I went to Aspire in Manor Lakes to celebrate Early Learning Matters Week, and those workers told me they needed a pay rise. Lo and behold, what has the Labor government delivered? A 15 per cent pay rise for early educators. This is an incredibly important thing delivered by this government, and I know that the early educators around this country are very appreciative.

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

### CONDOLENCES

#### Pritchard, Mr Thomas Page

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (13:59): I move:

That this House records its deep regret at the death on 3 August 2024 of Thomas Page Pritchard, former Australian serviceman, places on record its appreciation of his meritorious service and tenders its sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Yesterday, Tom Pritchard, Australia's final remaining Rat of Tobruk, was farewelled in a private family funeral. He may have been our last living link to one of the most extraordinary episodes in Australian military history, but he was a man of humility. As much as we as Australians lay claim to him, he belonged first and last to family and friends.

Born in country Victoria, Tom, like so many young people determined to serve, lied about his age in order to enlist. He ended up taking part in one of the military campaigns that most emphatically showed the great truth of the Australian character. Through its eight extraordinary months, the siege of Tobruk called on the tenacity of every Australian soldier who stood against the forces of Hitler and Mussolini. It called on their resourcefulness. It called on that deep instinct to respond to even a glimpse of hell with comradery and understated courage, with irony and humour.

When enemy propaganda compared them to rats, they adopted the insult as a badge of enduring pride and honour. Even in the most desperate darkness, theirs was a light that never went out. And there, in the thick of it, was Tom Pritchard. By his own admission, he didn't know how to put on a bandaid when he started out, but he ended up saving lives as an ambulance attendant with the 2/5th Field Ambulance, freeing the wounded against all of the challenges they faced. The road beneath was often treacherous, and the sky above carried the threat of death, yet he pushed on through the siege and then again closer to home in Papua New Guinea and Borneo.

When it was all done, he married his sweetheart, Gwen, and went to work for Victoria's State Electricity Commission and settled into the reward of family life. Yet, through the decades of peace, he and the other Rats never lost the extraordinary bond that had been forged under the fire of fascism, nor did Tom lose the quiet modesty that was such a characteristic of his generation. Even when he was the last Rat of Tobruk left carrying the torch, he wanted to make sure that its glow fell upon others, not on his own achievements and his own courage but to light up the legacy of those who never came home from the Libyan Desert, those whose lives were part of the cost of victory against tyranny.

Fittingly, a public memorial for all the Rats of Tobruk will be held in Melbourne later this month. And we will remember Tom alongside all the thousands of Australians who gave the world hope when it was so desperately needed. Now this self-effacing hero's long and rich life is over—the man who once exaggerated his age to go to war so very nearly made it to his 103rd birthday. Our hearts go out to all who loved him and were loved by him. We join in pride and gratitude for all Tom was and all that Tom did. He was a great Australian, a man of humility, selflessness and larrikin humour. May he rest in peace. Lest we forget.

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): I thank the Prime Minister for his fitting tribute to Tom Prichard. The last Rat of Tobruk is at rest. On behalf of the coalition, I, too, acknowledge the life and legacy of Tom Prichard. Tom Prichard was a truly great Australian, part of the greatest generation.

Tom was among those Anzacs who prevented German field marshal Rommel from recapturing the Libyan port of Tobruk in 1941. He was among those Australians who served eight months of daily bombings and tank attacks from German and Italian forces. German propaganda mocked the Allied soldiers, comparing them to trapped rats, but those brave men embraced that slur with pride. 'The Rats of Tobruk' became a nickname which exemplified their fortitude in extremis.

Like other Australians who enlisted, Tom lied about his age. Such was his determination to serve. In addition to serving in Africa, Tom went on to serve in New Guinea and Borneo. As a man who knew the horrors of war, especially as an ambulance attendant, Tom was not one to talk about his experiences when he returned from the front. As Tom's daughter Judy said:

My father, the soldier, and my Dad are separate people entirely.

As Tom's friend Lachlan Gaylord acknowledged:

He would have seen horrible things. He wasn't so much contributing to the fighting as picking up the pieces ... soldiers who were already dead, soldiers who were seriously injured ...

We must never forget what Tom and those like him did. Our country today is the result of neither luck nor natural occurrence; it's been forged, fought for and defended by those before us. We are the beneficiaries of that service, of that suffering and of the sacrifice of soldiers like Tom Prichard. We commit Tom to our memory so that we do not forget our duty as custodians of their legacy. To quote a verse of poetry written by another Rat of Tobruk:

But his name will go down in history

On the scroll of honour at home

And his soul will live forever

In a hero's sacred dome.

We extend our deepest condolences to Tom Prichard's friends and family. May Tom Prichard rest in peace. Lest we forget.

**The SPEAKER:** As a mark of respect to the memory of Thomas Page Prichard, I ask all present to rise in their places.

*Honourable members having stood in their places—*

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the House.

Debate adjourned.

### Reference to Federation Chamber

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for the Arts and Leader of the House) (14:06): I declare that the resumption of debate on the Prime Minister's motion of condolence in connection with the death of Thomas Page Prichard is referred to the Federation Chamber.

### Steedman, Mr Alan Peter (Pete)

**The SPEAKER** (14:07): I inform the House of the death, on 10 July 2024, of Alan Peter Steedman, a member of this House for the division of Casey from 1983 to 1984. As a mark of respect to the memory of Pete Steedman, I invite all present to rise in their places.

*Honourable members having stood in their places—*

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the House.

## STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

### Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:07): So many Australians have spent the past fortnight on Paris time, our eyes glued to the extraordinary scenes in the pool, on the track, in the velodrome, on the whitewater

course, at the skate park, in the BMX arena, in the boxing ring and even on the Seine river. Everywhere there have been green and gold champions to cheer on, and every one of them has done our country proud. Every one of them has brought us joy and excitement and brought us together as Australians.

Paris 2024 has been Australia's most successful Olympics ever—a record 18 gold medals, 19 silver and 16 bronze, taking us to fourth in the overall medal tally. If you compare the size of our population, just 27 million, with the United States, China and, of course, Japan, the three countries that are ahead of us, they have far more sizeable populations to draw on than we do. But, over the past two weeks, the heroics of our athletes have captivated Australians.

Just as importantly, they have inspired the next generation of Australians to be active, play sport, be part of their community, learn life lessons and make friends, because having a go, participating and testing yourself is what the Olympic spirit is all about, as Anna Meares has so eloquently said. We see that when the competition is over and the athletes are interviewed, overcome by joy or relief, when we watch as they embrace their families and friends in the stands, and when we see the tears of pride in their eyes as they stand on the podium while 'Advance Australia Fair' plays.

In all these special scenes, we are reminded of how much this moment means to our athletes and to the people who love them—the coaches, mentors, parents, spouses and siblings who have been on the journey with them through years of very early morning starts and unwavering dedication, working to overcome the challenges that every Olympian faces along the way. It's important to remember that for most of these athletes, overwhelmingly, there is not great financial reward; they put in because of their love for their sport and their aim of representing their country. I also want to pay tribute to Anna Meares and the leadership that she has shown, standing up for all of our athletes. I was struck by something that Ariarne Titmus said straight after winning gold in the 400. She said:

I hope it goes to show anyone can do what they want to do if they work hard and believe in themselves. Here I am, from little old Lonnie, a town of 90,000, and I'm out here living the dream.

What a wonderful message from a great Tasmanian; from a remarkable champion. All of our fleets have given inspiration to boys and girls all over Australia. At a time when I think everyone in this chamber wants to see young Australians spend more time off their devices and on the netball court, the swimming pool or the oval, this is a great thing to inspire them.

In victory or defeat, we have been proud of every single one of our athletes. The Olympic spirit is about striving to be your best. It is about having a go and discovering something you love. Many of those young Australians will be thinking about Brisbane 2032 and about the potential of standing on the podium when, for the third time, Australia has the honour of hosting the Olympics. I'm sure that those Olympic Games will be just as successful as Melbourne was in 1956 and my home city of Sydney was in 2000. Many of the Olympians that we were cheering on Paris, grew up cheering for their heroes in Sydney, Athens or Beijing. It seems like Lauren Jackson just goes on for ever. I was watching coverage of the bronze medal match last night, and it showed her off the court encouraging those who were doing Australia proud in defeating Belgium to win the bronze medal. What a great champion she has been.

All of these athletes started their journey at Little Athletics or the local community sports centre. From time to time, the government gets questions like, 'Why should you invest in sport?' Investing in sport reduces our health bill for a start, it helps with both physical and mental health and it also helps the health of our country. That has been really lifted up.

I look forward to welcoming the athletics home on Wednesday morning along with the Leader of the Opposition and others who will be there to welcome them home. I pay tribute to Anika Wells, as Minister for Sport, for the work that she did in the lead-up to the Olympics as well. We look forward to welcoming them home on Wednesday and we look forward to further inspiration when we watch our Paralympians in just a short period of time—because they as well will do us proud, I am certain of that.

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): I want to thank the Prime Minister for his fine words and join him in celebrating the triumph of the Australian team at the Paris Olympic Games. This really was our finest Olympics. The medal tally says it all: 18 glorious gold, 19 splendid silver and 16 breathtaking bronze, with 53 medals in total and a fourth-place finish overall. For a country of 27 million people, Australia's result was outstanding in terms of medals per capita. By any stretch, this is an amazing result, and it's a great credit to all those involved. Our athletes showed the world once again that we're a sporting nation which punches above its weight.

Every Olympics has its magnificent and magical moments which we can commit to our national memory. Paris 2024 was no exception. We always anticipated we would prevail in the pool. Our swimmers did not disappoint. Ariarne Titmus, Kaylee McKeown, Mollie O'Callaghan, Cameron McEvoy—all have become household names, just like Dawn Fraser, Ian Thorpe and Kieren Perkins. Of course, we salute the outstanding Emma McKeon, who is

retiring. Having won her sixth gold medal in Paris, Emma is our most decorated athlete in Olympic history, with 14 medals in total. In Paris, we saw the triumph of seasoned athletes, most prominent among them Jess Fox with her two golds in the kayak and the canoe. There were also the feats of emerging stars like 14-year-old skateboarder Arisa Trew. Australians were overjoyed to see our youngest ever gold medallist bearing our nation's flag across her shoulders. It was a joy surpassed only by her delight in knowing her parents would have to keep their promise and buy her a pet duck. The Olympics will also be remembered for Australia's achievements on the athletics track and field, most notably Nina Kennedy, who soared over the bar to win Australia's first ever Olympic gold medal in the women's pole vault and Jess Hull's sensational silver in the women's 1,500 metres—our first medal in that event in 56 years.

In any Olympics, amidst the cheers there are inevitably tears. There will be Australians returning from these games disappointed with their performances. For those Australians who have fallen short of their goals, I hope they'll remember the truism in life that our character is strengthened as much by our setbacks as by our successes. I hope that they appreciate just how incredibly proud every Australian is of their achievement on and off the sporting arena. Few people can call themselves Olympians. It's a title our athletes can carry with them throughout their lives with pride, regardless of their individual results. Our athletes have known a life defined by discipline, rising early, training for hours multiple times a day, sticking to strict diets and relinquishing precious time with family and friends to master their chosen sport. They have reached the summit of sporting endeavour, and their physical training and mental agility will see them excel in their personal and professional lives long after they've left the sport.

On behalf of the coalition, I commend all of our Olympians for their successes and spirit—on the field and on the track, on the court and in the ring, in the water and on it. They were magnanimous in victory and gracious in defeat, testimony to the calibre of the Australian character. Of course, it takes a team to condition an athlete and keep them at their best. I also want to take the opportunity to applaud the wider team. I applaud Anna Meares, the coaches, the managers, the sport scientists, the nutritionists, the doctors, the psychologists, the physios, the massage therapists and more people besides, like all of the family who were involved and the sacrifices they made. In many cases they pulled every dollar together to enjoy that trip to watch that moment of great pride. Many commentators are already speaking about our prospects for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles and the 2032 Olympics in Brisbane. When I look around the gallery today and see the students here from across the country, I think perhaps one of them will be inspired by a performance that they saw on their television screens. Maybe it will be more than one—maybe many of them. I'm sure many across the country will be excelling and trying that bit harder as we approach 2032 in Brisbane. But let's stay in the moment, for this has been a historic Olympics for Australia, and this generation of athletes deserves our praise and our gratitude for many days, months and years to come. This is their moment. In their moment, they have done our country very proud.

## MINISTRY

### Presentation

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:18): I present a revised ministry list. It includes the changes to the ministry made by the Governor-General on 29 July and new representative arrangements. I understand the document will be included in the votes and proceedings and in *Hansard*.

*The document read as follows—*

Commonwealth Government	ALBANESE MINISTRY	29 July 2024
TITLE	MINISTER	OTHER CHAMBER
<b>Prime Minister</b>	The Hon Anthony Albanese MP	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
<b>Minister for the Public Service</b>	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher	The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
<b>Minister for Women</b> (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher	The Hon Catherine King MP
<b>Minister for Indigenous Australians</b>	Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
<b>Cabinet Secretary</b>	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
<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 a Future Made in Australia</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>	
<i>Assistant Minister for Women</i>	<i>The Hon Kate Thwaites MP</i>	



<b>Minister for Defence</b> (Deputy Prime Minister)	The Hon Richard Marles MP	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
<b>Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery</b>	The Hon Pat Conroy MP	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon Matt Keogh MP	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
Minister for Defence Personnel	The Hon Matt Keogh MP	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
<b>Minister for Foreign Affairs</b> (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Penny Wong	The Hon Richard Marles MP
<b>Minister for Trade and Tourism</b> (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Don Farrell	The Hon Madeleine King MP
<b>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</b>	The Hon Pat Conroy MP	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
<i>Assistant Minister for Trade</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>	
<i>Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon Tim Watts MP</i>	
<b>Treasurer</b>	The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
<b>Minister for Small Business</b>	The Hon Julie Collins MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Assistant Treasurer	The Hon Stephen Jones MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Financial Services	The Hon Stephen Jones MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
<i>Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>	
<b>Minister for Finance</b>	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher	The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
<b>Special Minister of State</b>	Senator the Hon Don Farrell	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
<b>Minister for Home Affairs</b>	The Hon Tony Burke MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
<b>Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs</b>	The Hon Tony Burke MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
<b>Minister for Cyber Security</b> (Leader of the House)	The Hon Tony Burke MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Emergency Management	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister	The Hon Catherine King MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Immigration</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>	
<i>Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon Julian Hill MP</i>	
<b>Minister for Health and Aged Care</b> (Deputy Leader of the House)	The Hon Mark Butler MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Aged Care	The Hon Anika Wells MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Sport	The Hon Anika Wells MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
<i>Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care</i>	<i>The Hon Ged Kearney MP</i>	
<i>Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health</i>	<i>The Hon Ged Kearney MP</i>	
<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 Ageing</i>	<i>The Hon Kate Thwaites MP</i>	
<b>Minister for Climate Change and Energy</b>	The Hon Chris Bowen MP	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
<b>Minister for the Environment and Water</b>	The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
<i>Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>The Hon Josh Wilson MP</i>	

<b>Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government</b>	The Hon Catherine King MP	Senator the Hon Malarndirri MaCarthy
<b>Minister for Communications</b>	The Hon Michelle Rowland MP	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
<b>Minister for the Arts</b>	The Hon Tony Burke MP	Senator the Hon Malarndirri MaCarthy
<b>Minister for Northern Australia</b>	The Hon Madeleine King MP	Senator the Hon Malarndirri MaCarthy
Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon Kristy McBain MP	Senator the Hon Malarndirri MaCarthy
Minister for Cities	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister	The Hon Catherine King MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Regional Development</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>	
<b>Minister for Social Services</b>	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<b>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<b>Minister for Government Services</b>	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<b>Minister for Housing</b>	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<b>Minister for Homelessness</b>	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</i>	
<i>Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</i>	
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Security</i>	<i>The Hon Kate Thwaites MP</i>	
<b>Attorney-General</b>	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
<i>Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General</i>	<i>The Hon Patrick Gorman MP</i>	
<b>Minister for Education</b>	The Hon Jason Clare MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Early Childhood Education	The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Youth	The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
<i>Assistant Minister for Education</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>	
<b>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</b>	The Hon Julie Collins MP	Senator the Hon Malarndirri MaCarthy
<i>Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>	
<b>Minister for Resources</b>	The Hon Madeleine King MP	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<b>Minister for Industry and Science</b>	The Hon Ed Husic MP	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<b>Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</b>	Senator the Hon Murray Watt	The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Skills and Training	The Hon Andrew Giles MP	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
<i>Assistant Minister for Employment</i>	<i>The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh 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.** *Assistant Ministers* in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the *Ministers of State Act 1952*.

### Temporary Arrangements

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:18): I inform the House that the Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Sport will be absent from question time today. The minister for Health and Aged Care will answer questions on her behalf.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Cost of Living

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has broken promises to cut electricity bills, to provide cheaper mortgages and to ensure that families will be better off on the cost of living. The price of electricity is now up by 22 per cent. We've endured 12 mortgage rate hikes, and the prices for food and groceries are more up more than 11 per cent. Isn't it clear to Australians this

government has lost its way because of this Prime Minister's lack of economic management and experience and general incompetence?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:19): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition asked me about cost of living, and there's one thing that is consistent about our cost-of-living measures: they have all been opposed by those opposite. Even last week, they opposed the tax cuts that we gave to every Australian taxpayer. Those opposite were against that. They opposed the energy price relief plan that we put in place. They were against that. They were opposed to fee-free TAFE. They were against that. They were opposed to cheaper child care. They were against that. We know they were opposed to wage rises, whether it be the three increases to the minimum wage or the additional wage rises for people who work in aged care or who work as early educators in our childcare system. We know that that was the case.

But we also know that those opposite, when it comes to economic policy, do have some half-baked plans. They have a plan for nuclear reactors, sometime in the 2040s, but they won't tell us how much they will cost. What we do know is that they are the costliest form of new energy. We know it will take too long and we know, even after all that, it will produce something like four per cent of the energy needs that Australia has.

We know also that they have a plan to break up supermarkets. Now, I'm not sure who will buy the Coles supermarket at their local shopping centre next to Woolworths, but I suspect it will probably be Woolworths. There's nothing, of course, to stop IGA setting up anywhere in the country. But that's what happens when you have the Nats running their economic policy.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr ALBANESE:** But they came out with something else last week: zonal taxation. Depending upon where you live, you will pay a different rate of tax under this Leader of the Opposition.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr ALBANESE:** This is the troika of economic irrationality: zonal taxation depending upon where you live; breaking up private sector companies through forced divestment, and nuclear reactors, owned by the government, sometime in the 2040s. The party of Menzies is a long time gone. *(Time expired)*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is far too much noise on my left. The Manager of Opposition Business and the Leader of the Nationals are continually interjecting. We're just going to have a bit more silence during the answer to this question.

### Early Childhood Education

**Ms PAYNE** (Canberra) (14:23): My question is to the Minister for Early Childhood Education. How is the Albanese Labor government recognising the professional work of early childhood educators and helping them with the cost of living? What approaches to early childhood education has the government rejected?

**Dr ALY** (Cowan—Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth) (14:23): I thank the amazing member for Canberra for her question and for her ongoing advocacy and support for early childhood education and care workers in Canberra. Last week, the Albanese government made a historic announcement of a 15 per cent wage increase for early childhood education and care workers—workers who carry out the vital and important role of caring for and educating our youngest Australians. This is on top of supporting not one, not two, but three increases to the award wage of early childhood educators, as well as our tax cuts.

I have spoken to educators right across the country who have told me how much they love their job. Their dedication to children's wellbeing and children's development is on show at every single centre that I have visited across Australia. But they also tell me that love doesn't pay the bills. This wage increase will make a real and tangible difference for over 200,000 workers in Australia. Sia, an educator from Victoria, said this: 'Instead of searching for a second job, this pay increase will help me now pay rent and put food on my table.'

This 15 per cent wage increase means that an average ECEC educator will receive a pay rise of over \$100 per week, increasing to over \$150 a week from December 2025. An early childhood teacher gets an additional \$166 a week, increasing to \$249 a week from December 2025. This is a great outcome for a highly feminised workforce.

Unsurprisingly, yet disappointingly, the opposition doesn't understand how important this wage increase is for the sector. The opposition leader dismissed the wage increase as 'a few dollars a week' and refused to support it. The opposition leader would do well to go out and speak to ECEC workers—people like Karen, an educator in the opposition leader's home state of Queensland, who said that this will change people's lives. It means that early childhood educators who have been relying on Foodbank to feed their families won't have to do that anymore.

Every Australian, whether a parent, a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle—whether you know an early childhood educator or you are one—knows how important this work is. It's not just about wiping bums and noses. But it's only a Labor government that will deliver a fair and decent wage increase for early childhood workers.

### Economy

**Ms LEY** (Farrer—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:26): My question is to the Prime Minister. Last week, the RBA said:

... Public demand is forecast to be stronger than previously expected, reflecting recent public spending announcements by federal and state and territory governments ...

The Prime Minister dismissed this, claiming, 'That's not what they've said.' Why is the Prime Minister in denial that Labor's spending is causing homegrown inflation and keeping interest rates higher for longer?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:27): I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. This is what the RBA governor, Michele Bullock, said last Thursday in Armidale:

... governments have a job to do and I have a job to do. My job and the Reserve Bank's job is to get inflation down. The governments have a different job. Their job is also to get inflation down, and they acknowledge that, but it's also to provide services and infrastructure for the Australian people. So, they need to do that at the same time as they need to focus on keeping inflation down ...

That's precisely what we're doing. It's also consistent with what the governor told estimates in May, where she said:

... fiscal policy has been running a surplus for the last couple of years, so I'd say that has been helping the ... inflation situation, if anything ...

I know for those opposite, a budget surplus is something that is foreign to them.

*Ms Ley interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

**Mr ALBANESE:** You may as well be talking in a different language. They promised a surplus in their first year and every year thereafter, and they produced none. None! We turned a \$78 billion Liberal deficit into a \$22 billion surplus, and then backed it up with a second surplus—that's on its way—as well.

This is also what Michele Bullock, the RBA governor, had to say about inflation: 'Inflation has fallen substantially since its peak in 2022.' This is what she said on 6 August, last week. She spoke about international experience as well: 'We've seen from overseas experience how bumpy inflation can be on the way down and across the economy.' She had that to say as well. She's been very, very consistent, and we have been consistent. What we have been doing is making sure that we do continue to have inflationary pressure put down—

*Mr Wallace interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Fisher will cease interjecting.

**Mr ALBANESE:** which is why we have halved it since we came to office. At the same time, we're not leaving people behind. We've given tax cuts to every Australian, something that the questioner here, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, said they would roll back. We await the Deputy Leader of the Opposition saying, during the election campaign, when it will be rolled back. When are you going to roll it back? That's what we want to know. So, get ready for whenever it's called; you stand up there and you say that you're going to roll back the tax cuts that we put in place, in order to support your ideological position, which is simply inconsistent— (*Time expired*)

### Early Childhood Education

**Ms BELYEA** (Dunkley) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Education. What has been the reaction to the Albanese Labor government's decision to increase early educator wages? And why is it important to support our early educator workforce?

**Mr CLARE** (Blaxland—Minister for Education) (14:30): I thank my friend the sensational member for Dunkley for her question. Our early educators deserve a gold medal—

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**Mr CLARE:** do you like that?—and silver, and bronze. They also deserve a pay rise, and that's what this government is delivering: a 15 per cent pay rise; that means an extra 100 bucks a week from December. We've already cut the cost of child care for more than a million Australian families, and this is the next step, lifting up the pay of the people who make all of this possible—some of the lowest paid workers in this country and some of our most important, the people who help ensure that our kids start school ready to learn.

The US president often makes the point that children who go to preschool are 50 per cent more likely to then go on to college or to university. So, this isn't 'baby city'; this is early education. It's not about changing nappies; it's about changing lives. And what we announced last week is not just a 15 per cent pay rise. We announced two things: a 15 per cent pay rise for workers and also a 4.4 per cent fee cap to keep prices down for parents. It's a pay rise for more than 200,000 workers, and we're keeping prices down for more than a million Australian families. It's a win

for workers and it's a win for parents. That's why everyone has backed it—except for the Liberal Party, which has attacked it.

There's no better example of that than the ramblings of that policy heavyweight Senator Gerard Rennick, who, on Saturday, hopped onto Twitter and said that child care destroys the family unit. The truth is that it's units like that who destroy the Liberal Party's credibility. It's comments like that that make you think that the modern Liberal Party thinks that women who have little kids shouldn't go back to work, shouldn't have a paid job. If awards were handed out for cooks, this bloke would win a Michelin star. If the opposition leader had any ticker, he would pull this bloke into line—maybe he would pull the plug on his computer—and then he would back this pay rise for some of the lowest paid and most important workers in this country. We want more kids to start school ready to learn. We want more kids to finish high school and then go on to TAFE and to university. We want a better and a fairer education system, and this is where it starts.

## **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

### **Drug ARM**

#### **Wortley, Ms Dana, MP**

**The SPEAKER** (14:33): I'm pleased to advise the House that present in the gallery today are representatives from Drug ARM, who are visiting Parliament House today in celebration of 175 years of service by the Drug Awareness and Relief Foundation. I'm also pleased to advise that Ms Dana Wortley MP, a former senator for South Australia and a current member of the House of Assembly, and also Mr Russell Wortley, a member of the Legislative Council of South Australia, and former member Leonie Short, are with us today. Welcome to you all.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

## **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

### **Poverty**

**Dr RYAN** (Kooyong) (14:34): My question is for the Treasurer. One in eight Australians live in poverty. Helping them helps all of us. It means that more Australians can afford to pay their rent and their bills, to get to interviews and get a job, and to feed their kids and themselves. Eradicating poverty would transform their lives as well as our economy. Will you instruct the Productivity Commission to inquire into the economic cost of poverty to Australia?

**Dr CHALMERS** (Rankin—Treasurer) (14:34): Thanks to the member for Kooyong for her question about an issue very near and dear not just to her heart but to mine and to everyone on this side of the House, and that is: how do we go about, in the most responsible way that we can, making life easier for the most vulnerable people in our community?

The honourable member, who follows these things closely, would know that the Productivity Commission has already, quite recently, put out what I thought was a really terrific piece of work about social mobility—intergenerational mobility—in our communities. For me, this really goes to the heart of the matter that the member for Kooyong raises for the House today, which is: how do we make sure that people can not just get by but get ahead, and how do we prevent intergenerational disadvantage—which exists in many of our communities, including, if we're honest about it, communities like the one that I represent—from cascading through the generations? That's the work that the PC did. I want to thank the chair of the PC, Danielle Wood, and her colleagues for doing that important piece of work, because I think the PC has given us an important reminder about how much we cherish intergenerational mobility in this country but also about how we can't be complacent, particularly at the very bottom end of the income and wealth scale and also when it comes to the very top.

I know that the honourable member's question is well motivated, and I know it's well informed by the work that the PC has already done. We're not contemplating another study of that kind, in addition to the one that the PC has just released, but we are proudly, as a Labor government, very focused on the most vulnerable people in our society and on that question of intergenerational disadvantage. It's why we increased JobSeeker and the working age payments, working closely with my colleagues here on the front bench. It's why energy bill relief has happened a couple of times. It's why we've made sure that everyone gets a tax cut, not just people who are already doing a bit better than others. It's why I work closely with the minister on a whole program of addressing place based disadvantage in our communities where that is the biggest challenge. It's why we've supported increases to the minimum wage. It's why we're supporting decent pay rises for early childhood educators and others as well. It's why we've expanded paid parental leave. There are a whole range of things that we are doing. I could go on about those things that we are doing.

We are proud of the progress that we've made for Australia's most vulnerable people, but we don't pretend that every challenge in our economy and, more importantly, in our society has been fixed. That's why the work of the

PC about mobility is so important to us, and that's why, in every single budget, we do what we can to help the most vulnerable people in our country.

### Early Childhood Education

**Ms LAWRENCE** (Hasluck) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. How is the Albanese Labor government helping to ensure childcare workers are valued and paid fairly, and what has been the response?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:37): I thank the member for Hasluck for her question and for welcoming me last Friday morning into a childcare centre in her electorate, where we were able to speak directly with the workers who do such an extraordinary job in looking after our youngest Australians. They are there not just to mind children but to educate them both in terms of early learning and through the social interaction that comes from that engagement.

That's why, last week, I was very proud that we announced the 15 per cent increase in pay for these essential workers: 10 per cent in December this year and five per cent in December next year—a total increase of \$155, extra money in their pocket. This is added to by the fact that all of them will benefit as well from tax cuts that we've put in place—tax cuts of which they would otherwise have got either none, if they were part-time workers, or very little, if they were working full time.

Early educators do an extraordinary job, and this wage increase will make sure that the system doesn't continue to see people leave it because they can't afford to stay there. This is good for workers, good for children, good for families and good for our national economy, because early learning also allows people either to re-enter the workforce after having a child or to stay or to work one or two extra days above what they would otherwise have done. Claire, at my electorate in Leichhardt, where we launched the announcement last week, said this: 'It will help tremendously. It means that the teachers who are really passionate about the industry will stay. They don't have to leave.' And indeed it will. But of course those opposite refuse to embrace this change. They say they support workers, but there's always a 'but'. 'I don't oppose helping families, but—' and they go on to say why they're against it with their relentless negativity.

The minister's already spoken about our friend Senator Rennick, personally endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this term in a preselection battle in the LNP where he spoke about institutionalised childcare as a sacred cow for the Labor Party. He said it 'destroyed the family unit', and he went on to say it 'brainwashed children early with the woke mind virus'. I mean, this stuff is just extraordinary. It's from an elected senator, someone who actually gets to vote on legislation in this parliament. *(Time expired)*

### Inflation

**Mr TAYLOR** (Hume) (14:41): My question is to the Treasurer. Independent economist Chris Richardson said last week's RBA statement was about as clear as they can be: there is extra budget spending in the system which is fuelling inflation. But the Treasurer said last week, 'I don't think that's what the statement says.' When will the Treasurer cut the spin and take responsibility for decisions that are driving up his homegrown inflation?

**Dr CHALMERS** (Rankin—Treasurer) (14:41): I take responsibility for the decisions that we've made in our budget and I do that proudly. I take responsibility for the cost-of-living help that they don't support. I take responsibility for the responsible economic management which is completely foreign to them. I take responsibility for the surpluses that we have delivered that they weren't capable of delivering in nine attempts.

Now, if the shadow Treasurer knew what he was talking about, he would know that the Governor of the Reserve Bank, as the Prime Minister said a moment ago, has said very clearly, 'My personal view is that they're doing what they can in this area.' I think that the Governor of the Reserve Bank saying that we are doing what we can with our surpluses and the way we've designed our cost-of-living help is an important thing to factor in. You can't believe a word that the shadow Treasurer says about this.

*Mr Taylor interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hume will cease interjecting.

**Dr CHALMERS:** To pick up the bizarre logic of the shadow Treasurer: first of all, obviously, a net additional spend of \$10 billion this year is not the primary determinant of prices in a \$2.6 trillion economy. I shouldn't have to explain that to the shadow Treasurer. But even if we accepted that point, by the shadow Treasurer's bizarre logic about that \$10 billion additional spend, which is a fraction of the additional spend that they had in 2022, he is taking responsibility. When inflation was higher and rising faster, those opposite spent more in their last budget.

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer will pause. The member for Hume on a point of order?

**Mr Taylor:** Relevance. The question was about the Treasurer's hopeless decisions that are driving up—

**The SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. The Treasurer was asked about the RBA statement and about—

*Mr Taylor interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Don't talk over me when I'm dealing with your point of order. Trust me; you won't be here to hear the answer. The Treasurer was asked about taking responsibility regarding the issue of inflation, so he is being directly relevant. I'm going to listen carefully to him to make sure that he is being relevant to the question. The Treasurer has the call.

**Dr CHALMERS:** We've turned two big Liberal deficits into two big Labor surpluses. We've designed our cost-of-living relief to put downward pressure on inflation, not upward pressure, and we are providing the responsible economic management that they were incapable of delivering in nine years in office.

We know what's really going on here. What's really going on here is that the shadow Treasurer was disappointed and embarrassed last week because he desperately wants interest rates to go up, and they didn't. He desperately wanted underlying inflation the week before that to go up, and instead it went down. While the rest of Australia was cheering for our Olympians, he was cheering for high interest rates and more pain. He wants higher inflation and he wants higher interest rates, because he doesn't want anyone to notice that, in the third year of a three-year term, he still doesn't have any costed or credible economic policies. He still won't come clean on the \$315 billion in cuts that he says the economy needs. He still won't tell people what that means for Medicare, for pensions or for the economy more broadly.

On this side of the House, we acknowledge that people are doing it tough. We are helping with the cost of living, we are repairing the budget and we are making our economy more resilient at the same time. Those opposite did none of those things. *(Time expired)*

*Mr Taylor interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Hume is warned!

### Economy

**Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (14:45):** My question is to the Treasurer. How is the Albanese Labor government's responsible economic management right for the conditions we confront, and what approaches have the government rejected?

**Dr CHALMERS (Rankin—Treasurer) (14:45):** I thank the wonderful member for her question. The two big influences on our economy are global uncertainty and cost-of-living pressures, and they are combining to slow our economy at the same time. Our economic plan anticipated this balance of risks and we are responding with cost-of-living relief, budget repair and investments to make our economy more resilient, as I said a moment ago. The extreme volatility we have seen in global markets in recent weeks is a real warning against complacency. Inflation is sticky and stubborn and more persistent than we would like. We are seeing that around the world, including in Europe, where inflation has just gone up again, and in the US and Canada, where it zigged and zagged on the way down.

There is no shortage of challenges in our economy, but we have made some welcome progress in the last two years, as the Prime Minister said a moment ago. Inflation has halved on our watch; wages growth has doubled; almost a million jobs have been created, which is a record; there are tax cuts for every taxpayer; and, despite all of that—tax cuts and energy relief—we have still turned two big Liberal deficits into two big Labor surpluses. Those opposite do not want anyone in Australia to remember that, when we came to office, inflation had a six in front of it—and now it has a three in front of it. Rates were already rising when we came to office, wages were stagnant, the deficits were much bigger and the budget was weighed down by rorts, waste and debt—and the Shadow Treasurer was the poster child for all of that. That is their record.

*Mr Taylor interjecting—*

**Dr CHALMERS:** The Shadow Treasurer, as I said a moment ago, was disappointed and embarrassed last week because he desperately wanted interest rates to go up and they did not. He desperately wanted underlying inflation to go up the week before and instead it went down. It was the same with the quarterly read on homegrown non-tradable inflation. As I said, most people in Australia are cheering for the interest rates and for the cost-of-living pressures to be alleviated in the coming months. The Shadow Treasurer wants life to get harder for people.

*Mr Taylor interjecting—*

**Dr CHALMERS:** That's because he does not want anyone to say, 'Hang on a minute, Shadow Treasurer; you say there should be \$315 billion worth of cuts, but what are they? What does it mean for pensions and indexation? What does it mean for Medicare? What does it mean for the broader economy?' He still cannot tell us why they opposed tax cuts for every taxpayer or energy bill relief and how they will roll back the cost-of-living help. He still cannot tell us how much the nuclear reactors will cost or how he will pay to reinstate the old stage three tax cuts.

*Mr Taylor interjecting—*

**Dr CHALMERS:** We acknowledge that people are doing it tough. We are helping where we can in the most responsible way at the same time as we deliver these surpluses. If they had their way, inflation would be higher, interest rates would be higher, wages would be lower and there would be absolutely no help for people doing it tough.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Durack, the Shadow Treasurer interjected eight times during that answer. We are starting this fortnight with a lesson to everyone. There are consequences for actions. You were on a warning and you will now leave the chamber under 94(a).

*The member for Hume then left the chamber.*

*Dr Chalmers interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer is now warned!

### **Makarrata Commission**

**Ms PRICE** (Durack—Opposition Whip) (14:49): My question is to the Prime Minister. Has the Prime Minister ruled out the creation of a Makarrata commission to oversee truth-telling and treaty? If so, why is there still money in the budget to create one?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:49): I thank the member for Durack for her ongoing commitment to Indigenous Australians and for her interest in these issues and the constructive role that she wishes to play. I did indeed speak at the Garma Festival. I attended the Garma Festival along with the education minister, the social services minister, the Indigenous affairs minister, the member for Barton, the member for Lingiari, the member for Solomon and many representatives of state governments. We were the only federal members who were there. It was an important gathering to discuss with First Nations people a way forward to close the gap. What we know is that, when it comes to closing the gap, we are not achieving the outcomes that I'm sure everyone here would want to see. We need to reduce the suicide rates. We need to reduce the incarceration rates. We need to reduce the disparities in health and education that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The theme of this year's festival was 'Fire, Strength, Renewal'. Fire is something that Yunupingu—the Leader of the Opposition attended his funeral—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on my left! The manager is entitled to raise a point of order, and he shall do so.

**Mr Fletcher:** On relevance, it was a very tight question: has the Prime Minister ruled out the creation of a makarrata commission to oversee truth-telling and treaty? If so, why is there still money in the budget to create one? The Prime Minister should be directed to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I'm listening carefully. I want to make sure the Prime Minister is on topic. He's talking about the visit to Garma. I'm assuming, or hoping, he will continue his answer regarding the question, which was about the makarrata commission for truth-telling. He has had a preamble. I invite him to return to the question.

**Mr ALBANESE:** Indeed. 'Makarrata' is a Yolngu word—the Yolngu are the people who host the Garma Festival each year—for a coming together after struggle. No-one can say there hasn't been a struggle in this country with Indigenous Australians when you have Closing the Gap at that point. Coming together means actually sitting down and discussing the issues of how we move forward together. Those opposite might want to seek to continue to have division. What I'm seeking to do—and I spoke at the Garma Festival about economic empowerment—is to search, along with the new Minister for Indigenous Affairs, for ways in which we can come together. That is what makarrata is: coming together. I seek for Australians to come together in order to advance the interests of Indigenous Australians, and I invite those opposite to stop with the attempts to divide and try to come together in order to close the gap, because that is our objective.

During the referendum that was held last year, I was asked a range of questions on multiple occasions. I was asked whether the Voice would affect interest rates, defence bases, nuclear powered subs and a whole range of issues. I was also asked about treaty, and at that I continually indicated the same answer. I referred to the same answer before the referendum as afterwards: that that is not the focus that we have. *(Time expired)*



**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS****Winter, Hon. Dean****Dow, Ms Anita****Christensen, Mr George**

**The SPEAKER** (14:53): I acknowledge, as guests of the member for Lyons and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Leader of the Opposition from Tasmania, Dean Winter, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition from Tasmania, Anita Dow. I think he's just left, but I was advised by the member for Hinkler that the former member for Dawson is in the gallery today as well.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE****Defence**

**Ms MILLER-FROST** (Boothby) (14:54): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister. How is the Albanese Labor government investing in defence to keep Australians safe after a decade of mismanagement in defence?

**Mr MARLES** (Corio—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence) (14:54): Last Monday I signed, on behalf of the government, the AUKUS naval nuclear propulsion agreement with the United States and the United Kingdom at Australia's embassy in Washington, DC. This is a foundational part of the legal underpinning of the announcement that was made by our three countries in San Diego last year, and it is another critical step forward in delivering AUKUS.

When we came to power, AUKUS was really not much more than a thought bubble, but since then we have been turning it into a reality. We have determined the actual pathway by which Australia will acquire a nuclear-powered submarine capability. We have now passed multiple tranches of legislation which have included the establishment of the Australian Submarine Agency and, along with legislation that was passed by the US Congress last year, we have created a seamless defence industrial base between our two countries, which is so critical to delivering this project. Most importantly, we have provided the increased funding in the budget to deliver AUKUS and much, much more—funding which those opposite did not provide. All of this has happened because what the Albanese government says, it does, and this stands in stark contrast to those opposite.

The shadow minister is reported in the media today as saying that on the one hand he would like to see an increase in war stocks by 2026 but, on the other, he is refusing to commit to an increase in defence spending against what those opposite promised in the last election—which, to remind everyone, is \$50 billion less over the decade than what this government has in the budget right now. The difference between the rhetoric and the reality is profound, but it should not be a surprise, because this was the business model of the Leader of Opposition when he the defence minister. He oversaw \$42 billion worth of unfunded defence announcements in addition to 28 different projects which were running 97 years overtime.

The complete dysfunction in the defence delivery, combined with the historic overprogramming of the defence budget, is the literal last will and testament of the worst defence government that this country has ever seen. They were terrible in government. Today, we see they are no better in opposition. The Albanese government is doing the detailed work making the difficult decisions to deliver AUKUS and keep Australians safe. *(Time expired)*

**Climate Change: Agriculture**

**Mr LITTLEPROUD** (Maranoa—Leader of the Nationals) (14:57): My question is for the minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Has the minister's department modelled how much farmers will pay of the \$2.3 billion Treasury has estimated in extra compliance costs for compulsory sustainability and scope 3 reporting the government is introducing? What will be the flow-on cost to families at the checkout?

**Ms COLLINS** (Franklin—Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness and Minister for Small Business) (14:57): I thank the member opposite for his question. The member opposite knows we are working on a plan in terms of sustainability and climate change for the agriculture sector, and that plan has been worked on for some time. Also, when it comes to food prices—

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Nationals has asked a question.

**Ms COLLINS:** and competition, we all know what their policy is: divestiture of supermarket. They don't have anything over there. We are investing and making sure that we put downward pressure on food prices—that's why we funded CHOICE, that's why we did the ACCC inquiry and that's why Doctor Craig Emerson has conducted a review of the food and groceries code of conduct.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat.

### **Cost of Living**

**Ms COKER** (Corangamite) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Industry and Science. How is the Albanese Labor government's Future Made in Australia plan helping Australian families deal with cost-of-living pressures, and what are the consequences of opposing this plan?

**Mr HUSIC** (Chifley—Minister for Industry and Science) (14:59): I thank the member for her question because she knows an important way for Australians to deal with cost-of-living pressures is to hold down a secure, well-paying job. The bulk of manufacturing jobs are full time and pay above-average weekly earnings. Our Future Made in Australia plans champion Australian manufacturing, as does our \$400 million Australian Industry Growth Program.

We got to back the efforts of small manufacturers to grow well-paying jobs with the announcement last week of the first grants from the IGP. Li-S Energy in the Corangamite electorate secured one of those grants to help with the commercialisation, development and production of its lithium-sulphur batteries. These batteries are lighter and more powerful and are targeted for use in aviation and defence. Li-S employs 25 people in Geelong and Brisbane and is now looking to expand. We set up the IGP to help emerging manufacturers to grow, be it Li-S in Corangamite, be it Cauldron Molecules in Calare, be it Forager Automation in Bonner, be it Brandsec in Melbourne or be it Electrogenics Laboratories in Bradfield. So we are saying yes to Australian jobs—secure, well-paying jobs in manufacturing. We're saying yes to more products made right here in this country and yes to workers earning more and keeping more of what they earn.

The question is: what about those opposite? It's always no, always negative—no to our \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund, no to energy price relief for Australian manufacturers and no to cost-of-living tax relief for workers. And here's the other one: when we announced our Future Made in Australia initiatives in our May budget, the Leader of the Opposition described our plans to scale up more work onshore as 'corporate welfare' and 'billions for billionaires'. Tough talk! But last week, on his way to Western Australia, it seemed like that courage evaporated over the Nullarbor, because, when he had to eyeball WA businesses keen to leverage off our announced production credits, the Leader of the Opposition did what he normally does when he is under pressure. He said, 'We'll have more to say about that later.' Tough guy! Where did you go? He's tough on the east coast, and then it just diminishes on the west coast. It just disappears. The tune changes. Their hearts are not in it. They will not back Australian manufacturing. They saw off 100,000 manufacturing jobs when they were in office, chased out the car industry and now only ever talk about manufacturing to talk it down.

### **Gambling Advertising**

**Ms DANIEL** (Goldstein) (15:02): To the Prime Minister: Goldstein constituents and other Australians tell me they want all gambling ads banned, yet it's been reported that you're planning only a partial ban. Rod Glover, husband of the late Peta Murphy, said today:

Her main argument is really simple: in a really hard trade-off, you've got to put people first and think about what kind of future you want to create.

Prime Minister, will you reconsider your reported position and honour Peta's legacy by banning all gambling ads?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (15:03): I thank the member for Goldstein for her question. There's a fair bit of hypothetical in there about what our alleged position was, but we are working through these issues and the government has made it very clear that the status quo regarding the saturation of gambling advertising, particularly where children are exposed to it, is untenable. The Minister for Communications and the Minister for Social Services are getting on with tackling gambling harm comprehensively, and we're doing that in a way that will ensure that there aren't unintended consequences of it. In today's world, where people have access to information instantaneously on devices that they have—including the member for Goldstein and others in this chamber here—where things can just pop up and be received, we want to make sure that any measures do not have unintended consequences, and we're taking a comprehensive approach, recognising that this is a complex issue.

The government has already delivered the most significant reform that has been done. We've done more in two years than those opposite did in the previous nine. We have delivered the most significant online wagering and harm reduction initiatives of the past decade. We have established mandatory customer ID verification for online wagering. We have banned the use of credit cards for online wagering. We have forced online wagering companies to send their customers monthly activity statements outlining wins and losses. We have introduced new evidence-based taglines that people will have seen—very different from the 'Gamble responsibly' that used to be there. We have provided direct funding for specialist financial counselling to support people affected by problem gambling. We have introduced nationally consistent staff training. We have introduced new minimum classifications for videogames, and we have launched BetStop—the National Self-Exclusion Register.

I have every respect for Rod Glover. He has been a friend of mine for a long period of time. He is a great Australian who has had to deal with the tragedy of losing his life partner, something that is felt by so many people in this chamber—and not just on this side of the chamber, I acknowledge. I note some people like John Howard are entering this debate. If only he had been in a position to have some influence over public policy over this time! But the entire time that he occupied my seat, he did absolutely nothing about any of these issues. (*Time expired*)

### Housing

**Mr NEUMANN** (Blair) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Housing and Homelessness. How is Labor's Homes for Australia play helping address the housing pressures Australians face, and what is standing in the way?

**Ms O'NEIL** (Hotham—Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Cyber Security) (15:06): The member for Blair is right: Australians are doing it tough right now and housing is a big part of that story. I've been the minister in this portfolio now for two weeks, and I am very honoured to progress the enormously important work of the member for Franklin in her time in this role. I have spent a lot of time since I became minister speaking to people directly affected by this problem. I have spoken to a mum with a child with disability who has been forced to move house in the middle of her child's school year. I have spoken to renters whose landlords will not fix black mould in their homes and whose rents are rising too often and too fast. I have spoken to a lot of young people who are worried that they will be locked out of home ownership forever, and I have spoken to a woman who was a victim of long-term homelessness and talked to her about how housing is helping her rebuild her life.

Our country today is led by a prime minister whose entire life trajectory was reshaped by secure housing and, unsurprisingly, we have a bold and ambitious housing agenda. For the first time in a decade, we have a Commonwealth government in this country saying, 'We have responsibilities here and we can make a difference to this problem.' The Commonwealth can't solve this problem alone, but it is not going to get solved without us. That is why our government, in just two years in office, has invested \$32 billion in helping Australians with this crisis.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Ms O'NEIL:** I hear some murmurs from those opposite, and I will remind them that our government invested more just in our last budget than the entire nine years that those opposite were in office. Our government also recognises that we have a good long-term solution to this problem but we are in crisis right now. That is why our government has made the biggest increase to Commonwealth rent assistance in 30 years—two back-to-back increases to Commonwealth rent assistance that will see Australians get up to 40 per cent increases on those payments.

We have two really important initiatives that are part of the puzzle here sitting in the Senate—one which will help more low-income Australians get into the housing market and one which will help build more rental homes for our country. Would you believe that both of these initiatives are being blocked by the Liberals and the Greens in the Senate! One of my observations is that there is a hell of a lot of politics being played in this debate by people who are seeking to get a political outcome. My goal and the government's goal in this debate is to make sure that we focus not on the politics, not on the politicians and not on the personalities, but on the fact that we have a generations-long housing crisis in this country—and our government is here to help.

### Makarrata Commission

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Leader of the Opposition) (15:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. Has the Prime Minister committed to anyone that he supports the establishment of a Makarrata commission?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (15:09): I'm pleased to see that the Leader of the Opposition is focused on the cost of living. What we've said on makarrata is that we'll continue to engage. We held a referendum last year which wasn't successful.

**Mr Pasin:** You lost!

**Mr ALBANESE:** That's right. It wasn't successful. And what happens is that you accept that, you accept responsibility for it—something foreign to those opposite. We can accept our responsibility. You accept your responsibility for saying that it would have an impact on interest rates and on nuclear subs.

**Mr Dutton:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** Has the Prime Minister concluded his answer?

**Mr ALBANESE:** Yes.

### Energy

**Ms SITOU** (Reid) (15:10): My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy. How is the Albanese Labor government acting to reduce the cost of energy? What policies leading to higher power prices has the government rejected?

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon—Minister for Climate Change and Energy) (15:10): I thank my honourable friend for her question and, of course, her leadership when it comes to climate activism in her electorate. Since the parliament last sat, the \$300 of energy bill relief from the Albanese government has been applied to energy bills across the country. Of course, that comes along with our tax cuts which came into force on 1 July to provide cost-of-living relief to Australians today, when they need it—not in decades time but today, because that's when Australians are feeling the pressure. They're feeling the pressure right now, and so the relief is flowing right now.

In the medium term, we're also continuing with the task of rolling out the cheapest form of energy, which is renewable energy. While both sides of the House agree that renewables play an important role in Australia's energy mix, we on this side of the House have faith in renewables, which now provide cheaper energy than nonrenewables. To be fair, that was a statement by the member for Fairfax in 2017, when the Liberal Party actually believed in renewable energy and recognised it was the cheapest form of energy available. The member for Fairfax said that renewable energy is the cheapest form of energy. And it's not just the member for Fairfax who thinks that; real experts do as well. We see it from Daniel Westerman, the Chief Executive of AEMO, who has said:

... renewable generation connected with transmission and distribution, supported by hydro, batteries and gas, is the lowest-cost way to supply electricity to homes and businesses ...

That's exactly what this government is doing—renewables supported by gas, supported by storage and supported by transmission.

The honourable member asked me what policies we have rejected. Well, I'll use the term 'policy' lightly, because what we've seen from the opposition is the announcement of seven sites. That's it—no costings, no details, no number of gigawatts, just seven nuclear power sites. I've seen more detail on the back of a cornflakes packet than we have in the opposition's nuclear policy. To assist those opposite, though, we can provide some details for them. They've said that the power that they will generate on these seven nuclear sites will replace the power from the coal-fired power stations that are on those sites—that is, 11 gigawatts, or 3.7 per cent of Australia's energy needs. That's 3.7 per cent, at a cost somewhere between \$116 billion—that would be the cheapest—and \$600 billion, based on the experience in the United Kingdom. That is between \$10.5 billion and \$54.5 billion a gigawatt. That's a lot of dollars for not many gigawatts. Well done to the Leader of the Opposition, who says his plan to reduce the cost of power is, in decades time, to introduce a form of power which is \$55 billion a gigawatt. That's \$55 billion a gigawatt. That's their genius plan. Well, we are not going to be distracted by these plans. We are going to continue with real cost-of-living relief today. (*Time expired*)

### Workplace Relations

**Ms SPENDER** (Wentworth) (15:14): My question is for the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. The construction industry is different. We've lived through 11,000 pages of royal commission reports, but, once again, shocking allegations of corruption and criminality and flatlining housing productivity over the last 20 years. The ABCC didn't stop some of these, but I believe, as many others do, that the industry is different and needs a different oversight mechanism. Will you consider a body or framework that brings together industry, unions and people across this parliament to truly clean up the industry?

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for the Arts, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Leader of the House) (15:14): I thank the member for Wentworth for the question. The oversight mechanism that the government is following through on is what we introduced into the Senate today: to place the CFMEU into administration. The reasons for that are very strong. The three different options, which are to place the organisation into administration, establish a watchdog of some sort, or go down the path of deregistration, all involve fundamentally different outcomes. First of all, going down the pathway of administration allows someone to be in charge who can make sure they look at official by official and say, 'That person should not be there,' who can make sure that the union runs for its members and who can look at the money trail and say, 'That money shouldn't be spent in a particular way.' It is highly interventionist, which is only something that you do in extraordinary circumstances, which are the circumstances we face.

The experience of a watchdog has been all the things we don't want. The first is the current leadership, which has caused the highest level of concern—in particular, some from the Victorian branch—and rose to power while the ABCC was there. That was when they came to power. In 2017, it was admitted by Senator Cash that she knew that Nigel Hadgkiss had been breaching the Fair Work Act while he was heading the watchdog. Labour productivity—

*An opposition member interjecting—*

**Mr BURKE:** Referred to in the question. Labour productivity fell in each of the years prior to the pandemic. Every year the ABCC was there, productivity went down. You had an organisation that, instead of trying to deliver on productivity, was obsessed with flags and stickers and would pull down a health and safety sign if it had a union sticker on it. A judge of the Federal Court described it by saying:

I hold the clear view that this is a case where the ABCC should be publicly exposed as having wasted public money without a proper basis for doing so ...

Since we abolished the ABCC, the number of days lost to industrial action fell by 30 per cent—fell by 30 per cent! And when those opposite start calling out now about wanting a cop on the beat—

*Mrs Phillips interjecting—*

*Mr Wallace interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, the member for Durack. The member for Fisher is now warned.

**Mr BURKE:** they forget that the ABCC was incapable of dealing with any criminal issues. It only dealt with civil issues. It was incapable of that. Instead, the third option is the one that is not being put forward by the crossbench, as I understand it, but is being put forward by those opposite, which is to say, 'Why don't we have deregistration?' The answer is simple: which choices changed who should turn up to the commission to negotiate? Whether registered or not, you can still turn up to the commission. Under their proposal, the full leadership of the CFMEU would stay in power and could still negotiate—nothing would be fixed.

### Cybersecurity

**Dr CHARLTON** (Parramatta) (15:17): My question is to the Minister for Cyber Security. What was the government's role in the response to the CrowdStrike outage?

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for the Arts, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Leader of the House) (15:18): I thank the member for Parramatta for the question and acknowledge the work that he is now doing in assisting me in the cyber area. The outage that took place on Friday 19 July, caused by an update published by CrowdStrike, has been described as the biggest IT outage of all time. It ricocheted all around the world, including in Australia. It was not a cyberattack, but all the systems that had been put in place by my predecessor, the member for Hotham, were able to be tested and showed that Australia is far better prepared for cyberattacks than comparable nations. In establishing the National Cyber Security Coordinator, we established that this would be used for the National Coordination Mechanism.

CrowdStrike brought down systems across the whole country and around the world. It left travellers stranded at airports. It posed issues for supermarket supply chains. It disrupted countless businesses. Every single one of us had people in our electorates unable to get money and purchase goods because of how this had interfered with Australian systems. Within three hours of the CrowdStrike update being published, the government had convened the National Coordination Mechanism.

Members will be familiar with the mechanism but not historically with its involvement with cyber. Anyone who's held the emergency service portfolio is aware of the way the National Coordination Mechanism brings in who is relevant to each crisis when it happens, gets them all together and starts working it through, together, through the leadership of the government. It's what we use, since the change of government, for natural disasters, cyber incidents and threats to critical infrastructure.

As I said, the first meeting was convened within three hours of the update going out. It was chaired by the deputy secretary of the Department of Home Affairs, Cyber and Security Group. It included representatives from the company CrowdStrike itself, a wide range of Australian state and territory government representatives and key industry representatives. Seven meetings like this continued over the following days. The process was led by staff from my department, including the National Cyber Security Coordinator, a position that did not exist before the change of government, led by Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness. It found ways to deal with the long tail of consequences that stem from an outage of that scale.

All of this was possible only because we changed the government. If those opposite had still been in, there'd be no cabinet minister to deal with threats, there'd be no dedicated office within my department, and the National Coordination Mechanism would not be available for cyber. *(Time expired)*

### Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

**Mr SUKKAR** (Deakin) (15:21): My question is to the Minister for Housing. Has CFMEU corruption and lawless behaviour added to construction and housing costs for everyday Australians?

**Ms O'NEIL** (Hotham—Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Cyber Security) (15:21): I thank the member opposite for his question. We have a construction union in our country which has become riddled with corruption and wrongdoing, and our government is taking the strongest possible action to reset that union. Today in the Senate the government introduced legislation that will allow the Minister for Industrial Relations to appoint an administrator who will have sweeping powers to do what is needed to be done to clean up this union.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Deakin on a point of order?

**Mr Sukkar:** My question was very tight. It was just asking the minister whether the CFMEU's corruption and lawless behaviour has added to housing costs for everyday Australians.

**The SPEAKER:** It was a tight question, and the minister has had 30 seconds as a preamble. She'll need to make sure her answer is directly relevant. I appreciate that the member wants a yes or a no, or perhaps a figure. Under the standing orders, I can't compel the minister to answer a certain way. But having some context given now, she's going to have to return to the question or resume her seat.

**Ms O'NEIL:** Of course. I've talked about the action the government is taking, and I do want to make the point that this is stronger action than anything that was done by those opposite in the almost decade they were in power, despite all the complaining that went on.

We have a housing crisis in our country which has been 40 years in the making, and for a long time the Commonwealth stepped right out of this policy area. This issue is too important for our citizens—

**Mr Sukkar:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** You had a point of order. The member for Deakin is obviously raising another point of order.

**Mr Sukkar:** Yes, the minister is defying your ruling. She is not answering—

**The SPEAKER:** No, resume your seat. I'm trying to help the member. The minister needs to return to the question or she will be sat down. To simply talk about what is happening in—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on my left! The member is entitled to ask a question. It was a very tight question. Historical context—we're past that point. If the minister can't answer the question or doesn't want to add extra information, that's okay, but she's got one final chance here. Otherwise, I'll ask her to resume her seat.

**Ms O'NEIL:** Sure. I've talked about the strong action the government is taking. There is analysis that shows impacts on residential construction. There are experts in industry that say it has no impact on residential construction. The point I would make is that the policy fix is exactly the same. We need to take this union and clean it up. The activity in this union is dragging down not only the union itself but in fact the reputation of the union movement in our country, and that is why our government takes this so seriously. I would say again: the opposition had almost 10 years that they were in power to do something about this problem. Instead it took until we came to government to make sure we clean up this union once and for all.

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition on the point of order?

**Mr Dutton:** The Prime Minister made an unparliamentary remark, and he should withdraw it.

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on my right. The Minister for Social Services. The Minister for Education. If the Prime Minister has made an unparliamentary remark—

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Okay. Order! The member for Macarthur was on his feet. We'll hear from the member for Macarthur.

### Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

**Dr FREELANDER** (Macarthur) (15:25): My question is to the Minister for Health and Aged Care. What action is the Albanese Labor government taking to make medicines cheaper? Why is this action needed, and how are new listings on the PBS improving the health of Australians?

**Mr BUTLER** (Hindmarsh—Minister for Health and Aged Care and Deputy Leader of the House) (15:26): I thank the terrific member for Macarthur for his question. Australia, as he knows, has one of the best medicine systems in the world, underpinned by the PBS, which, of course, is another great Labor legacy opposed at the time by the Liberal Party. The PBS ensures that Australians get access to the best cutting-edge medicines available anywhere in the world and at affordable prices. In just two years, we have made 200 new or expanded listings to that PBS.

This month we expanded access to Trikafta to children under the age of five years who are living with cystic fibrosis. A new child is born in Australia with CF every four days, and, as a long-time paediatrician, the member for Macarthur knows better than anyone in this chamber just how devastating that condition is for those kids and for their families. Trikafta is simply amazing and its impact is almost immediate. Ashley, who is the mother of a four-year-old boy, Heath, said at the time we listed this:

A few people have said today, what does this mean to us? In my family, it means hope ... we just can't wait to keep planning the long life for Heath that we know he's going to have.

But it's also expensive. Indeed, without PBS listing, this medicine costs as much as \$250,000 every year. From this month, though, an additional 330 kids every year will get access to this new medicine at affordable PBS prices—PBS prices that we have been making even cheaper in the two years that we've been a government. We have slashed the maximum amount that pensioners pay by 25 per cent. That's the biggest cut to the price of medicines in the 75-year of the PBS. We are finally allowing doctors to issue 60-day supplies of common medicines for ongoing health conditions. Of course, in May, the Treasurer froze the price of PBS medicines for up to five years—a measure which in and of itself will save patients as much as half a billion dollars over the coming five years. We are determined to keep making medicines cheaper because it's good for the hip pocket, obviously, but it's also good for Australians' health.

The Leader of the Opposition has always taken a different view of this, as Australians will very well remember. He was a member of the government which, back in 2005, under John Howard, jacked up the price of medicines by almost \$5 a script. He then tried to do the same again, by another \$5 a script, when he was the Minister for Health in 2014. Of course, in this term of parliament, he has opposed all of our cheaper-medicines policies. That's what you would get again from this man: services always going down, prices always going up.

**Mr Albanese:** I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

## AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

### Report No. 1 of 2024-25

**The SPEAKER** (15:29): I present the Auditor-General's Audit performance audit report No. 1 of 2024-25, entitled *Defence Procurement and Implementation of the myClearance System: Department of Defence*.

Document made a parliamentary paper.

## DOCUMENTS

### Presentation

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for the Arts and Leader of the House) (15:29): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

**Ms RISHWORTH** (Kingston—Minister for Social Services) (15:30): by leave—Today I rise to table and acknowledge the release of the Australian government's response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability. The Disability Royal Commission was the most comprehensive examination of disability policy and services in Australian history. The Disability Royal Commission held 32 substantive public hearings, with close to 10,000 people sharing their experiences. The evidence presented to the royal commission was confronting, shocking and disturbing—behaviour that has no place in Australia.

I wish to acknowledge the determined efforts of people with disability, their families and their advocates, who have worked tirelessly and continue to work tirelessly for a more inclusive Australia. I also acknowledge and thank the chair of the Disability Royal Commission, The Hon. Ronald Sackville AO KC, and commissioners Barbara Bennett PSM, Dr Rhonda Galbally AC, Andrea Mason OAM, Dr Alastair McEwin AM, and The Hon. John Ryan AM—as well as The Hon. Roslyn Atkinson AO, who was appointed for the first 15 months—for their diligence, respect and care in how they conducted their inquiries.

The final report of the royal commission comprises 12 volumes, 6,788 pages and 222 recommendations. Of these, 172 recommendations are the sole or joint responsibility of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth government has accepted or accepted in principle 130 in our initial response to the Disability Royal Commission, released just under a fortnight ago. For many of the recommendations accepted in principle by the Commonwealth, work has already commenced or will be commencing shortly, and we have made investments to support this work. I want to be really clear that 'accepted in principle' is a commitment to the policy intent of the recommendations along with the commitment to those recommendations we have accepted.

Throughout the royal commission, we heard countless experiences of people with disability who experienced violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation—as it was for Kylee, a First Nations woman in her 50s, who shared her experience of failing for 20 years to receive the right diagnosis and support for her disability; or Jerome, an autistic man in his 30s, who has Down syndrome and post-traumatic stress disorder, who was abused when he was in high

school by a staff member at a respite home but was not believed; and Jaylen, who is in his 50s and lives with an intellectual disability, who was subjected to the inappropriate use of restrictive practices by disability service providers. There was also Charmaine, who was told by a staff member at a disability employment service, 'If you look blind, people won't employ you.' The staff told Charmaine she needed to present as though she could see. As a government, we thank each and every person who came forward and contributed to this important inquiry. Reliving trauma and your experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation to pave a clear path forward towards a safer and more inclusive Australia for people with disability was not an easy thing to do—but it will make a difference.

I want to assure the disability community that we have listened. We are taking action. We are absolutely committed to driving progress and real change across all aspects of society. Our government accepts and is committed to the vision set out by the disability royal commission. We are committed to enabling policy and delivering services that realise the vision of an Australian community where people with disability:

- live free from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- where human rights are protected; and
- individuals live with dignity, equality and respect and can fulfil their potential.

This includes a future where people with and without disability can:

- live, learn, work, play, create and engage together in safe and diverse communities;
- have the power of choice, independence and the dignity to take risks;
- make significant contributions to communities that value their presence and treat them with respect; and
- are culturally safe and belong in families, communities and peer networks.

The Commonwealth and states and territories jointly established the disability royal commission through letters patent, and its final report holds all governments accountable, with a comprehensive and compelling call to action.

The 222 recommendations of the royal commission are comprehensive and far-reaching across all aspects of society—from safety and human rights to inclusion and access to mainstream services like health and education. The final report made it very clear that our response requires a coordinated approach across multiple portfolios and all levels of government. The recommendations can be divided into those that are clearly the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth, those that are clearly the sole responsibility of states and territories and others where the Commonwealth and states and territories share a joint responsibility.

Since the release of the royal commission's final report in September, we have consulted with people with disability, their families, carers and the disability sector—and we have worked collaboratively across the Commonwealth, with 16 of my ministerial colleagues, and with states and territories across eight different ministerial councils to form initial positions against the 172 recommendations that fall within the sole or joint responsibility of the Commonwealth.

Just under two weeks ago, the Australian government released its initial response to the disability royal commission. Of course, fully responding to the disability royal commission requires ongoing work, and there will be further positions taken by the Commonwealth against recommendations that fall within our sole or joint areas of responsibility with states and territories as we progress this important work. Given the breadth and scope of the final report, this is the first stage of our government's response.

We will need to take a considered and staged approach to our program of reform activity, which will be aligned with broader reforms to the disability ecosystem, as well as mainstream system reforms in health, education, and housing, as this supports the ongoing involvement of people with disability and enables lasting change.

Our joint response between the Commonwealth and states and territories provides a clear commitment to the disability community that all levels of government are committed to working together to make progress against the recommendations of the royal commission.

Volume 12 of the disability royal commission's final report emphasises the importance of putting the voices of people with disability at the heart of policymaking—from designing initiatives through to delivery, monitoring and evaluation. We are determined to do just that.

The government is committed to implementing all of the recommendations that we have accepted as well as those that we accept in principle. Many of the recommendations are multifaceted and can be implemented in a variety of ways. Of course, for some recommendations, the commissioners were split in their views—providing alternative options for governments to consider. That is why we will work in partnership with people with disability to determine the most appropriate and impactful way to implement reform in response to these recommendations.



Just as an example, recommendations 6.1 and 6.2 relate to improving national approaches to accessible information and communications and developing a strategy to increase the number of Auslan interpreters.

These two recommendations are multifaceted, with 14 distinct subcomponents.

They also involve all levels of government and, in the case of Auslan, will require collaboration and cooperation with industry.

The government has accepted these recommendations in principle to enable proper engagement with people with disability; state, territory and local governments; industry and other stakeholders on the design and implementation of effective reform, and we have committed \$12.3 million to support this important work.

There are also several recommendations that are contingent on other work or require sequencing with states and territories.

For example, recommendation 11.4 is about the Australian government establishing a national complaint pathway to direct people to independent complaint mechanisms in their state or territory. This relies on states and territories first implementing recommendation 11.3 to establish a one-stop-shop complaint mechanism in each jurisdiction.

We have therefore accepted in principle recommendation 11.4 and committed an extra \$2.6 million to continue the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline and the Complaints Resolution and Referral Service to ensure continuity of service while we work together with states and territories to improve the accessibility and availability of complaint referral and resolution services right across the country.

For many of the recommendations accepted in principle by the Commonwealth, work has already commenced or will be commencing shortly.

And we have made investments to support this work.

There are also 36 recommendations that require further consideration as they relate to ongoing or recently concluded inquiries or negotiations that require further consideration in consultation with people with disability, state and territory governments and other stakeholders, and six recommendations are noted.

A further 50 recommendations clearly fall within the responsibility of state and territory governments, and it would not be appropriate for the Commonwealth to respond to these.

All governments—Commonwealth and state and territory—have worked together to reach a common position in most cases on recommendations of joint responsibility.

This will ensure that there is continued open and transparent work, working in partnership with people with disability. And the Commonwealth will remain accountable for progressing recommendations within our sole or joint responsibility through six-monthly reporting on implementation progress. We will also be coordinating progress updates on recommendations we are jointly responsible for with states and territories.

Through public reporting the Commonwealth will provide updates to the positions against recommendations within our sole or joint responsibility with the states and territories.

And it is understood that states and territories will undertake a similar process to provide updates on the 50 recommendations that clearly fall within the sole responsibility of states and territories.

As a government we have not waited for the final report of the disability royal commission to take action to improve the lives of Australians with a disability.

Our government's \$371 million commitment towards the first phase of its response to the Disability Royal Commission builds on over \$3 billion of investment over the last three budgets to improve the lives and safety of people with disability in Australia.

We are taking action through four key pillars that reflect the areas the disability community have told us are important to them, including:

- better safeguarding
- promoting inclusion and accessibility
- upholding human rights, and
- recognising the unique perspectives and experiences of First Nations people with disability.

These pillars will continue to drive the focus of our government as we progress reform toward a more inclusive Australia.

The Albanese Labor government is committed to a national effort and working in partnership with the disability community to implement the necessary reforms to make Australia more inclusive, accessible, and safe.

The program of reform activity will be staged over several years and is aligned with broader reforms to the disability ecosystem—as well as mainstream system reforms in health, education, and housing—as this supports the ongoing involvement of people with disability and enables lasting change.

Implementing and embedding our shared vision for an inclusive Australia requires a sustained national effort from all Australian governments.

The Australian government commits to strengthening safeguards, independent oversight and complaint mechanisms that will help to reduce the unacceptable levels of violence, abuse and neglect experienced by people with disability. In many instances this will require working together with state and territory governments to enhance protections and service systems nationally. The Australian government commits to listening to the diverse voices of people with disability and working in partnership with the disability community to design, implement and evaluate policies and programs that drive reforms to make Australia more inclusive, accessible and safe for people with disability. The Australian government commits to upholding the human rights of people with disability to enable them to live with dignity, equality and respect, and the Australian government commits to promoting a more inclusive society where people with disability feel they belong, are respected and valued and able to fully contribute.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 remains the key national policy mechanism we will use to drive reform at a national level. Our government's response is not just about fixing problems; it's about creating a better future, where people disability are valued, respected and supported to live their lives with dignity.

Our initial response marks the beginning of a renewed commitment by all levels of government across areas of government to working with people with disability to achieve the vision of the disability royal commission, and end the experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation that have no place in Australia or anywhere.

I commend the response to the House.

**Mr SUKKAR** (Deakin) (15:46): I thank the minister for that ministerial statement. As was outlined in that statement, more than five years ago on 4 April 2019 a monumental decision was made to finally take action in response to community concern about widespread reports of violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation of people with disabilities.

The establishment of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability by the former coalition government marked a significant milestone in addressing the longstanding issue of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The commission began accepting public submissions shortly after that decision in July 2019, and the former coalition government put in place extensive measures to support those affected. Recognising the complexity of the issues, the coalition also agreed at a later date to extend the commission's work by 17 months until September 2023 and committed \$527.9 million over five years for its operation. This funding also supported the provision of counselling and other services to those participating in the commission.

The disability royal commission took a very deep dive into a range of crucial public policy areas. It looked into how we can prevent and better protect people with disabilities from facing—as the name of the royal commission suggests—violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and it represented a pivotal moment in this parliament and our nation's history to tackle the serious issues faced by individuals with disabilities in a really head-on fashion.

The royal commission's work was thorough and far-reaching, focusing on a broad spectrum of behaviours that impacted people with disabilities. These behaviours range from physical and sexual assault to the use of restraints, forced treatments, harassment, financial abuse and severe violations of privacy and dignity, all contributing to an overarching pattern of neglect, areas that no vulnerable person should ever have to battle.

The commission worked tirelessly for several years, culminating in its final report on 29 September 2023. That report, as the minister outlined and is well-known to members in this House, includes 222 recommendations aimed at improving laws, policies, structures and practices for people with disabilities. It aimed to achieve several goals, including preventing and better protecting people with disabilities from harm, improving the systems for reporting and investigating incidents and fostering a more inclusive society where individuals with disabilities can live independently and free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. It focused on how we can improve the system, aiming for best practices across the sector and, importantly, it explored ways to build a more inclusive society, one where people with disabilities can live independently and free from harm.

As an indication of the complexity of the recommendations, which the minister touched on in part in her statement, it came to light that even the commissioners could not agree on a number of the key recommendations. Of the 222 recommendations, 172 fell to the responsibility of the federal government and many others fell to the states. We should note in a moment like this that disability advocates were disappointed to find out last week that only 13 recommendations were fully accepted, notwithstanding the fact that 117 were accepted in principle, 36 were set aside for further consideration and six were simply noted. The disappointment has been widespread.

Some of the key recommendations, as I've outlined, focused on ending segregation, including phasing out group homes, segregated employment and segregated education, such as special schools. Some commissioners, and many in this House and many on our side of the chamber, had some differing views on these issues. Other important recommendations included introducing a disability rights act to incorporate international human rights into Australian law, creating a new complaints mechanism and establishing a federal government portfolio for disability with a dedicated minister.

Along the way, leading up to the final report, the royal commission released a series of reports covering public hearings, research and policy themes. The interim report came out on 30 October 2020 and, throughout commissioner's work, as the minister has touched, on seven progress reports were published roughly every six months to keep Australians updated on the important findings. To build its findings the commission used a wide range of methods. This included conducting research; holding public hearings; collecting personal testimonies—many of those quite harrowing; receiving submissions from stakeholder organisations; and organising private sessions to provide a safe space for survivors to share many of those difficult experiences.

The commission's extensive efforts, which the large funding provided by the former coalition government enabled, resulted in a gathering of 7,944 submissions, nearly 18,000 phone inquiries, the publication of 14 issues papers and the holding of nearly 1,800 private sessions. This thorough process was, in our view, essential in shaping the commission's comprehensive assessment and resulting recommendations. Importantly, the commission did not confine its investigation into just specific settings; it sought to uncover and address these issues in all sorts of contexts, wherever they could have occurred and had historically occurred—schools, workplaces, jails, secure disability and mental health facilities, group homes, family homes, hospitals and, of course, day programs. This approach allowed the commission to gain a comprehensive understanding of the varied challenges faced by people with disability and identified the necessary solutions to ensure their future safety and wellbeing.

The coalition will now closely consider the government's response to the royal commission's findings and recommendations. We ultimately remained focused on ensuring that the recommendations lead to real and lasting change for people with disabilities in Australia. It is crucial that the government respond to the 222 recommendations comprehensively and promptly to ensure that the progress made translates to real and meaningful change, including support for health, housing, education, employment and legal systems for people with disabilities. We want to emphasise the importance of a timely and thorough response and, though it seems obvious—but it can be difficult—encourage the government to collaborate as closely as possible with states and territories to implement the necessary changes that will ultimately, I think, safeguard the most vulnerable members of our society.

We all know that people with disability in Australia are one of the most vulnerable cohorts of Australians and they are susceptible to greater risks of violence, catastrophic health expenses, workforce challenges and hardships that could go on and on. Addressing these obstacles is ultimately within our grasp, and we acknowledge the work of the royal commission.

Most importantly, tackling these barriers will unleash—we know—the potential of so many individuals with disability, and we simply can't afford to overlook the millions of Australians with disability who have been denied access to the health care, rehabilitation, support, education, employment and equality which has held them back from making the full contribution to this country which we know they can.

The United Nations estimates that over a billion people globally live with some form of disability, and in Australia it is more than one in five of us. Most of us will at some point experience impairment, or care for someone or know someone who does, so it's imperative that the recommendations of the royal commission are seriously and thoroughly considered by the government. We take the minister at her word and know that she will do what she can to deliver that.

Finally, for all of the Australians who participated in the comprehensive royal commission, and who have suffered injustices along the way, and for the many that we have lost, our thoughts are with you and your families. Now is the time for us as Australians to make things right. As a nation we are committed to supporting all those who have been affected and we continue to focus on protecting and prioritising your rights to be cared for, to be supported and to be loved.

**Ms RISHWORTH** (Kingston—Minister for Social Services) (15:56): I move:

That the House take note of the Minister's statement on the Australian Government response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Debate adjourned.

#### **Reference to Federation Chamber**

**Ms RISHWORTH** (Kingston—Minister for Social Services) (15:57): by leave—I move:

That the resumption of the debate on the motion to take note of the minister's statement on the Australian government's response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability be referred to the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

## COMMITTEES

### Intelligence and Security Joint Committee

#### Membership

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon)** (15:58): In accordance with the Intelligence Services Act 2001, the honourable members for Bruce and Fremantle cease to be members of the committee on their appointments to the ministry. The Speaker has received advice from the hon. Prime Minister nominating members to be members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Attorney-General and Cabinet Secretary) (15:58): by leave—I move:

That in accordance with the provisions of the Intelligence Services Act 2001, Ms Claydon and Mr O'Connor be appointed members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

I offer my congratulations to you, Deputy Speaker Claydon, on your appointment.

Question agreed to.

## DOCUMENTS

### Department of Health and Aged Care

#### Presentation

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Attorney-General and Cabinet Secretary) (15:59): I ask leave of the House to make a statement regarding the explanatory statement for the National Health (Chairperson of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Remuneration Tribunal) Appointment 2024, deemed to have been presented to the House on 14 May 2024.

Leave granted.

**Mr DREYFUS:** The original explanatory statement inadvertently contained personal information, which is omitted in the replacement explanatory statement. I ask leave of the House to present a replacement explanatory statement for the National Health (Chairperson of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Remuneration Tribunal) Appointment 2024.

Leave granted.

**Mr DREYFUS:** I present the document.

## BILLS

### Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024

#### Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: "whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Government has taken decisions to drastically increase the migration intake putting further strain on housing, infrastructure and essential services in Australia;

(b) the Government's mismanagement of Australia's immigration system has led to more than double the number of international students in Australia from 336,845 in March 2022 to 713,144 as at February 2024;

(c) under Labor there are 80,000 student visa holders who are on to their third student visa or more while some are on an eighth, ninth or tenth student visa, as a backdoor way to stay in Australia to work;

(d) the Government's failure to manage Australia's international education sector is causing economic harm to Australian universities, private higher education providers, English language course providers and the vocational education sector; and

(e) the bill reflects the lack of confidence the Government has in the Minister for Immigration and Minister for Home Affairs by giving the power to determine the number of international students who can study in Australia to the Minister for Education;

(2) calls on the Government to rebalance Australia's migration program and manage its impacts on housing, congestion and essential services; and

(3) further notes that, given its deficiencies, the bill has been referred to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee for inquiry to report by 15 August 2024".

**Mrs MARINO** (Forrest) (16:01): Australia certainly needs a sensible and practical approach to international education. However, I'm greatly concerned by the government's narrative, characterising this bill as a response to the shonks and crooks in the sector. There are over 1,400 private education and VET providers, many of which are actually high-quality providers. The Labor government itself is far more responsible than these high-quality providers for the majority of the international educational challenges. It is an indictment on the Labor government during a cost-of-living crisis here in Australia—a cost-of-living and inflation crisis caused directly by Labor's \$315 billion excessive increase in spending that has driven up the cost of everything, including mortgages, housing, rent and accommodation. At a time of critical housing shortages, Labor has made this situation so much worse by simply opening the floodgates to record numbers and levels of international students. Labor has actually doubled the number of foreign students studying in Australia, from 336,845 in March 2022 to 713,144 in February 2024. There's no doubt that this has created a mess entirely of Labor's own making.

Even worse for me as a regional MP is that, at the same time as Labor has allowed record numbers of international students into major city universities, what was confirmed at recent Senate inquiry hearings was that regional and smaller universities and private education providers have had their student visa approvals reduced by 73,000 this year. That I see as discriminatory against the regional universities. Once again, as we see in so many of Labor's policies, the regions are bearing the brunt of Labor's discrimination. It's all about those inner-city elites and the big end of town for Labor. Just compare the numbers: at the University of Sydney almost half of all students enrolled in semester 1 this year were the 32,800 international students who were granted visas. Keep in mind that the University of Sydney already receives the majority of taxpayer funding of all our universities, around \$1 billion every year. Actually, it's 47 per cent of federal taxpayer university funding.

Considering the social licence with the Australian people needed to keep supporting higher education, this is the same university that facilitated antisemitic hate, incitement and vilification on its campus, where the UK proscribed extremist terrorist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir infiltrated the pro-Palestinian camp on the university campus itself. This is the same university that gave the Muslim Students Association a dedicated seat on the university's working group with access to defence and security related industries and research. Last week, hundreds of students voted to support anti-Israel motions, including support for a single Palestine state, from the river to the sea, effectively supporting the destruction of Israel and its people. Appalling, disgusting, and discriminatory treatment of students that did not support the motion is what we saw. How on earth can Jewish students and staff be safe on the University of Sydney campus?

The shadow minister was entirely correct when she said freedom of speech and academic freedom are vitally important, but this does not include the right to trample on the rights of others. Equally, I expect all research and business entities, particularly those engaged in AUKUS or other defence related industries, to reconsider their involvement with the University of Sydney as a result.

All of these instances bring into question the social licence compact the university has with the Australian people and Australian taxpayers. This is the university that the government granted 32,800 international student visas to at the same time regional and smaller universities and private education providers have had their student visa approvals slashed by about 73,000 this year alone. In fact Australia's most prestigious universities have had a 16 per cent increase in their number of foreign students. Not only has this affected our regional universities; what this does very directly is decrease the accommodation and rental properties available, particularly for our regional students who have no choice but to study at city universities. The reason for this is that the courses are not available. Either there are no universities in their region or the courses they need to study, such as medicine, law, pharmacy or engineering, are not available at those regional universities.

But the knock-on effect of Labor's doubling of overseas student numbers in a practical sense is that our regional students not only have to compete for the accommodation. I talk to these families all of the time. Often it's totally unaffordable accommodation, if they can find it. They also have to compete for the jobs they desperately need to help support themselves when they have to live in the city and away from their homes and families. Many of our regional students cannot and do not receive youth allowance or any other form of government support to help with the ever-increasing accommodation and other costs they've had to bear by having to live away from home and with the significant inflation issues.

I strongly believe these same city based universities need to do far more in supporting our regional and remote students. I've looked at the reporting of numbers of regional and remote students in various city based university annual reports. Statistics were provided for international students, onshore, offshore and research training programs, but there were no statistics on the numbers of regional and remote students. In one I read, the international student experience was detailed but not the regional and remote student experience. Why on earth not? Every university

should be not only providing this information but actively targeting and supporting the enrolment of these Australian students from our regions.

I read in the Universities Accord document that regional and remote students make up only 11 per cent of the Group of Eight university cohorts. Our students in the regions deserve to have a higher education. Surely this, in great part, is why our universities receive federal taxpayer funding—to actually educate Australians, our domestic students and those who come from regional and remote Australia, who find it so hard to even get to university?

I hope these same institutions respect the fact that our students come from regional Australia with the majority of the wealth this nation has actually produced. The contributions to the economy from resources, mining and agriculture underpin Australia's economy and, in large part, pay for the education, health, infrastructure and general government services that we all rely on. Our students from regional areas absolutely deserve a fair go from our higher education system.

Another problem with Labor's record number of general immigration—it's almost a million people Labor have brought into Australia—is the really serious shortage of broader housing across the board. It's not just a housing shortage; it's actually a housing crisis. I see and hear about it every day in my electorate of Forrest, in the south-west of WA. That nearly one million extra people is adding massive pressure, as I said, on health, education, transport and other infrastructure and services.

All of this may suit the government's political agenda, but it actually puts at risk the social licence that's needed from the Australian people—the social licence that ensures ongoing public support not only for the international student business model but also for our skilled migration program. Part of this social licence is based on ensuring that the students who are accepted are genuinely students, not those people who are simply using the student visa system and process for an entirely different reason.

It actually concerns me greatly that there has been a threefold increase in the number of international students who have come to Australia on a student visa but, once here, have sought asylum. That these numbers have increased threefold should be of major concern for the government. These people are clearly coming to Australia under false pretences and, once here, are using our courts and our systems to seek and claim asylum. I note, added to this, that Chinese students not only are having their visas granted at the highest level but also are the top nationality making asylum claims once they're here in Australia.

Unfortunately, overall, Labor has misled Australians by claiming that the number of migrants will actually go down. However, actual figures, not projected figures, show an increase in these numbers, and the government certainly needs to take this issue seriously. There is no doubt, as the Reserve Bank has acknowledged, that Labor's massive additional \$315 billion in additional spending is not only driving inflation but keeping the basic costs of living for Australians much higher for longer. Hardworking Australians struggling to make ends meet are having to deal with the cost of housing being up by 14 per cent. I see that recent ABS figures and statistics show that the average Australian mortgage increased by \$56,000 last financial year.

In my home state of Western Australia, average mortgages are at a record high, increasing by 20 per cent to \$100,000 over those 12 months. South Australia and Queensland have seen similar increases. In general, these same mortgage holders, who are paying at least an extra \$1,000 every week, are seeing their basic costs of living increasing as well. When you consider that for a rural and regional family trying to send their young people to a city university because they have no choice, this not only adds to the cost for their family and the cost of living but reduces the ability of that family to be able to send their kids to a university. The cost of education is up 10.9 per cent, and it's actually even more for regional students having to study at a city university. Food is up 11.4 per cent, and electricity is up 21.5 per cent. Insurances are going through the roof.

With this legislation, the minister will set caps on the number of international students who can study in Australia at any one time, but we haven't had any details on how the minister will actually apply these caps in this legislation. We do know that the caps will come into force on 1 January, and there have been widespread concerns raised about these bills. On that basis, I conclude my remarks.

**Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (16:14):** Australians understand the importance and power of education. We value it and what it can do to open the doors of opportunities for Australians and for friends overseas. The power of education is that it changes lives, so we invest in it. You can see evidence of that in this year's budget, as we not only lift the education standards of Australians but export our world-class education to the world. Education is a big export—the biggest one that we don't dig out of the ground—it's our fourth largest export overall. In the last decade, we have helped to educate more than 3 million people from around the world. It's a \$48 billion industry.

Our education sector doesn't just make us money, it also makes us friends, because when a student comes to Australia to study they don't just get an education, but a bit of Australia rubs off on them. They fall in love with the place and when they go home they take that love and affection for us and that connectivity back home with them.

They use the knowledge and qualifications they've gained in Australia to become leaders and scientists, teachers and entrepreneurs in our neighbouring countries. That makes this no ordinary export industry, because it's so important to our economy while students are here and also when they return home. It's important to Australia and it's important to the people in my electorate of Darwin and Palmerston as well as other regional areas of Australia. It's particularly important because we want more, not less, international students. This bill matters because it ensures the integrity and quality of the overall system underpinning that social licence and it provides long-term certainty for the sector and sustainable growth over time.

The pandemic kneecapped international education. Of course, it didn't help that the former government—those opposite—told students to go home, so of course they did. Almost overnight an industry worth \$40 billion was effectively halved to \$22 billion. The students are now back, but unfortunately so are the shonks and crooks looking to take advantage of students and make a quick buck at the expense of this critical national asset. These unscrupulous actors are a threat to our good name as a place where the best and brightest from around the world can come and get the best education in the world.

Since we were elected a little over two years ago we've been working hard on this. In September 2022 we announced the Parkinson review of the migration system and in January 2023 we announced the Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System, also known as the Nixon review. These reviews brought urgent attention to integrity issues in international education.

We moved quickly on the recommendations of those reviews. In July last year we got rid of unlimited work rights for international students by reintroducing a working hours cap of 24 hours per week. This allows students to support themselves, but not at the expense of their studies, and was a first step in reducing the lure of getting a student visa as a backdoor entry to work in Australia.

In August last year, Minister Jason Clare, the member for Blaxland, closed the concurrent enrolment loophole that allowed agents and providers to shift international students who had been here for less than six months from one course to a cheaper one and from genuine study to no study at all—another backdoor way just to work here. In October last year, we boosted the capacity of the VET regulator ASQA through a \$38 million investment and establishing an integrity unit. The same month we increased the amount of savings an international student now requires to get a student visa from \$24,000 to almost \$30,000. In March of this year we increased the English language requirements for students, introduced a new genuine student requirement and increased the number of no-further-stay conditions on certain cohorts of visa students.

I want to emphasise that many of these measures are in response not only to the Parkinson and Nixon reviews, but to feedback directly from the sector because they know that dodgy education agents and providers create problems for the whole industry and they are a threat to the reputation of the universities and providers who are doing the right thing. It's very important that this important part of our economy maintains its social licence to operate.

Not only are the students back, but they're back faster than anyone had expected here and in other countries. At the Universities Australia gala dinner in February last year, Minister Clare spoke about how the trajectory of the total number of international students enrolled in our universities wouldn't get back to pre-pandemic levels until the end of 2025. Well, they are back already, and that's a vote of confidence in our institutions, in our providers and in Australia as a place where the best and brightest come to study. But it's also something we need to manage carefully and protect from the bad actors that I mentioned, and that's what this bill does.

This legislation does a number of things to bolster the social licence as we manage the international education industry in a way that delivers the greatest benefit to Australia whilst maintaining the social licence that the Australian people provide to any Australian government. We will continue to use a responsible approach in setting enrolment limits, for example, that are appropriate. The Minister for Education will take into account the relevance of courses to Australia's skill needs, of course, and he is working through this in a very diligent and commonsense way.

It was fantastic to have Minister Clare in Darwin, and he visited some remote communities recently. He not only visited our university, Charles Darwin University; he visited schools, met with parents and talked with teachers and, of course, the students—the university students and other higher education students of the future. At the Australian International Education Conference in October last year, he said that the government wanted to work with the international education industry to make sure we get these reforms right. It was fantastic, as I said, to have him in Darwin recently.

We've done a number of consultations with the sector about the implementation of the powers set out in this bill. There has been broad and continued engagement with the Council for International Education and, of course, with stakeholders in the sector, including the Group of Eight and many others, such as regional universities like Charles

Darwin University in my electorate. I note that the Chancellor of Charles Darwin University, Paul Henderson, has said that the Northern Territory faces a unique operating context, and it certainly does. The Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin University, Professor Scott Bowman, said:

International students bring a vibrancy to Darwin; are warmly welcomed into the community; and help fill skills gaps while studying and upon graduation. In the context of dire skills shortages, and lower than national average rental vacancies, the social licence for international education in the NT is distinct from that in major metropolitan cities.

That's something that I know honourable members representing regional electorates with universities will relate to. These consultations have been taking place for some time and will continue until the start date, 1 January 2025.

One thing that the framework makes clear is that international education is not a one-way street. In the last couple of years, we've made great strides in taking Australian education overseas, teaching in international branch campuses where students can get the benefit of an Australian education without having to leave home. We are a global leader in terms of international education and the education we provide to our own citizens. When it comes to the caps on enrolments, I know from speaking to the minister that we will be taking into account the vital role that international education plays in regional areas of Australia, such as with Charles Darwin University in my electorate. We will get the balance right.

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina) (16:24): The coalition will not be opposing the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024, but I do suggest that the government support the very reasonable and thought-out amendment put forward by the member for Bradfield. I agree with the member for Solomon when he talks about how important international education is to regional universities and regional communities per se.

Recently I have been on a fact-finding tour—an inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors, particularly post COVID, appreciating the fact that we are not out of the woods when it comes to COVID-19 by any stretch of the imagination. People are still being afflicted with COVID and passing away from COVID, but the conditions have changed. The economy is back open. This inquiry has looked into how the situation is being handled with Australia's tourism and tertiary education factors and sectors in mind. I participated with the chair, Labor's Senator Deb O'Neill from New South Wales, in hearings in Sydney, the Gold Coast, Orange, Cairns, Broome, Fremantle, Great Ocean Road, Ballarat and Adelaide. They were very good hearings, and I commend those who gave evidence to those hearings, particularly the hearing on 2 March last year in Sydney.

I just want to place on the record what was said by students who would know because they are experiencing it firsthand. Inuli Subasinghe, who studies at UNSW, told the inquiry:

The cost of rent has been at an all-time high recently and, with a lot more international students coming into the country, it has been difficult for students to find accommodation. A lot of students are paying insanely high prices right now; they are only staying in a place for three months and then have to move again. So it has been difficult. For university courses we pay a really high amount, but I do not think we get the support that we need for the courses.

She was very frank and very raw. I thank her for her honesty. They are sentiments which are being echoed right throughout the university sector, not just by visiting students but by many students who are Australians who reside in this country.

Katja Strehle, a fourth-year PhD student in sociology from Western Sydney University, backed up those comments. I really liked what she said. She said:

I personally, for example, would like to give back to the community, because there has been a lot of economic investment in me and my research. I would not like to just leave Australia without giving back.

I think those sentiments are admirable. I think they are reflected in many students who come to Australia to learn. They do want to contribute. They do, as Katja has said, want to give back. I thank the students who gave evidence at that inquiry for being so upfront.

The inquiry heard some alarming reports about the unavailability and the lack of accommodation, both in capital cities and in regional areas. When I discussed this bill with the government relations officer at Charles Sturt University at Wagga Wagga, Samantha Beresford, she was concerned, as she has a right to be. We want our universities—and, from my own point of view, our regional universities—to be the best they can be.

I am concerned that this Labor federal government has mismanaged Australia's immigration system. It has led to more than double the number of international students in Australia, from 336,845 in March 2022, a couple of months prior to the election of the Albanese government, to a peak of 713,144 in February 2024. These are figures from six months ago. Goodness knows what they are now. Under Labor, there are 80,000 student visa holders who are on to their third student visa or more. Some are on an eighth, ninth or 10th student visa, as a backdoor way to stay in Australia to work. I'm sure the member for Barker would agree with me, coming from a regional area, that there are so many job vacancies in regional Australia at the moment, not just in agriculture but in all areas of endeavour,



blue collar and white collar, that cannot be filled. And, yes, our international students and our residential students are filling the void in many cases. But the accommodation crisis is real. It's hurting regional communities, particularly regional communities where there are universities.

We know that education is one of the big pillars that provides generous benefits to our balance of payments. If we're inviting students to our country, we need to be able to accommodate those students properly. The government's failure to manage Australia's international education sector with requisite certainty and fairness—and I have to say that this came out from some of the students who gave evidence at that inquiry—is causing economic harm to Australian universities, private higher education providers, English language course providers and the vocation, education and training or VET sector. The member for Bruce made some comments about this, and I don't disagree with them as far as some providers abusing the privilege of having international students. I'll leave that for another day. I listened to the member for Solomon when he talked about rejigging the English test and other parameters. Could you just imagine what those opposite would have said had we done the same in government? There would have been cries of discrimination and cries of, 'What are you doing to our education sector?' But we don't hear any of that now.

We won't be opposing this legislation, but the government's narrative in the remarkable growth in the international student numbers—on its watch, mind you—has been driven by the Minister for Education describing it as 'shonks and crooks'. That's what he contended in his second reading speech to this bill. Like the member for Bruce and, to a degree, the education minister, the member for Blaxland, I know that some international students have been lured here by providers just trying to make a fast buck and have used the various visa schemes to do just that. However, visa arrangements under this government are out of control.

Interestingly, in the Howard years, overall, not just in education, there were about 100,000 people migrating to Australia. That number was exceeded this January and February, in those individual months alone. There were more people who came to Australia in January and February than there were in the entire year in the Howard era. Eventually, we're going to have to say, 'Enough'; we're going to have to draw a line. This Labor government doesn't seem to have the capacity to do that.

The Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill introduces:

... new ministerial powers for the Minister for Education to set caps on the number of international students who can study in Australia at any one time—not just for each educational institution but for each campus location and course.

A bit has been said about the regions. The Regional Universities Network, or RUN, is a national collaborative group of seven regional Australian universities: Charles Sturt University, CQUniversity Australia, Federation University Australia, Southern Cross University, the University of New England, the University of Southern Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast. It's really interesting to hear what RUN has had to say about this bill. The group has actually said it:

... tends to leave the social missions of RUN universities more exposed to unintended consequences. It is RUN's concern that the universities most likely impacted by the changes introduced ... will be those regionally-based institutions who not only host the sector's highest concentrations of domestic equity enrolments, but whose ongoing viability in regional areas is directly linked to international enrolments at both regional and metropolitan campuses.

RUN universities have witnessed the highest proportional declines in international student revenue since COVID, the largest reduction in international student enrolments, the slowest post-COVID recovery in international students, and are among the least able public institutions to absorb any further reductions in international student revenue.

That's what RUN says.

It continues:

RUN universities enrol just 4 per cent of all international students studying at Australian universities ...

I accept that, but they are still an important component of those regional campuses. They further state:

Between 2019 to 2022, RUN universities saw a 61 per cent reduction in international student revenue linked to the pandemic, compared to the sector average of just a 16 per cent reduction during the same period.

They're hurting, and they say:

However, this must be supported by a visa regime that positively discriminates towards regional study/settlement, to assist the growth of international students at regional campuses.

They say:

RUN believes there should be no capped impediment, by location, provider, or course—for international students enrolling at regional universities.

I would contend that this government doesn't really have an ear to what's important in regional communities, and you see that right across the spectrum. You see that right across the board, and it wouldn't matter whether it's transport or agriculture. It doesn't matter that it's education in this instance.

It was regional areas which, like most times, kept this nation going during COVID, when many city folk were pulling up the doona over their heads and feeling sorry for themselves because we had a global pandemic. It was our farmers and our miners who were getting out and helping to put food and fibre on tables and backs, who were helping dig things up out of the ground to help our exports and who kept this country going. When you get legislation with the city-centric nonsense that we so often hear spouted by members opposite in legislation and interviews and all the rest, it makes it hard to stomach. It truly does. I can see the member for Barker nodding because he knows exactly that what I am saying is true.

Again, RUN says:

The new student accommodation requirements of the proposed managed growth policy, if applied to regional higher education providers, would also place disproportionate burdens upon regional universities and regional communities.

Firstly, regional universities have less financial capacity and/or borrowing capacity to take on major capital expenditure projects, compared to metropolitan universities who can leverage robust balance sheets derived from scaled operations in dense urban markets.

Secondly, the costs of construction, maintenance, equipment, and supply chains are higher in regional Australia.

They ought not be, but they are. That's why I commend the amendments to this bill that have been put forward by the member for Bradfield. We need to make sure that our regional universities are as strong as can be.

**Mr DAVID SMITH** (Bean—Government Whip) (16:39): I also rise to speak on the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024. The Australian government is committed to lifting the quality and assuring the integrity of our international education sector. This legislation continues this critical work. Australia is known globally for its high-quality tertiary education, with well-respected institutions conducting vital research and offering students opportunities and experiences that they cannot get in their home countries.

You don't have to look far from this building to see evidence of this. Across the lake, Australia's national university continues to provide world-class education and world-leading research. Further west, the University of Canberra punches above its weight in global rankings, despite its relative youth as an institution. And the Australian Catholic University and the incoming University of New South Wales Reid campus will provide students with plenty of opportunities to study what they want to and to gain the skills they need to succeed. Down the road, in my electorate of Bean, the new CIT campus in Woden will offer a variety of courses and encourage more students to consider vocational education as an equal to university, not an alternative. An EV Centre of Excellence has been established in Fyshwick as well. It's easy to see why over 15,000 international students from more than 100 countries come here to study—and that's just in the ACT.

Overseas students contribute \$30 billion to the Australian economy per annum, and international education is Australia's fourth largest export. The number of international student enrolments in the year to March has increased from 246,000 in 2005 to 741,000 in 2024. As other contributors to this debate have noted, the pandemic crippled international education. The former government told students to go home, and they did. Almost overnight, a multibillion-dollar industry was effectively halved. Those students are now back, but so are the dodgy operators, looking to take advantage of students and make a quick dollar at the expense of this critical national asset. They are unscrupulous actors who are a threat to our good name as a place where the best and brightest from around the world can come and get the best education in the world.

Since coming to government we have been working on this. The release of the Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System, or the Nixon review, and the review of the migration system brought urgent attention to integrity issues in international education. In September 2022 we announced the Parkinson review of the migration system, which found that the migration system creates incentives for non-genuine students and unscrupulous profit-seeking education providers. That profit motive means that some institutions prioritise enrolment numbers over learning outcomes or that student visas are sold as a way to work in Australia. Additionally, the review found clear evidence of systemic exploitation and the risk of an emerging permanently temporary underclass, including both overseas students and graduates.

In January 2023 the Nixon Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System revealed further weaknesses and failures. The review found systemic integrity issues within the international education sector, including collusive and unscrupulous business practices between education providers, their agents and non-genuine students. Additionally, the 2023 interim report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into international education, titled *Quality and integrity: the quest for sustainable growth*, found instances of active collusion between non-genuine students, agents and education providers, as well as instances of

education agents directing genuine students to take up unsuitable courses that are profitable for the agent in terms of commissions and provider end recruitment numbers. The report also noted that providers were facing difficulty managing agents because the student recruitment market was hypercompetitive and that providers, sometimes in collusion with agents, were enrolling non-genuine students in courses that they did not attend and offering courses to overseas students only, which may be of poor quality.

These reviews did bring urgent attention to integrity issues in the international education sector, and this government moved quickly on the recommendations of those reviews. In July last year the Albanese government got rid of unlimited work rights for international students by reintroducing a working hours cap of 24 hours per week. This allowed students to support themselves but not at the expense of their studies. It was the first step in reducing the lure of getting a student visa as a backdoor to working here.

In August last year the Minister for Education closed the concurrent enrolment loophole that allowed agents and providers to shift international students who had been here for less than six months from one course to another—a cheaper one—and from genuine study to no study at all. It was another backdoor way to work here.

In October last year we boosted the capacity of the VET regulator, ASQA, through a \$38 million investment and the establishment of an integrity unit. That very same month this government increased the amount of savings that international students are now required to have to get a student visa from \$24,505 to \$29,710.

In March of this year we increased the English language requirement for students, introduced a new genuine student requirement and increased the number of no-further-stay conditions for certain cohorts of visa students. Many of these measures are in response to not only the Parkinson and Nixon reviews but to feedback from the sector. The higher education sector knows that these operators exist and that they are a real threat to quality and integrity. Stakeholders have told the government that we need to respond in stronger terms, and this legislation will do that.

The bill is comprised of one schedule with eight parts. Parts 1 and 2 introduce new considerations for education services for overseas students, or ESOS agencies, in determining whether a provider is fit and proper, such as if they control or own, or are controlled or owned by, an education agent or associate. The provisions in part 1 will also require providers to give information about education agent commissions upon request from the Secretary of the Department of Education, who, in turn, will have the power to give information to providers on student transfers by, and commissions made to, specific education agents.

Part 3 will provide the Minister for Education with the power to determine, via legislative instruments, how initial applications for the registration of providers and for registration of courses by registered providers are to be managed by ESOS agencies. It also allows the minister to pause the registration of new providers and new courses by registered providers.

Part 4 will require providers to deliver one or more courses exclusively to domestic students for two consecutive years to be eligible to apply for registration under the ESOS Act. Providers that are listed in table A of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and providers that are seeking registration as standalone English language intensive courses for overseas students or standalone foundation programs will be exempt from the new registration requirement.

Part 5 will enable the automatic cancellation of a provider's registration under the ESOS Act where a course has not been delivered to overseas students in a period of 12 consecutive months. Part 6 provides for the automatic suspension of a provider's registration when an ESOS agency or designated state authority determines that a provider does not meet the fit and proper test because it is under investigation for a specified offence.

Parts 7 and 8 introduce new ministerial powers to regulate the provision of education to overseas students. They include allowing the minister, via legislative instrument and with the agreement of the minister responsible for vocational education and training, to: (1) limit the enrolments of overseas students by provider, course or location over a year; and (2) automatically suspend and cancel specified courses on the basis of systemic issues, their value to Australia's skills and training needs and priorities or if it's in the public interest.

This legislation is about restoring quality and integrity to the education services that overseas students come to Australia for, and it will support management of the sector for sustainable growth over time. The bill will support this by empowering the minister to determine limits on overseas student enrolments at a class, or classes of registered providers, for one or more years or on overseas student enrolments in individual courses, or classes of courses, at the provider. In addition, the bill allows the minister to give separate notice to individual providers to enable unique enrolment limits. The limit can be expressed as a specific number or worked out in accordance with the specified method.

The minister has the flexibility to exclude courses or providers from limits. The bill also enables the automatic suspension and cancellation of courses that the minister is satisfied have systemic quality issues in relation to the

standard of delivery or have limited value to Australia's critical skill needs or where it is in the public interest to do so. Following consultation, the final international education and skills strategic framework will outline the government's approach to implementing these limits.

We cannot proudly promote our education sector to the world if it is undermined by poor integrity and poor quality. We cannot have students coming to Australia and being ripped off, and we cannot have operators in the shadows whose business model is based on providing low-quality courses at sandstone university prices trying to profit off the name and brand recognition of this high-quality sector.

We are a government focused on welcoming the world's students to share in and experience the Australian quality of education that is internationally recognised, but it must be sustainable so that only education providers that are committed to investing the time and resources to provide students with a genuine education are not undermined by scammers trying to get rich quick and take advantage of vulnerable students coming to Australia under the banner of providing an 'Australian education'.

Under this Albanese Labor government and the work of this Minister for Education, we are restoring quality and integrity while ensuring that an Australian tertiary education remains synonymous with high quality and good value and continues to be one of our nation's most valuable exports. The important measures in this bill are the next steps in strengthening our international education sector, shutting out the dodgy operators, giving our providers long-term certainty, whether they're in the bush or in the city, and setting this national asset up for future success. I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr CHANDLER-MATHER** (Griffith) (16:52): We welcome the changes introduced in the bill to reduce exploitation of international students and weed out non-genuine education providers and agents. Nevertheless, the introduction of international student caps and broad ministerial powers to interfere in the tertiary education sector is something the Greens cannot support. The government is attempting to write extraordinary powers for itself into legislation, allowing the education minister to set limits on uni enrolments down to specific providers, courses or locations. This is an extraordinarily heavy-handed approach.

The bill demonstrates unprecedented government intervention in the university sector, and that has the possibility of government simply using the legislation to take aim at providers or courses that it does not like. There are no safeguard mechanisms in the bill, no avenues for providers to review decisions and no guidance on how the minister will be guided—or in what way—in making the legislative instruments that are possible under these expansive powers. Capping international student numbers is shockingly bad policy. It meddles with the independence of higher education institutions and totally disregards the needs, welfare and interests of international students.

International students play a vital role in this country, and this bill sends a message that they are no longer welcome here. Attempting to silo international students into particular degrees or locations will not improve their uptake. It means international students will simply look elsewhere. Students should be able to choose what they study and where they study; it is not for the government to decide.

Lots of the talk around the international student caps, though, has stemmed from one of the more disgraceful bits of rhetoric that goes on in this place—conflating migration with the housing crisis. International students far too often are demonised, targeted and singled out as somehow a cause or a contributor to the housing crisis, with very little—essentially no—evidence to back that up. We know that, for instance, since COVID there has been a net increase in migrant households in this country of 375,000 migrant households. At the same time, the Australian private housing sector has built over 600,000 homes—almost double the rate of new migrant households in this country, which includes international students. In that same time period, the group that has purchased the most homes that have been built in this country are property investors. In that same period property investors purchased just under 600,000 homes.

Far too often in the middle of cost-of-living and housing crises, the rich and powerful and the political establishment will attempt to demonise and single out the weak and defenceless or people who don't have a big voice in this country in an attempt to protect the financial interests that actually cause the housing crisis and benefit from it. It's no coincidence that the Commonwealth Bank can make a record \$10 billion profit in 2023, just as mortgage and housing stress is reaching a peak disgraceful limit. It's no coincidence that at the same time as the government wants to avoid responsibility for building enough public housing for people in this country that they and the opposition and the Liberals and Nationals decide to team up to partially blame migrants for this housing crisis. It's no coincidence that as the Property Council, property developers, the banks and property investors want to avoid any responsibility for this housing crisis that we hear more and more talk of migrants and see more and more of the singling out and demonising of migrants, whether it be international students or people fleeing wars and conflict and coming to this country for a safe haven.

What we know about that sort of rhetoric is that it is designed to distract from the real causes of this housing crisis, whether it be the fact that the government chronically underinvests in public housing, whether it be that over the next 10 years property investors will pocket \$165 billion in tax handouts from this government, whether it's the fact that neither a federal nor any state or territory government outside of the ACT—where the Greens are in government—will even contemplate capping rent increases.

There are a variety of causes of this housing crisis, but one of them isn't international students or migrants. The more that they are targeted, the more likely it is that the rich and powerful and the real culprits of this housing crisis will be able to get away with continuing to profit from the housing crisis they have caused while they get to turn around and single out migrants and international students as the culprits when they've had nothing to do with it.

**Dr MULINO** (Fraser) (16:57): I'm pleased to rise today to support this bill. By way of introduction, there have been so many comments in this place over recent days, and rightly so, about how Australia was fourth on the medal tally at the Olympics and how we punched so high above our weight. Indeed, that's a common refrain in Australia when it comes to sport, and I think it's something that all of us in this place celebrate, including myself. I was glued to the TV at some very unhealthy hours over the last fortnight.

Today we're talking about another area where Australia punches well above its weight, which is international education and research. These are critically important to our economy and our society, and we should celebrate them. What this bill today recognises is that we can only celebrate it if education is undertaken in a way where it's properly regulated and undertaken with integrity.

I'll start with a couple of statistics. Though statistics can be rather sterile, it's important to provide some context, in that the international education sector in Australia is so massive. In 2022-23 the sector contributed over \$35 billion to the economy. As previous speakers have indicated, it was the fourth largest export earner. There were many significant components to that, including higher education at over \$24 billion and the VET sector at \$8½ billion. Coming from Victoria, I know how important this is. For many years, education exports—the international education sector—have been Victoria's largest services export. When you look at the international ranking of countries with international students studying in them we're routinely in the top five. Depending on the measure that you use, Australia is sometimes ranked even higher than that. These are huge numbers, and they don't just represent dollars of exports. For me, they also represent something more substantial around the numbers of people being trained to support the vitality of our economy.

But, of course, there's also the human side to this. I raise that because I feel as though I have experienced almost every dimension of the international student experience. I was an international student 25-odd years ago over in the US, and I spent a number of years doing that. I was in a class where 21 of 28 students were foreign, and it wasn't always easy to navigate the system as a foreign student, particularly, of course for those with language issues or cultural issues. But those 21 students out of that cohort of 28 added a great deal of vitality. That brought together people from all around the world who then studied and researched with each other and added greatly not just to each other's experience but to each other's education and to the final outcome. Indeed, that strengthened the institution which we were studying in.

Before that, I'd studied a master's at the University of Sydney where half of my class was foreign. Roughly 10 out of the 20 master's students were foreign students. There I didn't just see the interaction between foreign students and domestic students; I got to see how the foreign students who graduated from that class went on to contribute, in many cases, to Australia. Some of those foreign students who completed the master's went back to their home countries or, indeed, went to other countries, but many of them stayed in Australia. Some went on to undertake PhDs in Australia. Some went on to work in Australia. Some went on to become permanent residents. Some went on to work for Australian institutions such as the Treasury, ASIC and the Reserve Bank. So I saw directly how these people added greatly to our economy and to our society.

Finally, I taught international students when I was at Monash University. I taught a number of undergraduate foreign students. I taught PhD students macroeconomics. Again, I saw the challenges they often had in navigating the system and navigating society, but then I saw them grow. I saw them complete their qualifications. As with my master's class, some of them went home, but many of them stayed in Australia. Some of them are still teaching at Monash to this day, and now they're teaching the next generation of students. They're undertaking research. They're contributing.

So I've seen how much foreign students can create and contribute. If we think about all the different ways that foreign students add, there's the creation of skills that are dedicated after the completion of the degree, both here and abroad. There are the personal connections, of course. The massive alumni network that has been generated over decades of people who have studied here and then either stayed or gone overseas has created an incredible asset for Australia—not an asset that is measured in dollars and cents but something very valuable and important.

There is also the research, of course, and research is an area that, as I have seen, has benefited greatly from a diverse range of skills, backgrounds and perspectives. I believe Australian research is all the better for having not just those foreign students who graduate and continue researching here but all of those connections that undoubtedly continue for many years after those students study here. Then, of course, there are all the financial benefits: the export dollars but also, of course, the fact that so many people who complete these degrees then fill skills gaps in Australia and contribute in those ways.

So there are so many benefits. But, of course, you get the benefits of that system not through volume but through the quality of the interaction, the quality of the training, the quality of the education, the quality of the skills that people come out with and the quality of the research. For that to be the focus, you need to have a system that is built on integrity.

There have been a number of reviews into this sector. The Nixon review is one of the more recent reviews. It found systemic integrity issues within the international education sector, including collusive and unscrupulous business practices between education providers, their agents and non-genuine students. That involves agents and sometimes providers ripping off students. Sometimes, perhaps, students are coming here without any intention to study. It can be all sorts of different situations. But what was most pertinent out of the Nixon review was that there was something systemic at play—not everywhere, of course, because I think the vast majority of the sector has high integrity and adds a great deal to our education system, to our research and to our society, but it did find that there were systemic integrity issues that needed to be addressed. In relation to the VET sector, the Nixon review looked at recent operations and investigations that had exposed that non-genuine providers were colluding with disreputable agents to facilitate student visas. It's in that context that we need to strengthen the system, and that's why the bill that has been brought forward is so important. The international education sector is adding greatly to our economy, greatly to our education system and greatly to our society, but we need to make sure that we strengthen it, and we need to make sure that it continues to do so.

One of the key elements in this bill is that the bill will strengthen the fit-and-proper-provider test applied to providers to limit cross-ownership and collusive behaviours behind providers and education agents. As I just mentioned, that was an issue which had been identified by the Nixon review. It had also been identified by other reviews, including reviews of the parliament. So that's a very important step that this bill will put into place.

There are also a number of measures in relation to agents. One is that the Secretary of the Department of Education will be given the power to collect education agent commission information. This is critical because we know that effective regulation relies upon effective data. It is not possible, in almost all cases, to effectively regulate a sector if you don't have clear visibility of what's going on. There will also be an expansion of the ability of the Secretary of the Department of Education or the relevant regulator to provide information to registered providers about education agents. That's another critical element of not just collecting critically important information and data but making sure that it goes to those members of the education ecosystem that need it in order to protect student interests and protect the overall integrity of the scheme. It will also permit the Minister for Education to direct, via legislative instrument, how ESOS agencies manage initial applications for the registration of providers and applications for the registration of courses by registered providers by directing the suspension of lodgement or processing of applications and/or that an ESOS agency is not required or is not permitted to process existing applications for a period of up to 12 months. So those three elements of this bill all go to the way in which the role of agents will be regulated more effectively.

There are also measures which go to providers. That's the other main key element of this system when it comes to student interaction. The bill will require providers to deliver a course to domestic students for two years before applying to register to deliver courses for overseas students, and this is obviously to reflect the fact that we want bona fide courses and that we want courses that have been offered to domestic students for a reasonable period of time. We don't want courses that are set up entirely for foreign students in a way that isn't rigorous and isn't for the right purposes. In a related sense, the bill will allow for the automatic cancellation of a provider's registration where they have not delivered a course to overseas students for 12 consecutive months, so it will require continuity in the provision of services to foreign students.

The bill will also permit the automatic cancellation of a provider's registration where they are deemed not to be fit and proper as a result of being under investigation for serious offences. Of course, this will relate to the very first element that I talked about, which is a strengthening of the fit-and-proper test itself. And it will provide additional powers to the Minister for Education in relation to limiting or cancelling providers' ability to deliver courses that have systemic quality or standard-of-delivery issues and to set limits on enrolments at a provider level. It's critical that the minister has those additional powers in order to ensure integrity of the system.

So, we have a raft of integrity measures. Importantly, underpinning this is strengthening of the fit-and-proper provider test. But, as I mentioned, there are a series of measures that relate to agents and their role in the system,

and it is absolutely critical that the regulation in relation to agents is strengthened, because in so many instances it's possible for vulnerable international students to fall prey to an unscrupulous agent. Then of course it's also critical that providers are also subject to stronger regulation. This is going to be achieved through strengthening of the framework, through providing additional powers to the secretary of the Department of Education, and through providing additional powers to the Minister for Education to act in that central role.

I started with a summary of the significant economic contribution of international education to Australia—the fact that this doesn't reflect just dollars and cents, in terms of exports, but a huge provision of services, training and education to so many thousands of people, and that those people gain massively, and that our students gain from learning and researching with the international students, and that Australia benefits from so many of those students staying here and researching or working after they've finished. It contributes so much, and I've seen that firsthand. But a system as big and as complex as our international education sector can work only if it's not about volume but about quality. That's why integrity has to be at the heart of the way in which this sector sees services provided to international students and also the way in which the government provides oversight and regulation. So, I'm very pleased to support this bill.

**Ms DANIEL** (Goldstein) (17:12): As I've said publicly, the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024 is a sledgehammer to crack a walnut—and the wrong walnut. I do not quibble with the integrity measures contained in parts 1 to 6 of this bill. But I would argue that it's compromised by its approach to reducing the number of overseas students and short-term holidaymakers to make a show of doing something about a housing shortage that has little to do with either cohort.

We should welcome overseas students to Australia, as we've been doing since the heyday of the Colombo Plan in the fifties, sixties and seventies. What we should not be doing is encouraging young people to come to Australia on false pretences that the sham or questionable courses being offered them are really a pathway to residency. It's meant that there are thousands of people now living in Australia in a kind of limbo, with reduced economic opportunities and no real road to citizenship. Visa factories ought to be run out of business, and to the extent that this bill leads to that result, so much the better.

If rorting were the real concern, this legislation would focus specifically on providers of concern and simply introduce measures to ensure more effective regulation of their practices. Some privately owned VET providers are clearly not of high integrity and quality. They should be the focus, not universities and other quality government providers. Nor should this be an avenue to pit quality institutions against each other or to create a city-country divide.

Once again, we're presented with legislation about two very separate and distinct issues. It's becoming a habit with this government, and a bad one. As the government knows and as the minister has come close to saying publicly, the rest of this legislation, part 7 and 8, is not primarily about education but about fixing the net overseas migration number for the next year and using the tertiary sector to do most of the heavy lifting. There are also TAFEs and other respectable providers that would be adversely affected by these measures, not to mention the impact on Australia's reputation as a reliable provider of quality overseas education and on the ability of universities to support the research we need if we are indeed to be a clean, green superpower.

It was not that long ago that assaults on Indian students in Australia resulted in a sharp downturn in young people from the subcontinent signing up to come here to study. In fact, it took a specific visit by Julia Gillard to India to get under the hood and start the repairs. Reputation is hard won, easily lost and a real battle to regain. Overseas education may indeed be our third-largest overseas earner, but we are not unique. We do not have the field to ourselves. We do not have a monopoly. We are reliant on the cross-subsidisation international students provide to support domestic students and research.

Already, the tertiary sector tells me, the uncertainty surrounding this legislation is leading to prospective students going to other countries, including the United States. That's not surprising given that Home Affairs is already deliberately slowing down the time it takes to process visas for prospective students. Create uncertainty and people will reconsider their options. By reducing the number of overseas students in this pre-emptory way we will be creating reputational and business risks for the tertiary sector as well as broader problems for an already troubled economy as unintended consequences. International students have played a large role in underpinning economic growth since COVID.

I accept that not every university thinks the same way on this bill. Some, like La Trobe—and I've met with the vice-chancellor—argue they will benefit. But I have also met with vice-chancellors from the University of Melbourne and Monash University, which many Goldstein students attend, and they entirely disagree. I do not want to be involved in creating a situation where students in Goldstein cannot get a place at a university anywhere near where they live because of arbitrary course caps that could be imposed under this legislation.

If there's a perceived temporary issue with the number of people entering the country—and I'm still not convinced this is a way to solve it—make sure the legislation only operates for a temporary period. I have been in discussions with the minister to add a sunset clause to the legislation so it will lapse once it's achieved the government's short-term goals. Unfortunately, it appears the government has ultimately decided not to support my amendment despite support from the tertiary sector and other respectable providers. Yes, the government sympathises with the concept, but it's decided it's just too difficult. That's an inadequate response, especially when the legislation as it stands grants extraordinary powers to the minister to, for example, impose total enrolment limits by legislative instrument and to impose total enrolment limits by notice to the provider. The real sledgehammer comes with additional provisions to allow the minister to impose enrolment limits on individual courses by legislative instrument or by notice to the provider. This is an overreach, and I wholeheartedly support the amendment from my colleague the member for North Sydney to remove that provision.

Meanwhile, I continue to offer a sunset clause of two years to enable the government to get over what it sees as an immediate but one-off problem. It would also give the sector certainty that the extraordinary powers granted to the minister would not be used for even less acceptable reasons by a future incumbent. The government acknowledged to me that it might have been a different story if the Australian tertiary education authority had been up and running. I offered suggestions to address this that were considered but ultimately rejected. I do suspect that, if the minister had been the ultimate decisionmaker, a sunset would have seen the light of day, to mix a metaphor, but he is not and there are other priorities at play at in other offices in this building.

It appears that the proposal to cap the number of international students was thrown into the budget at the last minute to make it appear that the government was doing something about the housing shortage. In his budget address, the Treasurer went so far as to blame international students for putting pressure on the prices of rent and making finding housing harder for everyone. The government has repeatedly shown itself to be willing to bow to the politics of fear propagated by others in this chamber on immigration. Now a housing crisis which has been decades in the making is being tied to international students. I would argue that the housing crisis has multiple causes which are bipartisan and will take decades to repair. This needs to be done in a considered way, and creating another problem in a knee-jerk attempt to solve it is not the way to go. There is a real danger that, in trying to resolve one perceived issue, this legislation, if it remains unamended, would damage the broader economy, especially by reducing the supply of part-time workers at the time of a labour shortage and with inflation remaining uncomfortably strong.

As the Treasurer has pointed out, it is services rather than goods that are driving inflation now. Reducing the supply of labour can only make matters worse, and blaming overseas students for the housing crisis is at best simplistic. As the Property Council has pointed out, between 2019 and 2023, median weekly rent increased by 30 per cent. Over the same period, student visa arrivals decreased by 13 per cent. Reports suggest that overseas students occupy a mere four per cent of rentals. As the Student Accommodation Council puts it:

There are more domestic students in rental homes than international- yet no one is suggesting we ban share-houses for local university students.

The fact is we have simply not been building enough purpose-built student accommodation. The Property Council estimates 7,770 new beds are due to come online by 2026—still not enough to alleviate demand in the private rental market. It's still not quite clear to me how increasing requirements on universities to add to student accommodation works when this legislation will reduce their income and, one would have thought, therefore their ability to borrow to build. On top of that, last financial year, when growth was an anaemic 1.5 per cent, the National Australia Bank estimated that spending by international students was responsible for the 0.8 of the increase—more than half of the total for the year. Growth remains around the same level right now, so any cut in international student numbers is likely to have a further direct impact on growth.

The Group of Eight universities suggests that, if the number of international students were capped at the pre-COVID level of 2019, the immediate impact would cost the economy more than \$5 billion and more than 22,000 jobs. In my own city, the estimate is that international students at Monash and Melbourne contribute nearly \$6 billion in economic output and the impact would reduce economic output by more than \$1 billion and 4½ thousand jobs. I know the universities are talking their own book, but clearly the impact would at least be substantial and damaging.

This bill is a sledgehammer—and not in a good way. I do not support it in its current form.

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Chief Government Whip) (17:22): I rise to speak on the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024 and I do so as someone who represents a community where an enormous number of international students have gone through the processes of studying in Australia and now call Australia home as citizens, many of them parents of children, many of them owners of homes in my electorate. I also come to this bill having visited having visited India last year and having spent a lot of time talking to people



there about international students in Australia. Obviously, there are a lot of people in my community who want to talk to me about their experience as international students here and their wishes and hopes to have family members or other people from home come and join them here for that.

I have to say that we all know the power of the international education program for the Australian economy, but we must also be able to say, hand on heart, that what we are offering as a country to students from other parts of the world who wish to come here is absolute quality. When you put your hand up to say that you want to come to Australia to study, you do so expecting the Australian education experience, whether that be in the vocational education and training sector or in the higher education sector. I cannot, hand on heart, knowing people who have been educated in Australia through these programs, say that that is the case for everyone, and I would like to be able to do so. I think it is incumbent on everyone in this place to want to be able to say the same.

I want to be able to say that every student from overseas who comes here seeking an education, paying for an Australian education, receives the quality that we expect as parliamentarians and receives training of an international standard and that they're then able to apply for positions globally with an Australian qualification in their hand and have the world say that that's a quality certification that has met international standards. This legislation goes some way to ensuring that that is the case in the future. It goes some way to undoing some of the exploitation of those international students that we have seen in our suburbs and communities. I know firsthand of cases where, tragically, those things have occurred to people who have come here for an education. Similarly, some people can tell us that they came for an education, paid for it, and received less than what we would all like to say was an Australian education. I support the bill.

**Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (17:25):** I rise to address the government's Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024. The coalition reserves our position in relation to this until we see the Senate inquiry. We want to know a lot more about the impact of the bill. However, after extensive years of experience inside the student system and administering it in the executive for some period of time, I am concerned about many measures that the government is putting forward in relation to this bill.

There is too much arbitrary power for the minister over caps and over the caps on international students that the government's proposing. It is hard to run an international college if you're in the private sector or a university that deals with volumes of student numbers, visa approvals, revenue streams and all of the variables that come with bringing in humans and the fact that people change their minds. Students are no different to any other group of humans. They may well change their minds. It's hard enough without the government arbitrarily setting limits every 12 months, unreasonably by fiat, of whatever the minister feels like. Generally, we have a scepticism that this will be because of the government's mismanagement of the immigration system more broadly, taking it out on the student sector and using the cap to somehow reduce the number of people in the country arbitrarily without any good evidence and with too much ministerial power.

I want to point out that the demonisation of students through COVID is particularly poor from the Labor Party. In the speeches we've heard, they make the same point, 'Oh, you told students to leave.' Well, in 2019, when COVID came about, the government sensibly advised students to return home while we faced a pretty unprecedented worldwide crisis that nobody was certain about. Borders were shutting around the world in some countries, like China. People were being locked into houses and boarded in. It was a very fragile environment. Sending people home during that period was a good choice for that time. Now they want to rail against it and say they would have said, 'Stay in Australia with uncertain prospects of returning to your family and slave away working,' even though most businesses were making them redundant. Therefore, the government would have paid for students to be here doing nothing, not being able to work, not being able to function, and not being able to study.

The faux outrage from members opposite about this issue is actually a complete misappreciation and misunderstanding of basic humanity and the responsibility of a government in a crisis. The government made the right call. It told students to go home, and a lot of students did go home. That wasn't for fun or because the government felt like it; that was an emergency situation. We don't have to go into what that was. I'm sure all members understand and accept the basic premises. It was a one-off event, and it had to happen. Railing against that as some sort of argument for this bill is complete and utter nonsense.

Labor supported those measures at the time with the students, and, of course, they understood why, and so did all the Labor premiers. Everybody understood why. And we all went through that very sad situation. Many students who stayed here couldn't feed themselves. Communities came forward and fed students. Then the government extended its payments to students in recognition of that. Keeping everyone locked in the country didn't seem a very humane response. The Labor Party needs to wake up and maybe edit the talking points they're giving out to the backbenchers. They probably don't really appreciate what they're saying or how stupid the position they're adopting really is. With massive hindsight, it is massively stupid and massively foolish to make this argument, and it wouldn't have been done by them or anybody else in government.

When we get to the core of this bill, the overreach has come because of the government's fundamental mismanagement of the numbers of people coming into the country through their own migration settings and their lack of experience in managing it. I think the housing crisis, of course, has added fuel to this fire, but I agree with the member for Griffith. I'll say it: to blame students, particularly, for housing or rental affordability is an odd instinct of this government, and this bill is a hard response to that. It won't fix anybody's housing or rental crisis and, at the same time, risks a very big export industry—one that brings in a lot of workers to Australia.

I invite members here who are not from major capitals like Melbourne or Sydney to go into any restaurant in Sydney at any time of the day or night. You'll find students working in the kitchen. The truth is a lot of Australians don't want to work in kitchens anymore. A lot of Australians simply won't do it for the wages there. It's done by international students. You go into many businesses now—with security guards and all kinds of things—and people are doing work, from their international student visa, that is not filled by Australians. They're not taking Australian jobs either; they're simply doing a lot of heavy lifting inside the economy in a lot of sectors like hospitality and in roles that we cannot get people to fill.

The government dramatically reducing student numbers is not about addressing the shonks and the dodgy operators. They've always been there, and they always have to be continually managed out of the system. International education is heavily regulated by ASQA and TEQSA and regular state and federal reviews. The vast bulk of the sector is doing the right thing. The vast bulk of the sector spends all day, every day, year in, year out, in compliance, and that includes our major universities, who do a very good job of this. For the government to say this is a bill about shonks and dodgy operators is counterintuitive. It is not about those things.

In fact, I've just received an email from the new vice-chancellor of Western Sydney University and all the people there explaining their position on this bill and why it won't work. I want to say to members here from Western Sydney—and there are plenty of Labor ones as well as people in the coalition—we should very carefully read the view of Western Sydney University, one of Australia's most modern and internationally competitive universities, and their objections to this bill. They do a great job managing international students in Western Sydney, to the benefit of Western Sydney and our life in Sydney, and they make a great point. This is a major university funded by the taxpayer, funded by the Commonwealth, and they are worried about the minister's caps on international students and the arbitrary ability to change it. They're more than worried; they think it threatens their viability.

The government says this is somehow a bad model for universities to have, but it's the model worldwide now. We're in a global competition for the international student. We know of the volumes that come from China, India and Nepal. Most students come here for an education, and the vast bulk of students return to their home country educated. They have a good experience in Australia, and we have a good experience with them.

It is a profitable industry for Australia. It makes a lot of money. It also provides a workforce where we couldn't provide those workers, and our universities are able to fund themselves. When you look at the gap, if they get their student numbers caps in funding for universities, the government has no intention of replacing that money. The government couldn't possibly afford to replace that money, and it couldn't possibly, in 100 years of trying, raise enough tax to replace the revenues that would be lost by just our major universities. Why is the government embarking on this path? They're being warned not by shonky operators and not even by private sector colleges that have been around a long time but by all the major universities about this. Surely, that would give the education minister food for thought.

Some of the changes that do come in here about education agents can make some sense. We don't disagree with many of the changes in definition, and tightening is always welcome. Most of this can be tightened through the immigration side function rather than the education side function. I want to also allude to some of the other changes in the bill that the coalition finds could be very useful. However, the false narrative about shonks and crooks really sets the sector up, when most of the sector is internationally renowned, doing a great job and providing that great cultural and diplomatic function for Australia in educating our region. It's been an objective of multiple governments many times.

Happily, I'm old enough to remember the last time Labor was in government. This tends to happen in Labor governments. The last time was when Minister Kim Carr was in place. They had the VET FEE-HELP scheme, one of the most disastrous Commonwealth policies in terms of wasted money, where there were shonks and cowboys who took advantage of the government and made a fortune. Then the government cracked down so hard on the sector that they virtually crippled the international education sector because of their own policy, which opened up a wild west cabinet of funding under VET FEE-HELP.

I see that situation emerging again where, because of the Labor government's ineptitude in managing migration, managing the student sector, understanding the intersection of both and understanding how to manage them properly, they are now pulling the lever as hard as they can on the sector, rejecting all visa applications—so many

rejections coming through now, you don't have to be too smart to work out that every private sector and public sector internationally exposed college is getting mostly rejections—so hard they threaten the viability of the sector, again cruellng a big industry for Australia. Does the government have any replacement income or industry for this fourth-largest export sector? It's fourth in our entire economy. The answer is, of course, that they don't.

That's why Western Sydney University's letter intrigued me as well. They already have a system in place where every student they bring has accommodation, and they're prepared to guarantee and sustain it. The government hasn't even looked at allowing universities to make their own use of housing and share housing, to build more housing fast on their campuses, to have more student accommodation. There is no attempt to actually deal with the fundamental driver of this bill, which is their incompetence in relation to the migration portfolio and their mismanagement of the volumes of people. Western Sydney University is right that they can do this sustainably and in that they promise they could get it all done in a way that wouldn't put pressure on rents and housing. Indeed, they do that pretty well at the moment.

We are looking forward to the Senate inquiry and the review. There is much more that I could say about this bill, but I will certainly be watching it with interest. I want to signal to the sector that this is not the first time this has happened—the last time Labor was in government they crippled international education, and here we are again. I believe that a few years of this regime and this reduction in student numbers will be so bad for our economy it will add further pressure to an already difficult economic environment—a shortage of labour, inflationary pressures and no replacement income from the international education sector for our universities. This could really be very damaging for the sector. If this is brought in, in the way the government is intending, I believe it will cause some very significant issues in this sector that may lead to further economic harm to our economy at a time when we should be doing no harm to the economy in general. It couldn't be worse timed.

I suppose the silver lining is, just like last time, a new government, if elected, would have to come in and look at fixing this fairly quickly, establishing certainty for the sector and certainty for our universities to continue to operate at the peak level they operate at, and getting those revenues back. I know it would be a priority—restoring confidence to the sector, regardless of what this government's able to do.

I've expressed my concerns. I endorse all our major universities' concerns—and they have grave concerns. Any capable minister, any responsible government—we're not dealing with shonks or crooks when we're talking about our major universities in our country. They are the ones saying: 'Government, listen to us: this will not work. This will damage our operation, this will damage our revenue and this will damage our international reputation for no benefit.' I think that's a sober warning. I think the government should really rethink this bill and I look forward to the Senate inquiry.

**Mr BURNELL** (Spence) (17:38): I rise to speak in favour of the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024. Education is not just a pillar of our economy but a cornerstone of our society. It changes lives and builds bridges across the globe. As Paul Keating—as well as the more contemporary member for Blaxland, the minister for education—said on a number of occasions, education is the key to the kingdom, and a great education is a master key that opens every door. This bill is crucial for ensuring the continued integrity and quality of our international education sector.

Over the past decade, Australia's international education sector has become a vital component of our economic and social fabric, contributing \$48 billion annually and educating more than three million students from around the globe. This sector not only fuels our economy but also fosters international goodwill, as students who study here carry a piece of Australia back to their home countries.

Australia's reputation as a premier destination for education is built on the quality and integrity of these institutions. This reputation has been meticulously cultivated over decades, with our universities, vocational educational institutions and schools earning accolades for their academic excellence and innovative teaching methods. However, a number of recent reviews—including the Nixon review and the Parkinson migration review—have highlighted significant issues that threaten this reputation. These reviews revealed exploitation within the visa system, and underscored the need for stringent measures to protect students and ensure the sustainability of the sector.

This bill addresses those concerns head-on by implementing comprehensive reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability and quality within the sector. The Nixon review, in particular, brought urgent attention to integrity issues in international education, exposing how some providers and agents were exploiting the system for financial gain. The Parkinson review into migration further highlighted the vulnerabilities in our visa system that allowed such exploitation to occur. These findings made it clear that without decisive action the trust that international students and their families place in Australia's education system could be eroded.

The bill before us today is designed to close those loopholes and restore confidence in our international education sector. The primary objective of the bill is to safeguard the integrity and quality of Australia's international education sector. It introduces several measures designed to prevent unscrupulous behaviour and ensure that only genuine providers operate within a sector known throughout the world for its high quality and high standards.

By expanding the fit and proper test for education providers, the bill ensures that those with cross ownership and control interests are thoroughly vetted to prevent collusion and exploitation of students. The bill also empowers the Minister for Education to take decisive action against providers that fail to meet these standards. For example, the minister can now suspend or cancel the registration of providers under investigation for serious regulatory offences such as human trafficking or slavery-like practises. This provision ensures that providers cannot continue to enrol new students while under investigation, protecting students from potential harm and preserving the integrity of our education system.

Furthermore, the bill mandates that new providers must demonstrate a commitment to domestic education by delivering courses to domestic students for at least two years before applying to register for international students. This requirement prevents the establishment of ghost colleges, which, unfortunately, are not fictional places where Caspar attends in order to upskill himself as a scarier ghost. Instead, these colleges are institutions that exist solely to exploit the visa system for financial gain.

One of the central provisions of the bill is the enhancement of transparency and accountability among education agents. Under the new regulations, education providers will have greater access to performance data of education agents, including information on student transfers and commissions. This measure aims to curb the practise of agents exploiting students by shifting them from one course to another—often of lower quality—to maximise commissions. By making this information accessible, providers can make more informed decisions about which agents to engage, thus protecting students from being misled.

Additionally, the bill empowers the secretary of the Department of Education to collect detailed information on the commissions and activities of education agents. This increased scrutiny ensures that the agents act in the best interests of students and uphold the standards expected of them. The inclusion of a new definition for education agent within the bill provides a clearer framework for regulating their activities, further strengthening the oversight of this crucial aspect of international education. The transparency provisions also require education providers to report any commissions paid to agents, particularly for offshore student transfers. This measure addresses a significant loophole that has been exploited by some agents to poach students from their original courses and enrol them in cheaper, less rigorous programs. By banning such commissions, the bill ensures that agents are incentivised to act in the best interests of students rather than pursuing financial gain through unethical practices. This change is expected to have a significant impact on the quality of education that international students receive, as it discourages enrolment in substandard courses.

Another significant aspect of the bill is the introduction of enrolment limits to manage the growth and quality of the international education sector. The Minister for Education is granted the authority to set limits on overseas student enrolments at both the provider and course levels. By carefully regulating the number of international students the government can ensure that educational institutions are not overstretched and that students receive the high-quality education they expect.

Furthermore, the bill includes provisions for the automatic suspension and cancellation of registrations for providers that fail to deliver courses to international students for 12 consecutive months. This measure targets dormant providers that pose a risk to the sector's integrity by potentially being used as fronts for fraudulent activity. The automatic cancellation provisions for providers who have not delivered courses to international students for 12 months further strengthens this regulatory framework. By removing dormant or inactive providers from the system, the bill helps to maintain a high standard of education and protect students from being enrolled in institutions that may not be committed to their educational needs.

Additionally, the minister will have the flexibility to exclude certain courses or providers from these limits if they demonstrate exceptional quality and alignment with Australia's strategic educational goals. This approach ensures that the system remains both dynamic and responsive to the needs of the sector while maintaining high standards of quality and integrity.

The bill also introduces a more robust fit and proper test to assess the suitability of education providers. Regulators are now required to consider factors such as cross-ownership and control of education agents and providers. This expanded scrutiny is crucial in preventing collusion and in ensuring that providers and agents operate with the highest standards of integrity.

The bill also empowers the minister to take immediate action against providers that engage in systemic quality issues or that deliver courses that do not meet Australia's critical skills needs. This power includes the ability to

suspend or cancel courses that are found to have persistent quality problems or that are deemed to provide limited value to Australia's strategic objectives.

These measures collectively ensure the international education sector remains a high-quality and trustworthy environment for students. They also protect the reputation of Australian education providers, ensuring that they continue to be seen as leaders in delivering world-class education. By maintaining rigorous standards and taking swift action against noncompliant providers, the government demonstrates upholding the integrity of the sector. To that end, this bill brings significant benefit to all stakeholders within the international education sector.

For students it ensures access to high-quality education and protects them from exploitation and fraud. By enhancing the transparency and accountability of education agents, students and their families can have greater confidence in the choices they make regarding their education. The bill's provisions create a safer and more reliable environment for international students, who can focus on their studies without fear of being misled or exploited.

Education providers, while facing stricter compliance requirements, will also benefit from a more level playing field and the removal of unscrupulous competitors. This, in turn, enhances the overall reputation of Australia's education sector. Providers that adhere to the highest standards will be recognised and rewarded, attracting more students and building stronger international partnerships.

The bill also addresses the concerns of various stakeholder groups, including universities, vocational education providers and private training organisations. By setting clear and consistent standards, the bill helps maintain the trust and confidence of these stakeholders, ensuring their continued support and participation in the international education sector. This collaborative effort will ultimately lead to a more resilient and sustainable education system that benefits all involved.

Since the release of the Nixon review many other reviews have helped our government formulate a view towards legislating for a number of measures within this bill. The Albanese Labor government has taken swift and decisive action to address the integrity issues identified. Measures such as reintroducing working hours caps for international students and closing the concurrent enrolment loophole demonstrate our commitment to protecting the sector. These actions are complemented by the provisions in the bill, which build on these initial steps to create a comprehensive framework for ensuring quality and integrity in international education. The government's collaboration with the education sector has played a key part in crafting this bill. Continuous engagement with stakeholders, including universities, vocational education providers and industry associations has ensured that the reforms are both practical and aligned with the sector's needs. This approach will continue as our government works with the sector to implement new measures and monitor their impact.

Furthermore, our government has invested significantly in enhancing the capability of regulatory bodies, such as the Australian Skills Quality Authority, to enforce the new standards. This investment includes establishing an integrity unit within ASQA and providing additional resources to support their regulatory frameworks. These efforts ensure that the regulatory framework is not only fit for purpose but also adequately resourced to handle the increased oversight and enforcement responsibilities.

The Albanese Labor government has also committed to ongoing reviews and assessments of the impact of these reforms. The approach allows for continuous improvement and adaptation to emerging challenges, ensuring that the education sector remains resilient and responsive to changing circumstances at home and abroad. By maintaining an open dialogue with stakeholders and adapting policies as needed, the government demonstrates its commitment to sustaining the high standards of Australia's education system. Providers will have access to comprehensive data on agents, allowing them to identify and avoid those with poor track records. This transparency protects students and ensures that they receive the quality education they were promised.

Many Australian universities have built and fostered a reputation for excellence, attracting students from around the world. By maintaining stringent quality controls, they ensure that their students receive a world-class education—because that is, after all, what so many have travelled great lengths at great personal cost to seek out in our country. The bill supports these institutions by creating a regulatory environment that rewards integrity and penalises bad actors. This is not just a response to current challenges but a proactive step towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of Australia's international education sector.

By aligning with Australia's strategic goals in education and skills development, the bill sets out the foundation for continued growth and excellence, ensuring that our education system remains robust, transparent and accountable. By implementing stringent measures to achieve this outcome, we are protecting the interests of students and maintaining Australia's reputation as a leading education provider. We are fostering a fair and level playing field to benefit students, education providers and the broader community alike. We are ensuring that Australia remains and continues to be a preferred destination for those abroad who are seeking to obtain a quality education

in their chosen fields and disciplines and, in doing so, contributing significantly to our economy and enhancing our global standing.

The Albanese Labor government has indeed already introduced similar legislation through the parliament earlier this year to ensure that our VET sector can reach the high standards needed of a sector we are depending on to train a workforce in one of the many jobs of high need in our workforce. We can do the same across higher education, ensuring that, when someone looks at travelling all the way to Australia to study, they do so with a sense of surety and the knowledge that the quality of the education they receive and the standards of the institutions they engage with are world-class.

In this multibillion-dollar market, some institutions may more closely identify as being in the education business rather than, at their core, operating as educators within the sector. If some clearly have no business educating anyone at all, we now have a framework by way of this bill that will bring probity and integrity back into something that provides billions of dollars into our economy and provides thousands of jobs across the country. I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (17:53):** I rise to speak on the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024. First of all, Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you for your service to parliament. We've worked very closely. One of the inquiries of which I was the chair and you were the deputy chair was the inquiry into the efficacy and integrity of immigration agents, and I know how hard you fought when it came to, I think, Spanish international students—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou):** Colombian.

**Mr WOOD:** Colombian, sorry; my apologies—who had been ripped off, which was very sad to see.

To make it very clear for people who may not know, when it comes to immigration agents and giving immigration advice, that can only be done by a practising lawyer and also an immigration qualified agent who is registered in Australia under OMARA, the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority. When it comes to education agents, that is separate. They cannot give immigration advice.

The bill amends the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000, the ESOS Act, to make changes that the government says will improve the quality and integrity of the international student sector. It is important to note so Australians are not misled about the primary purpose of this bill. Sadly, it's to hide the government's mess when it comes to immigration. We've seen that the government's mismanagement of the immigration system has led to a more than doubling of the number of international students in Australia from 336,845 in March 2022 to a peak of 713,144 in February 2024. When it comes to this huge increase, I must admit immigration agents, who are also looking after the education sector and the education of international students, were very excited about what the government was doing, because they were basically increasing all these numbers and letting more people in. They were very excited about it until they started receiving notices—I know 700 went out to immigration agents—to 'please explain why you've allowed this person to come to the country with false documentation' or education agencies running schools where Home Affairs would walk in and tell them to remove students midclass.

This has all come about now—this is what the immigration agents and education agents have told me—because, under the previous coalition government, we had very strict controls when it came to the security checks of people coming to this country. We weren't putting the burden onto education agencies or immigration agents to make sure all the documents were bona fide; we did that as Home Affairs. That's why we had this kind of open-door policy. This has put huge pressure on universities around Australia. Several top universities in Australia are getting concerned about the repercussions on them when it comes to allowing students in who may have false documentation, so they have decided to place restrictions on applications such as those from Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Jammu and Kashmir. Instead of scrutiny and doing due diligence, the universities have basically now had to put a blanket ban in. I must say too, though, that it's not the universities' responsibility to have the know-how to check and have all the due diligence when it comes to the scrutiny of false documentation.

Under Labor there are 80,000 student visa holders who are now on their third student visa or more—some are on an eighth, ninth or 10th student visa—as a backdoor way of staying in Australia. This huge increase is obviously putting on great pressure when it comes to rentals. I know this firsthand in my own electorate of La Trobe, where I visited the Casey Hospital and talked to the nurses. They were saying that, when it comes to bringing nurses into the country, they actually find it most difficult to find accommodation for them. We're finding right across not only Victoria but Australia that international students who have come in these huge numbers—and we love the international students, but this policy of having an open door where anyone can come in without being scrutinised has put huge pressure on immigration agents, education agents, universities and also rentals.

The government has a deeply offensive and divisive false narrative that the growth in international students is basically driven by shonks or crooks. It is not that at all. Yes, there are people in that industry, like all industries, who take advantage of innocent people, and they must be and should be punished. One thing I've pushed for for a long time—I know it was one of our recommendations, Deputy Speaker—is giving the Australian Border Force more when it comes to search and seizure provisions. They don't have those search and seizure provisions when it comes to these issues. They need to call in the Australian Federal Police. The Australian Federal Police have the search warrants and basically go in there, search for the evidence and put the case together even though the Australian Border Force have the necessary skills.

While we acknowledge this bill contains some integrity measures, and I recognise those, the government's amendments to the Education Services for Overseas Students Act are primarily concerned with the imposition of a cap on the number of foreigners who can study in Australia. We're now having a big cap put in place simply because the doors have been opened.

Sadly, as I was saying, there are immigration agents and education agents who've come to me who have been put under great stress, and have even threatened to have their business closed down. It's proposed that the methodology for the minister's decision will be set out in legislation to be detailed in parliament by 31 December 2024, supposedly after consultation with stakeholders. However, the sector will be required to put in place the new caps from 1 January 2025. So if the government moves very slowly, which I assume they will, and its decision is made in December, it's going to put an awful lot of pressure on education agents' forward planning when it comes to staff and university, because it has to be turned around so quickly.

The international student market is a huge market in Australia. With \$36.4 billion in revenue, it was Australia's fourth largest export in 2022-23. I congratulate Senator Sarah Henderson, the shadow education minister, who went in really hard to back students from India, Nepal and Pakistan who've unfortunately been targeted by the decisions made by this Labor government. On 22 April, in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* entitled 'Unis ban Indian student applications as visa rejections hit record highs' it said:

Universities are blocking applications from students from entire countries as the federal government's latest stage in its migration crackdown makes it even tougher for some institutions to recruit foreign pupils. Some universities, include at least one prestigious Group of Eight institution, have taken the drastic step of banning or limiting applications from countries deemed at high risk of visa refusal, including India and Nepal.

When it comes to international students, Nepal and India are fantastic overall international students and they should not be targeted. Vice chancellors from small universities say that processing visas has been highly unpredictable and has targeted them unfairly. This is interesting too, because it flies in the face of the Prime Minister's joint commitment with Prime Minister Modi made at the first Australian-Indian annual summit in March 2023 that 'the efficient and timely processing of student visa applications for Indian nationals' will be facilitated. It says nothing about banning them altogether. It actually says they will be made in an efficient and timely manner. That hasn't been the case.

At the same event, I know Prime Minister Modi put pressure on Prime Minister Albanese to change the situation when it came to safer community funding for Hindu temples and other temples, because sadly they had been targeted. We didn't have a reverse face when it came to that position. Also when these international students come here many of them go to places of worship, and it was sad that they were targeted in such a way.

In 2023, there were around 5,800 education agencies and more than 23,000 individual education agents facilitating overseas student enrolments with Australian providers, reflecting the sheer size of this market. With 23,000 people, can you imagine how many jobs there are in this sector? Providers typically pay a commission to these agents per student. The exact amount is not disclosed, but it could be up to 15 per cent. It's a very important message for Australia to let countries know overseas, and this is something we put in place in the previous government when it came to those applying, you get these unscrupulous—I won't call them agents, because they won't agents—people lodging international students or visa applications and putting them through the system. Under OMARA, we make sure that if the person is putting through the one computer they must be registered with OMARA, unless it's an individual. They can't get group applications going, which is something we put in place.

While, the coalition government made quite sensible and constructive improvements to the quality and integrity of the education of international students, we are disappointed with the minister's false narratives which, as I said, characterise this industry as shonks and crooks. It is just not the case. Yes, like any industry, they have some criminal elements in there. There always are when there's some money to be made. But most education agents I've met and dealt with are very hardworking and very dedicated and just want to see people come to Australia, get a great education and enjoy the Australian lifestyle as they stay here. After two years, the Minister for Home Affairs only issued letters to 34 providers just a few weeks ago. No providers have been shut down. So, if they're all shonks and crooks, it sounds like they are getting away with it. Those colleges which are providing a back door for foreigners

to come to Australia and work should be weeded out. We await the outcome of a Senate inquiry into this. I am looking forward to that. Again, Madame Deputy Speaker, congratulations for— (*Time expired*)

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (18:06): We do want to get rid of the shonks. I completely agree with many speakers that that is not the majority of the providers and it certainly isn't the way I would describe providers in my electorate of Macquarie. In fact, I want to start by talking about what quality looks like, what a quality vocational education and training organisation looking after the educational needs of international students actually looks like. I see it in my community and have known it in my community for many years through the Torrens University Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School. I want to describe this quality, because it's streets away from the sorts of providers that this legislation will focus on. It's the No. 1 ranked hotel school in Oceania, based on the QS world university rankings 2022-23. It offers a world-class education with really practical training and hands-on experience at Leura in the Blue Mountains. It's an undergraduate program. As part of that program, students are required to reside on campus. So they live on campus and all the accommodation, meals and recreational requirements are provided by the school. When it's full, it has about 250 students for a 2½-year program of which 12 months is actually in a paid placement in the industry. This is the other part of overseas students in Australia. In local communities, they can play a really key role in helping to tackle the skills shortage. That's certainly the case in the Blue Mountains tourism industry.

This school has been operating since 1991. Over that time, it has developed very strong relationships with our local hotel sector, predominantly in the accommodation sector. But it also employs its own people. Around 100 staff are employed. I am told around 90 per cent of them are locals who live in the Blue Mountains and, thanks to the hotel school, work in the Blue Mountains. As well, at any time, between 40 and 60 per cent of the local suppliers that are used are sourced in our local region. I wanted to give this picture to show what quality looks like as we discuss this quality and integrity bill.

The Fairmont Resort is the largest hotel resort in the Blue Mountains and, I must add, hosted the Blues ahead of the State of Origin match. It was thanks to being accommodated at the Fairmont Resort that they were able to take in the fresh air of the Blue Mountains and deliver victory. Charlie Young, the general manager of the Fairmont, describes the business's reliance on the students from the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School. He says: 'They employ a lot of people while they're at the campus. They provide them with much-needed real-world experience in multiple departments as part of their curriculum during their required industry placement.' He said, 'Their brand is one of service excellence.' That's what he sees in the students. He points out that finding qualified, engaged, positive and skilled employees is difficult. He's talking about the Blue Mountains, where there is quite a serious skills shortage in our hospitality industry.

I want people to keep in mind that tourism is the prime part of our economic drive up there. We're talking about the Blue Mountains World Heritage area, the Three Sisters and all the bushwalks surrounding it, plus all our amazing local businesses. So tourism is absolutely key to our local economy staying alive and healthy. He says, 'Knowing we have a hospitality school around the corner with students eager to learn and test their skills and knowledge helps to reduce our employment challenges and reduces staff turnover, enabling us to retain qualified, engaged employees.'

I want people to have that picture when we think about this bill and what it aims to achieve. This is the sort of quality provider we want overseas students to experience when they come to Australia. I've been to many functions there over the years and talked to many of the students who take great pride in being able to cater to local events and learn their craft. That's why this legislation is here. It's targeting quality and integrity. We are really committed to lifting the standards across the board.

While my own experiences have informed me of the quality training of overseas students, this piece of legislation does not stand in isolation. It comes from evidence that has been captured by inquiries, like the Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System, or the Nixon review, and the review of the migration system. Both brought urgent integrity issues to our attention. It's also informed by last year's interim report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, called '*Quality and integrity—the quest for sustainable growth: interim report into international education*'. I'm a member of that committee and have been looking into these issues since we came to government in 2022. There is no doubt that integrity is absolutely essential, but the evidence shows that it is absent in certain circumstances and certain providers. One of the issues this bill addresses is the activities of education agents and the way they interact with providers in Australia.

There's a really important role for international education agents overseas to help students navigate their move from another country to Australia, to help them identify the courses and the institutions that will help them. The reviews, feedback from the sector, and stories from students told us that there is a problem and that there has been collusion and unscrupulous practices between some agents and providers. That is not good enough. That is not the way we want to start the experience for an overseas student coming to Australia. For a start, we know that when



students come to Australia and have a good experience, it builds their love of Australia and their relationship with Australia for many years to come. One of the great benefits of having overseas students is that they can experience what it is like to be in Australia. We want that to be a positive experience. We don't want them to go home and, in years to come, when they move into roles of responsibility, not think well of Australia. We really want them to have the best possible experience.

So our response to these concerns is to, in this bill, insert a definition of 'education agent', which is better at capturing their activities. This is about strengthening the fit-and-proper requirement used by regulators to apply increased scrutiny to any cross-ownership of businesses, including those between an education agent and an education provider. There's also a definition of 'education agent commission'. That will really allow for complementary amendments to be made to our National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 so that we ban commissions from being paid to education agents for onshore student transfers.

These are technical things that will limit the ability for the wrong thing to happen. These are things the sector has asked for and will certainly help address one of the issues that was revealed, which is the poaching of newly arrived students so that they shift from their original course into a cheaper, more limited course from a different provider. And this bill is full of practical things that will ensure better experiences. As well as the fit-and-proper considerations, it empowers the Minister for Education to pause applications to register providers or courses for provision to overseas students if issues are raised. And it gives greater access to agent performance data, including information on transfers and completions. Without data, we can't really know what's going on.

Under the bill, providers will have to deliver one or more courses to domestic students in Australia who are not overseas students for consecutive study periods, totalling at least two years, before they deliver courses to overseas students. This is to deter those who are seeking to enter the sector purely for the purpose of facilitating migration outcomes or trafficking people into bonded labour. That is the seriousness of some of the concerns and examples that have been raised.

The bill also prevents education providers from using their business operations as a cover for fraudulent activity. Those who have not delivered courses to overseas students for a period of 12 consecutive months will have their registration automatically cancelled. The bill also allows for providers who are being investigated for serious regulatory offences to be automatically suspended from enrolling new international students.

There are many other elements to this bill, but for me the primary focus and what I'm so pleased to be here supporting is the quality and integrity measures, which mean that when we meet an international student studying in Australia we can be proud, knowing they are getting a quality education and one that is value for them and allows them to return to their home with a set of world-class skills. That's what it should be, and that's what this legislation will help us deliver, as part of a range of measures we have introduced since we've come to government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms SPENDER (Wentworth) (18:17):** International education is an Australian industry success story of the last two decades. Since the opening of Australian institutions to international students in the 1980s, the education sector has innovated its business models and leveraged its strengths and reputations to grow Australia's higher education sector into our largest non-mining export industry and our fourth biggest export earner. This is a huge achievement. International education provides value through, first and foremost, the fees paid to our universities. For universities these fees that the international students pay allow an important cross-subsidisation that helps our universities deliver comparatively affordable education to Australian students. These fees are also critical for research funding over time, contributing to a tripling in research funding since 2000. This has enabled world-class research that helps attract foreign students and employees and has propelled innovative Australian industries, such as quantum computing.

Also, as a second-order benefit, the Australian international education sector has increased our soft diplomacy in the region and beyond. In 2023 the QS world ranking of higher education found that Australia has the third highest concentration of high-quality universities in the world, behind only the US and the UK. This acts as an enormous pool for international talent and is directly and indirectly responsible for almost 70 per cent of Australia's international tourism. Since 2005, 3.7 million international students have studied in Australia, fallen in love with our cities and regions, and experienced our unique landscape, culture and way of life—and those who have returned to their own countries have taken that back home and increased Australia's soft power across the region in particular.

Finally, as we think of the future of Australian industry and businesses, the international education sector is an area that Australia should want to expand and grow. This is because this export earner really plays to Australia's enormous strengths: our incredibly strong education system and our welcoming way of life. This is an education

sector that is of high value and provides high-value jobs for highly educated Australian people. This should be an area that, as a country, we want to continue to grow and develop.

But I appreciate that there are some concerns over the growth in the sector, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. As at February this year, there are almost 700,000 international students enrolled to study in Australia, a 20 per cent increase on 2019. This is partly due to a long backlog caused by COVID, but the unavoidable truth is that it is also the fault of loopholes in the migration system.

The *Rapid review into the exploitation of Australia's visa system*, known as the Nixon review, presented in 2023, identified that generous visa provisions to enable our education system have led to a proliferation of unscrupulous operators gaming the system in two key ways: firstly, education agents seeking to extract commissions from international students for transfers that are not necessarily in their best interests; and, secondly, so-called ghost institutions that offer vague courses targeting non-genuine students who are looking for a back door into Australia for work. While not exclusive to the vocational sector, the majority of these practices and behaviours are accounted for there. These operators do not reflect the whole sector, but they represent a significant enough share of the sector to be a danger to the integrity and reputation of Australia's international education sector.

The Nixon review, as well as last year's Migration Strategy, suggested significant crackdowns on these operations. But, unless you were a student or an education policy wonk, many of these various reviews into the system went unnoticed. These concerns have found new life more recently because of the impact the education system has had on net overseas migration and particularly rental affordability. The Grattan Institute estimates that, for every 100,000 unanticipated migrants who come to Australia, rents rise by approximately one per cent. Feeling the pressure, the government is seeking to kill two birds with one stone, cleaning up the sector while implementing a speedy cut to net overseas migration. Unfortunately, students are the lowest-hanging fruit.

Half of this bill is quite sensible and goes to some of the major concerns and subsequent recommendations of the Nixon and migration reviews. This includes introducing increased transparency over agent commissions and associations with providers, as well as stricter requirements on providers to demonstrate genuineness. Parts 7 to 8, however, are problematic—problematic in the powers delegated to the Minister for Education to impose hard caps on courses as well as providers and potential penalties imposed for exceeding these caps.

While I understand the concerns with migration, international students and education institutions are not to blame for our housing crisis, despite the rhetoric surrounding this bill. Instead, it is decades of inaction from coalition and Labor governments at all levels of government—state, federal and local governments—to put forward adequate housing policies to provide for future generations. They have been missing in action, and we now have a housing crisis. But, now that we're in this mess, the government would risk causing irreparable damage to the education sector. Meanwhile, the coalition seems to be broadly supportive, if not disappointed that it doesn't go further.

I find this baffling. Consider the comparison here with the mining sector. For decades, the overwhelming weight of local and international evidence has pointed to the need to address climate change produced by the fossil fuel industry, yet both Labor and coalition governments have at various times been swayed by the argument that this would come at an unacceptable cost to the Australian economy. Yet, when shown one year of migration numbers that highlight their collective inaction on housing over decades, both parties are ready to put shackles on the largest non-mining export that we have, an export that last year contributed half of our GDP growth and that supports employment for around a quarter of a million Australians. Am I missing something here, or is it just that the education system needs more lobbyists?

As I've said, I am really sympathetic to the arguments surrounding the quality of the international education system, and I am not ignorant of the pressures on the cost of housing that Australians are facing right now. But I think this needs to be done carefully. I think there are other ways that the government's broad objectives can be achieved without killing the goose.

As is so often the case, the Grattan Institute provided some considered proposals that would be fairer and less disruptive and would work better than implementing student caps, and, to their credit, the government has implemented some of these. Raising the student fee from \$710 to \$2,500 would raise an additional \$1 billion a year, enough to fund the government's crisis accommodation measures for women and children experiencing domestic violence outlined in this year's budget. The government's increase to \$1,600, which came into effect this week, will discourage some students from participating in low-value programs.

Additionally, the government introduced a genuine student test and lifted English language requirements, as well as cracking down on visa hopping for those who have completed their studies. Both of these measures will make it harder for low-value studies or unskilled professions to be used as a visa back door. Restrictions in visa hopping alone is expected to lower the number of international students and graduates by 140,000 students by 2030.

But the problem with these measures is that they wouldn't necessarily work fast enough for the government. I get it. Housing is a huge issue for my community as well, and I'm absolutely on the record, across this parliament and since before the last election, as calling for the need for action. But this bill represents a kind of short-term political thinking that landed us in the housing crisis to begin with, and, once again, offers no long-term solution for getting us out of it either.

I've run businesses, and I know that businesses can't turn on a dime. You can't turn your customers on for one week and then, three weeks later, say: 'I'll turn you off. Don't worry, I'll come back to you in a couple of months when I feel I'm ready to have you again.' The education industry has taken many years to build up in Australia. We should respect the work that has gone into building this industry and the enormous contribution that it makes to this country. We shouldn't expect that we can turn it off with the flick of a switch and then expect it to restart again when we think that we need some more export earnings. Business doesn't work like that, and the real world doesn't work like that. If we do follow through with what the government wants and what the opposition seems to want even more, we will pay for this in the long term in our export earnings and in our universities. That is entirely serious.

We do have other options, and I've outlined a couple of them, in terms of how to take a more measured approach to addressing this migration problem. We should be looking carefully at what happened to Canada, which imposed similar visa caps and ended up with a much stronger response from students, who now are not choosing Canada at all. There's been a much more significant reduction in earnings from those overseas students.

I know we need to change the education system for overseas students. From speaking to people and young people in the community, I know there are some genuine concerns about how integrated some courses are, particularly for overseas students, and how to make it a better experience not only for the overseas students but also for the Australian students studying alongside them.

There are real challenges here. But flat caps and, particularly, government control of courses completely stand against the entrepreneurial spirit which has given us this export industry. Again, businesses cannot and will not evolve and grow in the way that they have if government is constantly dictating the details, because it's not the nature of government to build and grow these sorts of industries which have added enormous value to this country.

We need to fix the housing crisis, but we need to do it in other ways. That is the appropriate thing to do, rather than to, once again, use migrants and particularly overseas students as a sort of punching bag in this issue. If nothing else, we need to make sure all of our actions focus on ensuring that we retain the highest-value students—the ones that contribute most to the economy, in terms of both their fees and their other contributions to the economy. That is the way to do this well. That is where the increase in fees for the visa application would weed out many of those students who are not really here to study but to work. I think that is a much more effective way: continuing to raise that fee so only genuine students come here to get a degree that costs a fair amount of money and provides a fair amount of return to the Australian government and to the Australian people.

I feel like the crossbench has tried to be the voice of reason in this debate and has put forward some sensible amendments that will mitigate the potential damage of this bill. This includes a sunset clause for two years, to be moved by Ms Daniel, which will prevent these dramatic powers being used by future governments. Ms Tink will move to exclude course caps that I see as egregious overreach from a government into the running of private organisations and actually give our universities the ability to respond to the needs of the market, because we know that government is not in touch with the needs of the market and so most likely will once again kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Dr Ryan has requested a review to be conducted on the validity of the caps. Finally, Ms Chaney has sought to push back the start of this legislation by one year to give students and universities certainty, given that the enrolment process for 2025 is already well underway, as well as cut out sections 7 and 8 entirely. These are reasonable and thoughtful amendments to the bill that would mitigate some of the worst effects of this bill.

I urge the government to reconsider this course of action and look for other ways that it can manage the education system without this draconian impact and the likely impact on the broader strength of this export industry that we have built up—the universities have built up, in particular, as well as the vocational community—over many years. I will be supporting the amendments from the crossbench, but I will not be supporting this bill. I believe it is a step too far by government, and I'm genuinely concerned about the economic and reputational damage these powers present, if not now then later under future governments. I particularly urge the coalition to consider that they used to be the party of free enterprise and of trying to build and grow businesses and really letting these sorts of success stories grow. Again, I find it unfathomable that the coalition is once again leading the charge on trying to destroy one of Australia's most successful export industries and one that is a credit to all of us and all the people who have built it up over time.

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (18:31): The bill that is before us, the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024, is measured, and it's about saving a sector from itself. I say that

because I've worked with the university sector for a long time, not just in this role but in previous roles. I'm the federal member for Bendigo; we have a La Trobe University campus in my electorate. I have been engaged with that campus since the day I was elected.

But I say that it's a sector that needs to be saved from itself because I disagree that we should be viewing higher education as an export industry. I disagree with that statement. Education is a fundamental right, and the first role of our universities should be providing a world-class education to Australian domestic students first and foremost. They are publicly funded universities. And at some point, about a decade ago, they reached a tipping point. They reached a tipping point when our universities went from having a majority of academic and academic support staff to having more general and marketing staff. It is a sector which has grown out of its original purpose, which was to offer quality higher education for Australian domestic students, and tipped into this marketing area, to the extent that I don't believe that the university sector fully understands what's going on with their campuses and their courses. And I say that with the experience that has been shared with me both as a federal member and as somebody who has family members that work in higher education.

I'll start first with the people that we've called the dodgy providers and the reforms there. It does feel like there is broad support across our parliament to crack down on the dodgy providers, absolutely, and quite frankly it's frustrating that it has taken so long to see reforms come before this parliament. It's taken a Labor government to bring forward reforms to shut down these dodgy providers, the visa hopping that occurs and the exploitation of those international students that occurs. It's this terrible 'everybody knows' secret—warehouses where there are supposed to be higher education institutions, shopfronts where nobody actually studies but the paperwork is done and people are churned through. We have people who are here as international students on their third or fourth visa, meaning that they've been studying—technically studying—in this country for 15 years.

The point of a higher education, the point of being an international student and what we need to step back to in this debate is that international students are here for an educational experience. Some, along the way, may meet someone that they love and want to settle here in Australia. Some may get a job after it and be recruited to work. But what we now know, because the data tells us, is a huge chunk of them go to the next provider, and quite often that international student is the one that is being exploited.

People who cut hair in Melbourne are in some cases working here on an international student visa, but they're not studying to be a hairdresser—they're studying accountancy or something else. They're paying somebody, or someone else is doing the book work—their mum might be doing it—because they no longer qualify for that visa, so the student is the person who they are all anchored to. We have seen report after report tabled in this parliament about how international student education is being exploited for people who are looking for those work rights. That has to stop, and this bill looks to address that.

But, as I said at the beginning, we actually need to go further, because not even our universities understand or accept what is happening within their own university. It isn't just the dodgy RTOs or the shonky providers. It is also institutions that we say are world-class and deeply respected. I am talking about Melbourne University, I am talking about UNSW, I'm talking about Sydney University—I am talking about some of our big universities, where this is happening in their own courses. There are courses being delivered through University of Melbourne which are 95 per cent international students, and above and beyond. They have students who are struggling to be able to complete the work because they don't have the English capability.

One of the comments that was raised by those opposite was that if they had introduced a English proficiency test we would have got upset about it. Depending on the visa, if you choose to study at Melbourne University in the graduate department of education, there should be an expectation that you have a high level of English proficiency. There should be that standard, yet we have students right now in that course at Melbourne University who don't meet that standard. They're putting their coursework through translators to submit it.

The problem that we have with higher education in our country is it has got away from that original image, it has got away from the original image and the original purpose, which is about delivering a quality of education, and the marketers have taken over. So when the sector has got to that stage where it is out of control, it is up to government to intervene and it is up to government to look at caps. Those universities are some of the most successful lobbyists, who are very well paid and who spend a lot of money engaging with all of us in here. They are probably right up there with the AMA when it comes to their ability to lobby. The G8 is incredibly powerful and incredibly influential. They've got to take ownership of what is happening in their courses and in their subjects.

One of the other things that is really important about this bill is that it is trying to encourage international students to think about studying at a regional campus. I've met with my local campus, Bendigo, at La Trobe University, who were a bit concerned with this bill. They've got only about 200 international students on the campus who are genuinely engaged in subjects and study. They are the one, two, three and four within a class. They have a support

network that is around them. They have support in finding education. Quite often, when they are in a housing arrangement, it is purposed student accommodation that is found. That is a good example. That is the example that we would assume would be there to support international students when they come.

This isn't about the campuses where it is a small proportion of their overall student population. This is about the campuses where it is the majority of their students. This is about the courses where it is the majority of the students, and where the universities are not providing the quality of support that is required for that many students. The Central Queensland University has a campus in Melbourne CBD that does not have one domestic student at it. Now, what purpose is that set up for? This idea that our higher education institutions should be about making money and enterprise is the debate we need to be having. Should they? Should our higher education, our universities, be about making money and enterprise, marketing courses and attracting students no matter what, giving them a false bill of hope that they may one day become Australian citizens?

Some of the big G8 universities got caught out marketing: 'Do this course. Come to Australia. It leads to Australian citizenship.' That is not right. We want people to study in Australia as international students because of the cultural exchange and because of the education experience that they will get. This bill aims to restore that integrity. Unfortunately, with the growth of international students in our university sector, what has happened is that it has got out of control. Support isn't being offered to the people being invited here to study, and, quite often, they are the victims of exploitation. And the universities just churn through.

In fact, I met more international students before I became a member of parliament than I did when I was actually working in the university sector. Whilst I worked in the university sector a long time ago, in 2002 and 2003, I met a lot in the previous role I had before entering this parliament. And I didn't work for a university; I worked for the United Workers Union—it was called United Voice back then—and I met a lot of international students that were working in cleaning and hospitality. Some of them were being treated incredibly badly. They were technically here to study, but were working as many hours as they could, trying to do what they could to pay their course fees and to try their very best to stay in Australia.

I can remember house-visiting people living in horrible conditions. On every spare piece of floor there was a mattress. Five would be squeezed into a room and 10 or 15 into a house. It was unsafe. I'll be honest with you: I don't think that's the housing crisis that people in Australia are talking about, squashing five people into a bedroom. That's completely unacceptable. That's unsafe. But this is what the world is like for some international students. I don't conflate the two, because I think that the housing experience of many international students is quite shocking. Most Australians would say, 'That's just appalling and should not be happening in our country,' but it is.

When I spoke to these international students, I went in there with these basic assumptions that maybe they worked for a dodgy provider or maybe that's who they were doing the university courses for. But I was shocked to learn that a lot of these international students were actually studying at our universities—the ones that we try and hold up in great lights to say, 'These are amazing institutions.' They have to take more responsibility for international students. I believe that means we do have to get control of the numbers and bring them down so we can properly support the ones that are here and make sure they aren't being exploited in terms of their housing, their work experience and the support around them. But, with caps, we also need to make sure that the education experience is genuine and that they are able to do the work and get that proper educational experience. The caps are critical because that's about saying to the sector: 'You need to reform. You need to step back and think about what your purpose is. Are you about providing education to students brought here by marketing, who may not have the English capability, who may not have the commitment to study, who are here because they want work rights, or are you here to provide a genuine education?'

When it comes to this issue, we need to start listening to a broader academic experience. People who are living the experience of having to try and teach classes with up to 90 to 96 per cent, and in some cases 100 per cent, international students need to ask: is that the purpose of Australian universities here in this country? We are experiencing a downturn in domestic students wanting to go to universities after decades of upturn. It's on the universities and on us to start to talk about the student experience. Domestic students are more likely to say: 'Maybe I'll wait. Maybe I'll do TAFE. It's not quite my thing. There's a debt that I'm concerned about.' But there's more to unpack about why people aren't going to university. Perhaps it's the educational experience. It's hard to participate in a tute when you are the one domestic student with a large proportion of international students whose cameras are off because people aren't engaging and are simply there to tick the box because they are here not for the educational experience but for the work rights. I say again that I do not believe the universities are being genuine and honest about what's happening on their campuses and what's happening in their courses.

That is why this bill talking about caps has become so necessary. It's so we can rebuild our higher education sector to be something of what it was originally envisioned to be, making sure that it's about quality education, making sure that academic jobs are able to be about teaching, not about compliance, not about making sure that

people hit all these criteria. We need to get back to a place where our universities are employing more academics and support staff than marketing staff. That's our problem with where we're at with higher education. We hit a tipping point about a decade ago. If we fast forward to where we are today caps are critical to making sure that we have oversight of what's happening on our campuses. I wish we didn't have to be here, but this is where the sector is at.

This bill is about ensuring integrity. It is about ensuring that we are getting universities to focus on what they're here to do: provide quality higher education. This idea that caps will somehow interfere with that is nonsense.

**Ms TINK** (North Sydney) (18:46): Let's be clear: as a nation, we should be proud to be recognised as a leading provider of international education, with students from over 140 countries educated here in the past 12 months alone. Whilst this success confers significant economic benefits across the board, it also ensures our society's enriched by the exchange and it strengthens our diplomatic ties. But, rather than celebrating these truths, it would seem there are those who wish to use the sector's success as a launching pad for a shallow political debate around immigration, with the end result being a potentially devastating outcome for our country's reputation and ultimately the ongoing viability of what is currently our most profitable export sector behind mining.

More than three million people from overseas have benefited from at least part of their education being completed in Australia in the last decade. And, contrary to widespread commentary, the vast majority—80 per cent—went home. The ones that stayed add significant value to our country. They are the emergency doctors who got us through COVID, the nurses who care for our elderly and the engineers who shore up our cybersecurity.

From a bigger picture perspective, international education generated \$48 billion in export revenue in just the last year, second only to the mining sector. Yet we stand here tonight having a debate on the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024 about removing that export income. I would ask this government: without that income, how will you fund it? How will you provide universities services for the domestic students you keep citing?

The sector supports 250,000 jobs nationally across the education, retail, hospitality and tourism industry environments. After years of reform and diminishing government investment, the truth is that our current domestic education sector relies on international students to remain economically viable and to be able to offer the courses domestic students wish to pursue. Meanwhile, in terms of productivity, international students are an invaluable resource for small businesses, helping to fill gaps across the economy.

This is particularly true in North Sydney, which, with over 28,000 small to medium-sized businesses, is the third-largest business centre in the country. Fascinatingly, nearly half of the owners of the businesses in North Sydney were born overseas, which is significantly more than the average across New South Wales and Australia. Beyond the economic upside, however, is the fact that, as recognised in the foreign policy white paper, international education is also a powerful tool for foreign policy soft power. The changes this bill seeks to make to the international education sector will not only limit the operation of several tertiary education providers in my electorate; it will also negatively impact our small-business community as labour supply would dry up and demand would diminish. Specifically, businesses offering accommodation services, insurance companies, restaurants, bars and cafes have all reached out to me to express their fears that this reform would affect the livelihood of small-business owners. Certainly quality, integrity and sustainable growth for the sector are all desirable, but the question is: will this bill produce those outcomes, or will this bill, with its unchecked powers that it confers to the minister of the day, risk the sector's ability to operate effectively and within a free market frame?

The Nixon review identified within the international education sector systemic integrity issues that we do need to deal with. These include collusive business practices between education providers, their agents and non-genuine students who seek to abuse the system for personal gain. The North Sydney community agrees: these issues must be addressed. The community also accepts that international student numbers have returned faster than expected to pre-COVID levels and that the sustainable growth of the sector is genuinely desirable. The bill seeks to address these issues in part by introducing measures around student recruitment and creating a provision that education of domestic students be prioritised ahead of international students. These measures are broadly welcomed by both providers and my community. But these efforts are overshadowed by the government's overreach when it comes to the unprecedented new ministerial powers being proposed.

Ultimately, many in my community are concerned this legislation simply goes too far. Under the guise of quality and integrity, the necessary checks and balances to ensure effectiveness are conspicuously absent. This then leads them to question whether this legislation is in fact a thinly veiled response to a larger political debate around immigration more generally, for it seems the two major political parties are intent on targeting international students in a bid to slash migration in a poll-driven war on the cost of living and on housing. With that frame in mind, then,

this legislation fails to strike a balance between improving the quality and integrity of the scheme and ensuring sustainable growth for the sector.

While the ministerial powers are being presented as a mechanism for managing temporary migration and alleviating the fallout of unsustainable growth, my community is unconvinced they will deliver the desired outcome and is concerned any benefit will be outweighed by damage to Australia's largest service export. As the CEO of the International Education Association of Australia said:

While stakeholder consultations are being offered, this latest measure will send all the wrong messages, yet again, of Australia's reliability as a welcoming study destination country. Coming on top of the recently announced changes to financial capability requirements ... visa processing slowdowns and backlogs, prospective students and our education agents will feel incredibly let down.

I will be arguing there is real danger of government overreach in this new policy approach. If implemented, the new ministerial powers to unilaterally limit enrolments across entire sectors, institutions, courses and locations create an unprecedented level of government intervention in what is currently essentially a free enterprise sector. Given this, I share the sector's concerns that these powers lack accountability and will be largely unchecked. The fact that there's no requirement for the minister to consult before issuing a notice to limit international students at a particular institution is unacceptable, as is the fact that the government has offered no indication of how it will calculate enrolment caps for each course or situation. Ultimately, providers are being asked to blindly trust the government on these matters, and, unsurprisingly, education providers, including those in my electorate, are concerned. Giving the minister of the day power to suspend providers who exceed their international student cap by even one student for up to 12 months is an extraordinary and, many would argue, completely disproportionate measure, given the enrolment journey for an international student typically takes 12 months or longer.

Meanwhile, the minister's new powers to arbitrarily suspend or cancel courses deemed not to align with Australia's skill sets, needs and priorities ignores the fact most international students are educating themselves for a career in their own home country rather than in ours, creating yet again a circumstance that seems incongruent. Recognising a government hell-bent on action is difficult to forestall, some have suggested the setting of caps should only be allowed at the provider level, removing the ministerial power to set caps at the course level. I remain unconvinced that this really is a space and place where ministerial discretion is warranted. Universities already deliver education under strict and mature regulatory and funding arrangements and are increasingly asked to deliver graduates in line with Australia's skill needs, based on advice from agencies including Jobs and Skills Australia. Given this, it would seem self-evident that giving a minister the power to intervene at the course level is a dangerous overreach which would have serious consequences for institutional autonomy, existing regulations and student choices.

Beyond that, for me, it's simply bureaucracy on steroids, and risks creating a legislative framework that flies in the face of basic free market principles. Why is it that this government believes an education minister will be better placed to anticipate the needs of those seeking and willing to pay to be educated? Capping overall student numbers is one thing, but setting them with respect to specific courses is a completely different scenario, and it's one that neither my community nor I am comfortable with.

Beyond this, many providers also lament that the potential impact of this legislation has been seriously underestimated. They cite the fact that international students commencing in the 2025 academic year are already in the pipeline and receiving offers. They argue it will be politically and diplomatically difficult to influence the 2025 academic year intake—as suggested by this bill—even if the bill is passed in this current parliamentary session.

In addition to this, economically speaking, international student fees account for over a fifth of total university funding. Consequently, universities have come to depend on international student revenue to subsidise their teaching and research efforts, because government funding under both the current and the previous governments has not been there. A cap on international student numbers will place these activities at risk unless additional government funding is found for the sector. Watering down a major source of revenue at a time when universities are being asked to provide more knowledge, skills, opportunities and research will significantly reduce the sector's ability to perform the functions being relied on by the government and all Australians.

The proposed reforms may also have consequences beyond university campuses, as a reduction in export revenue from international education contributes to weaker economic growth, lower employment rates, less investment in essential services and, ultimately, damage to other sectors of the economy. According to Universities Australia, severely curtailing student numbers will see the operating margins of Australia's top-tier institutions quickly compress or flip into small deficits. It's clear that there is more work to do on this legislation to ensure the right settings are in place to bring certainty, stability and growth to this critically important sector.

Consistent with the Universities Accord, under this legislation, tertiary education providers will be able to enrol additional students above their initial international student profile where they establish additional newly built supply

of purpose-built student accommodation. However, it's unrealistic to expect universities to boost the supply of student accommodation on such a short runway, particularly in circumstances where land is simply not available, as is the case in many urban centres. You only need to look as far as the student accommodation debacle unfolding with NIDA and the University of New South Wales to understand that building new accommodation is more difficult than it's being made out to be. Labour shortages to build new housing are already at an all-time low and onerous local council planning rules are a major impediment. This is not to say this measure shouldn't be pursued, but it does need to be better considered, with timelines agreed in consultation with education providers and across all levels of government.

As part of initial announcements expressing the intention to introduce this legislation, the government stated they would 'work closely with the sector to implement this policy and establish transitional arrangements that support the sector to manage this change effectively'. The fact that the sector is already expressing significant concerns about the lack of consultation does not bode well.

Attempts to push this legislation through parliament may have significant unintended consequences—to the detriment of our students, culture, diplomacy and productivity. That is why I ask the minister to wait for the completion of the inquiry into this bill by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment—which is due to report this week on 15 August—so those recommendations can be considered accordingly.

Drilling further into the issues related to accommodation, a number of key stakeholders have raised concerns that the provisions in this bill have been proposed before a suite of well-targeted integrity reforms outlined in last year's migration strategy have even had an opportunity to be implemented. In this way, the bill imposes an additional level of regulation before the effectiveness of the initial reforms are even understood. Surely a better approach would be to allow those early reforms to take time to come into effect before considering additional interventions.

The government has committed to halving net overseas migration to 260,000 by July 2025 and then to 235,000 by 2027, while the opposition has said it would cut the numbers from 260,000 to 160,000 in one year. This would mean that, for the government to reach its target, only 95,000 international students would be allowed into the country each year. This is a drop from pre-pandemic levels of 240,000. Under the coalition's proposed cuts, the international student intake would fall even further, to between—wait for it—10,000 and 15,000 students per year. Ultimately, we have to ask ourselves: are international students being used as an easy target in a political battlefield?

Seeking to link high migration to housing supply and affordability ignores several realities which the Treasurer himself acknowledged recently when he stated that the impact of international students on housing prices is marginal. International students make up just four per cent of the rental market. Rising rents are not attributed to migration, especially by international students, as rents have been rising since 2020, which was during the pandemic. Between 2019 and 2023, median weekly rent increased by 30 per cent, while student visa arrivals decreased by 13 per cent. The Reserve Bank itself has said the cause of high house prices was not an increase in migration but a shortage of housing supply made worse by the pandemic and rampant inflation driving up construction costs. Given everything I've just said, it's clear the claims that international students are a prime or causal factor in rental stress and housing affordability are just not true. Yet the argument is being used to justify this legislation.

In closing, I suggest the powers contained in this bill are a gross overreach and a dangerous precedent. This legislation poses an unjustifiable risk to the sector's future, not to mention our productivity and culture. We don't need our government to run what is already Australia's second most profitable export sector, behind mining. We need a government that's prepared to enable the industry to continue to grow, supported by targeted legislation that helps those in the sector meet broader community expectations.

**Mr RAE (Hawke) (19:01):** Australians understand the power and importance of education. We value what it can do to open the doors of opportunity and change lives. This year's budget demonstrates the Albanese Labor government's commitment to Australian education, with strong investments in building a better and fairer education system from early education to school education and through to tertiary education. We also take pride in being a global leader in education exports. Our education sector is valued at \$48 billion, making it our fourth largest export. However, international education is not just an economic asset. It fosters friendships and cultural exchange, as students who come to study here often develop a deep affection for our country. They return to their home countries with not only new knowledge and qualifications but also a positive impression of Australia.

Unfortunately, the pandemic severely impacted our international education sector, reducing its value from \$40 billion to \$22 billion. The students are now returning, but so are unscrupulous operators looking to exploit them. This bill is a critical response to protect the sector and maintain Australia's reputation as a premier education destination. The Albanese Labor government is deeply committed to lifting the quality and assuring the integrity of our international education sector. This commitment is about not just maintaining our reputation on the global stage but also ensuring that every student who comes to Australia receives a world-class education delivered with the



highest standards of integrity. The Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024 is a testament to this commitment. It continues the critical work of enhancing our education services, aligning with the policy directions outlined in the draft International Education and Skills Strategic Framework, which is currently under consultation with the sector.

The bill draws on the findings of the 2023 interim report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors. This inquiry solicited input from a wide range of stakeholders, including education agents, regarding integrity concerns within the international education sector. The committee discovered serious cases of active collusion between non-genuine students, agents and education providers. This included instances where education agents steered genuine students towards unsuitable courses that were financially beneficial for both the agent, in terms of commissions, and the provider, in terms of recruitment figures. The inquiry recommended targeted measures to eliminate disreputable providers and to demonstrate Australia's commitment to maintaining the integrity of international education.

The evidence gathered also revealed that the highly competitive student recruitment market puts providers at a disadvantage and encourages the payment of large commissions to agents. The committee found a compelling case to mandate that providers disclose any commission paid their agents. The committee also learnt that some education providers are complicit in funnelling non-genuine students into ghost schools where agents collaborate with providers to enrol students in courses they never attend. In some cases, courses are exclusively offered to overseas students, which may be a sign of poor quality. In particular, the inquiry identified persistent and significant issues within the private VET sector. Despite these problems, data shows that VET sector growth has significantly outpaced other sectors. The VET sector's growth rate from December 2019 to December 2023 was 16.6 per cent, compared to a 2.4 per cent growth rate for all enrolments. This report underscores the need for sustainable growth in our international education sector, coupled with stringent quality and integrity measures.

This bill also addresses urgent integrity issues highlighted by the recent Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System, known as the Nixon review, and the review of the migration system. These reviews brought to light significant concerns regarding the exploitation within our visa and education systems. The Nixon review found that some providers were facilitating student movements for the sole purpose of maximising profit rather than in the best interests of the student. Others sought to profit from non-genuine students using student visas to gain access to Australia for work instead of study. In some cases, education agents were even found to be involved in visa exploitation and human trafficking. Allegations of sex trafficking and foreign worker exploitation were also reported, including against overseas students.

In developing its recommendations, the Nixon review relied on findings from Operation Inglenook, which was launched in November 2022 following investigations by *60 Minutes*, the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* as part of the joint 'Trafficked' series. Operation Inglenook's mandate was to examine the systemic misuse of Australia's visa system for exploitative purposes. As of 31 March 2023, Operation Inglenook had investigated over 175 persons of interest related to the exploitation of the temporary visa program, leading to more than 57 border alerts. Of these, 93 were foreign nationals under scrutiny, and the Department of Home Affairs had flagged 87 high-risk visa applications. By July 2023, the Australian Border Force reported that the investigations had resulted in 22 visa cancellations, the identification of unlawful non-citizens and the denial of immigration clearances. Education agents and international education providers were among those targeted.

While the figures from Operation Inglenook are relatively small compared to the more than 500,000 student visa holders in Australia, the seriousness of the identified cases is very clear. The situation is further complicated by the vulnerabilities faced by international students, including language barriers, financial instability, limited knowledge of Australian law and fear of deportation. Estimating the number of overseas students who are vulnerable to, or victims of, exploitation is challenging due to the hidden and illegal nature of trafficking. The Australian Institute of Criminology estimates that, for every victim detected in Australia, there are about four who remain undetected. Factors such as mistrust of authorities, fear of deportation, failure of individuals to recognise themselves as victims and professionals' inability to properly identify victims contribute to the difficulty in assessing the extent of trafficking in Australia.

Likewise, the migration review found clear evidence of systemic exploitation of the visa system involving overseas students. Education agents and complicit education providers were found to have systemically moved students from temporary visa to temporary visa without any realistic hope of meeting requirements to gain permanent residency. Often, private providers in the VET sector would offer lower fees to deliberately incentivise non-genuine students to apply for a student visa solely to gain access to the Australian labour market. These revelations demanded an immediate and robust response.

At the heart of this bill is a comprehensive framework designed to bolster quality and integrity across the sector. Some of these key provisions include the expanding fit and proper considerations. Regulators will now have to

consider cross-ownership and control of providers and agents to prevent collusion and exploitation of students. Regulators must also take into account whether a provider is under investigation for a specific event, such as human trafficking, slavery or slavery-like practices. This measure is crucial in ensuring that only those with the highest standards of integrity can operate in this sector.

Another is access to agent performance data. Providers will have greater access to data on agent performance, including information on student transfers and education agent commissions. This transparency is essential in holding agents accountable and ensuring they act in the best interest of students. A further example is that there will be ministerial powers to pause registrations. The Minister for Education will have the authority to pause applications for registering providers or courses for overseas students. This provision allows for swift action in response to any emerging concerns.

In terms of requirements for domestic course delivery, providers will need to deliver courses to domestic students in Australia for at least two consecutive years before offering courses to overseas students. This amendment aims to deter non-genuine providers from entering the international education sector purely to facilitate migration outcomes by requiring that they demonstrate a genuine intention to deliver educational outcomes for students. Providers that are seeking registration to provide English language intensive courses for overseas students or standalone foundation programs will be exempt from the new registration requirement.

Providers that have not delivered courses to overseas students for 12 consecutive months will have their registration automatically cancelled. This measure prevents the misuse of education provider status as a cover for fraudulent activities. Providers being investigated for serious regulatory offences can be automatically suspended from enrolling new international students. This provision ensures that students are not exposed to potential risks while investigations are ongoing.

The bill also sets out a new definition of education agent to prevent people or organisations from falling through the cracks. Education agents are defined by the activities they engage in rather than their relationship to a provider, as many agents do not have formal agreements with specific providers. Notably, permanent officers or employees of a provider are not captured in the definition as they receive a salary and employment benefits from the provider. For example, a permanent employee of a university who works in the university's student recruitment team will not be treated as an education agent.

Sustainable growth in the international education sector is a key objective of this bill. To this end, the legislation grants the minister several powers to ensure that the number and distribution of overseas student enrolments align with government objectives. These powers include setting enrolment limits. The minister can determine limits on overseas student enrolments for specific classes of providers or individual courses. These limits can be expressed in specific numbers or calculated through specific methods, providing flexibility to address varying needs and circumstances. In setting enrolment limits, the Minister for Education will take into account the relevance of the courses to Australia's skills needs and the supply of purpose-built student accommodation. To ensure compliance, providers that exceed their enrolment limit will have their registration automatically suspended.

In terms of exemptions and special notices, the minister can exclude certain courses or providers from these limits and issue unique enrolment limits to individual providers as needed. Schools with a smaller number of overseas students are also exempt. Applications for extensions may be made to ensure that genuine providers are not affected or inconvenienced.

The bill allows for the automatic suspension or cancellation of courses that have systemic quality issues, that offer limited value to Australia's critical skill needs or where it is in the public interest to do so. This includes where the provider has not delivered a course to overseas students in a period of 12 consecutive months. This amendment will address integrity issues posed by dormant providers who are using their registration for fraudulent purposes and providers that are not demonstrating a genuine commitment to the delivery of courses to overseas students.

Following the consultation process, the final international education and skills strategic framework will outline the government's approach to implementing these enrolment limits, ensuring that our international education sector continues to grow sustainably and with integrity.

In conclusion, this bill protects and strengthens the right of education and recognises its important personal, societal, economic and intellectual benefits across the world. This bill enhances student rights by implementing safeguards for educational institutions to guarantee the delivery of high-quality education to international students. The bill implements changes to the fit and proper test to specifically target those providers and agents who might seek to exploit overseas students and introduces more effective penalties for misconduct, including automatic suspension of registrations when warranted.

The requirement for providers to disclose any commissions paid to education agents for student recruitment, coupled with improved transparency measures, helps identify and address poor agent performance early on.

Additionally, these amendments support the right to education by restricting the recruitment of non-genuine students and ensuring that students seeking education in Australia receive top-quality instruction and protection.

The Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024 is a robust and necessary piece of legislation. It not only addresses current issues within our international education sector but also sets the foundation for sustainable, high-quality growth in the future. By enhancing regulatory oversight, increasing transparency and ensuring rigorous quality standards, this bill will help maintain Australia's reputation as a premier destination for international students. It will ensure that every student who chooses Australia can be confident in receiving an education that is not only world class but delivered with integrity and care. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr RYAN** (Kooyong) (19:15): Presenting the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024 as an education bill is a misrepresentation. This bill reflects the fact that the sector has become an unwilling and unfortunate victim of the major parties' race to the bottom on immigration numbers. It is indeed a very sad day when we see our major political parties competing to damage an important Australian growth sector and export industry.

The education sector drove half of Australia's economic growth in 2023. It contributed \$48 billion to our economy. The sector supports 250,000 jobs nationally. But its benefits are not just economic. They include students' cultural and social contributions, their role in our workforce, and the soft power imbued in the sector's contribution to our global engagement and to our foreign policy. Let's face it, for years there have been issues with the integrity of the education sector. It has been subverted by low-calibre colleges and by visa shopping and hopping by students who have sought to remain in this country indefinitely. We do need better oversight of agents and providers, and we need better protection of students entering tertiary and secondary overseas student pathways in Australia.

In amending the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000, this bill does go some way to improving the integrity of our international education system. However, the bill also proposes a number of other measures that could damage that system: arbitrary enrolment caps for individual courses and providers and extraordinary new powers for the minister to suspend or cancel courses for international students without consultation. It gives the minister the power to cap student numbers down to a course level, with no requirement to consult or provide reasons for limiting international student numbers in any one particular institution or course. There are limited accountability provisions and limited avenues for appeal of these decisions. Institutions will have no right to a merits review. If providers exceed their caps, their registration will be automatically suspended for that course or for the whole institution for the rest of the year.

These consequences of automatic suspension are draconian, and they are profound. Equally, the deadline of 1 September of the preceding year for the allocation of places—which aligns with neither institutions' nor students' timetables—is a confounding aspect of this legislation. The uncertainties around the timing and number of visas for students compound the institutions' difficulties. It's going to be very difficult for providers to know how close they are to their cap for each course in accepting applications. They may well exceed their cap for a single semester, with attrition and completions then bringing numbers down during the year. But the proposed penalties are so severe that providers will likely underenrol so that they can be sure not to exceed their limits. This will lead to stranded places and to total enrolments falling well under caps.

We're told that the minister will exercise these extraordinary powers only in extraordinary circumstances. That might well be true of this minister, but we have no guarantees regarding his successors. The government proposes to give itself powers which would also put education providers at both legal and financial risk, with limited means of recourse. These powers could harm the institutions' investment in quality programs and delivery of assets. The potential impact on capital investment in the industry is clear.

The measures fly in the face of the Higher Education Support Act, which defines Australian universities as being autonomous in relation to their academic courses and offerings, how they teach, and what research they conduct. The legislation negates four decades of effort by Australian governments to actively develop our international education sector.

Reflecting the excellence of many of our institutions, Australia has become a leading destination for international students. Those numbers increased by less than six per cent a year between 2005 and 2019. Of late, they have overshot targets as students have returned after the pandemic, but let's remember that rebound was accentuated by the Morrison government's active encouragement of their return, with such policies as unrestricted work rights, fee-free visa applications and expedited visas. Then, in 2022 and 2023, the Albanese government also contributed to the significant increase in international student numbers by clearing the backlog of student visa applications and by giving many international students an additional two years in Australia after they graduate.

Now we find ourselves in a housing crisis with 1.1 per cent rental vacancies in Australia and a shortfall in purpose-built student accommodation. This crisis has been decades in the making, and it's directly attributable to the policy failures of successive Liberal and Labor governments to build enough housing in the country. Cue the Albanese government's U-turn on education. It first responded by abruptly decreasing student visa approvals in late 2023. Forty per cent are now being refused—that is unprecedented. The government has twice raised the savings needed by international students to gain visas, and it raised the bar on language requirements. It then increased the non-refundable fees for international student visas from \$710 to \$1,600—by far the highest in the world. It has halted temporary graduate visas to international students aged over 35 and it has reversed its earlier two-year extension of their visas. What has happened in response? Well, we have already seen a 34 per cent drop in visa applications in the last 12 month in the VET sector to the lowest level since 2005, and a return to the massive visa backlogs of the last government. Consistent with that race to the bottom, the opposition leader proposes cuts to migration which would see new student enrolments fall to 10,000-15,000 a year. This would do untold damage to our education sector.

The evidence level set up for universities and the unpredictability around processing of visas and visa approvals have already disadvantaged the smaller institutions. Rural and regional universities are now limiting or refusing applications from students from those countries which are deemed at high risk of visa refusal. It's important to remember that capping metropolitan places will not encourage those international units to go to the regions. They have cultural, social and labour-market reasons to stay in the cities. Currently, fewer than 10 per cent of international students opt for regional institutions, despite the lower course costs and migration incentives. Those who do go regional are often attracted by the lower course costs, but that cohort is going to be the cohort that is the hardest hit by the recent increase in visa application fees.

We've already seen, with the Morrison government's extraordinary Job-ready Graduates program that heavy-handed incentives or punishments have very little impact on student choices. International students are not going to choose to go to the regions; they are simply going choose to study in a different country. The same principle applies to caps on metropolitan universities in favour of regional institutions. The relationship between the housing crisis and international students is weak. International students account for only four per cent of our rental market. They make up less than one per cent of the house population in most local government areas in Australia. Only three per cent of international students live in a detached houses, with 74 per cent living in purpose-built student accommodation. Many live in shared accommodation in the unregulated rental sector. Many live far from the institutions at which they study. International students often struggle to find housing because they lack a rental history. They have little protection in homestays and in shared accommodation and they're vulnerable to exploitation. They remain an important workforce in key sectors such as aged care and disability support in Australia. There's a real risk that placement caps will cause labour shortages for local businesses and the care sector.

It makes no sense to propose to limit course numbers based on domestic labour-market demands. Eighty-four per cent of overseas students who come to this country return home after their studies and only 16 per cent decide to stay in Australia, so why limit students' course selection to the skill sets that we require here? We would in fact be better off reserving positions in courses with domestic skill set shortages for Australians, not for international students, particularly for those courses in which there is a constraint on prac placements. The minister shouldn't need to micromanage institutions. Any cap should be set at a provider not a course level, and it should be set at least 18 months in advance of the year in which the students are applying. We have to remember that students are not migrants. The two should not be conflated. Any government with effective immigration policy can winnow out those graduates who want to stay and who actually do have qualifications which are consistent with our skills deficits. We should remember that international graduates account for one-third of our permanent skilled migrant intake and that those migrants produce a massive economic dividend over their working lifetimes.

Australian universities have experienced a long-term decline in government investment, particularly in infrastructure and in research and development. They rely on tuition fees from full-fee-paying international students to deliver their core function of research, which is the basis of their international ranking and, in turn, the basis on which they attract quality overseas students. It's true that in our universities this has fuelled a culture of revenue, profit and competition in what might well be viewed as an unstable business model. This government says it wants to make things in Australia, but it has provided no additional funding for research in its recent budget. Government grants for the ARC, the NHMRC and the MRFF typically support less than half of the economic cost of supporting funded research. Commonwealth support payments for medicine and veterinary science students leave a shortfall of as much as \$10,000 per student. If this government really does want to expand tertiary education and research while reducing our reliance on international students, it is going to have to fund universities better.

Swinburne university in my electorate of Kooyong has already been impacted by the recent changes in the processing of visas. In May and June 2024, the drop in percentage of student visas granted compared to 2023 was

as follows: for India there was a decrease of 88 per cent; for Sri Lanka there was a reduction of 93 per cent; for Vietnam there was a reduction of 78 per cent; and for Pakistan there was a reduction of 86 per cent. This is egregious. It's an egregious insult to a venerable institution. Some of Swinburne's courses are going to become non-viable if international student numbers remain impacted in this way. That loss of revenue is going to directly impact research capability and capacity. We're going to see the same pattern repeated at every major institution in this country. The institutions' reputations are already being harmed by this government and its delays in visa assessments. Students are already threatening to move to universities in other countries, and that's already beginning to have an impact on local businesses in the surrounding suburbs, who are being impacted by the reduced numbers of students on campus.

The first goal of our universities should be to educate Australians, not to generate revenue as global businesses. It does make sense for the government to review their business models, but the review should be based on objective data and modelling, and it should be taken in concert with, not in opposition to, educational institutions. It makes sense to defer these changes and for any such radical policy change to be undertaken not by a single minister but by the proposed Australian Tertiary Education Commission as part of each institution's mission based compact process. I will be moving an amendment to this legislation mandating an independent review of the impact of enrolment limits on providers, on net overseas migration and on the quality of education offered to our local and international students.

Rather than a kneejerk contraction of an important industry in response to a temporary overshoot on immigration, which is of successive governments' making, this country needs mature and nuanced policymaking on housing, on immigration and on education. The Albanese government should not overcompensate as a kneejerk reaction to the populist small mindedness of the opposition. For the good of all Australians, it needs to have the courage to stay the course on the education sector. If it does not, and if it continues to fail to research adequately, we will see institutions fail, we will see skills and labour shortages worsen, we will see our universities' international rankings tumble, we will see our academic reputation tank, and our economy will suffer. I cannot commend this piece of legislation to the House.

Debate interrupted.

## ADJOURNMENT

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough):** It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

## Hall, Mr Raymond Steele

**Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (19:30):** This evening I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to Steele Hall, who, sadly, passed away two months ago—a former member of this chamber, a former senator and a former member of the House of Assembly in South Australia and Premier of South Australia. A man who was an absolute titan of South Australian politics, he had across his career something that many of us would be proud to have done but that was but one of the many significant things that Steele Hall did in his career in politics. He was first elected to the parliament at the age of 30 and became Premier in 1968, before he'd turned 40. He had served as a minister in the Playford government. The Playford government was defeated in 1965, and Steele Hall led the Liberal Party back into government in 1968, defeating Don Dunstan following the latter's first term as Premier of South Australia.

As Premier, Steele Hall did two remarkable things on top of the many other significant achievements of his premiership. One is better known than the other. The first was that he reformed the electoral system in South Australia to put in place the proper and appropriate principles of one vote, one value. For a long, long time, there was disproportionate representation in South Australia, and that, beyond question, led to the people not getting the result that they had voted for. These reforms, of course, dramatically jeopardised Steele Hall's own longevity in the role of Premier, but nonetheless his principles and morals led him, during his time as Premier, to institute those reforms, which were part of the reason he lost the subsequent 1970 election.

The other very significant thing that he did was to stand up for the important principle of building a major dam for the security of South Australia's water supply, not in South Australia, an idea which was extremely parochially popular, but instead way up in the Snowy Mountains, where all the expert engineering and hydrological advice of the time said it should be built. That meant that his government, which was supported by an independent Speaker who had the balance of power in the parliament, fell because that independent Speaker represented the electorate where the proposed dam in South Australia, at Chowilla in the Riverland, would have been built. That independent member did not support confidence in the Hall government because of the government's insistence on instead pursuing what became the Dartmouth Dam construction—subsequently the Dartmouth-Hume water retention—in the Upper Snowy, which has been so vital to securing the water supply for South Australia ever since. The Dunstan government, who had said they'd build the Chowilla dam, subsequently, of course, came to realise the wisdom of

Steele Hall's view on that and never proceeded to construct the Chowilla dam. So, in his two years as Premier, Steele Hall left a very significant legacy.

He was then elected to the Senate and served in the very infamous Senate that deferred the budget bills, leading to the dismissal of the Whitlam government, and, of course, he served in this chamber from 1981 until 1996 as the member for Boothby. His time as the member for Boothby was very significant and substantial as well. The modern electorate of Sturt has a number of suburbs that were then in the seat of Boothby, so I'm very honoured to represent parts of the city of Adelaide that Steele Hall represented for a long, long time. Indeed, he was a constituent of mine for the entirety of my time serving in this parliament up to his death.

My thoughts, of course, are with his family—particularly his wife, Joan, who herself served in the South Australian parliament, but also the rest of his family. It is a devastating loss to lose such a giant, such a titan of South Australian politics. He made an enormous contribution to his state and to his nation. I take the opportunity to pay tribute to him, to remember him and to thank him for his service in both parliaments and for the legacy that he leaves behind. Vale, Steele Hall.

### **Adelaide Electorate: Infrastructure**

**Mr GEORGANAS** (Adelaide) (19:35): I had the great pleasure on the weekend, on Sunday, of hosting the Prime Minister in my electorate. He was there to announce the final stage of the long-awaited North-South Corridor infrastructure project. The final stage of this long-awaited seamless North-South Corridor has reached a major milestone, and the Prime Minister was there yesterday with the Premier to announce it in my electorate. The milestone is that there's a preferred alliance partner being selected for the nation-shaping project. The project will be completed by deadline, but it's likely South Australians will be able to enjoy the full benefits of the Torrens to Darlington project even sooner than expected, with three tunnel-boring machines to be operated at the same time, instead of the expected two, which will bring forward the work.

Once finished, the Torrens to Darlington project will allow motorists to avoid 21 existing sets of traffic lights between the River Torrens and Darlington and will complete the nonstop 78-kilometre North-South Corridor between Gawler and Old Noarlunga. The middle part, which is in my electorate and parts of Boothby, is where the tunnels will be going. I'm very pleased about this announcement because, following the exhaustive procurement processes which commenced back in January, the consortium comprising John Holland, Bouygues Construction, Arcadis Australia, Jacobs and Ventia has been selected as the preferred alliance partner to deliver SA's biggest ever infrastructure project. The successful consortium has confirmed it can deliver the Torrens to Darlington project on budget, delivering significant travel, economic and community benefits for South Australia.

I've been campaigning on this project since 2013. I recall clearly the now Prime Minister, who was then the infrastructure minister, coming out to my electorate and turning the first sod on this project. It was a great pleasure to have him there yesterday to announce that the last bit of this project is being completed. Part of the project was also ensuring that we protected and secured some of the heritage listed buildings along that strip in my electorate. Without the tunnels they would have had to knock down the Thebby Theatre, an iconic heritage listed building that has had every rock band and Australian musician go through it, including Midnight Oil and many, many others, and also the Queen of Angels Catholic church. Both of these buildings were built at the turn of the century and are magnificent buildings. It's great that they and many other buildings in the area that have some significance and are old—some heritage, some not—will be saved.

That's why I was delighted yesterday to join the Prime Minister; Premier Malinauskas; South Australian Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Tom Koutsantonis; my colleague the member for Boothby; Nadia Clancy MP, state member for Elder; and Jayne Stinson MP, state member for Badcoe. Credit must also be given to Minister King, who has worked tirelessly. Minister King, our infrastructure minister, works tirelessly on infrastructure and many projects around the country. I've got to say that I've made many calls to her office to get information on behalf of constituents, and they were always there with the information. I know that she's worked tirelessly and puts effort into improving our nation's infrastructure, transport and regional development.

The project not only will revolutionise the way locals move around our region but will unlock new transport opportunities for tourism, for the airport and for people who visit the area. It will take off approximately 40 minutes of travel time for commuters, which is a big difference if you add that up. If you're doing it every day, there are a few hours in that. So it gives you time at home with your family. The project will also provide approximately 5,500 jobs to South Australia during the main construction, with 90 per cent of labour hours to be undertaken by South Australians. I'm incredibly proud to have been part of this transformational project that will help South Australians get home quicker and safer. It was great to have the Prime Minister and the Premier in the electorate yesterday to deliver for South Australians, once again working in partnership. This project will be a fifty-fifty partnership of approximately \$15.7 billion.

### Cost of Living

**Ms PRICE** (Durack—Opposition Whip) (19:40): Despite the significant distance from communities in my large electorate, no matter where I go, I am reminded of the plight of regional WA under this Labor government. Labor's homegrown inflation is keeping interest rates higher for longer. As the Reserve Bank has told the Select Committee on the Cost of Living, they are waiting for softer growth in government spending before they cut interest rates. I'm afraid we could be waiting some time.

The cost-of-living pain that constituents in my electorate are feeling just makes the constant attacks on regional Western Australia even more shameful. As we know, Labor has now legislated to end WA's live sheep trade. Those opposite showed absolutely no regard for the wishes of my regional communities and the thousands of good, hardworking men and women who rely upon this important Western Australian trade. Just as this was a political calculation to appease inner-city voters, so was the decision to abolish the cashless debit card in vulnerable communities, including the East Kimberley. The University of Adelaide recently released their report detailing that domestic violence, public drinking, intoxication and gambling have all increased since this decision was taken. Statistics released by WA police have confirmed that 2023-24 was the worst year on record for crime in regional WA and that assaults on police officers in the Kimberley were nine times above the national average. Labor at a state and federal level need to do more to combat this crime epidemic.

Speaking of the East Kimberley: I was happy to hear the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley's application for funding for the Kununurra Airport runway extension through the Growing Regions Program was successful—hooray, we said. This project has the potential to deliver cheaper flights and direct east coast connections to the region. Yet even good news turns sour because of this government's incompetence. According to Labor's own guidelines, successful applicants must have started construction by May 2024. Comically, the recipients were announced on 16 May 2024. Three months later, the shire still hasn't received its funding application. The government's delay means upgrades to the airport won't commence until next year as, of course, work cannot begin now, due to the upcoming wet season. The shire is now predicting a 10 to 15 per cent increase in costs.

Labor had almost two years to get this program right after scrapping our successful Building Better Regions program, yet they couldn't deliver it on time, they rejected hundreds of projects while underspending the project's budget by 31 per cent and now they can't even confirm when recipients can expect to receive funding and get their projects underway. Such incompetence and lack of care demonstrates that the Albanese Labor government has abandoned regional WA.

Durack's borders are also under threat, and I call on the new minister to act immediately to reverse Labor's actions with respect to border protection. Under Labor, aerial surveillance hours have fallen by 20 per cent and maritime patrol days have decreased by 12 per cent. Earlier this year, I outlined the necessity of increasing maritime surveillance following the fourth illegal boat arrival along the WA coast in just six months. It seems that that message fell on deaf ears, with the Border Force confirming four illegal fishing vessels were found by local fishermen in the mangroves near Broome just last week. Boats reaching our shores present significant threats to northern Australia. Just think of the biosecurity disaster that could occur if disease reaches the mainland just because our borders aren't sufficiently protected.

However, there may be a bigger threat to industry in the form of Labor's so-called Nature Positive Plan. The duplication of environmental approvals will blow out times, and the prospect of a climate trigger will kill off billions of investment in our mining and resources sector along with thousands of jobs. According to the IPA's analysis, Western Australia would be the state most affected, that's regional WA, potentially losing \$111 billion of investment. Once again, regional Australia—especially regional Western Australia—is getting the raw end of the stick, despite being the backbone of the Australian economy.

### Early Childhood Education

**Dr GARLAND** (Chisholm) (19:45): My community in Chisholm, just like me, really values education. I'm so delighted to be part of a government that is delivering a 15 per cent pay rise for early childhood educators. This is not just going to help relieve the cost-of-living pressures for those workers, but through not increasing fees we're helping families right across the community as well as being able to assist in delivering productivity gains through more workforce participation.

The reason I know people in my electorate are so passionate about education—and specifically early childhood education—is that I've been speaking to them about this for a long time now. I've run a survey across my electorate to hear from educators, parents and families that access early childhood education and care in our community to see what they think the most pressing needs are. Based on the results of that survey, I made a submission to the Productivity Commission's early childhood education and care inquiry. The findings from this inquiry are really informing our government's approach to a universal early childhood education and care system. It was really clear

from my survey that the No. 1 issue in the community was to take action to deliver a pay increase for educators, and I'm so pleased that is exactly what our government has done.

What I'd like to do here in the House today is read some of the comments from my community, because I want to acknowledge and recognise the work that educators do in our community every day, but also to acknowledge their advocacy and the expert voices that they brought to this conversation in order to assist our government make a decision to bring forward this pay rise. One early educator said, 'The wages we are paid do not reflect our training and the importance of our role in a child's education.' An educator in Glen Waverley said, 'I am a qualified teacher with over 30 years experience in the sector. I am burnt out, unsupported, undervalued and disheartened. I do not earn enough to save, and there are no regular increases in wages. This year my focus will be looking for a position in a new sector where I'm valued as a professional and paid accordingly. It's time to leave.' That's a particularly heartbreaking comment.

Parents were very supportive of a wage increase, with a mum in Blackburn South saying, 'We need to value those who work in this industry and pay them properly. Early education sets kids up for life. A good experience brings numerous benefits for families.' A dad in Burwood East said, 'We struggle with affordability of child care and know the sector is not paid fairly. The amount of responsibility educators have means they should be paid at higher rates.'

As well as that feedback from my community, I've got some more feedback, which is the reception we've had to our announcement delivering a 15 per cent pay increase. Educators are saying, 'Instead of searching for a second job, this pay increase will help me pay rent and put food on my table. This isn't just a huge win for educators like me; this is a huge win for our community and for our families that we have here in the centre.' Another educator said, 'This is a monumental, history-making moment. This means I can stay in the job I love, and I know that it is going to change a lot of lives, not just my own.'

Our government has done the work of listening to our communities about what needs to happen in our early education and care system. We are making some pretty serious commitments here to workers by delivering a 15 per cent pay increase, to families by ensuring that their fees do not increase, and to children, of course, who are getting the best quality education they can possibly get in those very early years of life. We know those first five years are crucial for setting someone up for a successful life journey.

I am very proud to be part of a government that listens, that takes action and that is doing what it can do to ensure that we take pressure off households and workers at this time when people are feeling the pinch with the cost of living.

### **Gibbs, Mrs Doris Ethel Rosemary**

#### **Ellison, Mr James Sidney**

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde—Chief Opposition Whip) (19:49): I want to use this time tonight to reflect on the wonderful contributions that two terrific people made to the community of Forde both through the Beenleigh region and on the northern Gold Coast. Both Doris Gibbs and Jim Ellison sadly passed away in recent weeks. Each has left an indelible mark on their communities.

Doris Ethel Rosemary Gibbs was a dear mother to Chris, Paul, Andrew, Megan and Matthew. She was also an adored grandmother of nine and great-grandmother of seven. Doris was also the dearly loved wife of Ivan Gibbs MP, who himself passed back in 2011, one day short of their 61st wedding anniversary. Mr Gibbs served on Albert Shire Council for several years as deputy mayor and also moved into state politics, being a cabinet minister under the Sir Jo Bjelke-Petersen government.

But, long before politics became part of their world, Doris and Ivan moved from Whittlesea in Victoria to Queensland in 1956. The Gibbs family started the South Coast Wrecking Co, originally on the old Sundale site in Southport, for those who know the Gold Coast. It's now called Gibbs Truck and Trailer Parts. The couple were devoted members of the Anglican Church, helping to found the Coomera Anglican College on the Gold Coast in my electorate of Forde. Doris was a force in the Coomera and northern Gold Coast communities. She gave her time supporting the Girl Guides, Holy Rood Anglican Church and Probus and was a fundraising extraordinaire.

Doris and Ivan built kindergartens. She was also a Girl Guides leader, Sunday school teacher and president and chair of women's guilds and welfare committees. She helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for new churches and family centres. Not only was she chair of her National Party electorate council; she was the first woman to ever hold such a position. She was also a Melvin Jones fellow and a Paul Harris fellow award winner and was an Order of Australia recipient.

Her daughter Megan said she always went out of her way to make sure nobody ever felt alone. I can attest to that. Whenever you met with Doris, you were met with a great big smile, a hug and a story or two. She was always



interested in what you were doing and how you were going. She asked about your family. She was a wonderful person and she loved life dearly.

I would also like to pay tribute to Jim Ellison. Jim was a man committed to his region, which was around Beenleigh and the surrounding area. He too served on the Albert Shire Council as a division 1 councillor for a number of years. He was always known as somebody who would stand up for the little guy and would never just walk past an injustice.

Starting his working career as an electrician, Jim soon started a successful import-export business trading with China in the late 1970s. He moved into local government before sidestepping and making a name for himself in real estate. He was a trusted name in Logan City real estate for three decades. If I may share a little anecdote, I was out doorknocking for the 2010 campaign and had the truck parked on the side of the street. When I got back to the truck, here was Jim's card under the windscreen wiper with a note saying, 'Please come up to my place and have a chat.' I had actually forgotten he'd worked with my father, who was a ceramic tiler in the 1970s. We had a great time reminiscing and catching up.

He was one of those who came from nothing but built himself up through hard work. It was a characteristic he no doubt picked up from his mother, Jean. His mother worked tirelessly as a welder to ensure the two survived in an era when there was little support for single parents. On the football field, he gained the nickname 'Angry Ant', but it was in competitive boxing where he made his name for himself and held various state titles.

He met and later married Jill in 1963, with the couple having three children. Even after their split, Jim always admired Jill's efforts and work as a mum. He would later remarry Ruth, who would become a big part of Jim's life not just for Jim but also for his three children. He was a popular identity at the Beenleigh bulls rugby league club, as well as the Beenleigh apex club, and his apex involvement was such that he eventually ascended to the positions of zone and national president.

My condolences go to both families, and I want to thank both for their wonderful commitment to our communities over many decades.

### Schools

**Dr FREELANDER** (Macarthur) (19:55): I've been visiting our local schools in Macarthur for over 40 years in my role as a paediatrician, often for case conferences about my particular patients who often had complex neurological and medical needs. I've always been impressed by the dedication, ability and passion for education of our local teachers to make sure that our students got the best education possible.

Last week, I met with four local public school teachers from the Macarthur area: Teresa Calder, Tom Gough, Sara Priestley and David Atkins. They had come to me to discuss what I already knew from my school visits and what I'm still seeing—that is, that our local public schools are very run down compared to many of the private schools scattered around Sydney. Some of these private schools have unbelievable infrastructure—indoor Olympic pools, indoor tennis courts, multifunctional drama centres, outdoor education centres and even equestrian centres. It's unbelievable infrastructure. The inequity is completely gobsmacking. It is unfair, it is not right and our government is addressing it.

In May 2023 Jason Clare, the education minister, made a commitment at the New South Wales Teachers Federation's annual Principals' Conference, co-signed with Deputy Premier Carr, to work with the New South Wales government to ensure that every New South Wales public school is on a path to reach 100 per cent of the school resource funding standard. To deliver this commitment, the Commonwealth funding to public schools would need an extra \$4.1 billion for New South Wales public schools alone.

I'm proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of education, from early childhood education, where we've just delivered a significant 15 per cent pay rise to early childhood education teachers, to primary school and high school. The Productivity Commission recently found that the equity gap in schools widened markedly under the coalition's schools agreement signed by the then member for Cook. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds were found to be three times more likely to fall behind, and 86,000 students didn't meet either the basic literacy or the numeracy standard. It's clear that students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, were being left behind under the previous government's schools agreement.

We live in a world where every single new job that's created will require students to finish school and go to TAFE or university. That's why the Albanese Labor government is determined to help students from all backgrounds to catch up, keep up and stay in school. This requires significant infrastructure improvements as well as improvements in teachers' pay and conditions. The Albanese government is working with the states and territories to get every school to 100 per cent of its fair funding level under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement.

These negotiations are ongoing. A couple of weeks ago, Minister Clare released the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. It sets out reforms that will help close the education gap, including a year 1 phonics check and early-years-of-schooling numeracy check to identify students who need help. It includes evidence based teaching and targeted and intensive supports such as a small group or catch-up tutoring to help students who fall behind. It also includes greater wellbeing support for learning and engagement throughout our public school system, including through full-service schools, counsellors, wellbeing coordinators and mental health workers.

It's very important that our Schools Upgrade Fund continues on, and the Albanese government is committed to this, investing \$275 million through the Schools Upgrade Fund to improve school facilities, to help keep students and school staff safe and to get kids' education back on track after 10 years of opposition neglect. Over 1,500 schools are benefiting from the targeted first open round of the Schools Upgrade Fund. All this is being done to make sure our public schools can keep up with the private schools around all our major cities. It is very important that this inequity is changed and that equitable school funding agreements are reached. We have to work with the states and territories to make sure this happens. We cannot continue to see the inequity in school resourcing and school infrastructure that has been allowed to develop over the last 20 years. I thank the House.

**House adjourned at 20:00**

## **NOTICES**

### **Presentation**

The following notices were given:

**Ms Tink** to present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Migration Act 1958*, and for related purposes. (*Migration Amendment (Limits on Immigration Detention) Bill 2024*).

**Mr Wood** to move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that the Government cut \$50 million in the October 2022-2023 budget from Round 7 of the Safer Communities Fund for early intervention high-risk youth programs, which was funded but not announced in the March 2022-23 budget; and

(b) the recent surge in youth crime in Victoria and Queensland, in particular requires an urgent and dedicated response from the Commonwealth Government to address and combat this serious issue, while the Victorian Government must reconsider its stance on weak youth bail laws and prioritise the safety of its citizens;

(2) condemns the Government for abandoning young Australians by scrapping this funding;

(3) calls on the Government to reinstate funding to provide for much-needed capital to organisations working with high-risk youth;

(4) congratulates the previous Government for investing \$300 million in the Safer Communities Fund to keep local communities safer; and

(5) commends the Opposition for committing to working with states and territories in the future to develop uniform knife laws as a significant step towards ensuring the safety and security of all Australians.

*Monday, 12 August 2024*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Scrymgour)** took the chair at 10:30.

### **CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

#### **Kooyong Electorate: National Disability Insurance Scheme**

**Dr RYAN** (Kooyong) (10:30): I rise to convey the extreme frustration of a Kooyong family with the processes of the NDIS. I have to note that I've known this family since they first presented to the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. S is 15 years old. She has spinal muscular atrophy, an incurable and severe neurological condition that was diagnosed when she was only 12 months old. Despite receiving state-of-the-art therapy for her SMA, she's still dependent on assisted mobility devices and intensive supports. From 12 months of age her therapy has included the use of a standing frame. This can get her upright, weight-bearing and moving against gravity. The health implications of not standing, for her, include joint contractures, osteoporosis, pressure sores, reduced respiratory function and poor circulation.

For the first five years of her life she used a loaned frame. Her parents bought her one when she was six, and she used it for seven years. When she outgrew it, her parents donated it to another child with the same medical condition. They applied to the NDIS in November 2023 for access to another frame, one which should last her indefinitely because she's pretty much done growing. While waiting, her parents rented a frame. It cost them \$7,887. It was demo stock, and they had to give it back after eight months. They have been unable to find another standing frame for her since that time.

Since November 2023 my constituent's family have had 12 points of contact with the NDIA. They have spoken to them repeatedly over the phone and by email. They've talked to them about the standing frame, about their application for a conversion of their car so that it's suitable for a wheelchair and about the rest of their child's plan. Again and again, delays in the NDIA's responses have forced changes to this child's plan, to the cost allocation and to the costs of interventions. Those delays have led to a deterioration in S's condition. They have led the family to the point where they have given up and paid for the equipment themselves. They have paid for that equipment at a cost to this family of \$21,903. My constituent's family have had to self-fund her medical care because delays in the NDIS system are harming their child.

My constituents are well-educated and resourceful people. They are organised and effective advocates. For 10 years they have been battling the NDIS, and they have found its processes frustrating, cumbersome and unresponsive. My constituents have had to pay for their child's equipment because they can—at a stretch—and are sacrificing other things for their family. But most families are not in that position. So I ask the government: if this is the experience of an effective, organised, well-resourced family, what is the experience of other people with the NDIS? I hate to think how other families are managing their NDIS experience. So I place this story before the House, I place it before the minister and I place it before the NDIA. I tell them now: you have to do better.

#### **Vietnam Veterans Day**

##### **Australian Service in Timor-Leste: 25th Anniversary**

**Mr GOSLING** (Solomon) (10:34): This Sunday, 18 August, is Vietnam Veterans Day. On this day in 1966 men of the 6th Battalion, supported by New Zealand artillery, encountered the Vietcong in a rubber plantation outside the village of Long Tan. In the ensuing battle they were outnumbered 10 to one. Eighteen Australians lost their lives, and 24 were wounded. It was the single greatest loss of life Australia suffered during the Vietnam War. In the years that followed they came together to remember their mates lost on that fateful day. Now we gather to commemorate all those who served in Vietnam on that day. And the war still lingers. A veteran wrote to me recently: But what about the other 364 days of the year. Many of us are still hurting every single one of those days.

Many of us didn't go of our own volition, we were sent there because of a government edict. And what did we achieve? Everyone completely underestimated the enemy.

He goes on:

... around 50,000 of us were sent over there and about 500 came home in body bags and I wonder how many of us wish we had been in a body bag rather than suffer the mental trauma that has beset us since we came home and that's on top of the ones with physical injuries.

There is a Vietnam Veterans Day commemoration on Sunday at Reg Hillier House at Bees Creek, just outside of Darwin—in your electorate, Deputy Speaker Scrymgour. It is always a fantastic event.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the significant events in Timor-Leste in 1999. This September we are commemorating all Australians—military, police and civilians—who served in Timor-Leste and the sacrifice of their families. In particular we remember the six Australians who lost their lives serving in Timor-Leste or as a

result of that service in Timor-Leste. There will be commemorative services and events held here in Canberra; at the peacekeepers memorial in Dili; in Darwin; in Perth; in Sydney; and at unit reunions in Townsville as well. They will be on Friday 20 September. Why on 20 September? It's because this is when the main body of INTERFET arrived in Dili 25 years ago. Like 18 August—Long Tan Day and now Vietnam Veterans Day—for Vietnam veterans, 20 September is the date that we commemorate and thank all those who have served in our neighbour Timor-Leste, and we also come together to honour the families of those who served in Timor-Leste.

We owe a great deal to our serving men and women and also their families. This Sunday is an opportunity to remember those who served in the Vietnam War, and it is also 25 years since our service began and continues with Timor-Leste.

### **Torres Strait: School Infrastructure**

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (10:37): I rise today to highlight the substandard education and wellbeing of our young students in the Torres Strait region. Tagai secondary college on Thursday Island is currently in a deplorable condition. I personally attended the school during an unannounced, impromptu visit on 9 April. Without exaggeration, I can say I've seen Third World prisons in better conditions. It's truly shameful that the school has been left to fall into such an appalling state of disrepair. The classrooms are not only outdated; they are quite literally falling apart. Portions of the ceiling are collapsing, the roofs are leaking like sieves, and the black mould is so prevalent that it made my eyes burn after just a few minutes. The toilet facilities are atrocious. Several of the cubicles are screwed shut so that the kids can't even access them, and the others are without locks altogether. I understand that the Northern Peninsula Area State College in Bamaga is in an even worse condition, and I intend to visit them next time I'm in the area, to make a similar assessment.

After my visit to Tagai I wrote to the Minister for Indigenous Australians and the Minister for Education, raising significant concerns and inviting them to the school, and asking them to intervene and to support the school. Unfortunately, to date I haven't even received a response to those letters. Since then a 14-year-old student from Tagai secondary college, Catherine Paton, took the initiative to write to state and federal ministers raising similar concerns and advocating for her school. She even provided her own photos to the ministers.

The situation is not acceptable. It is deeply shameful. Neither the students nor the teachers should be subjected to such disgraceful conditions. We need immediate action across all levels of government to get it fixed without delay. This would never be allowed to happen anywhere else in Australia. There would be total outrage. So why is it acceptable for the only two high schools in the Torres Strait region?

There is so much rhetoric about closing the gap, so why don't we start with a critical area like safe and appropriate education facilities that will actually drive tangible outcomes? The government was so intent on pushing the Voice to Parliament, but, quite frankly, what is needed is to listen to Catherine Paton's voice. Visit the school and tell me it is in an acceptable condition for Australian students. This is about action, not slogans. Students should not have to fight for basic education standards taken for granted elsewhere in our country. I hope that the government will listen to Catherine and that her voice will become a catalyst for some meaningful change and action in that area.

### **Hasluck Electorate: Hasluck Volunteer Awards**

**Ms LAWRENCE** (Hasluck) (10:40): Congratulations on your ascension, Deputy Speaker Scrymgeour. It's a pleasure, in your first duty today, to tell you about an event I hosted on the weekend: the inaugural Hasluck Volunteer Awards, attended by over 200 community members. It was an amazing event where we celebrated the wonderful work being done by individuals across the community—so talented and dedicated. Volunteering is the lifeblood of all our communities. It was wonderful and an honour to acknowledge the work of all the fine citizens who were nominated. Our awards covered a few different categories—youth and education, environment, emergency services, sport, and community and multicultural. We also presented a lifetime achievement award and the Hasluck volunteer of the year award.

Our youth and education award winner was Claire Cowan, a volunteer speech pathologist. Claire is retired yet provides a comprehensive literacy report for young people re-engaging in their education at Swan City Youth Service. Our environment award winner was Rob Fyfe, who has given over 20 years of service to the work of Trillion Trees Australia, planting trees across the state. Our emergency services award winner was Aaron Thredgold, the Mount Helena Voluntary Bush Fire Brigade captain, who has served since 2012 in a number of roles and has faced many difficult fires both local and further afield. Our sports award winner was Rikita Ryder, from the Koongamia Football Club. Registrar, administrator, canteen manager, first aider and sports trainer—she has served that club with single-minded dedication since she was 14 years of age. Our community and multicultural award winner was Aliaa Alzayadi, Alnoor Community Language Inc president and founder of a school to help children from all backgrounds to learn to read, write and speak in the Arabic language. Our lifetime achievement award went to Paul Crouchley, deputy team leader from Mundaring SES, who started volunteering with St John's Ambulance

in 1978 and with the SES in 1986. The difficult-to-determine Hasluck volunteer of the year award went to Michelle Bailey, our administrator of the Perth Hills online fire chat. Michelle advises, helps, supports and educates the community throughout the year but particularly during fire season, keeping some 14,000 online chat members informed and ultimately safer.

I thank all who came together to make the event such an amazing success, in particular Tanya Richardson, Mayor of Swan; Margaret Thomas, Mayor of Kalamunda; and Page McNeil, President of the Shire of Mundaring. I acknowledge the Hon. Michelle Roberts, the member for Midland and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, for her presence, and the Deputy President of the Shire of Mundaring, Trish Cook, who represented the member for Swan Hills, Jess Shaw. I thank all the sponsors and donors who made it a particularly joyous occasion, particularly Oakover Grounds, Bailey Brewing, Pinelli Estate, Mandoon Estate and the Abbey Winery.

### **Carter, Ms Sarah**

**Mr CHESTER** (Gippsland) (10:43): I rise to offer my sincere condolences to the family, friends, loved ones and work colleagues of Sarah Carter. Sarah tragically passed away last week, aged just 45.

I know it's reckless to try and predict the future, but I think all who met Sarah assumed she'd go on to achieve much more in her life. She was on such a positive trajectory already. She'd been a long-serving councillor of Maribyrnong and a fierce advocate for the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne. She'd been mayor on three occasions at the tender age of 45. She was a classic example of someone who was taking action locally, but she was also an incredible global citizen. She saw disadvantage and wanted to be part of the solution and fix a problem wherever she found it.

Sarah had a very strong sense of injustice and was determined to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable and underprivileged people she met anywhere in the world. She was pivotal in her role with Save the Children, in the international engagement that organisation provided. My thoughts are with her colleagues in particular who were shocked by her loss last week.

We first met on a delegation to Cambodia about 10 years ago. Colleagues will well understand that hosting members of parliament on overseas delegations is a bit like herding cats. At times, when logistics went wrong, despite Sarah's best efforts, it was like watching a blindfolded tightrope walker juggling four balls and answering phone calls—but she always managed to fix the problem somehow, get the logistics back on track, dust herself off and return to that picture of serenity. That's until the next crisis hit, and she went into fix-it mode again. We stayed in touch over a long period of time on issues that we were both interested in. While she was core Labor at heart, she had a lot of affection for the Nats and for regional Australians and battlers, so we had a lot to talk about over the years.

As members of parliament, we do get to meet many inspiring people, and sometimes it makes us a bit hard to impress. But I was very impressed with Sarah Carter. She impressed me with her passion, her intelligence, her determination and her resilience. She's been a huge loss to our nation and a huge loss to the Labor family. I guess we will never make sense of why someone like Sarah would leave us so early. And the challenge for us in this place is to make sure she's not forgotten and, I think, to take the memory of someone like Sarah and make an inspiration for us in the roles we do. Our job is not always easy. Sometimes the political winds blow the wrong way, and we suffer misfortunes ourselves in our political lives and question our future in this place itself. But, if you need an inspiration, I say to everyone in this place: just think of what someone like Sarah Carter would have given in a year in this place—a month, a week, an hour! We all thought that Sarah was destined to join us in this place as a member of parliament, and she would have been an extraordinary MP. May she rest in peace.

### **Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games**

#### **Hull, Ms Jessica**

**Mr JONES** (Whitlam—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services) (10:46): I just want to start by associating all members in this place, particularly Labor MPs, with the wonderful words of the member for Gippsland. Those were heartfelt words, and you could see that in his disposition just now. I thank him for that most genuinely.

I want to use the opportunity this morning to give a shout-out to an amazing local Albion Park girl, Jess Hull. Olympic Games history was made yesterday when she became the first ever Australian woman to medal in the 1,500 metres in an incredible display of determination and speed. She took home silver, finishing in three minutes and 52.56 seconds. She was beaten only by the defending champion, Faith Kipyegon from Kenya, who had to run an Olympic record to take gold. It was the fastest 1,500 metres in Olympic history. Hull's silver medal was the seventh track-and-field medal of the Paris games, and that's the biggest tally in Australia's history since Melbourne in 1956. Jess Hull now joins local greats like Sally Pearson and Cathy Freeman as Australia's only track medallist this century. There's a job of work to be done there.

I'm sure there's no-one more thrilled about Jess's achievements than her family. Hull's dad, Simon, has been her coach from the earliest days, and he and her mum, Michelle, have always believed in their daughter's ability. After the race, Jess shared this wonderful story about Michelle, who'd sent a photo of her earlier that morning from her Little Athletics days. I remember her in her Little Athletics days. Her and my daughter used to get around the track at Beaton Park and Albion Park as they made their way through Little A's. Jess was just 12 in the photo. The text from her mum read, 'Do it for this little girl,' and she did. It was absolutely to the thrill of all Australians who were tuned in during the early hours of the morning.

Jess is an inspiration to all of us, but particularly to little girls who are coming through Little A's at the moment or deciding to take up a sport. She's an inspiration. But whether you get to the Olympics or just your regionals, you can do it, and it's good for you. It's good for your health and good for your community. From Albion Park Little A's to the podium of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, Jess, you've done your family, your region and all Australians proud. To all of the Aussies who competed in the Olympic Games, medal or no medal, we know how much hard work it took to get there. Well done to you from all of us.

**McKenzie, Mr Kai**

**IGA Local Grocer Hawks Nest**

**Australian Surf Championships**

**Watkins, Ms Caron**

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (10:49): I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Bonny Hills local Kai McKenzie. Many of you have probably heard in the news about 23-year-old Kai's horrific experience on 23 June, when he was attacked by a 10-foot-long great white shark while surfing at nearby Port Macquarie. Kai was not only able to fight the shark off; he made it back to shore—but, sadly, not before his severed leg was lost. It was nothing short of a miracle that among the passers-by who came to Kai's rescue was a retired police officer walking his dog. His quick thinking saw him tourniquet Kai's leg with the dog's leash, effectively stemming the bleeding and saving Kai's life.

Kai has demonstrated extraordinary courage and determination in his recovery, and he's vowing to make his return to the ocean and surfing. A GoFundMe page has been started to raise money to support Kai in his recovery, and, so far, \$173,000 out of the \$250,000 target has been raised. I and the rest of the community wish Kai a very speedy recovery and extend our best wishes for the future.

I'd also like to congratulate the team at Hawks Nest IGA, who have taken out the 2024 IGA National Small Grocery and Perishables Department of the Year award. It's a really significant achievement for the Hawks Nest IGA team, who beat out competing grocers and supermarkets, large and small, from across the state and country.

The Lyne electorate has a lot of talented sports people, several of whom did really well at the 2024 Australian Surf Riding Championships, which were held at North Haven beach recently. Approximately 300 athletes from far and wide descended on the area to compete across bodyboard, shortboard and para surfing titles. Of the 300 competitors, three Lyne locals had great success. I'd like to congratulate Hardy Fletcher, who took out the under-14s Australian bodyboard championship; Archer Thoms, who was crowned the under-16s bodyboard champion; and Damien Kelly, who secured a podium finish, placing third in the over-35s shortboard titles.

On another note, I'd like to extend my gratitude to Caron Watkins for her 23 years of unwavering commitment and tireless service to Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services. Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services provide invaluable and tangible support to our community, and I know that many of the incredible services that they offer and the many thousands of people they have helped would not be possible without Caron's dedication. Well done, again, Caron.

**Baldwin, Mr Ricky**

**Bamblett, Professor Muriel, AM, AO**

**Ms KEARNEY** (Cooper—Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care) (10:52): Deputy Speaker Scrymgour, congratulations on your appointment. It's an honour to be here this morning and lovely to see you in that chair. It's wonderful news.

I rise to give my first constituency statement since I had the privilege of being sworn in as Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health. I'd like to share some of the amazing First Nations leadership and strength that we have in my electorate of Cooper. As parliamentarians we come across local champions who have seen obvious need and not so obvious need, and have acted selflessly for their community. I'd like to honour two of my local heroes, Uncle Ricky Baldwin and Auntie Muriel Bamblett, both of whom have been formally recognised for the incredible work that they do.

Ricky has been honoured as the 2024 Victorian NAIDOC Male Elder of the Year, a very well earned title. He's a passionate Gunaikurnai man from Lake Tyers Mission. Growing up, he didn't always have the mentors to guide his way and to instil in him a sense of hope and self-determination. That is what drives his passion to now mentor young Aboriginal people himself towards their own self-determination, cultural identity and a sustained connection to land and cultural practices.

Ricky has many strings to his bow. He is a talented artist, creating traditional Aboriginal artefacts. He is a recognised elite athlete and is founder and CEO of Koorie Academy Basketball. Uncle Ricky's vision of keeping culture alive is fundamental to the growth and wellbeing of the young people he works with. Through his connections with the AFL, the National Basketball League and state and local associations, he has demonstrated models for a healthy lifestyle that contribute to closing the gap. I thank Ricky for his tireless work and his advocacy.

Another local hero is Aunty Muriel Bamblett, who was awarded the Officer of the Order of Australia, AO, for her distinguished service to the First Nations Community in Victoria. This year she was again honoured, with the Member of the Order of Australia, AM. Aunty Muriel is an elder and leader who looms large in our community for her work with local Aboriginal children and their families towards self-determination and fostering connection to culture. She's a Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman and has been CEO of VACCA, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, since 1999. She's also chairperson of SNAICC, the peak body representing First Nations child and family services nationally. Muriel is noted as a spiritual and intellectual force for change, driven by the desire to give children in out-of-home care a connection to culture.

As the member for Cooper and now the Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health, I acknowledge these wonderful people's leadership and the leadership of other First Nations people and organisations.

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme**

**Mr CONAGHAN** (Cowper) (10:55): I have said for a long time now that being on the NDIS is life changing for a participant with the right package and the right service provider. It is truly life changing. We have to ensure that the NDIS is there for people in the future. Both sides of the House have recognised that there are problems with the NDIS—and there's an inquiry being undertaken at the moment—like extended assessment wait times, overcharging, travel costs and draining packages well before their 12-month limit.

But in the past few weeks another issue has been brought to my attention, this time from the perspective of an NDIS provider. I should note these organisations are not fly-by-nighters. They are organisations who have been in my community for over two decades. They're not cowboy individuals. They are there servicing the community properly and changing people's lives. But as a result of the recent NDIA annual price review, combined with significant increases in workers compensation premiums in New South Wales, they have seen a 16 per cent increase in workers compensation premiums without any further claims from the provider. There's been no explanation. It's leaving some of those service providers in an unsustainable position. Data from the Ability Roundtable reported to the NDIA shows a direct link between state premiums and an organisation's margin. The median provider in New South Wales reported a 4.3 per cent deficit margin, so they're losing money, and much of that is a result of these significant increases in workers compensation.

After the pricing review announcement, the disability services peak body, National Disability Services, or NDS, surveyed its member organisations. Collectively, NDS members operate several thousand services for Australians with all types of disabilities. Twelve hundred organisations responded to the survey, and, of those, 84 per cent are rethinking their future and 75 per cent are considering stopping some or all of their services. This is frightening for regional and rural Australia. I urge the Minister for the NDIS to acknowledge this data and incorporate any impact on New South Wales providers into the NDIA pricing review. Please don't let my people go without those services.

### **Burt Electorate: Volunteers**

#### **Early Childhood Education**

**Mr KEOGH** (Burt—Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel) (10:58): Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community. In my electorate of Burt, there are countless local heroes that give their time and energy to make our community a better, more vibrant place to live. Volunteers don't go out with the goal of gaining money or glory but instead to do their part to support others and to leave their suburb, state and country better than they found it. Their work, however, should not be taken for granted. That's why every year I run the Burt Volunteer Awards to give our local heroes the recognition that they deserve and to encourage others to consider volunteering, too. This year we had more than 30 people nominated for an award. Each and every one of them would have been a deserved winner for the countless hours that they have spent supporting important causes like local disability services, multicultural groups, sporting clubs and so much more.

Congratulations go to the six winners of the 2024 Burt Volunteer Awards: for sport, Zara Fear from the Armadale Triathlon Club; for community services, Georgina Barker from the Piara Waters Primary School Parents and

Citizens Association; for disability support, Dawn Barker from Good Sammy Enterprises; for youth, Maisara Muzaffar; for multicultural, Stephanie Wei Yin Chan from the Gosnells Chinese Association; and, for the environment, Carol Hughes from the Animal Protection Society of Western Australia. And congratulations, of course, to all the nominees. Your contributions to our community may be away from the limelight, but they should never go unrecognised.

Another group that deserves more recognition is our early childhood educators. As a dad with young children, I know too well how much work goes into preparing our kids to have bright futures and how reliant families are on having high-quality early childhood education and care. In June the Prime Minister and the Minister for Early Childhood Education joined me to visit Goodstart Mount Nasura in Armadale, just down the road from my electorate office. While there, we heard from educators about the positive difference Labor's policies like paid prac placements will be making and we saw firsthand the hard work that goes into early childhood education day in, day out—work that educators should be fairly paid for. That's why I'm so proud of our government's announcement last week that will see a 15 per cent pay increase for our early childhood educators and a cap on childcare fee increases over the next year. That's a win for workers and a win for families, and that's what Labor is all about.

We're not just making sure that local workers earn more; we're also making sure that they keep more of what they earn. That's why last month delivered tax cuts to all taxpayers in our community, with an average tax cut for the people of Burt of just under \$1,500.

Finally, I'd like to give a shout-out to our local Olympians, including Caitlin Parker, who took home a bronze medal in boxing last Thursday. Congratulations. You've done your community and our country proud.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Scrymgour):** In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Taxation

**Ms TINK (North Sydney) (11:02):** I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the politicisation of tax reform is holding this country and economy back; and

(b) this process of politicisation is frequently felt by small to medium sized businesses through their contact and engagement with the Australian Tax Office (ATO); and

(2) calls on the Government to recognise the importance of improving productivity within the small to medium business sector and ensure the ATO is working with businesses towards this outcome.

As someone who both grew up in a family that relied on the income of a small family business and has owned and operated small businesses myself, I know exactly how rewarding and at the same time challenging this environment can be. Now then, as the member for North Sydney, I am delighted to speak on behalf of the third-largest business community in the country. It's for this reason that I move this motion today—for, if I cannot speak out against the politicisation of our tax system and the impact this is having on small to medium-sized businesses across our community, who will?

At a time when these businesses should be protected and supported by our government systems, they are instead being drowned by red tape and dreading calls from the ATO as the tax office pursues modest debts from small operators, whilst large multinationals continue to report bumper profits with little attention. Twenty twenty-three was a tough year for our usually resilient small-business community, with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission identifying that rising business costs were a key contributing factor to small-business annual insolvencies.

As we entered 2024, CreditorWatch predicted the business failure rate would increase from 4.4 per cent to almost six per cent by the end of the year. At the time, the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia CEO Luke Achterstraat warned that small businesses would need to prioritise cash flow management as higher costs were undoubtedly set to continue throughout the year, and cost-of-living pressures would make it difficult for small business to pass additional costs on to customers. He also argued it would be critical for banks, business partners and regulators to support small businesses wherever possible. Yet, two months into the year, my office was inundated with calls from accountants and small-business operators who suddenly found themselves under the direct scrutiny of the ATO.

Then, just last week, as we waited to hear what the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, Bruce Billson, would suggest our government prioritise to support small to medium-sized businesses, many were dismayed to read that the number of administrators being appointed to struggling businesses had grown



at an astonishing rate. Not surprisingly, it was businesses in New South Wales and Victoria who were at the greatest risk of being forced under. Gallingly, the report identified that the ATO is playing an active role—a significant role—in driving businesses to the wall as it goes into overdrive collecting debts, particularly from small businesses. While I was not surprised by the finding, I was relieved to see it was finally being identified as an issue.

We know small-business owners are currently paying themselves less and working longer than average to support their enterprises. The modest initiatives the government identified to try and help—like the instant asset write-off and the energy rebate—came far too slowly to make any meaningful difference to them. Large multinational businesses, including supermarkets and companies in the mining and energy sectors, seem to get away with modest tax payments relative to their profits while small businesses face lightning-fast calls from the ATO for payment of small debts and threats of insolvency.

Interestingly, the recommendations of the ombudsman on Thursday included, among other things, an ambitious plan for tax concessions. Disappointingly, while he identified the upside of reform, he stopped short of criticising the way in which tax reform in this country is currently pursued. For what it's worth, I agree with the ombudsman that better access to government contracts and savings from cheaper payment systems for the sector will be welcomed, but these things will not fundamentally reset an environment that has become dominated by increasingly complex red tape.

Last week, the Reserve Bank further downgraded its expectations for our economy, reporting it has grown by just 0.9 per cent in 12 months to the end of June. At the same time, a corporate insolvency measure compiled by Insolvency Australia showed many businesses are struggling to deal with the drop-off in economic activity and the increase in overall costs. Businesses in New South Wales accounted for over half of all insolvency appointments in the last 12 months. The reporting identified that small and family businesses are being hit particularly hard.

While the nation's small business ombudsman warns that without ambitious and targeted reform we could as a nation be 'sleepwalking into a big corporate economy', we are yet to see this government show any intention to push for far-reaching tax reform. Indeed, if the actions of the ATO are anything to go by, it seems the appetite is simply not there.

As someone who fundamentally believes small family businesses are the engine room of our economy, I believe it's time for this nation to have a government that looks beyond the politicisation of tax policy and supports and incentivises small family businesses while ensuring our nation stops relying on income generated off the back of individual workers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Scrymgeour):** Is there a seconder?

**Ms Spender:** I second this motion and reserve the right to speak.

**Mr LAXALE (Bennelong) (11:07):** I'd like to thank the member for North Sydney for bringing this motion to this place and acknowledge her upbringing in a small family business, something we share. Recently, my local state member, the member for Epping, resigned—you might have heard of him: Dominic Perrottet. In his valedictory, he quoted some advice he received from former prime minister Paul Keating. Keating said to him:

Dom, I had to teach my bastards to care about money and you need to teach your bastards to care about people.

As we debate this motion today, that is a particularly apt quote to consider.

Keating, as he has the power of doing, encapsulated perfectly in just one simple phrase the balance we must strike in governing, particularly on tax reform. If we pursue tax reform, we have to care about money. But we also have to care about people, because taxation is not just pure economics. It's about ensuring fairness, fostering growth and, above all, supporting the people and businesses that support our nation. Australia has a long history of tax reform and has often been driven by necessity and, at times, by vision, but nearly all reform has been contested.

In the modern era the Hawke-Keating era stands out. In the true Labor way, the introductions of the fringe benefit tax, capital gains tax and dividend imputation system were deliberate steps to ensure that our tax system was fairer, more progressive and more attuned to the realities of a modern economy. Subsequent governments have made their own marks on our tax landscape. The Howard government introduced the GST. Other reforms, such as the Gillard government's mineral resource rent tax and carbon tax, were unfortunately short lived, swiftly dismantled and then not replaced by subsequent governments. How different our country would have been if those important reforms weren't politicised and inevitably repealed.

In just a tick over two years, we have moved forward on tax reform. Apart from our significant reforms to the tax code and income tax, we've introduced a global and domestic minimum tax rate of 15 per cent for large multinationals—many are based in my electorate; that's ok—and changes to the petroleum resource rent tax to ensure offshore LNG companies contribute more sooner. They're good steps, and they're significant. Like all Labor reforms, they are deeply rooted in fairness and equity. Big multinationals should pay their fair share of tax. Our

resources sector should contribute more from the profits they make off our national resources, and income tax should contribute less to the national intake than it does at the moment. With every measure I've named, from the past and the present, opposition came from nearly every angle. Tax reform remains a political football for the left, the right and those in the middle.

I give this history because I think it's important to illustrate that tax reform in this country is rarely easy or straightforward. It's always contested. Therefore, by definition, it involves tough decisions, political courage and, often, significant and drawn-out debate, yet the politicisation of tax reform has time and time again hampered our nation's ability to create a stable and effective tax system that serves the long-term interests of our society and economy. When tax reform becomes a political football, kicked around for short-term vote harvesting, we all lose.

I speak from personal experience when I say that navigating the challenges of running a small business is difficult. I spent my childhood on the floor of my family's business, and before I came to this place I was juggling that business while also serving as director on a number of boards. My time in the private sector taught me a lot, but if there's one thing that I learnt it's that certainty matters—certainty for investors, for directors and for sole traders—because certainty creates growth and uncertainty creates doubt.

The politics of fear and division creates uncertainty. There is no example more current in this parliament than the uncertainty created around energy policy, and we've had similar uncertainty created around tax reform as well. Delays have real-world impacts, and they impact small business. It would be nice for this parliament to give the electorate some certainty on our big national challenges: fairness, equality, energy, decarbonisation and, of course, tax reform. I join with the member for North Sydney and, I'm sure, millions of Australians who yearn for a parliament that from time to time can achieve consensus, not just perpetual conflict.

**Ms SPENDER** (Wentworth) (11:12): The tax system, like the legal system, is a fundamental structure that underpins Australia's modern society. It raises the revenue we need to pay for government services, it redistributes national prosperity and it has the power to promote or stifle investment and activity in our economy. But Australia's tax system is no longer fit for purpose. While there are many aspects that require reform, the impact that the current system is having on small businesses requires urgent attention.

Like the members who have spoken previously, I grew up in small business, and I've run a number of small businesses in my time. This group of people who are driving the economy, who employ 42 per cent of private sector workers, are an incredibly important part of my electorate and our community, but small businesses represent a declining share of Australia's GDP. They currently represent around 33 per cent of economic activity, down from 40 per cent in 2006, and it's getting worse. ASIC data shows that insolvencies have risen by 40 per cent over the last 12 months, and half of those small businesses that have managed to stay afloat have considered closing their doors.

This chimes exactly with my experience over the last few weeks, talking to small businesses in Wentworth. Many of them are questioning whether they should go on. This is a major concern for the Australian economy, as small businesses are also a wellspring of innovation and productivity. Private investment in Australia, as a share of GDP, is at its lowest level since the early 1990s, with corporates choosing to distribute profits to shareholders rather than reinvest in innovation, and that innovation is what we all need. From my discussions with small businesses, they are asking for three things from our tax system. They want the ATO to partner with them when they hit hard times. They want policy certainty—that once the government announces a policy, particularly a tax policy, it will be followed through. And they want tax reform that builds resilience and innovation in the economy. Frankly, we're not getting any of those.

Firstly, let's talk about our central tax agency, the ATO. It's a hindrance rather than a help. In a recent survey released by ACCI, the ATO was listed as by far the most difficult agency to deal with in terms of meeting compliance requirements for small to medium businesses, with over half of businesses saying the government could be doing a better job—and it should be. But, secondly, even when the government is explicitly trying to use the tax system to help small businesses, the politicisation and the back and forth in this place mean that the wedging opportunities stop creating that certainty for small businesses.

We saw this with the small business instant asset write-off that Labor promised to deliver in last year's budget but only managed to pass the legislation for in the dying days of last financial year. The uncertainty created by the government's inability to pass a core budget measure that was promised to the small business community exacerbated confusion and frustration in the business community. I was hearing stories of small businesses from my community whose owners were stuck in limbo waiting for confirmation that they could upgrade equipment, or, worse, of owners who, assuming that, because the government had announced it, it would go through, had made investment decisions without realising that it hadn't passed the houses of parliament and was stuck in the Senate. This sort of uncertainty is anathema to what businesses need in order able to make the decisions and the investments

that drive the economy, that employ 40 per cent of the private sector workforce and, frankly, that provide the livelihood and opportunities for so many Australians.

It's not just the ATO and it's not just the politicisation of policies here in parliament; it's also that the government and, frankly, the parliament—both this parliament and previous parliaments—have not addressed the major tax reform that this economy needs and that small businesses need. Tax settings are preventing young Australians not only from getting into the housing market but also from getting into businesses. When I talk to the business community, there's a plea: harmonise things like the payroll tax; make it simpler for us. They still don't understand, and I don't either, why there is a tax on employing people in this country. Why is stamp duty holding people back from making efficient economic decisions and proper investment decisions? How can we drive a tax system that actually rewards innovation and investment rather than holds it back?

It's not just the business sector where this matters. This is also in the community sector. This affects young Australians who can't get into the housing market and don't see the prospect of ever owning their own home. Urgent tax reform is needed, and it's much more comprehensive than either of the major parties have contemplated because of their political wedging. It's time for change.

**Dr CHARLTON** (Parramatta) (11:17): The two previous speakers, the member for Bennelong and the member for Wentworth, have both described the important role that small business plays in our economy, and I associate myself with those remarks. Ninety-eight per cent of all businesses in Australia are small businesses, and those businesses employ more than 60 per cent of working Australians and account for 50 per cent of Australia's GDP. The key thing for me, though, is the difference between those last two numbers: they employ more than 60 per cent of Australians but account for only 50 per cent of GDP. The reason there's a difference between those two numbers is that there's a productivity gap between small businesses and large businesses.

Small businesses are on average about 10 to 15 per cent less productive than larger businesses. That means that, per employee, the added value produced by our small business sector is much lower than the added value produced by our large business sector, and that, to me, speaks to an opportunity. If we can lift the productivity of those small businesses up to the national average, we would make a huge difference to our national productivity challenge.

So what are the things that are holding back small business productivity? Everybody in this place who regularly meets with small businesses and goes down to visit them in their shops and offices and places of work knows how hard it is to be a small business in Australia. They know the challenge of meeting payroll and the difficulties of managing all of the government regulation associated with employment, compliance, tenancies and occupation. They know the stress that so many small businesses are facing right now, at a time when not only are revenues soft but costs are rising. We talk about the cost-of-living challenge in Australia. So many families are experiencing rising costs, but the small businesses of Australia are not just feeling those rising costs—rising costs of inputs and labour and materials and rent. Unfortunately, they're also feeling the other side of that coin, which is falling sales as the economy softens. Small businesses are caught by both blades of the scissors. That's why now is such a good time to think about what we can do to help small businesses in Australia, not just to help them through a very difficult time in our economy but also to realise that largest of economic opportunities that Australia has: to close the gap between large and small businesses in terms of productivity.

For a long time, many of the drivers of productivity in our economy were the exclusive province of large businesses. Think about big ERP systems, big pieces of digital infrastructure that enabled big businesses to be more efficient, to manage their workforces better and to reach customers more easily. But, today, many of those digital tools which were once the exclusive domain of large businesses are now democratised, available to small businesses. Small businesses can use online platforms to help them manage their payroll, do their accounts and conduct advertising and marketing in low-cost online ways. The fixed costs of becoming a small business have fallen dramatically. If we think about one of the big opportunities to close that productivity gap and to boost our national productivity, it is surely to support small businesses to take advantage of these digital opportunities, to give them the same efficiency tools that big businesses have had for a long time.

As the previous two speakers also said, another important thing we need to do is help small businesses through the tax system. In the previous government, there was almost no reform to our tax system over the course of nine years. There were no changes to superannuation, no changes to many other areas of economic policies, from microeconomics to competition policy to financial services and climate change. Our economy stood still, without being renovated or modernised to keep up with the changes across businesses' experience. That lack of reform has led us to the productivity cul-de-sac that we're in today, where, over the previous decade, productivity declined to near record lows. For this government, returning productivity, both through small and large businesses, is core to our economic agenda.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Scrymgeour):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### Geneva Conventions

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton) (11:22): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) 12 August 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the foundation of modern international humanitarian law; and

(b) they are as relevant to armed conflict today as in 1949;

(2) acknowledges that the conventions, while universally accepted, are not being uniformly respected in times of war, underscoring the need for ongoing commitment;

(3) recalls that the conventions and their additional protocols protect civilians, medical personnel, chaplains and humanitarians as well as non-military places such as hospitals;

(4) emphasises that compliance with international humanitarian law during armed conflict can reduce the human, economic, social and environmental cost of war, and facilitate the return to sustainable peace;

(5) honours the role of Australian Red Cross in:

(a) disseminating and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law; and

(b) providing education about the correct use of the emblems of the conventions and their additional protocols;

(6) pays respect to the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross in assisting victims of armed conflict and working for the advancement of international humanitarian law; and

(7) determines that Australia should remain a global leader in the promotion and implementation of the conventions and their additional protocols.

One aspect of my job that I hold dear to my heart is being co-chair, along with the member for North Sydney and the member for Cowper, of the Parliamentary Friends of the Australian Red Cross. I've been involved with this group for all of my 17 years in parliament. It's given me an insight into the crucial work the Red Cross and its volunteers do in our communities and around the world during difficult times.

We all recognise the emblem of the Australian Red Cross—the opposite of the Swiss flag—and we see that red cross during times of humanitarian need. Australian Red Cross staff and volunteers are always at the front line as emergency situations unfold, such as bushfires, cyclones or flooding here in Australia and famine, earthquakes and so many other disasters overseas. They're always there in the aftermath of these disasters to provide food, shelter, support and access to services. In fact, in the six months to April 2024, there were 10 activations of the Red Cross in Queensland alone. That meant 375 Red Cross personnel across 137 days of continuous activation over 87 different locations. As a Queenslander, I thank them for the work that they do during times of distress and need. It's important to acknowledge that their work does not end when the floodwaters subside or the power comes back on. The Red Cross continues to work to help affected communities get back on their feet.

Of course, the Australian Red Cross sits within a wider organisation, and I'm pleased to have the opportunity today, on the 75th anniversary of the Geneva conventions, to reflect on the role of the wider International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The International Committee of the Red Cross was founded in 1863 by a Swiss businessman, Jean-Henri Dunant, as a neutral and impartial organisation to aid those affected by the hardships of war on all sides.

There's no more crucial time to stress the absolute urgency for all countries to uphold the Geneva conventions. These are the international humanitarian laws that outline, amongst other things, how civilians should be treated during armed conflict. Seventy-five years ago today the cornerstone instruments of international humanitarian law were signed. It is tragic that the number of armed conflicts occurring right now is higher than ever before. More than 110 conflicts are currently devastating communities and regions around our world.

The foundational objectives of the four conventions are to protect people who are not or who are no longer participating in an armed conflict and to restrict the means and methods of warfare. The first convention concerns wounded and sick soldiers on land during war; the second convention focuses on wounded, sick and shipwrecked sailors at sea during war; the third convention protects prisoners of war; and the fourth convention concerns civilians, including those in occupied territories.

National organisations like the Australian Red Cross work to promote and ensure respect for international humanitarian law—the rules that come with being human. Not only do they prepare people to work within zones of armed conflict; they work with the ADF and other organisations to train them on international humanitarian law. I give a big shoutout to all the ADF legalos who do that great work.

Respect and understanding of the principles of the Geneva conventions lay the foundations for enacting them when conflict breaks out. I pay tribute to the selflessness and courage of those serving humanitarian needs in zones

of armed conflict. Many of them bear the emblems of the International Red Cross and the International Red Crescent. Tragically, some of them pay the ultimate price for their work, giving their lives to help those in need.

Australia is steadfast in its upholding of international humanitarian law. Last month the Prime Minister released a joint statement with the prime ministers of Canada and New Zealand to urge for a ceasefire in Gaza. The statement described the human suffering there and stressed:

Israel must listen to its friends and it must listen to the international community. The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law.

The joint statement also called for Israel to respond substantively to the International Court of Justice's advisory position.

On this important anniversary, I call for renewed respect for human dignity and compassion—indeed, a renewed commitment from all countries to uphold our common humanity. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will be reiterating this call when they meet later this year. We need to narrow the gap between acceptance of and compliance with international humanitarian law. This is paramount. The innocent victims ask that of all of us.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Young):** Is there a seconder for the motion?

**Ms TINK** (North Sydney) (11:28): I second the motion. The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing—or so said Albert Einstein. I want to thank the member for Moreton for moving this motion, as I believe he's right. He's right to draw attention to the 75th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva conventions. He's right in saying these conventions are just as important today as ever. He's right to lament that, while they are universally accepted, they are not being uniformly respected. He's right to ask us to honour and advocate for the work of the Red Cross in assisting victims of armed conflict and advancing international humanitarian law. And he's right to ask this House to determine that Australia should remain a global leader in the promotion and implementation of the principles of the conventions.

This anniversary reminds us of the importance of advocating for the humane treatment of any person during an armed conflict. It should also remind us that simply calling for this principle to be upheld is only as useful as the steps we're prepared to take when a nation breaches those principles. For this reason, I add one more important point to this motion: that this House should call on our government to take tangible and decisive action against those who ignore or breach the conventions.

Many would be aware of the Geneva conventions, which actually originated in the Napoleonic Wars in the mid-19th century. Then Genevan businessman Henry Dunant witnessed the horrors of a gory battle in the Second Italian War of Independence. The atrocities he saw impacted him so greatly that he proposed nations cooperate to create trained volunteer groups to treat those wounded in battle and offer humanitarian assistance. In 1863 a committee that included himself and an early iteration of the Red Cross brought 16 countries together in Geneva to discuss the terms of the wartime humanitarian agreement. The resulting treaty, the first Geneva convention, was signed by just 12 of those countries.

One-hundred and sixty years on the principles of the Geneva conventions have been revisited on multiple occasions, most frequently following a significant conflict. On each occasion they've been expanded to extend human compassion and ensure accountability. But the existence of the conventions alone has never been enough to stop evil. It did not stop the Nazis in World War II, even though Germany was a signatory of the conventions in 1929. In recent months it has not stopped the atrocities we've seen and we continue to see in multiple locations around the world.

At this time of great uncertainty I urge our government to move beyond words and towards action to ensure we play our part in protecting and enforcing the principles of the Geneva conventions. There are more than 100 armed conflicts currently taking place around the world. We should all do what we can to ensure that the loss of innocent life is minimised and that the conventions are upheld. Ultimately, compliance with these laws during armed conflicts can not only alleviate the suffering of people but reduce the human, economic, social and environmental cost of war and help facilitate a return to a sustainable peace. These conventions provide a set of rules that seek to limit the effects on armed conflict and protect people who are not participating in hostilities, including by restricting the means and methods of warfare. Importantly, they recognise that the rules should apply equally to all regardless of race, faith, gender, location or nationality, and that no person or country is ever to be placed above the law. The conventions protect non-military places such as hospitals, schools and religious buildings whilst also protecting those wounded or captured in battle and those who are not fighting such as civilians, medical personnel, chaplains and humanitarian workers.

Today I take this opportunity to honour Zomi Frankcom, whose life was taken during an Israeli Defense Forces drone strike in Gaza on 1 April this year. At the time we were told, 'This sort of thing happens in war.' Yet the rules

of war contained in our international treaties explicitly exist to protect people like Zomi. In the aftermath of her death, special advisor Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin found that chaos, confusion, fear and a breakdown in the chain of command and communications all contributed to Zomi's death. We can recognise those things can be true, but we must also reject the idea that the loss of her life was inevitable. To do anything less is to turn our backs on the conventions and deny her family accountability. The longevity of instruments like the Geneva convention is up to us. The more they are tested, the more intentional we must be in protecting them.

As a nation, Australia has a role to play in upholding the principles of international humanitarian law. This includes continuing to support international bodies like the United Nations, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. We must continue to advocate for organisations like the Red Cross. Ultimately, there should be no question of when we uphold international humanitarian law, nor for whom. Our commitment to these principles and organisations must remain firm and enduring. *(Time expired)*

**Mr DAVID SMITH** (Bean—Government Whip) (11:33): I'm very pleased to rise to speak on this important motion put forward by the member for Moreton. The 12th of August marks an important anniversary. It is not just my son's birthday—happy 21st, Marcus!—but, much more importantly, the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva conventions of 1949.

While there have always been rules of war and acceptable conduct in conflict and the treatment of non-combatants, many of these rules arise more from accepted norms than enforceable instruments. These norms did not prevent atrocity—far from it—but they provided guidance and guardrails for conduct in war. You can look back to antiquity to see examples of this.

The conventions of 1949 were promulgated in the shadow of one of the most devastating periods in modern history. Just a few short years before, in 1945, one of the bloodiest wars in human history ended. It was a war marked by aggressive territorial expansion and the use of weapons of mass destruction against civilian targets, in one of the most organised and coldly executed genocides the world has ever seen. Vast parts of the world had been devastated, and in 1949 the scars of this war were still visible in many cities. It was the context of this terrible, destructive war that compelled the effort to codify and expand upon the rules in an effort to ensure that in future conflicts the crimes of the past could be avoided.

This is not a matter confined to history. Indeed the conventions are not abstract notions of legality and principle. These conventions are the very cornerstone of international humanitarian law. In the context of armed conflict, they provide for the protection of civilians, those providing aid and assistance, journalists and prisoners of war.

In every conflict since their promulgation in 1949 these conventions have been tested and sometimes broken. This is despite the universal acceptance of the conventions as a bulwark of international humanitarian law. It's important to remember that every state has ratified these conventions and essentially accepted them as rules of law.

It is timely that the member for Moreton has brought this motion before us today. Today there are more than 110 conflicts taking place across the world. These range from wars between states to internal conflicts and wars between state and non-state actors. Many of these conflicts have been utterly brutal, and the years from 2021 to today have seen unacceptably high levels of casualties. In all these conflicts we've seen the spirit and even the letter of the law of the Geneva conventions tested and broken. This is completely unacceptable, and we need to call attention to it.

Rules and norms only continue to be effective if they are accepted and enforced. If we fail to call out breaches of the Geneva conventions and pursue those guilty of breaches then we are contributing to the ultimate undermining of these important principles.

I'd also like to recognise the important role played by the humanitarian aid workers who render important assistance in conflicts. In particular the Red Cross and Red Crescent movements have over a long period of time provided aid in conditions of great danger. This provision of aid is essential to assisting the many people affected by war, including displaced civilians and prisoners of war. In particular, by providing aid and assistance to these groups in these conditions, these organisations are an important check on violations of the conventions. I pay tribute to their work and efforts. It's essential that humanitarian aid workers be allowed to continue to do their important work in conflict zones free from threats and interference from any combatants.

In conclusion, I imagine the delegates who drafted the 1949 Geneva conventions were hoping that their efforts would lead to a more peaceful era. While we thankfully have not seen another global conflict on the scale of the Second World War, we have not seen a decrease or decline in the instances of war around the world. War is still brutal, and with new technologies and equipment war is increasingly complex. It's in this context that we must all redouble our efforts to protect and enhance the Geneva conventions and the principles for which they stand.

Australia, as a middle power and a global leader in the promotion and implementation of the Geneva conventions and their additional protocols, must continue to be just that: a global leader in international humanitarian law. Let us all recommit ourselves to this important cause.

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina) (11:38): Today, 12 August 2024, marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva conventions of 1949. Following the tragedy, the atrocities of World War II, it was clear to the peace-loving international community that a global set of minimum standards had to be implemented to ensure such atrocities were never committed again. As the member for Bean has just correctly pointed out, we haven't seen a war on that scale since, but what we are seeing at the moment is beyond belief, and it is so sad that we live in troubled times.

I commend the member for Moreton for bringing this motion to the House, but I guess it doesn't really matter so much what we say in this chamber today. It is out there in the halls of power in certain countries that action has to be taken. What we are seeing in Ukraine is so despicable. Russia stands condemned for what it is doing. In the Middle East, of course, innocent people are dying every day because of the conflict there.

Today the conventions from Geneva have been ratified by 196 states, including all United Nations member states. It cannot be understated just how significant an accomplishment it is to have the world unite and to strive to protect the innocents of war. That's why this motion is important. But, more than that, the world must stand as one—at least, peace-loving communities and countries in the world must stand as one when they see the sorts of actions taken by Russia and taken on 7 October by Hamas. Too many people stand silent when those sorts of outrages happen. The standard we walk past is the standard we accept. That goes for local communities; it also goes for the halls of power in the various jurisdictions across the world.

Sick and wounded soldiers, prisoners of war, civilians, medical personnel, chaplains and humanitarians all receive the benefit of protection under the conventions, and that is right; it is proper. Unfortunately, it seems war is a reality of life, and it should not be so. It's something that has plagued civilisations for millennia. Even today, despite all of the progress in the fields of diplomacy and democracy and the ever-growing friendship and tolerance amongst nations, we see we have not shaken this scourge.

People could learn a lot from what took place at Cowra following the breakout of 5 August 1944. Japanese POWs—1,104 of them—broke out of an internment camp. Two hundred and thirty-four of them were killed during that breakout, as well as four Australians—five if you count the one who, sadly, died a little later on at Blayney—but what you saw from that Cowra community is a lesson for the world. I was pleased that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visited for the commemorations on the weekend before last. It was interesting that, at the press conference, we stood together, Labor and coalition, as one. One of first of the questions from the journalists was: 'Don't you find it odd that people from across the political divide are standing together?' No, we didn't. I think the things that unite us as members of parliament are far greater than those that divide us, and Cowra reached its hand of friendship to Japan. It would've been easy at the time to spurn Japan, because there where some terrible atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers, the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces, against Australia soldiers at Sandakan, Hellfire Pass and other places, yet Cowra reached out its hand in friendship, and it is now an example to the world of what could and should be done in this instance.

So I commend the member for Moreton for bringing this forward. It is important that we talk about it, but it's more important that we act when we see things that are wrong. When nations of the world see incursions into other countries and the world sees that it is wrong, the world should say so. It should not stand silent, because to stand silent is to allow it to happen and to encourage others to do the same. What we're seeing being done by Russia and by Hamas-led Palestine at the moment is beyond belief, and it needs to end.

**Dr REID** (Robertson) (11:43): I, too, would like to commend the member for Moreton for bringing forth this incredibly important motion. I also echo the sentiments that were just put forward by the member of Riverina. There is a lot more that unites us in this chamber than divides us, and international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions is exactly one of those things.

The number of armed conflicts right across the globe is at an all-time high. We know that the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia has shaken that region and the world. There are many other armed conflicts across the globe. More than 110 conflicts are currently happening worldwide, with 2021 to 2023 being some of the deadliest years on record for our planet. There is not a more important time than now to acknowledge the incredible importance of international humanitarian law, also known as the laws of war.

Seventy-five years ago on 12 August 1949 the cornerstone instruments of international humanitarian law were signed. The four Geneva Conventions set out protections for civilians, humanitarians, journalists, prisoners of war—those that are outside the fight, outside the battlefield. They were agreed by countries right across this world and they remain a beacon of humanity in these troubling times. They set out the world's agreement that wars have limits. They set out how, regardless of the circumstances, respect for human dignity and respect for human compassion must always guide the actions of parties to armed conflict. Civilians must be protected. Humanitarian relief must be provided, and those who provide humanitarian and medical services must be protected.

Now, we are introducing this motion at a critical time, when the unacceptable cost of armed conflict demands a renewed commitment to our common humanity. We use the opportunity of this important anniversary to reiterate Australia's commitment to promote the protective power of the Geneva conventions and their ability, when duly observed, to protect the safety, dignity and wellbeing of those who are made most vulnerable in times of war and in times of conflict. We call on all states and all parties to conflict to uphold these universally accepted laws. States and parties to conflict must lead by example. Ultimately, respect for international humanitarian law is a question of political will, and we call on states to create a global culture of compliance with international humanitarian law.

Australia is dedicated to alleviating human suffering and protecting civilians in times of armed conflict through the application of this international humanitarian law. We have been a strong supporter of the Geneva conventions since we first signed them in 1950, and we have ratified all three additional protocols. In this divided world, where conflict is rampant, it remains a powerful fact that every state has ratified these laws of war. Every state in the world has decided that limiting the human cost of war is their legal and moral obligation.

We also acknowledge the many neutral and impartial humanitarian actors who continue to provide important and life-saving work for those impacted by the devastation of war. We know that one of those is the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Over the last 160 years, the international Red Cross has carried out its work in many international and armed conflicts, developing its activities as the needs arose, monitoring the conditions of prisoners of war and other detainees, and providing medical and humanitarian relief. Likewise, the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, like the Australian Red Cross, are there to promote and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. They work with humanitarians to ensure they're prepared to operate in armed conflict, train corporations with a footprint in armed conflict, support training for Australian Defence Force personnel and protect the Red Cross emblems—which does, in fact, save lives in times of conflict.

**Ms MASCARENHAS** (Swan) (11:48): Today is a significant day, and I want to extend my gratitude to the member for Moreton for putting this important motion forward to recognise this day. Not only is today a milestone but it's an opportunity for us to reflect on the importance of the Geneva conventions and their additional protocols.

Seventy-five years ago today, the Geneva conventions were signed and codified, and they established the basic rights of wartime prisoners, civilians and military personnel. The first Geneva convention began in 1864, and almost a century later, in the wake of the immense civilian suffering we saw during World War II, four Geneva conventions were universally accepted by the global community. This was a watershed moment that reflected our shared commitment to protecting human life during conflict. They incorporated the principles of neutrality, protection and care for the wounded, humane treatment of prisoners of war and the protection of civilians. The rules safeguarded civilians, medics, aid workers, the wounded and sick, and shipwrecked troops.

The rules of war matter, and they do so today as they did 75 years ago. Today, in 2024, human rights matter just as much as they did in 1949. They are as relevant today as they were in 1949, and recent events around the world, be it in Ukraine, Palestine or Bangladesh, show us why. I reflect today on the estimated 30,000 civilians who have lost their lives since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Innocent civilians must not bear the cost of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In my electorate, like me, many people are deeply distressed by the suffering of innocent civilians in Gaza. I condemn the death of civilians after the devastating strike by Israel on the Al-Tabaen school over the weekend. I also unequivocally condemn the attacks on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023. It is heartbreaking how many civilians have died in the Israel-Hamas conflict, including 39,000 Palestinians and 1,200 Israelis. Innocent civilians must not continue to bear the cost of the conflict in Gaza. All actors must comply with international humanitarian law. Australia has again called for an immediate ceasefire. We are united in this call and urgently emphasise the need to protect civilians, to release hostages and to facilitate humanitarian aid.

Bangladesh is a country in which I lived for almost a year, and I share the concerns of constituents in my electorate about the conflict there. It is estimated that over 30 innocent children have been killed, and it's believed that hundreds of people were killed during the July protests. We are starting to see some positive movements in Bangladesh, but, again, I will say that innocent children and innocent civilians must not bear the cost of the conflict in Bangladesh.

All these horrific events highlight the importance of recognising the significance of this anniversary and why it is relevant today. Let us use it to remind ourselves of the principles that underpin those treaties and the horrors that inspired their ratification. They are rules that were put in place to limit the horror repeating itself, and the universal ratification of each treaty demonstrates a global consensus to protect human life during armed conflict. At the core are the fundamental principles of humanity. We can turn to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to understand these principles: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' Furthermore, every person is entitled to the same rights and freedoms, irrespective of race, colour, sex, language, religion or



political or other opinions. These words hold deep meaning for me. I remember my year 6 teacher at Kambalda Primary School, Mrs Wilson, teaching us about Amnesty International, the rules of law and the need to protect humans. This is something that I hold true today, as I do every other day.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Young):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### Child Care

**Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (11:53):** I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) it has been over 12 months since the Government introduced its Cheaper Child Care policy, and out of pocket costs have increased by 7.2 per cent in the past six months;

(b) all families saw an increase to their child care fees following the introduction of this policy, with some families slugged with multiple increases over the past 12 months;

(c) the Government has no idea how much of the \$4.7 billion that was spent on higher child care subsidies was actually eaten by inflation and increased fees; and

(d) the Government's policy has done nothing to increase access to early childhood education and care, particularly in regional, rural and remote communities; and

(2) calls on the Government to deliver:

(a) more access to early childhood education and care places to support Australians to return to the workforce; and

(b) real cost of living relief to families.

It has been over two years since the Albanese Labor government was elected, promising Australians that life would be cheaper under them, and yet, after two years of Labor, the cost of essentials has increased. Food is up by 11 per cent, housing is up by 15 per cent, rents are up by 15 per cent, electricity is up by 22 per cent, and gas is up by a staggering 25 per cent. Australians are paying 20 per cent more personal income tax, despite the rhetoric you hear from the government. Household savings have collapsed by nearly 10 percentage points, and homeowners with a typical mortgage of \$750,000 are nearly \$35,000 worse off. It's quite jaw dropping. Unfortunately, this is what happens when you vote for Labor. We know that Labor don't know how to manage money. They don't understand how inflation works, and they'll tell you whatever you want to hear just to win your vote.

Over 12 months ago, Labor's cheaper child care policy came into effect. We warned Australians that Labor had not done the proper due diligence on this policy and that costs would rise. And what do you know? On 1 July 2023, centres increased their prices, some increased them again in January 2024 and up they went again only last month. In 12 months, out-of-pocket costs have increased by 8.4 per cent and families are right back where they started. Again, Labor will tell you that over a million families are better off under them. But they can't tell you how many parents and how many carers they supported back into full-time work. They promised 37,000. That was the number they promised you. And they can't tell you how much of the \$4.7 billion spent was immediately eaten up by increased fees, never mind inflation. It appears the only thing they can tell you are the talking points—carefully crafted, of course—by the PM's media unit.

The announcement just last week of a one-off 15 per cent payment to early childhood educators is further proof that this government cares more about winning votes than actually delivering good, long-lasting policy for the sector. In two years time, when the wage payments have been made and fee restraints are removed, who, I ask you, Australians, will be left footing this bill for those higher wages? It will be you. Australian families will be left with the bill. A two-year pause on fee increases means that, in the third year, prices will have to rise significantly, especially when most providers already increase their fees by more than the 4.4 per cent cap that will be imposed. Even Goodstart, the nation's largest not-for-profit, increased its fees by more than that just last month.

If we take a look at regional, rural and remote communities, the early childhood education situation is even more dire. There are families with no access at all, as the member for Casey will attest to. There are families who drive an hour one way to do drop-off and then an hour back the other way to go to work, families who have to choose who goes to work and who looks after the children, and families who are struggling to get by because in this economy both parents need to work to pay their bills.

Every time those on the opposite side of the chamber open their mouths to talk about families and how they are better off under them, I want them to think about the families in regional Australia. Better yet, why don't you get out of your metro seats, I say to those opposite. Get out of the cities and go and visit them, like my colleagues and I have been doing. Go and listen to the parents in Lismore, still waiting for the services to be reopened or rebuilt. Go and speak to the parents in Casey in Victoria, where there's one early learning place for every 15 children. Or

visit Grey, in the great state of SA—the biggest child care desert in the country. If you really cared about all families, you'd make sure a policy for access to early learning benefited all families.

This government talks a big game, but it has no idea how to actually deliver it. The coalition believes in choice and flexibility—that all families should have a choice. Right now, so many of you don't. We want to see actual cost-of-living relief delivered for families, something we know that this Labor government is incapable of delivering. All they have delivered to Australian families is higher inflation for longer. What all Australian families need is lower inflation, lower mortgage rates and more cost-of-living relief, which this government is failing them on.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Young):** Is there is a seconder for the motion?

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

**Dr GARLAND (Chisholm) (11:58):** I find it quite astonishing that we've just heard how dreadful it is that we're making decisions that are going to reduce the cost of living for families, like bringing down childcare prices and giving workers a pay rise. At the same time we've just listened to a list of complaints rather than any substantial contribution. It makes me lament the fact that, in this place, there is not a contest of ideas on this very important issue of the cost of living and early childhood education. It's just an opportunity to politicise things that shouldn't be politicised, in my view, like making sure that early childhood educators get a much-deserved pay rise and that families have lower childcare costs. That should be above politics, but yet again we're seeing really cheap attacks from the opposition.

We saw this sector neglected for almost a decade. Families had been struggling to access the early childhood education services they needed. In contrast, we're working to build a universal early childhood education and care system that's accessible, affordable and inclusive. I think these are aims that people in this place should support, no matter what political party they're from. We've already made some really good progress on this front with our cheaper childcare reforms, making early learning more affordable for more than a million Australian families. Of course, we know there's more to do, because you can't undo 10 years of damage overnight.

We've received the final report from the Productivity Commission, helping us to chart the course to universal early learning that meets the needs of families across all of Australia. In my own electorate, I undertook a survey on this very important issue and made a submission on behalf of my electorate to the Productivity Commission, as well as hosting roundtables with Minister Anne Aly. I know people in my electorate are very concerned about the state of early childhood education, and the neglect that we've seen from those opposite. They are really eager to be engaged in the next steps that our government is taking to improve the sector.

We can't achieve our vision for accessible, affordable and inclusive early childhood education without a quality and sustainable workforce. We know that, and that's why our government is funding a 15 per cent wage increase for early childhood education and care workers. I'm unapologetic about the fact that we're doing that. Those opposite might see it as a problem, that we are giving a mostly female workforce a much deserved pay rise for educating the youngest members of our community, but I simply will not back away from this very important commitment from our government. This overdue pay rise for workers in early childhood education will commence from December this year. I want to acknowledge the many advocates who have been meeting with members of parliament, right across the country, to convey the importance of this pay increase. Importantly, we're increasing the pay for workers in early childhood education and care while keeping costs for childcare and education low for families—reducing those costs. Measures in this year's budget have built on what we've already delivered to date and are paving the way, as I mentioned earlier, for what will follow in response to Productivity Commission's report.

Again, I would hope that this is something that members in this House can get behind, because this is about the youngest people in our communities getting vital education in those first five years, which we know have lifelong benefits. We know that through investing in early childhood education and care we're investing in children, but we're also investing in the productivity of the nation when more parents are able to go into the workforce. We know that this is something that primarily impacts women. Through increasing wages for early childhood educators, we are getting a triple benefit by making sure that those hardworking educators are staying in this very important field of work.

I'm pretty sick of the negativity I'm hearing from those opposite. This is something where, I would have hoped, we could have had a vision for the future—for the children who are in education now and the benefits that they will bring to the country when we invest properly in the first five years of their life.

**Mr VIOLI (Casey) (12:03):** Supply and demand are very basic economic concepts, and clearly concepts that those opposite, including the Prime Minister and the Treasurer, don't understand. If you increase supply and demand stays the same, prices will come down. But, in over two years of this government, we've not seen one policy initiative to increase supply in the early childcare sector. All of their initiatives have been aimed at reducing prices by

providing wage subsidies. I understand that, in and of themselves, they have a role to play, but only if you increase supply, because if there is only a fixed amount of places then guess what? Prices go up. That's economics 101.

A constituent in my electorate, Carly from Mooroolbark, recently contacted me about this issue, and this is what she had to say: 'The cost of day care is absurd. They've just announced they are increasing it again. My child goes two days per week, and it's now going from \$149 per day to \$159.50 per day, of which we are subsidised 50 per cent—no change from Labor's supposed cheaper child care.' Another family in my community has gone from paying \$162 per day to paying \$175 per day after the increase in the subsidy last year. Another family has had a \$13 a day increase, from \$129 to \$142 a day. I could sit here all day and use examples from my community, or any community across the country, of prices going up despite what the government promised.

The reason they can't deliver cheaper child care is that they're not investing in supply. They're now going to subsidise wages, but they're not prepared to commit to a long-term plan. As the member for Moncrieff said—and I commend her for this motion—the government have committed to this for two years, but, after two years, who's going to pay for it? The people that need the child care. The government have also capped price rises at 4.4 per cent over the next 12 months. So they're capping the increases that our childcare centres can have at a time when the cost of food for young children is going up, the cost of energy at the centres is going up and wages are obviously going up. If they've taken out a loan at that site, their interest rates are going up. So every cost is going up, and the government are saying that 4.4 per cent is all they can increase fees by if they want to get access to this subsidy. The government don't have any real plans to address the cause. It's all about treating the symptoms. It's bandaid solutions that make it worse.

Child care is an essential part of life. We need to continue to invest in it. I was lucky to recently visit Hansen Park Pre School in my community, and I want to thank Amy and the parents and friends committee there but also the educators for the work they do. Prior to my entering politics, my wife, Rachel, was the president of our local preschool, where my children went, and I've seen firsthand the amazing volunteers who put in so much for the community to make sure that children can get the early childhood education and support they need. But, again, they're being let down by this government. They're being let down because there's no investment in supply. You can talk about price, and that is important, but it doesn't help those who cannot find a place. In my community, we are definitely a childcare desert. There are currently nine million Australians who are living in a childcare desert, with little or no access to early learning education.

The member for Moncrieff came to my electorate, and we met with Belinda and the team at Mums of the Hills. We talked to many of the parents who are having to put their children on waitlists as soon as they are born and having to pay a fee, in many cases, just to get onto a waitlist. For every 15 parents who are trying to get into child care, there is one place available in my community. And what do we hear from the government about addressing these deserts in my community and many regional and peri-urban communities? Nothing. For two years, we have heard nothing from this government on how they are going to increase childcare places. It's very easy to talk about a subsidy, but it doesn't help if you can't get a place. That's why, again, this government has the wrong priorities. They're not addressing the cause of these issues; they're addressing the symptoms. That's why, after two years, there is not one Australian who is better off.

**Ms SITOU (Reid) (12:08):** My question to those opposite is: how do we increase the number of places at childcare centres? This is something that we all want to be able to do. The only way you do that is to get a workforce in that can sustain increased spots. We want to make sure that these kids are getting good-quality education and that they have well-qualified early childhood educators looking after them. How long does it take to qualify to be an early childhood educator? You can do a TAFE course diploma in a couple of years, so really the hard work of trying to get more early childhood educators in the system needed to have happened a few years ago. Who was in government then? Those opposite. When we talk about the lack of early childhood educators in the workforce, this isn't something that has sprung up in the last one or two years; this is something that has been problematic for many, many years. We ought to have had the foresight to have trained these early childhood educators some years back so that they would now be in the workforce.

Last week I visited Abbotsford Long Day Care Centre. It's a really special early childhood education centre; you feel it as soon as you walk into the place. It's one of those places where the early childhood educators have been working there for years, sometimes decades. It's a not-for-profit organisation and a community run centre that has been in Abbotsford for almost 40 years and has a strong reputation in the community. Parents play an active role in the running of the centre. I met one of those parents. He spoke to me about how much his three-year-old son had benefited from the rich learning environment Abbotsford Long Day Care Centre had offered him. I did a video with the centre director, Kylie Lawson, where we spoke about the importance of early childhood education. Early childhood education benefits the child, their families and our society. I know it; you know it, Deputy Speaker Young; and the parents and educators at Abbotsford Long Day Care Centre know it.

Unfortunately, those opposite failed to value this importance that early childhood education provides. They're complaining about the government providing help to families with childcare costs. It begs the question, 'Why?' It's because they really don't want to look at their own record in this space. Over their nine years in government, a period of historically low inflation across the global economy and across the globe, childcare prices under their watch skyrocketed. It wasn't just the system they neglected; they also neglected the workforce. They neglected those people doing the hard yards looking after our kids—and it's them that we really need to support.

During the May budget there was a moment when the Treasurer was speaking that struck me. I looked up in the public gallery and saw a row of women who were in tears. They were in tears because of an announcement the Treasurer had made—that we had put a provision in the budget to help fund an increase in the pay for early childhood educators. The next day, bright and early after the budget, I went to a post-budget breakfast run by the Community Child Care Association and Community Early Learning Australia. I got to meet those early educators. They were still emotional the day after the budget because many of them had been asking for years and years for their work to be valued. In that budget speech, where we talked about ensuring they got a pay rise, they finally felt as though they were being valued—that their work as educators, where they were providing a rich learning environment for our kids, was finally being recognised and valued, and that they were finally going to be paid what they are worth. That was what the announcement the Prime Minister made yesterday was all about: recognising the important contribution of these early childhood educators who had been fighting for so long to finally be valued. We said to them, 'We see the important work you do, we value it and we are going to pay you what you are worth.'

**Dr HAINES (Indi) (12:13):** I thank the member for Moncrieff for her very important motion. The positive impact of quality early childhood education cannot be overstated. It is simply transformational. Kids who receive educational care earlier are better equipped for the challenges that life throws at them. It sets them up for success at home, at school and throughout their life. A resilient early childhood education sector is also a game changer for parents and carers, particularly in regional, rural and remote communities. When high-quality child care is available, parents can choose to return to work sooner or work more days per week. At a time when the cost of living is so high, access to child care makes it easier to provide for a family. If we get more parents working, we can help to address workforce shortages in areas such as teaching, health care, construction and so many others. Regional workforces are under so much pressure, and affordable and available child care is one of the best tools we will ever have to fill the jobs we need. Unfortunately, though, this is not the reality across most of Australia.

In rural and regional Australia, childcare deserts—areas where there are three children for every childcare place—are everywhere. Just last week, new ABS data showed that a lack of child care is the No. 1 reason stopping women from entering or re-entering the workforce. When families can't access child care, women pay the price, losing out on career progression, superannuation accrual and social connection. It has consequences for the family budget and for the opportunities offered to that beautiful, developing child. This system is failing us. That's why in mid-July I hosted two play date events in my electorate with the Parenthood, one of Australia's leading advocacy groups for a better and fairer childcare system. I want to thank Maddy Butler and the Parenthood for their commitment to addressing regional childcare shortages and their engagement with the people in my electorate of Indi.

Our play date events were an opportunity to go beyond the statistics and hear from parents, grandparents and carers directly what childcare shortages mean for parents in my electorate and what they want to see done differently. I thank all the parents and carers who came out to the Wangaratta and Wodonga libraries and those who wrote to me to share their stories. But what I'm hearing has me seriously concerned and reinforces exactly what the experts and the numbers are saying. I heard from parents who've lost track of the number of waitlists their child is on and have been forced to wait for years for a place to become available. I heard from parents driving hours every day to get their kids to where a spot is available, meaning only one parent can work full time. I heard from grandparents who have given up work so they can step in to provide child care, because otherwise their own adult children would be in financial trouble.

Frankly, something has to change. While I commend the government for increasing the childcare subsidy, which is critical, and for its commitment to fund a wage rise for early childhood educators, which is so desperately deserved, more urgent action is required. We need to do more to train passionate and skilled early childhood educators. Recent research by the Australian Education Research Organisation shows that one of the greatest indicators of success in the first year of school is the quality of early childhood educators in that period. That is why it is so crucial and so fundamental that we support more Australians to build a career in this sector and that we value and recognise the life-changing impact this work has. That means paying early childhood educators more, and I support the government's commitment to fund the 15 per cent wage rise for employees. It means exploring all options to ensure more Australians study early childhood education and teaching in regional areas. This could involve expanding access to fee-free courses in regional centres and making sure that placements prepare, extend and develop the educators of the future. Finally, it could mean funding local governments and not-for-profits to

provide childcare services in regional towns and communities where the for-profit sector won't fill the gap. This will require leadership by government, but, if we're to create truly universal access to childhood education in regional Australia, it might be what is needed.

I'm inspired by the work of organisations such as Thrive by Five, the Parenthood, the Mitchell Institute and the Centre for Policy Development who are showing us that a better childcare system is possible. But I would also like to note the commitment of my state counterpart, Annabelle Cleeland, the Nationals member for Euroa, for her ongoing engagement with me to address childcare shortages in north-east Victoria. Universal child care is a policy I support. *(Time expired)*

**Ms COKER (Corangamite) (12:18):** Today we have a reason to celebrate, because, after so much advocacy, our early years educators have achieved a much-deserved pay rise. Backed in by the Albanese government, early childhood educators make it possible for millions of Australians to do their job and support young children's early learning and development. The role they play is so important, and our government recognises and values their contribution to families across the nation. That's why I'm so proud that we will fund a 15 per cent wage increase for early childhood education and care workers.

This significant wage increase is an important next step in the government's reform of the sector. It will be phased in over two years, with a 10 per cent increase from December 2024 and a further five per cent increase from December 2025. This \$3.6 billion investment from our government recognises the vital role that early childhood educators play in fostering better learning outcomes for children.

In my electorate of Corangamite, early-years educator and amazing United Workers Union advocate Raelee Fechner told my office this pay rise will be a game changer. She said:

It's a good move, some educators are working two to three jobs, and with this pay rise, they will have a much better work-life balance.

It will encourage more educators to stay in the sector, and that's good for kids because consistency in the classroom leads to better learning outcomes, and that's why this pay rise is so important—not just for workers but for families.

I remember well, back in 2018, catching the bus to Melbourne surrounded by early-year educators and standing with them as part of their Big Steps campaign, fighting for better pay and conditions. I'm so proud that our government has listened and acted and is working closely with the sector to deliver better outcomes for these workers, who for too long have failed to be recognised for the important and demanding work they do. Of course, we understand there's more to do, and that's why we're working to build a universal early childhood education and care system that's accessible, affordable and inclusive.

For a sector facing worker shortages, this significant pay rise is meaningful progress. To safeguard that progress and ensure we continue to grow the sector, our government is rolling out fee-free TAFE opportunities so that more young Australians can pursue a career as an early childhood educator. On top of this, it's now more than one year since our cheaper childcare laws came into effect. While I know the member for Moncrieff, who moved this motion, cares about early-years educators, I would like to remind her that our cheaper childcare policy has cut the cost of child care for more than one million Australian families. If you're a family on a combined income of \$120,000 and you have one child in care for three days a week, this has cut the cost of your child care by about \$2,000. That's \$2,000 in savings for almost 6,000 families in my electorate of Corangamite. Many of these families are now also receiving more pay in their pay packet, with a tax cut of about \$2,000. That's real cost-of-living relief.

The biggest childcare provider in the country, Goodstart, recently released a report showing that out-of-pocket costs have gone down and that those benefitting more from the cheaper childcare subsidies are families on low and middle incomes. The Albanese government recognises that they are doing it tough, and that's why addressing cost-of-living pressures is our No. 1 priority. Cheaper child care not only puts money back into the pockets of families; it also enables parents, especially women, to decide whether to go back into the workforce, if they wish, or increase their hours—and their pay packets.

Under our government, every early childhood educator who pays tax will now get a tax cut as well as a pay rise. Working parents will also get a tax cut and access to the cheaper childcare subsidy. The Albanese government is delivering tax cuts, pay rises and cheaper child care so that Australians can earn more and keep more of what they earn and early-years educators can receive the respect they deserve.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Young):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### Housing

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) safe and affordable housing is central to the security and dignity of Australians;

(b) Australia does not have enough homes and has not for a long time; and

(c) the Government has committed to an ambitious housing reform agenda which will boost the supply of all housing, including more public and social housing, more affordable housing, more homes to rent, and more homes to buy;

(2) acknowledges the \$6.2 billion in new investment in the 2024-25 budget to build more homes more quickly, bringing the Government's new housing initiatives to \$32 billion, which includes:

(a) additional funding for the new \$9.3 billion National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (including a doubling of Commonwealth homelessness funding to \$400 million every year, matched by states and territories);

(b) directing \$1 billion to Housing Australia towards crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic violence;

(c) assisting nearly 1 million Australian households with the cost of rent by delivering \$1.9 billion for the first back-to-back increase to Commonwealth Rent Assistance in more than 30 years; and

(d) providing up to \$1.9 billion in concessional finance for community housing providers and other charities to support delivery of the 40,000 social and affordable homes under the Housing Australia Future Fund and National Housing Accord; and

(3) further acknowledges the Government's ambitious goal of building 1.2 million homes by the end of the decade.

**Dr MULINO** (Fraser) (12:24): I'm pleased to rise to speak to this motion. Affordable housing is one of the most important challenges that we face as a nation, and this government is taking action on a number of fronts to deal with this. As the motion alludes to, this is an issue that has arisen over a long period of time, and it reflects actions taken at all three levels of government. It's the complexity and the structural nature of this issue which have made it so difficult to deal with. Now, I want to deal with the fact that this is not just a long-run problem; it's a complex economic challenge, because it involves both supply-side and demand-side dimensions and it's only when you deal with both of those that you can make real progress with this issue.

What are some of the supply-side issues? Well, obviously, Australia has not been constructing enough houses for a long time. There are a number of aspects to this. One of the issues is local government planning. There's inertia and there are undue constraints at the local government level. Federal governments have some limits on what they can do at that level, but I applaud the Treasurer and the Minister for Housing for having brought all three levels of government together—the federal government, states and territories governments and peak local government bodies—to deal with this in a coordinated way. I also applaud the fact that there was money in the last budget for the last-mile initiatives, which are often critical barriers to getting major approvals over the line.

In addition, there are workforce issues. This is an area where Australia has been facing increasing constraints. It's also an area where the government has been taking considerable action over recent years. For example, over the first three budgets of the Albanese government a considerable amount of extra money went into training additional people for the construction sector. That included an additional 15,000 fee-free TAFE and VET places in the last budget alone—\$62.4 million for that. There was also, of course, considerable assistance for apprenticeships, where there had been a significant drop-off in the years preceding this government coming to office. Also, in the previous budget, there was \$26.2 million for 5,000 places in pre-apprenticeship programs over the two years to 2025.

I've been seeing the outcomes of this in my own electorate. On behalf of the Minister for Skills and Training, I was at an event at MEGT in my own electorate to celebrate that firm's 700,000th apprentice in its decades of operation. It was one of many examples in my electorate of people obtaining qualifications and of young people starting out on careers where they will have so much to do over the coming decades. But we need more, and it's great to see more and more people going into that pipeline.

Of course, there's also the funding and finance side of the supply side, and this government has \$32 billion worth of initiatives, including billions of dollars going into the community housing sector, the HAF and many other funding and financing arrangements. That will do a considerable amount to support more housing.

There's also, of course, the demand side. In my opinion, the supply side should be the priority, and the supply side has been the priority of this government in its first three budgets, but I believe that, in addition to that, targeted demand-side measures are appropriate in some circumstances. For example, I think Help to Buy measures are an appropriate way to help young people in particular overcome some of the generational barriers to obtaining a housing deposit. The Help To Buy Scheme that this government has put forward is a material measure that will help many thousands of people get their first toe on that ladder of home ownership over the course of their lives. For so many people, they can service a loan, but they can't pull together the deposit, so Help to Buy for me is a very important element of the suite of policies that we need to consider. There are other measures, of course, like the billion dollars for women in particular fleeing family violence, giving them assistance in the short-run for emergency

housing options. That's a series of measures that will provide material help—\$5,000 for many people in that very vulnerable situation.

The member for Macnamara has raised an extremely important issue. It's a multidimensional issue. It's an issue which has arisen over a long period of time and it's not going to be solved overnight. It's going to require both supply-side and demand-side responses, and I've set out a few of the key ones. It's also going to require coordinated action across all three levels of government. I commend the member for having raised this motion and for the opportunity to highlight some of the government's actions in this area.

**Mr KENNEDY** (Cook) (12:29): I commend the member for Fraser for his diagnosis of the problem. It was very logical, and I couldn't agree more. It is primarily a supply-side problem, and we agree that there are demand measures and that it cuts across the three levels of government. We are in a housing crisis, though—let's not make any bones about it—and governments across Australia are still not doing enough. The diagnosis of the problem is correct, but there is not enough action.

Just this morning, I took a phone call from a local community member in Cook. His daughter and son-in-law, and their kids, can no longer afford to live in Cronulla. They're looking to move to Western Australia because they can't afford a house. They're schoolteachers. This man is losing his daughter, his son-in-law and his beautiful grandkids because, as a nation, we still cannot fix housing affordability. It's a national shame. Housing affordability is literally breaking up families.

I met with St Vincent de Paul three weeks ago in Gympie to discuss an especially troubling case about a young woman—a young single mother—facing homelessness. Homelessness in New South Wales is up 25 per cent this year alone. The Labor government is talking a lot about housing affordability, but prices keep going up and up. In early 2002, the median house price was 4.9 times the median gross disposable household income. In 2024, it has risen to be 8.6 times the median gross disposable household income. Treasury reports that the proportion of household income needed to service a home loan has increased from 29 per cent to 46 per cent.

Why are homes getting more and more expensive? Who's to blame? It's a failure of government. Today in New South Wales, 50 per cent of the cost of housing is the government's planning approval process, taxes and red tape. The government has failed to get housing supply to keep up with housing demand.

On the demand side, there's been record migration under this government. Australia's population is growing faster than at any time since 1952. A record 547,000 new migrants came into the country last year, with only 164,000 new homes added. What happens when you get population growth dramatically outstripping housing supply? You get skyrocketing house prices. Somehow this government does not understand this; Labor has largely ignored the problem. The government should have been bringing in droves of immigrants in construction related industries, but it has not. Instead, it's been prioritising yoga teachers and protecting unions, not importing new skilled workers for these industries.

Furthermore, the Housing Australia Future Fund has not built any new houses in the two years since the government was elected—not a new single house in two years, in the middle of a housing crisis. It's unacceptable. This scheme has been poorly designed, and it's turning into a case study on government killing the effectiveness of their own programs with too much red tape.

What is the solution? State and local governments control housing supply. They've been too slow to release land and too slow to approve development. Who can blame them? When they approve new developments, local roads become more congested and hospital waiting rooms become overcrowded. Local schools and sports fields become full of demountables. What's the solution here? I'm calling for the federal government to fund state governments based on new home completions. We need more supply at lower prices. For every one per cent increase in the number of dwellings, house prices drop 2½ per cent. More supply helps renters too. A one per cent increase in the vacancy rate provides rent cuts of up to two per cent.

How do we get more supply? The federal government needs to start funding the state governments for this, with more infrastructure funding, GST funding and rental assistance. Federal infrastructure funding should be allocated to states based on housing completions. If a state completes more homes, it should have more infrastructure funding. The GST formula could be reworked to provide more funding to states for housing completions.

Lastly, the federal government could offer to cover rent assistance in exchange for states redeveloping their public housing. We should allow public housing tenants and critical workers to buy their own homes. It's time to empower Australians and help them take control of their lives again.

**Mr KHALIL** (Wills) (12:34): This motion is a really important one, and I hope we can get out of politicising it. I want to acknowledge the member for Macnamara for moving this motion on affordable housing, because it is a public policy area that is deeply personal for many of us. Without access to public housing I wouldn't be where I am today, and that's the truth. That journey, from a house to a renter to a homeowner, also involved educational

opportunities that flowed to migrants—my family—and their children. When governments got housing policy right, it made a real difference to our lives and our ability to make that contribution. I'm keenly aware that it was easier to make that journey coming of age in the 1980s and 1990s than it is right now, for a whole host of reasons that we're debating and talking about. It's why we have to get these critical policies right. It's why we have to put the politics aside and do the work necessary, instead of grandstanding on it, because it matters to all of us.

Access to good housing is a fundamental human right. It's a matter of basic dignity. We need a roof over our heads to be able to engage in our community, to fully participate at school or work, to look for and get a job, and to contribute. That, as I said, gave my family—my sister and me—an opportunity to pursue our education and give back to the country that had given us so much. That's a reality that I want for other Australians—for all Australians, actually—and I know this is the reality the Prime Minister and the new housing minister, Clare O'Neil, want for all Australians.

The issue of housing affordability and rental stress cuts very deeply across the country. It causes stress to people in my community of Wills—to the young family trying to manage alongside childcare fees, to the university student juggling study with part-time work and to the older Australian relying on their pension or their super. We have far too many Australians experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. In fact, single women over 55 are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. It is unacceptable, in a country endowed with such wealth and opportunity, that many of our fellow Australians have nowhere to call home or are at risk of not having a home.

I recently met with Dini Liyanarachchi and Chris Sparks from Housing for the Aged Action Group—HAAG—a Melbourne based organisation that supports older Australians who are homeless or are facing homelessness. They talked a lot about older women, who are often forgotten and fall through the cracks, when we talk about vulnerable groups. They also raised elder abuse as not being spoken about as much when issues of family violence are raised. The group want interventions to focus on people who are at risk of homelessness before they end up actually sleeping rough.

I recently hosted a youth housing roundtable with Minister O'Neil. I think it was her first in her new portfolio. We heard about all of the poor rental conditions that people face, with invasive rental application requirements and stressful no-grounds evictions. A lot of the young people there described homeownership as being out of reach and said that they needed to make compromises, such as living at home with parents for longer to save for a deposit or putting studies on hold to afford rent or a bond. These are stories reflected across Australia, and they're unfortunately not new. Housing affordability is an issue that has been deepened by 10 years of inaction by the previous government, the coalition government. It's an issue that we, having come into power two years ago, are working every day to fix. It is front and centre in our mind to work on affordability and supply. Australia doesn't have enough homes, and we haven't for a while. Our priority is clear. Our objective is to build more homes for more Australians. We need to do this faster while also providing immediate support to Australians in need.

The government has an ambitious national target of building 1.2 million new homes by the end of the decade. We've added \$6.2 billion in investment to build more homes. We've brought the total investment in new housing initiatives to \$32 billion in just two years. We're supporting the building of new homes by growing our construction workforce—to the point that was made by the previous speaker—by \$1.5 billion to states and territories for housing infrastructure works and more social housing. There are so many programs and policies that we've put in place in just a short time, including, of course, the \$2.7 billion increase to Commonwealth rent assistance and the \$1.9 billion increase at the budget—doubling it twice there. There's also the build-to-rent scheme, which we've introduced to boost the build of more homes to ensure Australians can have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. This \$4.6 billion is money going into the pockets of one million Australians who are feeling rental stress.

I will say this in conclusion: this is something that we are working on every day. It's not about the politics. This is about building more homes and addressing what the issue is: supply, supply, supply.

**Mr CHANDLER-MATHER** (Griffith) (12:39): We're in the middle of the worst housing crisis that Australians have faced in generations, and right now we're debating a motion in parliament that lists all the great things that the government has done. It's as if we're telling Australians, 'You don't know how good you've got it.' For all the talk from this Labor government, literally the only things in this motion that are about new direct investment in public and community housing are elements that were won by the Greens in negotiations with Labor. Everything else is either a recycling of coalition era agreements or a misleading of the public about what Labor's games will actually achieve.

On Radio National today we heard the Minister for Housing claim that there was Treasury modelling to demonstrate that the build-to-rent scheme would build 160,000 homes over the next 10 years. However, Treasury officials have admitted in the last week that no modelling exists—zero, nada, none. In fact, experts will say that Labor's scheme will give tax handouts to property developers and investors to build expensive apartments they already planned to build.



This would be a sick joke if it weren't so serious right now for the millions of Australians whom Labor refuses to help: the millions of renters who are coping massive rent increases. Many of them are one increase away from eviction into homelessness. What they need is a freeze and cap on rent increases, not more words from Labor. What the first home buyers who repeatedly go to auctions and are beaten out by property investors who have tax handouts in their pockets from this Labor government need to give them a chance, not more words from this Labor government, is Labor phasing out those tax handouts.

They talk about people waiting for public housing or growing up in public housing. Well, then, build public housing! Australia is building less public housing now than it has at any point in its history since World War II. We have a proposal that the government can steal at any point: establish a government-owned developer; go and get it to build hundreds of thousands of good-quality homes that are then sold and rented at prices people can actually afford. This is how Australia used to do it. It is how countries around the world do it.

The bottom line is this: over the next 10 years, this Labor government is going to give \$165 billion in tax handouts to property investors to go to auctions, bid up the price of housing and screw over millions of renters trying to buy a home. Imagine if that money went to building public housing instead. How is it fair that there are people out there right now who are skipping meals—pensioners; single mums so that their kids can eat—so they can afford to cover their rent increases? How is it fair that they have to suffer while property investors get billions of dollars in tax handouts?

The bottom line is this: the Greens are ready and willing to work with the government to develop a housing plan that actually starts to tackle the scale of the crisis. Last year we secured \$3 billion of funding for public and community housing. But what we will not accept is a Labor government—75 per cent of whose members are themselves property investors—that is refusing to touch tax handouts for property investors, refusing to invest any more in public housing and refusing to freeze and cap rent increases to give the millions of renters who are doing it tough right now a little bit of relief.

What's most galling and most frustrating about this is that Labor love to pretend that they're doing all they can, as if this housing issue is just so complicated and there's not much more they can do. Why is it, then, that countries around the world can do this? Why is it that they can build enough government-owned housing—and rent it and sell it at affordable prices? Why is it that they have higher rates of home ownership? Why is it that they pay much lower rents? Why is it that countries around the world that are much less wealthy than ours are able to do it? Why is it that, in the 1970s and 1980s, Australia was able to build enough public housing for the people who needed it? It was able to build entire suburbs of good-quality homes that workers were able to move into and build good lives. Why is it that, when Australia was a much less wealthy country with much fewer resources and much less sophisticated construction technologies, it had the ability to build homes at a faster rate? Why is it that we were able to do it then but we can't do it now?

The bottom line right now is that Labor are addicted to a neoliberal ideology that is about putting money in the pockets of banks, property investors and property developers and taking it out of the pockets of ordinary renters, mortgage holders and people who are waiting to buy a home and are doing it tough. If you want to sign of how broken this housing crisis is, it is this: last year, as millions of mortgage holders were pushed into financial stress, the Commonwealth Bank recorded a record \$10 billion profit. So, while the government is sitting and overseeing a housing system that makes record profits for banks and developers, the rest of us get screwed.

**Mr LAXALE** (Bennelong) (12:44): The truth is that Australia has not had enough homes to meet the needs of its people for a very long time. This is not a problem that has emerged overnight or post pandemic; it's a crisis decades in the making. We are here not because of migration, as the Liberals want you to believe, but because of poor governments, poor planning, underinvestment and an indifference to housing in general from all levels of government a long time. Because of it, rents are up, and they continue to rise. Buying a home is hard and becoming harder, and it's hurting people and our economy.

On housing, I really fear for our state of New South Wales and our nation. I fear for our young, who have grown up with parents who could afford a home on a modest wage but who themselves cannot, despite often earning higher wages. The inequity of this reality is becoming increasingly unpalatable. In New South Wales, half of our young people are leaving the state. People cannot afford to live in Sydney or the regions, and they're going elsewhere. The premier state cannot continue to be great without our best and brightest in it.

In my electorate of Bennelong, I want to do everything I can to make young people welcome by making housing more affordable. I want Bennelong to be a vibrant hub for young people to study at our two local TAFEs and at Macquarie University. Then I want graduates to work in health and tech at the Macquarie Park Innovation District or establish a business in one of our vibrant town centres. And I want them to do all that whilst living locally, in student, affordable, social, build-to-rent and market housing that is accessible. To do this in Bennelong and across the country, every level of government needs to align.

In my ten years on the council of the City of Ryde, 19,000 new dwellings were approved, 13,000 of those in the five years that I was mayor. I copped a lot of flack for that, and I danced a fine line between heritage, low density and more affordable high density. But, at the end of the day, I took the approach that building more housing was the right thing to do for young people. Even with that record, we were held back by a state government that didn't allow for more affordable housing, and we had a federal government that simply did not care.

That's what makes me proud to be part of this government—we care. We care about delivering more homes. We're not just yelling from the sidelines, as you just heard from the Greens, or blocking progress, as the Liberals do. We're getting involved in the delivery of more housing across the country. Our \$32 billion Homes for Australia package is historic. Despite the political and economic headwinds we face, it is delivering. By directly investing in the construction of new homes and in growing our workforce, we will deliver more homes, which will help with affordability. Our \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund will support the construction of 30,000 new social and affordable rental homes over the next five years. Importantly, in the short term, it will turn market housing into non-market housing and will get more approved dwellings off paper and out of the ground. However, we also recognise that, while we work towards these long-term goals, there are immediate needs that must be addressed. That's why we've raised Commonwealth Rent Assistance not once but twice. That's why we're working with state governments to invest directly into public housing, reform renters' rights and land significant planning reform.

There is so much more to be done. This problem is so acute that we are in a national crisis. Usually, in a crisis, this parliament works together. But on housing, we're not seeing that. What voters must know is that we have bad-faith actors in this parliament who are putting short-term politics over building more homes. Two significant measures are being held up by an unholy alliance between the Greens and the Liberals. Together, they're stopping Australians getting government help to buy their first home, and they're stopping 160,000 rental homes being built by blocking tax reforms to incentivise their construction. I say to the Greens and to the Liberals that you cannot fix a housing crisis without building more homes. This has been decades in the making, and it cannot be fixed overnight. We went to the election promising to help with the housing crisis, and in two years we made so much progress, but I fully acknowledge there's much, much more to do.

**Ms WARE** (Hughes) (12:49): This motion concerns affordable housing. It makes reference to government spending of \$32 billion, purportedly, on housing. I was in the chamber when my friend the member for Bennelong was talking about the fact that the current housing crisis is due to poor government. It's certainly something that I do agree with him on, because, after two years of Labor and now a second Minister for Housing, housing affordability does indeed remain a national crisis in our country. This is a crisis that the federal government can fix and has failed to fix.

Whether it be homeownership or rentals, social or emergency housing, the failure by the government to address supply shortages and instead spend more money on establishing funds and schemes—Labor governments always love establishing a fund. They love a scheme. None of these funds or schemes are going to build any more houses. The Prime Minister himself has had to admit to this failure on his housing policy by now introducing a new minister to try and fix this problem.

To recap, in March 2022 Anthony Albanese went to the Australian people and said, 'Under this government you will have cheaper mortgages and cheaper rents.' What has happened since the May election? Average Australian households, like those in my electorate of Hughes, have now paid more than \$45,000 more since his government was elected, and that is absolutely due to the 12 successive interest rate rises in a row that we have had under this government. The Reserve Bank governor last week said that inflation is remaining high and interest rates will need to remain higher for longer as a result of federal and state Labor government overspending.

It's spending in the wrong place. The former housing minister announced \$10 billion for housing. What did this \$10 billion amount to, Deputy Speaker McKenzie? It was establishing the Housing Australia Future Fund, but this has proven to be nothing but a \$30 million spend on consultants and executives associated with that fund. It's proven to be jobs for Labor mates, both directly and indirectly. Wayne Swan is involved with the HAFF in his dual role as Labor Party president and also head of the Cbus fund—Cbus, which has its own governance issues. For example, Cbus has CFMEU directors on its board. The CFMEU is massively contributing to inflating housing costs. There's a 30 per cent premium on all construction sites controlled by the CFMEU. But the government then wants to use Cbus funds to help with the housing fund. There should be no role for either Cbus or the CFMEU in any of the government housing schemes.

The new Minister for Housing has just reannounced the 1.2 million new homes for Australians. That's 240,000 homes that have to be built every year over five years. Eight years ago, we were building 240,000 homes per year. This year we'll be lucky to build 150,000 homes. And this government has failed on a very important factor dialling into housing affordability, which is to allow Australians the opportunity to use their superannuation, their own money, to invest in a home.

Deputy Speaker, I just want to read to you a letter I received recently from one of my constituents, Lyn, from Engadine. She points out that her youngest daughter, also a Jenny, aged 51, has three children in their 20s. She's working full time in a reasonably well paid job, she has a husband who is retired and they're paying over \$1,200 per week in rent. She says: 'My daughter has never been able to own a property. She has a good amount of super, though, but she's unable to save any more for the deposit because of the huge amounts that she's paying in rent. However, if she could access her superannuation, she could now be into a home.'

What I say to Lyn and her daughter and her grandchildren is that this coalition, if in government, will allow people to access their superannuation—which is their own money. We'll allow Australians to have a choice as to whether or not they keep their money in superannuation or whether they use it to purchase a home. This will allow first home buyers into the market. It will also allow women who are coming out of a divorce or need to start their life again, and older women, the opportunity to purchase their own home.

This is a housing affordability crisis. It's a housing affordability crisis that this government has failed to address.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McKenzie):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### Ukraine

**Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (12:54):** I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) two and half years since the further illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Ukrainian military forces continue to bravely defend their homeland;

(b) Australia risks, again, falling behind like-minded partners in supporting Ukraine unless the Government moves to quickly back the G7 agreement of a \$50 billion USD loan for Ukraine obtained through frozen Russian assets;

(c) having claimed legal difficulties as justification to not use Russian assets, the Government now needs to stop finding excuses to not support Ukraine and wholeheartedly commit to doing all that Australia possibly can;

(d) unlike the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and France, Australia has not yet made any contribution to the unfolding global debate to the transfer of funds from Russia's frozen assets to Ukraine to assist with their war effort;

(e) if Australia's laws need amending to better target Russian assets or make more effective sanctions on Russia, then the Opposition will support sensible amendments to facilitate this;

(f) the Opposition, since the beginning of Russia's abhorrent and illegal further invasion of Ukraine, has offered full bipartisan support to the Government to implement all possible mechanisms that would aid Ukraine's self-defence;

(g) instead of acting wherever it can to assist Ukraine, the Government has let Australia's relative support decline by:

(i) junking Taipan military helicopters;

(ii) refusing assistance by not sending Hawkei protected mobility vehicles;

(iii) ignoring calls to reinstate Australia's embassy in Kyiv; and

(iv) turning down requests for coal; and

(2) condemns the Government for its failure to assist Ukraine in its hour of dire need.

Australia risks again falling behind like-minded partners supporting Ukraine unless the Albanese government moves to quickly back the G7 agreement to a US\$50 billion loan for Ukraine obtained through frozen Russian assets. Having claimed legal difficulties as justification to not use Russian assets, the Albanese government now needs to stop finding excuses to not support Ukraine and wholeheartedly commit to doing all that Australia possibly can.

If Australia's laws need changing to better target Russian assets or make more effective sanctions on Russia, then all Labor needs to do is act because the coalition is clear in its support. Since the beginning of Russia's abhorrent and illegal invasion of Ukraine, the coalition has offered full bipartisan support to the Labor government to implement all possible mechanisms that would aid Ukraine's self-defence. Instead of acting wherever it can, Labor has let Australia's relative support decline, including by junking military helicopters, by making some cockamamie argument it can't provide Hawkei vehicles because the antilock braking system isn't quite up to scratch, by ignoring calls to reinstate Australia's embassy in Kyiv and by turning down requests for coal.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine led to approximately US\$300 billion in Russian central bank foreign currency reserves being frozen in G7 countries. Over the past two years, multiple analyses have been published demonstrating that a transfer of Russian assets to Ukraine would vindicate respect for international law and alleviate the burdens on Ukrainian and Western taxpayers because of Russian aggression. Unlike the UK and Canada, Australia has not yet weighed in on the unfolding global debate as to the transfer of Russia's frozen assets to Ukraine. Australia's contribution to this debate is well overdue.

The coalition have said that when Labor fails to act we will explore Senate inquiries or other mechanisms to put pressure on the Albanese government to do so. On 27 March 2024 the coalition was successful in referring the issue of Australian support for Ukraine to a Senate inquiry. This committee has been examining Australian support for Ukraine, with a focus on whether Australian support is sufficient, timely and coordinated in a manner that optimises opportunities drawing on government, industry and allied initiatives, and is due to report back on 16 September 2024. The coalition will also be examining the mechanisms to freeze and confiscate assets belonging to sanctioned persons and entities and how the proceeds can be used to benefit people and countries impacted by the behaviour of sanctioned individuals and entities as part of a broader Senate inquiry into Australia's sanctions regime.

It's not just the coalition raising these concerns; as reported in the *Australian* on 9 April 2024, an eminent group of former politicians, academics, ambassadors and doctors wants the federal government to redirect \$9 billion of frozen Russian assets to help rebuild Ukraine. While Australia might not contain the largest pool of assets, we should at least be contributing to the debate. The United States is leading the global initiative for the payment of reparations to Ukraine via the transfer of forfeited Russian assets, though it controls only a minority of frozen Russian assets. Other than the US, Canada is the only other G7 nation that presently has a legal regime authorising the transfer of Russian sovereign assets to Ukraine.

As mentioned before, the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee has been examining Australian support for Ukraine, with a focus on whether Australian support is sufficient, timely and coordinated in a manner that optimises opportunities drawing on government, industry and allied initiatives. The coalition continues to stand with Ukraine. We honour the bravery and strength of the people of Ukraine, who continue to courageously defend their sovereignty, their freedom and their homes. We share their sadness at lives lost as they resist Russian forces—especially the innocent women and children who suffer from Russia's indiscriminate attacks. The government has refused to provide most of the military capabilities Ukraine have been publicly campaigning for, including tanks, Hawkeyes and Taipan helicopters. We urge the government to reopen the Australian embassy in Kyiv as a strong show of support for Ukraine and base Australia's incoming ambassador for Ukraine in Kyiv. Slava Ukraini.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou):** Is the motion seconded?

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

**Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (13:00):** Our government is unwavering in its support of the people of Ukraine in the face of Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war. Australia continues to stand with Ukraine as we work with our partners to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. I was glad to be able to pass that message on directly to members of Ukraine's government and armed forces when Senator Fawcett and I represented the Australian parliament in Copenhagen at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Last year, I also had the honour of visiting the 5th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment from my electorate in Darwin. I visited them in the United Kingdom and spent time with them. As part of Operation Kudu, they were training members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Operation Kudu is the Australian Defence Force's commitment to the training of those Ukraine recruits, working alongside partner nations as part of the UK-led training program to build additional capacity for Ukraine to defend their homeland. It focuses on basic infantry tactics, which we observed, in urban and wooded environments, such as those in which they find themselves facing the invading Russians. Building on our reputation as a highly regarded partner, Australia will now also build on Operation Kudu by joining NATO's new security and training initiative for Ukraine as an operational partner.

In addition, under Operation Kudu, a Royal Australian Air Force Wedgetail aircraft was deployed to Germany in support of multinational efforts to protect the vital gateway of international humanitarian and military assistance to Ukraine. Up to 180 air personnel deployed with the Wedgetail. Australia was honoured to provide this aircraft to help protect the vital lifeline of humanitarian aid and military assistance entering Ukraine. These are just some of examples of our government's approach to the crisis in Ukraine.

The approach has been substantial, ongoing and bipartisan, largely. The government's meaningful support totals over \$1.3 billion to date, and \$1.1 billion of that has been in military assistance. Australia continues to be the largest non-NATO military contributor to Ukraine. Since we came to office two years ago, we have more than doubled the military contributions to Ukraine, making us that largest non-NATO contributor of military assistance. Last month, we announced Australia's single largest military assistance package, worth around a quarter of a billion dollars. The package includes air defence missiles, air-to-ground weapons, including guided weapons, antitank weapons, artillery, mortar, cannon and small-arms ammunition, and a shipment of boots. These contributions ensure the men and women of the Armed Forces of Ukraine can continue their vital efforts on the frontline.

During his visit to Washington last week, the DPM also joined other partners in signing a memorandum of understanding on the Drone Coalition. This follows our government's \$30 million commitment to provide drones

to Ukraine as part of this important coalition. We have also provided demining equipment, portable X-ray machines, a 3D metal printer and counterdrone systems, which is some of the Australian-developed equipment that will contribute to the defence of Ukraine. I'm very proud that this assistance from Australia included 3D metal printers made by a local Darwin company based at Charles Darwin University, SPEE3D.

These contributions provide Ukraine with some of the best capabilities in the world while investing in Australia's sovereign defence industry and tech sector. This latest support takes Australia's overall assistance to Ukraine to approximately \$910 million, including the provision of Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles, heavy artillery, critical ammunition and contributions to the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund. A few months ago, in June, we announced \$31 million in energy and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Overall, our government remains committed and will do more.

**Mr VIOLI** (Casey) (13:05): Firstly, I genuinely want to congratulate my good friend, the member for Solomon, my co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of AUKUS, on his new role as the Special Envoy for Defence, Veterans' Affairs and Northern Australia. Congratulations to him. It's been nice to work closely with him on the Parliamentary Friends of AUKUS, and, in his new role, I hope he continues supporting not just AUKUS but also Ukraine, because the coalition does stand in support of the government when it comes to better targeting Russian assets and putting more effective sanctions on Russia.

We've always said from the start of this invasion that we would offer full bipartisan support to the Labor government in implementing all possible mechanisms that aid Ukraine's self-defence, so I congratulate the member for Solomon and look forward to continuing to work with him on AUKUS and also to ensure we support Ukrainian people. The abhorrent, illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine by Russia has tested us as a Western democracy. It has tested the global response, and so far we have stood up—led, obviously, by the Ukrainian people—but there is more that we need to continue to do. Across the world we are seeing a global struggle for freedom and democracy as authoritarian regimes flex their muscles. Whether it's in Ukraine, the Middle East or Iran, we're seeing these challenges.

I'm very lucky in Casey to have a strong Iranian diaspora. They have been devastated to see the political death-penalty murders of many of those who have fought for freedom in Iran. Just last week, Reza Rasaei, a young man, was executed for standing up for his political beliefs. The member for Menzies and I, as political sponsors, both sponsored Reza to do what we could to ensure his freedom, but, unfortunately, he was executed last week.

The Woman, Life, Freedom movement that was established in Iran after the abhorrent killing of Mahsa Amini has not stopped. There are many in Iran that have continued to agitate and work under the radar for freedom and democracy in that country. There are many in the Iranian community in Australia that have supported them, risking their own lives and the freedom of their family back at home who are continuing to protest and continuing to work every day to ensure democracy and freedom comes to the Iranian people. We need to continue to stand with them and support them at this tough time. I was proud to sign as a political sponsor and I'll continue to stand with the Iranian community in Australia as they fight for their democracy and their freedom.

We're seeing this struggle across the globe, and in many cases the Ukrainian people are on the front line of that challenge—that battle of ideologies and beliefs. We, as a parliament—the Australian government and the opposition—need to do everything we can to support them. There are many different ways, through official channels but also through private business, that Australia as a country is helping. One organisation that's received coverage and is doing a great job is SYPAQ, a Melbourne company out at Port Melbourne. They have developed cheap and efficient cardboard drones that are being utilised by the Ukrainians to ensure that they can not only keep Ukrainian people safe but also start to turn back the invasion.

There are many ways we can continue to support organisations like SYPAQ. It was wonderful to see, about two weeks ago, that they were successful in a process with the Department of Defence, receiving funding to continue to ramp up drone production, for Australia's use and also for use in Ukraine. What we've seen in this battle between Ukraine and Russia is a change in warfare, moving to a drone based system, and that has fundamentally changed how we go about these battles. The implications are profound for many in the community, particularly as we look at artificial intelligence and how we control these drones and target different areas of opponents and enemies while keeping civilians safe.

**Mr ROB MITCHELL** (McEwen) (13:10): I'd like to talk on this motion about Ukraine. What's important when we talk about this is the Australian government's commitment and support, which have been steadfast and reliable, for the people of Ukraine. Ukraine's strength, in the face of this illegal invasion, is a testament to that nation's endurance. That's why we have been steadfast in our continued support. Such an egregious breach of sovereignty unites Australians behind the efforts to support our allies. We marvel at their endurance and their spirit as they fight for their culture, for their livelihoods and for democracy, which is why the Albanese Labor government has continued to provide support through our words, our sanctions and, most importantly, our financial aid to Ukraine.

Our support for the Ukrainian government should be above politics, but it's not. The member who proposed this motion has been fairly consistently engaged with the issue of the Russian invasion into Ukraine—and I give him that. But, while we get these cheap words, there's a lack of acknowledgement of what the Australian government has done and continues to do, which is outstanding. This shouldn't be a political football, something for the opposition to kick about whenever they want to crank up their rhetoric, especially when their own party is infiltrated by pro-Russian supporters. It is hypocrisy, but at this point it's to be expected.

We shouldn't expect much more when we have people like Senator Antic—the top of the Senate ticket for South Australia, their No. 1 choice—parading on the Senate floor talking about 'the little fellow from Ukraine, whatever his name is'. That's an appalling statement to make. You'd think he'd realise, 'I've made a blue,' and maybe move on, but no. Following that, when it was mentioned, he said, 'Who cares?' That is the No. 1 person that Peter Dutton—the member for Dixon and Leader of the Opposition—wants in the Senate, and that is what he's saying about the President of Ukraine.

To come in with a motion like this is just utter hypocrisy. They accuse the government of not doing enough, when we've continually reaffirmed Australia's commitment to Ukraine. In case you missed it, we recently provided Australia's largest single military assistance package, worth just under \$250 million. This package, communicated to Ukraine's President Zelenskyy—alongside the 'Indo-Pacific four' partners—at the recent NATO summit in Washington, reflects our ongoing commitment. It puts us on a par with many of our allies, not only those in our region but also our European friends. This assistance reflects the national resolve, as an ally and a friend, to repel this illegal invasion. Our military package includes defence missiles, air-to-ground weapons—including guided weapons—anti-tank weapons, artillery, mortar, canon, small-arms ammunition and even shipments of boots, ensuring that the men and women of Ukraine's armed forces can continue their efforts on the front line.

Since the conflict started, Australia has imposed more than 1,200 sanctions in response to Russia's full-scale invasion. These sanctions have reflected the Australian government's position that those supporting Russia's illegal war will face consequences. As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence has said:

We stand with Ukraine in support of its courageous people and also in defence of a fundamental principle—the right of every sovereign nation to be secure in its own borders and to determine its own future.

These actions not only align with this government's consistent foreign policy and stance on global issues but also reflect the views of Australians. Just recently, the Lowy Institute put out polling that shows that, as of 2024, 62 per cent of Australians strongly support keeping strict sanctions on Russia. An additional 24 per cent indicated that they are supportive of sanctions. The Australian people are with us on that. The international community are with us on that. The only people complaining are the opposition. We'll continue our commitment to protect innocent civilians in Ukraine. But the next time you see the opposition come into this chamber, and accuse the government of not doing enough for Ukraine, it would be great if their backbenchers could denounce Senator Antic's words and the view that he put forward.

I had the honour of being able to listen, along with the member for Fisher, to President Zelenskyy at the United Nations last year—to hear from a man who was genuinely fighting for his people. You'd think that this parliament would support that. I look forward to the Liberals getting up, saying 'Antic is wrong' and supporting Ukraine. Slava Ukraini.

**Mr PEARCE** (Braddon) (13:15): It's been 2½ years since Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. During that time the coalition's support for Ukraine has remained absolutely unwavering. As a nation we must continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukraine and its people, to honour their bravery and to grieve the losses and the unspeakable injuries inflicted by Russia's abhorrent actions. We must continue to recognise the strength of a people who, against all odds, have courageously defended their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, their freedom and their homes.

Importantly, we must never, never forget that Ukraine's war is Australia's war. Although fought on Ukrainian soil, Ukrainians are fighting in Australia's national interest and in the interests of all like-minded countries across the world. This is a war between democracy and autocracy. That's why Ukraine must prevail. The geopolitical importance of Ukrainian independence for the security of Europe cannot be underestimated. A Russian victory would not only sacrifice Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity but also threaten the stability of Europe itself. The Russian leadership would be revitalised. They would be in control of Ukraine's vast human and material resources, and they would loom large on the eastern border of our NATO alliance.

Closer to home, Russia's aggression has already had a significant impact on Indo-Pacific security dynamics. If Russia were to be victorious, it would embolden like-minded nations right across the Indo-Pacific to act, right on Australia's doorstep. In May and June this year Russia's President Putin visited China, North Korea and Vietnam. His aim was to shore up key strategic partnerships between these countries and their leaders. Australia must remain resolved, and we must play our part in defending the peace in our region. Token words are not enough.

It's beholden on the government of the day, the Albanese government, to support the Ukrainian war effort with practical assistance. Within two months of Russia's invasion, the former coalition government delivered a comprehensive \$285 million package of support to Ukraine. This included military and humanitarian assistance, visas for Ukrainians seeking shelter in Australia and more than 79,000 tonnes of thermal coal. We also applied more than 800 sanctions on Russian individuals, entities and their supporters. Today, we continue to offer our bipartisan support to this government.

However, leadership from the highest level of this government is lacking, as far as I'm concerned. It's the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to stop dragging their feet and stop finding excuses to act. It's not good enough that Ukrainian officials had to plead for six months before the Albanese government finally sent shipments of thermal coal—coal that was desperately needed to meet the nation's energy needs as Russia targeted its power plants with precision guided missiles and drone attacks. In contrast, the coalition government was the largest contributor of coal to Ukraine of any non-NATO country.

On this side we stand ready to provide full bipartisan support to the government to implement all sensible mechanisms that would aid Ukraine's self-defence. Australia must remain steadfast in its commitment to Ukraine to reconfirm that we stand with like-minded nations, fight for the rule of law and fight for national sovereignty. These are the global principles Ukraine is fighting for on behalf of every single Australian, every single day—principles that underpin peace and prosperity in our region and right across the world.

Token words aren't enough. It's beholden on the Albanese government not to fall behind like-minded partners. Labor must act quickly. As the old saying goes, 'Si vis pacem, para bellum'—if we desire peace, then we must be prepared for war.

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton) (13:20): Slava Ukraini. Australians have followed news reports from Ukraine with horror and sadness since the brutal Russian invasion. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, at the two-year mark this senseless war had claimed the lives of over 10,000 civilians and injured nearly 20,000. The same reports also indicate the actual numbers are most likely significantly higher. Of course, these figures do not illustrate the effect of the mass displacement of civilians, the loss of livelihoods and the collective trauma suffered by the Ukrainian nation. It's even more difficult to gauge the loss of life and casualties and military personnel, as Ukraine does not release these figures. Estimates range from 30,000 to 70,000 deaths. Russian deaths and casualties, both civilian and military, are similarly challenging to estimate, let alone verify, but are undoubtedly higher because of Russian military tactics.

These tragic figures are the backdrop to the daily news reports we see, featuring terms like 'counter-offensive', 'blockade', 'occupied territory', 'bombardment', 'incursion', 'civilian exodus' and 'missile strike'. Without even knowing the specifics, these words paint a picture of horror, destruction, death and emergency humanitarian need, and it's why the Albanese Labor government has been steadfast in its support of Ukraine since coming to office. Both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence have made visits there, confirming that our support remains resolute. A despot's military takeover should never be tolerated. It only emboldens and begets more brutality and horror.

Australian support is more than symbolic under both Labor and the LNP; it's bipartisan, concrete, effective and ongoing. This support has totalled over \$1.3 billion to date. Of this, \$1.1 billion has been in military assistance. Since coming to office Labor has more than doubled our military contribution. Most recently, in July the Minister for Defence announced a military package worth around \$250 million. The package includes air defence missiles and air-to-ground weapons including guided weapons, anti-tank weapons and ammunition. This announcement also included Australia's decision to join NATO's new security and training initiative as an operational partner. This measure indicates our commitment to supporting Ukraine.

ADF personnel have trained over 1,450 Ukrainian armed forces personnel in the UK on infantry tactics for urban and wooded environments. I recently met the crew of the RAAF E-71 Wedgetail, deployed to the region for six months to secure a crucial gateway for international humanitarian and military assistance to Ukraine; I met them out at Canberra Airport. Over the course of the war Australia has provided 120 Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles, 56 armoured vehicles, six howitzers, trailers and special operations vehicles, ammunition and anti-armour weapons, body armour, personal combat equipment and clothing, and counter-drone systems. We've also supplied humanitarian assistance, with a \$31 million energy and humanitarian aid package, and \$20 million is being directed to the Ukraine Energy Support Fund, which provides electricity and heat for civilians and enables repairs to the energy grid. This amount may be directed towards buying coal, with the added benefit of no shipping and insurance costs.

The government maintains close contact with the Ukrainian embassy to ensure our contributions are effective. We're confident in this approach, with Ukraine stating:

Australia's aid for Ukraine has a multiplier effect. It not only directly meets needs in Ukraine but also affirms and strengthens Ukrainians in their pursuit of our common values and withstanding Russia's illegal invasion.

Australia has provided \$10 million to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. This will be directed towards improving access to clean water and food and shelter for the thousands of displaced people. And we've committed \$1 million to the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which includes people needing assistance after sustaining war injuries.

Another important measure is the imposition of sanctions. Over 1,200 targeted financial sanctions and trade measures have been imposed by the Albanese government against Russia since February 2022. Most recently we targeted six entities involved with North Korea's supply of arms to Russia. Cumulatively these sanctions are working to decrease Russia's ability to both fund and conduct its unjustifiable and immoral war.

Australia proudly stands as the largest non-NATO contributor of military assistance to Ukraine. We'll continue to stand by the Ukrainian government and its people in their fight for their sovereignty in the face of Russia's ongoing barbaric and unjustifiable war for as long as it takes. Slava Ukraini.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McKenzie):** I thank the member for Moreton. The time allotted for this debate has now expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Sitting suspended from 13:25 to 16:00**

## **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

### **Local News**

**Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (16:00):** I'd like to talk today about local news and access to local news content. Local news is struggling all around Australia, including in Warringah. Our news media are in a David and Goliath battle for survival against social media and search engine giants. Contractions in the news industry outpace expansions, but people still need and want to hear about their local news to keep up with what is happening in their area. This was true during the pandemic era and remains true today with the increasing frequency of disasters such as floods, bushfires, climate change events.

We need to make sure people can access information. Of course we have large national broadcasters, but local news plays an incredibly important role in that. It is vital that trusted local, national and international news content remains accessible as widely as possible. The removal of trusted news sources from social media platforms means that people will be consuming more divisive and even extreme content that keeps them engaged. It is ripe for spreading misinformation and disinformation in an environment where it's now so prevalent.

I want to congratulate Kim Smee and an organisation called the Manly Observer for the launch of the app for their news website. They faced no choice but to look outside of social media to keep their content alive, and their new app was the second-most popular news app in Australia in Apple's App Store. It shows how much desire there is for trusted local news.

### **Early Childhood Education**

**Ms LAWRENCE (Hasluck) (16:01):** It was a privilege to have the Prime Minister and Dr Anne Aly, the Minister for Youth and Minister for Early Childhood Education, visit the beautiful Sagewood Early Learning facility in Dayton in my electorate of Hasluck last week. Dayton is an area with a large number of young families and first home owners. At Sagewood and so many other centres, it all comes together to give our kids the best start in life to nurture the 90 per cent of brain development that happens in their first five years, nurture the essential social interaction skills and give them a specialist education that prepares them for success in school.

The people who provide all of this are highly skilled and caring and, too often, overlooked. They deserve not just our thanks but to be paid fairly and to be able to pay their own bills, and that's why the Labor government is ensuring they receive a 15 per cent wage increase. That will mean an additional \$155 of extra wages by December this year. To make sure the wage rise goes to the pockets of the workers and to protect families from further cost-of-living impacts, we've also put a cap on how much early learning centres can increase their fees, at 4.4 per cent over the next 12 months.

I echo the words of the Prime Minister today in stating that this is good for workers, good for children, good for families and absolutely good for the economy. I applaud this effort and our concern and action to support all workers in this nation, not just the top few.



### Health Care

**Dr HAINES** (Indi) (16:03): Recently, I made a freedom-of-information request to the office of the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler, asking for documents related to the redevelopment of Albury Base Hospital and/or infrastructure at Albury Wodonga Health, including correspondence and briefing notes.

In making this request, I wasn't hoping for a 'gotcha' moment for the minister, but to understand what representations the New South Wales and Victorian governments had been making on the only cross-border health service in the nation. Just five documents were released. There were no letters from the Victorian Minister for Health, Mary-Anne Thomas, nor the New South Wales Minister for Health, Ryan Park. The case is clear: we need a new hospital on the border. Whether it's a greenfield or brownfield site, we know the funding promise so far will not build a state-of-the-art single-site hospital that meets our community's needs for years to come. It would make sense to me if the states were asking for the federal government to invest in this project. I certainly am.

What these documents show is a lack of effort by the Victorian and New South Wales governments to get a better deal for people on the border. There are many examples of federal governments investing in building new hospitals, but when I speak to the government I am often told that hospitals are a state government responsibility and that the states would need to make the ask. I am dumbfounded that it appears that there isn't any correspondence on this topic at all from the states— *(Time expired)*

### Wilde, Mrs Edna May, OAM

**Mr LAXALE** (Bennelong) (16:05): It's with deep sadness that I rise to acknowledge the passing of Edna Wilde OAM, a cherished resident of Marsfield, who left us on Tuesday 6 August. Edna was approaching her 95th birthday, a milestone that reflected only a fraction of her remarkable life.

Edna was the loved wife of Allan Wilde, dearest friend of Jim Hull, mother of Lynette, Colleen and Pamela, grandmother of 10 and great-grandmother of 14. Edna was a passionate community advocate, serving as a Ryde city councillor for 34 years. She holds the extraordinary distinction of being the only female mayor of Ryde, serving three terms from 1980 to 1982, 1999 to 2000 and 2002 to 2004. Her journey as a community activist began when she rallied against council's plans to use Dunbar Park as a new waste dump. Well, she stopped that and just kept on giving back to her community. Her ongoing service culminated in her being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2000 for her contributions to local government and the Ryde community.

Many will fondly remember Edna as the driving force behind the Ryde Eisteddfod, an institution she nurtured for many years. It's only fitting that the new concert hall at Top Ryde will bear her name—a lasting tribute to her unwavering commitment to our community. Vale, Edna Wilde.

### Brisbane Electorate: Youth

**Mr BATES** (Brisbane) (16:06): Young people across this country are doing it tough, and their voices are rarely if ever heard in this place. As a young person—which I still think I can call myself at 31—representing one of the youngest electorates in Australia, the housing and climate crises are hitting us extra hard. I want the voices of young people in my electorate and young people across the country to be heard.

I recently conducted a survey of young people in my own electorate—and a huge thank you to the nearly 1,000 people from the community who took the time to share their thoughts. What are the top issues? They are: making the super-rich and big corporations pay their fair share; reducing the cost of living, specifically around rent and energy prices; ending the occupation of Palestine; making TAFE and uni fee-free; making mental health care more affordable and more accessible; working towards treaties and First Nations justice; and protecting LGBTIQA+ rights.

Young people are watching our standard of living going backwards. Owning a home is getting further and further out of reach, and not even the bare minimum is being done to address climate change. I feel the general mood is summed up perfectly by respondents when asked, 'If you could tell the Prime Minister one thing, what would it be?' The answer: 'Listen to us. Don't tell us what we should think. We need help, not words, and do more.'

Millennials and gen Zs are on the brink of outnumbering the older cohorts as the largest voting bloc in this country, and we will remember being ignored by this government.

### Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (16:08): In 2000, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area was declared. Its million hectares have unique eucalypts and other plants, endangered animals and 60,000 years of Aboriginal heritage, but nearly 25 years on there are threats to our area. This is why I welcome the work of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute in putting together a document that lays out the most urgent and profound challenges that the World Heritage area faces in the century ahead: climate change; fire; loss of biodiversity;

invasive species; direct human impacts on the landscape, such as urban run-off and flights from a 24/7 airport; and the need to recognise First Nations cultural rights.

Of course, quick and easy solutions are not always close at hand, but we won't find the answers without a strong evidence base. The research prospectus will ask big questions. I know the answers won't always be pleasant ones, and in many ways that's the whole point. That's why this research is such a worthwhile investment. I congratulate the institute on launching the prospectus with partners NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Blue Mountains City Council, who are collaborating to protect our area. You have my support, you have the mayor's support and you have the state member's support. In Science Week it's even more relevant to highlight for everyone who lives or love this region the importance of supporting the institute— *(Time expired)*

### **50th Anniversary: North Pine Sports Club**

**Mr YOUNG** (Longman) (16:09): It was my pleasure to attend the North Pine Sports Club's 50th birthday celebrations recently at Norths Leagues & Services Club. It was a great night to mix with many former and current players, including one of my old team mates who I hadn't seen for years. There was also plenty of memorabilia and old photos depicting their journey so far. As someone who played at the club in the 1970s and eighties, it brought back a lot of fond memories when they recounted the journey of moving from the school playground at my old primary school, Kallangur State School, to the Lawnton showgrounds and the final move to the old Dakabin dump, where they have been for over 40 years. I particularly enjoyed the story about them attempting to dig a ditch two feet down and hitting old car bodies, a remnant of the old dump, which meant getting an angle grinder to complete the project, something that I doubt would happen today. I'm glad they didn't hit the old trams buried there.

Ray Thiesfield, Edwin Thiesfield, Bill Leeming and John Bray from the inaugural senior team were present on the night. It was great to hear from them about how a few brave people broke away from the Pine Rivers Soccer Club to form the North Pine Soccer Club in 1974.

It was wonderful to see that the club is determined to keep the culture they have always had in developing and keeping their juniors, rather than bringing in players and trying to buy premierships. The club has always had a family feel, and I hope that will always be the case.

Thank you to the President Gavin Steel for the invitation, and here's to an even stronger next 50 years. Go the mighty Gorillas!

### **Boothby Electorate: Roads**

**Ms MILLER-FROST** (Boothby) (16:11): Many, if not most, Boothby constituents will have experienced the car park that is South Road. It doesn't matter if it's rush hour, school pick-up or some other time of day; if you can get 25 kilometres an hour on South Road, Edwardstown, you're doing well. We've been anxiously awaiting the Torrens to Darlington stage of the North-South Corridor to fix this problem.

Last weekend we had a significant step forward. I joined Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Premier Peter Malinauskas, Minister Tom Koutsantonis, member for Adelaide Steve Georganas and state members Nadia Clancy and Jayne Stinson for the announcement of the awarding of the tender to a consortium led by the John Holland Group. In even better news, this tender will involve three tunnel-boring machines instead of two, meaning the northern and southern tunnels can be dug simultaneously—or faster.

This project will mean 21 sets of traffic lights bypassed, up to 40 minutes of travel time eliminated, six kilometres of tunnels, 5½ thousand jobs during construction and 90 per cent South Australian jobs content, with 20 per cent of jobs for apprentices and the long-term unemployed. This is a huge project in South Australia, due for completion in 2031. It will be transformative for Boothby residents, taking a lot of the commuter traffic off the local roads. It will make travel safer, faster and easier for South Australians.

### **Gutwein, Hon. Peter**

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass) (16:12): It's a pleasure to rise today to acknowledge the remarkable efforts of the former Tasmanian Premier and current chair of the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania, the Hon. Peter Gutwein. On 9 June, Mr Gutwein set off from Burnie to walk the 350-kilometre journey to Hobart, arriving on 16 June. Averaging around 50 kilometres a day, he was on a mission to raise awareness of the value that Tasmania's migrant and refugee communities bring to our state. Motivated by a racist incident in Hobart, he was determined not just to issue a statement condemning the behaviour but, rather, to try and do something meaningful to change the conversation in a positive and enduring way and highlight the positive contributions migrants have made to our community over many years.

As a migrant himself—the son of an English mother and an Austrian Yugoslav father—Mr Gutwein understands well the challenges but also the great benefits of inclusion and diversity. In his words, 'Migrants are truly remarkable

people with great skills, and they're helping our communities in all kinds of fields, such as medicine, dentistry, construction, hospitality, retail, teaching and support services.'

Mr Gutwein had great support from the community, with many people joining him along the way to show their support for a multicultural Tasmania. The walk raised \$60,000 for MRC Tasmania to support migrants and refugees, including for cultural awareness training. But, importantly, it has sparked an enduring and positive message that we should all work to amplify: we are stronger together.

### **Martin-Lysicrates Prize**

**Ms SITOU** (Reid) (16:14): On 30 July, I, along with hundreds of school students, packed Parramatta's Riverside Theatre to watch the Martin-Lysicrates Prize. It was a real moment for me. I felt quite emotional as the lights dimmed and the students in the audience got excited. Their sense of excitement and anticipation was palpable. For many in the audience, this was perhaps the first time that they had ever seen live theatre in action. We were all there thanks to the efforts of John and Patricia Azarias. They set up the Lysicrates Foundation to provide access to theatre for all, not just an elite few.

The idea behind the Martin-Lysicrates Prize was that three Australian playwrights would be invited to show the first act of their play and then the audience would be invited to choose the play that they liked the most. It was a wonderful combination of theatre and democracy in action. The audience cheered. They laughed, cried and stamped their feet, and it was so wonderful to join them in this wonderful event.

### **Griffith University Golden Z Club**

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson) (16:15): Last weekend the Zonta Golden Z Club at Griffith University, Gold Coast set up a black shoe display at the Runaway Bay Shopping Centre. At that display there were 31 pairs of black shoes, with each pair representing a woman who died between 1 January and 31 May this year from gender based violence. I thank the Zonta Club for what they do to support and advocate on behalf of women. I congratulate them on putting up a very moving memorial to the 31 women who had lost their lives, which demonstrated to our local community and to so many women who stopped by that we need to highlight the impact of gender based violence and we need to always remember those 31 women who lost their lives during that period, plus the many other women who have lost their lives.

The United Nations defines violence against women as:

... any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

The statistics are very sobering. Two in five women have experienced violence since the age of 15, and, on average, every nine days one woman is killed by a current or former partner. We must do better.

### **Paris Olympic Games**

**Ms MASCARENHAS** (Swan) (16:17): Australia was unstoppable. A new gold standard has been set. It was the best Olympics ever, with 53 medals in total at the Paris 2024 Olympics. What a performance! What a team! To every Australian Olympian: you have made us proud. I'm going to give a special shout-out to some local Swan Olympians: in basketball, Samantha Whitcomb, a member of the Opals, who overnight won bronze—the first Olympic medal in women's basketball since 2012; in hockey, Kaitlin Hobbs, Karri Somerville and Jake Harvie on debut; in the water polo, Zoe Arancini, who won silver after a stunning run by the team to the finals; and, in the golf, Hannah Green, who fell just one short of a medal. On behalf of the electorate of Swan, congratulations to Samantha, Kaitlin, Karri, Jake, Zoe and Hannah. And, as the co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Cycling, I congratulate the cycling team.

Well done, team! Thank you for the late nights, the thrills, the spills and the champion efforts from each and every one of you. I know that it takes a village to raise an athlete. To all the coaches, managers and family and friends who supported their Olympians: I'm looking forward to the 2028 Olympians. There's a saying that women hold up half of the sky, but at this Olympics 13 of the 18 gold medallists were women. Rock on!

### **Little Grubbs Orchard**

**Ms BELL** (Moncrieff) (16:18): Little Grubbs Orchard, founded by Gold Coaster Lily Grubb, provides critical support services and programs for children, and their families, impacted by neurodevelopmental conditions. Lily provides this life-changing support to families, schools and childcare centres. She also offers her voluntary time to assist families that would not otherwise have the funding or the means to access that sort of meaningful support. That's why the Little Grubbs Orchard Foundation exists. It provides financial support to individuals who don't have adequate financial access to therapy supports. The foundation uses funds raised through individual donations, fundraisers, sponsorships and grants to support families that the NDIS may not otherwise cover.

I was delighted to join the team at Little Grubbs Orchard at their foundation recently for their second annual fundraising ball at Sea World Resort in my electorate. Together, we raised \$3,650, providing an additional 45 hours of much-needed therapy and support to children who otherwise would not have access to these sorts of services. To date, the foundation has received \$300,000, which is 1,455 hours of therapy support. Lily and the team pour their hearts and souls into their work. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child, and Little Grubbs Orchard is that village for so many in my Gold Coast community. Thank you so much to Lily Grubb and her team for what you do for our local community.

### **Fraser Electorate: Youth**

**Dr MULINO** (Fraser) (16:20): It's my pleasure to deliver a speech written by two wonderful year 10 students, Wangari Berhanu and Anthony Phan, who recently completed their work experience placement at my electorate office. The following is my recounting of their week as written by them:

2 weeks ago I was accompanied by two of the most ingenious 16 year olds in the western Melbourne suburbs. After coming into my office with nothing but their bright and wide smiles, along with their willingness to sit through long committee hearings and meetings with stakeholders who engaged in conversation, for which the most part of they did not understand, I knew that my week was to be packed with a refreshing touch of youth, something I hope every MP's E.O can be privileged enough to experience too.

Their brutally honest reviews on many of your MP websites—including my own—

though battering my confidence in my own MP site, shone light on how behind many of us are in updating and "youthfying," they made that word up by the way, our outdated and dull MP pages. Other than that ruthless highlight, we had embarked on many other inspiring journeys, much of which involved meeting with community members from all walks of life, that allowed for a very engaging, lively and definitely not boring Work Experience week.

These eloquent and witty words were from them and are not my own. Thank you for all of your work, Wangari and Anthony, and good luck on all of your future endeavours.

### **Theodore Centenary Celebrations**

**Mr BOYCE** (Flynn) (16:21): In June, Theodore celebrated 100 years since electricity to the town was turned on, and governor Matthew Nathan started the first water pumps. The Theodore Centenary Celebrations provided a fun-filled weekend packed with exciting events, live entertainment and an opportunity to celebrate the town's rich history and vibrant community spirit. The theme of the centenary celebration was 'sensing the past, enjoying the present and focusing on the future'.

The power station was built in Theodore to power the town and the water pumps to provide water to the irrigation areas around the region. The town of Theodore was built on the assumption that the Nathan Gorge dam would be built to expand the huge agricultural potential of the Dawson Valley. But this was not to be. Now, 100 years on, the Nathan Gorge dam has still not been realised.

Theodore was named to honour the former Queensland premier Mr E H Theodore. It is a local tale that the town was architecturally designed by Walter Burley Griffin in the early 1920s before he went on to design Australia's capital city, Canberra, where we are today. I would like to congratulate everybody involved in the Theodore Centenary Celebrations. It's a terrific milestone that the whole community should be proud of.

### **Blair Electorate: Infrastructure**

**Mr NEUMANN** (Blair) (16:22): I have great news from my electorate of Blair. Four community and sporting infrastructure projects in Ipswich City and the Somerset region have just received more than \$19.8 million in joint funding under the \$1.8 billion South-East Queensland Liveability Fund, contributed to by every level of government. Most the funding will go to upgrading the Redbank Plains Recreation Reserve and expanding the Tivoli Sporting Complex with extra rectangular playing fields, with \$830,000 for stage 1, and to the Kilcoy Streetscape revitalisation project. There is over \$800,000 for stage 1 of the Lowood Futures Strategy. This is a terrific example of what we can achieve with all levels of government working together.

Unfortunately, this is something Ipswich City Council seems to have forgotten after the council launched a political campaign called 'We Can't Wait', attacking the state and federal Labor governments over infrastructure during the weekend that the LNP in Queensland had their convention. The fact is that political attacks from the LNP mayor of Ipswich don't amount to political advocacy; it's political aggression. The Ipswich residents who contact me are poorly served by it. If Ipswich City Council wants funding for key infrastructure projects from other levels of government, here's a tip: how about engaging constructively with all levels of government before launching costly, ratepayer-funded political campaigns against the other levels of government?

**Brooker, Mr Trevor**

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (16:24): I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dungog local and World War II veteran Trevor Brooker, who passed away on 7 July aged 100 years. Trevor was born on 5 December 1923 on a cattle station north of Singleton. When war broke out Trevor was only 16 years old but managed to get away from school, Maitland Boys High School, and enrol. His decision to drop out of school and enlist in the Australian military was character-forming. He saw conflict in Papua New Guinea and was involved in the famous Battle of Shaggy Ridge. He got quite sick during the campaign with scrub typhus but he managed to survive, even though there is an astounding death rate when you catch this disease in the tropics. He was sent home in late 1944.

In 1948 he met and married his wife, Edna, after they met at a dance at Maitland Town Hall. In 1949 they moved into a house he built himself in Rutherford. He worked as a bricklayer as well as milking cows each morning and each night. In 1980 Trevor retired and moved with Edna to Dungog, where he became a stalwart and very active in the Dungog RSL club and subbranch. Only five years ago they both celebrated 70 years of marriage. Trevor's passing marks the death of Dungog's last World War II veteran. *(Time expired)*

**Australian Red Cross: 110th Anniversary**

**Mr REPACHOLI** (Hunter) (16:26): Tomorrow the Australian Red Cross celebrates 110 years of service to our country and so many more all around the world. The Red Cross was first established during the First World War. On 13 August 1914, nine days after the outbreak of the First World War, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, the wife of the Governor-General, formed Australia's first Red Cross branch. They were there when the men who fought for our country needed them the most. Thousands of amazing women volunteers contributed their time making vast quantities of clothing—socks, vests, mittens, mufflers, pyjamas—and a variety of linen, providing comfort to our diggers on the most uncomfortable of battlefields. They were in hospitals and convalescent homes providing vital care, goods and entertainment. They raised much-needed funds for the sick, wounded and prisoners of war. They even organised the Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau.

While we are lucky to no longer be living through times of war, there are still so many Australians crying out for help relying on the generosity of organisations like the Red Cross to help keep them on their feet. Today Red Cross Australia is made up of 16,000 members and volunteers, all dedicated to helping people impacted by disaster, conflict and other social issues. I say thank you to every one of those 16,000 volunteers. Keep up the great work, and we hope many more will join your organisation soon.

**Donnelly, Mr Cecil**

**Mr BROADBENT** (Monash) (16:27): Today in the House Tom Pritchard was honoured as the last remaining Rat of Tobruk. My next-door neighbour, Cecil Donnelly, was a Rat of Tobruk. Cecil began his working life working for my grandfather at his grocery store. Cecil went on to become a POW on Crete, after Crete was overrun, and then a POW in Germany.

Cecil finished the war as a POW. He was a remarkable gentleman because, in a way, he was very humble and never mentioned to me he'd been a Rat of Tobruk in any of the conversations we had. It was interesting because he called his children by nicknames—Alan was 'Gondi', Craig was 'Macca', Meredith was 'Minnie' and Kaye was 'Kad'. I remember that each night at five o'clock—our family ate later than the Donnellys—Midge Donnelly, the mum, would come out and yell out the four names of the kids at the top of her voice, and they'd come in for their dinner.

I honour Cecil Donnelly and all the Rats of Tobruk that made Australia and the nation—and they had that reputation that was spoken about in regard to Tom Pritchard today. I was so proud that Cecil Donnelly, my mum's friend and one of the first workers, was honoured in this way today.

**Nasoraia, Rishama Brikha Haithem Saed**

**Ms STANLEY** (Werriwa—Government Whip) (16:29): Recently I was privileged to join our local Mandaean community to celebrate the ordination to Rishama of His Beatitude Brikha HS Nasoraia. Just under 4,000 people of the Mandaean faith call Werriwa home. South-west Sydney has become the largest population of Mandaeans in Australia. As a result of persecution in Iraq and Iran over the last 50 years, many Mandaeans have fled their homeland to find peace. They've joined our community and support all sorts of events and fundraisers. Mandaeans follow the teachings of John the Baptist and are a peaceful community. His Beatitude Brikha HS Nasoraia came to Australia in 1996 to serve his community and educate the congregation of Mandaeans in Australia. He was originally ordained in 1991 and has a PhD, and his postdoctoral studies continue to research archaeology and Mandaism. His Beatitude has three children, one of whom gave a very heartwarming speech to the community about her dad.

I thank the Mandaean community for welcoming me to these important celebrations and I again congratulate His Beatitude Brikha HS Nasoraia for his years of dedication to educating youth in our community. I wish him all the best in his role.

### Beaudesert: 150th Anniversary

**Mr BUCHHOLZ** (Wright) (16:30): I had the great pleasure of attending the B150 Beaudesert sesquicentennial gala dinner a few weeks ago. The community came together for the most wonderful night of celebrations, which was the 150-year anniversary of the founding of Beaudesert, the heart of my community. The room was packed to the rafters with a who's who of Beaudesert, from local residents and business owners to longstanding community organisations, volunteers and local dignitaries. The night was well supported by civic leaders, including the mayor of the Scenic Rim Regional Council, Tom Sharp, and the state member, Jon Krause MP. It was truly a fantastic night. I'd like to pay special tribute to the organising committee, led by Tim Andrews, and all the volunteers who worked behind the scenes to make the night a celebration, but special mention goes to Mark Plunkett from the Historical Society of Beaudesert.

The celebrations were much more than just a gala dinner. Throughout the year there were a number of different events that we got the opportunity to attend. There was a launch event at the beginning of the year. There was the dancing through the ages ball, and then there was the family and fun day, held in conjunction with the high school, which was also celebrating its 60th anniversary. It has truly been a year of celebrations. From the great local families who've built our community through to the many more families who have followed them since, the rich history of Beaudesert is special, and there are many more pages left to write. Come visit beautiful Beaudesert, the heart of the Scenic Rim. It is Lonely Planet's eighth-hottest destination in the world. *(Time expired)*

### Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games

**Ms FERNANDO** (Holt) (16:32): How good is Australia? If you're anything like me, over the past two weeks, you couldn't have torn yourself away from the screen. We've watched our athletes thrive on the world stage in Paris, smashing records and making our nation prouder than ever. Australia finished fourth in the global rankings, bringing home an incredible 18 gold, 19 silver and 16 bronze medals—our most successful Olympics to date. From the pool to the track, our athletes have shown the world what it means to be Aussie. I give a special shout-out to the incredible Arisa Trew, who, at just 14 years old, won gold in skateboarding. What a moment for her and for all of us.

The Paris 2024 Olympics were a spectacular celebration of human spirit and perseverance. But, more than that, they've shown us how sport unites us as a country. Whether cheering from the couch or gathering at watch parties, we felt a surge of national pride as our athletes donned the green and gold. Australia, we are stronger, prouder and more united because of it. Aussie! Aussie! Aussie!

### Fadden Electorate: Business

**Mr CALDWELL** (Fadden) (16:33): Oi! Oi! Oi! Over the winter break, in addition to watching the Olympics, I was fortunate enough to host the deputy leader of the opposition on the northern Gold Coast to meet some local business owners and constituents. We hit the ground running at BUSY At Work at Oxenford, hearing from industry in the skills and apprenticeship sector about emerging challenges, but also recognising the amazing work being done by that organisation to get Gold Coasters into employment. The deputy leader and I hosted a women's business leaders breakfast with business owners and elected representatives, including Councillor Shelley Curtis and Councillor Naomi Fowler, as well as local school principal Joanne Sheehy from AB Paterson College. We discussed issues affecting women and young girls in our community. It was great to host that at my office.

We also took the opportunity to visit Adam Gilmour's new facility for Australia's leading aerospace and rocket company, Gilmour Space Technologies, which will soon be home to their 200 new employees, right in the heart of the northern Gold Coast, and we wish them the best of luck for their upcoming rocket launch later this year.

We then visited the Jacobs Well based local manufacturer Vansite, where we heard from business owners Grant and Christa and the executive manager, Tim, about their product, which includes the sale and leasing of mobile site vans.

The best part of this job is listening to people, and the deputy leader and I certainly did that both at a street stall in Coomera and a street walk in Paradise Point, hearing about how people are doing it tough during this cost-of-living crisis. I thank the deputy leader for the time she spent in Fadden with me recently.

### Senior, Mr Charlie

**Ms ROBERTS** (Pearce) (16:35): Today I would like to celebrate a remarkable achievement in the world of sport—an achievement that embodies dedication, perseverance and the uniting spirit of a champion. Charlie Senior, one of my Pearce residents, at the age of 22 has etched his name into the pages of boxing history.

At age 11, Charlie took up dancing, and his journey from the dance floor to the boxing ring is testament to his versatility and determination. Charlie has since demonstrated an unwavering commitment to his chosen craft, coached by Justin Lacey from the wonderful Lacey's Boxing Gym. Winning three national youth championships and then the Australian amateur title were just the beginnings of a promising career. The 2020 Asia-Oceania

Olympic Qualification Tournament fuelled his desire to excel. In 2023 Charlie struck gold at the Pacific games in Honiara, securing his reputation at an international level. And now, at the 2024 summer Olympics in Paris, Charlie showcased his skill, heart and resilience, earning him the bronze medal. His victories over formidable opponents and his courageous fight in the semifinals are a source of immense pride for all Australians.

Charlie Senior, you have shown us what it means to chase your dreams relentlessly. Your journey and achievements are an inspiration to all athletes. Congratulations on your Olympic success. We are all so very proud of you. We cannot wait to see what the future holds for you, and hope to see so many more of your celebratory backflips.

### **110th Anniversary: Australian Red Cross**

**Mr CONAGHAN** (Cowper) (16:37): I rise to celebrate the work of the Australian Red Cross, which turns 110 tomorrow. In my electorate of Cowper, the Red Cross holds a particularly special place in our hearts because, on the mid North Coast of New South Wales, we're prone to bushfires and floods, and not just the ones we've faced over the past few years but throughout the lives of generations, and our passionate local network of Red Cross volunteers have played a significant role in our emergency response and recovery—volunteers like the wonderful Heather Connell of the Bellingen branch, a branch that is also celebrating its 110 years, as it was one of the first to officially open in the country. For over 40 years Heather has assisted those most in need by tirelessly coordinating the sale of merchandise and donating generous prizes for fundraisers, working on street stalls and actively helping people to recover post disaster through her involvement in the Red Cross personal support team. It's individual acts of service like these from every Red Cross volunteer that make a positive impact on lives and livelihoods.

So a heartfelt 'Happy 110th birthday' to the Australian Red Cross and a very special thankyou to every Red Cross volunteer who has been involved over that time—may there be many more years to celebrate.

### **Newcastle Electorate: Telecommunications**

**Ms CLAYDON** (Newcastle—Deputy Speaker) (16:38): Almost 5,000 people live in Stockton, which is just a few minutes by ferry from the city of Newcastle. It's a tight-knit, strong and resilient community. But ongoing problems with mobile phone reception and poor wi-fi and internet connectivity are really taking their toll.

Newcastle is Australia's sixth-largest city, which makes these poor telecommunications experiences for Stockton residents especially shocking. In 2024, mobile phone reception and wi-fi and reliability of connectivity are essential services, yet too many people in Stockton have been let down.

I recently met with Telstra and Optus to raise Stockton community residents' concerns directly with them. I'm pleased that Telstra has agreed to investigate its telecommunications network in the suburb, and I've asked the same of Optus because we need to identify these problems and get them fixed. I've also written, with the support of Stockton Community Group, an expression of interest under the Peri-Urban Mobile Program for a grant aimed at improving coverage. Hopefully, that will be of help too.

More recently, I've written to all residents of Stockton to ask them to share their lived experiences of the telecommunications services in the suburb. Residents have been inundating me with their experiences. They speak about fears of constant dropouts and not having reliable tools for study for their children. These are unacceptable in 2024, and we're doing everything we can to fix them.

### **Gippsland Electorate: Princes Highway**

**Mr CHESTER** (Gippsland) (16:40): In my entire time in this place, I have been successfully advocating for a better safer Princes Highway. The Princes Highway in Gippsland is the main transport arterial, and a safer road obviously reduces trauma. It also improves productivity for the transport sector. The major project has been the duplication, which has seen an additional 43 kilometres of dual-lane highway through the Gippsland region between Traralgon and Sale. We are finally in the home straight, after many years of work, with the final section at Kilmany well advanced.

The question then extends to: what's next in terms of major transport priorities in the region? What's next in Gippsland is the Traralgon bypass. It's an issue which has been talked about for more than 30 years while the congestion and the safety issues continue to increase within the township itself. With the livability and the amenity of Traralgon impacted for locals, it's now taking up to 20 minutes for passing traffic to travel through the town. The duplication work should be finished by the end of this year. I believe that the Traralgon bypass then becomes the highest priority transport project in eastern Victoria over the next five years. It's been identified as a future priority for local residents and for the transport sector. We need to work at state and federal level to get the final design work done, to get the costings done and to get on with the job of building the Traralgon bypass.

**Ikhlesi, Ms Farzana**

**Mr BURNELL** (Spence) (16:41): Volunteering is one of the greatest bricks in the wall that is the Australian way. As a nation, we stand out above the rest for our willingness to help each other, to positively influence the lives of our neighbours just for the sake of it. That's why I'm honoured to be able to bring stories from volunteers in my community to this building, to give these inspiring individuals the recognition they deserve.

Farzana Ikhlesi is one such amazing person. She donates much of her time to the community centre in the Paralowie R-12 school. I bumped into Farzana when presenting flags to the school community at the centre, while visiting the Wednesday morning playgroup. As well as helping me colour in between the lines, Farzana works tirelessly with migrant families to help them engage and thrive in our community. She also manages Paralowie's toy library, the most important job of all—just ask the children who go there. On top of this, Farzana raises her own two children of primary school age—day in, day out—and still pours time back into her community. To Farzana, and all of the team at Paralowie: thank you for the phenomenal work that you do in our community. It is your efforts, on an individual level, that make our country as great as it is.

**Bruce Highway**

**Mr WILLCOX** (Dawson) (16:42): I rise today to speak on the disgrace that is the Bruce Highway. What is meant to be the main road in Queensland—used for delivering produce, supplies and materials from Brisbane to Cairns—is literally falling apart. Just last week, another report, commissioned by the RACQ, stated that anyone who travels this road is five times more likely to die. Can you believe that? I've lost count of the number of reports that have been commissioned on the state of the Bruce Highway. Their findings are all the same. The federal and state Labor governments are simply not listening.

Constituent Geoff contacted my office, saying he was travelling in the middle of the night and struck a pothole. The vehicle had to be towed, an insurance claim was lodged and \$1,000 out of his own pocket was gone. He said to me that he was just lucky that he didn't veer into another car. John Warren, a transport business owner for over 30 years, pays more than \$450,000 a year in fuel tax and over \$200,000 a year in registration to the state. John is sick of the double standards. He's expected to have roadworthy trucks. He asks, 'How about 'truckworthy' roads?' It's about time this government joined me to back the Bruce. Something needs to be done.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Young):** In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS****Taxation**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this House:

- (1) notes that on Monday, 1 July 2024, every Australian taxpayer will receive a tax cut; and
- (2) acknowledges the Government's number one priority is to tackle the cost of living pressures facing Australians by ensuring they earn more and keep more of what they earn.

**Mr GEORGANAS** (Adelaide) (16:44): I'd like to start by congratulating the member for McEwen for bringing this motion to the House. I know that he is acutely aware of the need to provide cost-of-living relief for Australians in a responsible manner, and that is exactly what this Albanese Labor government is doing. The government has a broad and ambitious tax reform agenda. We have delivered a tax cut for every Australian taxpayer. That's 13.6 million people who will be receiving a tax cut. This includes 93,000 taxpayers in the federal electorate of Adelaide who will receive a tax cut. The average tax cut in my electorate will be \$1,540. That's \$1,540 extra in people's pockets. We are delivering bigger tax cuts for Middle Australia to help with the cost of living. We know that cost of living is a real issue at the moment, so this government is focused on doing whatever we can to put extra money in people's pockets and to ensure that wages keep up with the cost of living.

An additional 2.9 million Australians earning \$45,000 or less, who were previously excluded under Scott Morrison's plan, will now share in the benefits of these tax cuts. Labor's tax cuts are providing greater tax relief to low- and middle-income taxpayers, who we know are disproportionately women. This will see 90 per cent of women taxpayers retaining, on average, an additional \$707 per year compared with the previous legislated tax cuts. Parents, particularly women with young children, will be meaningfully supported to return to work under the government's changes, through increases to their take-home pay.

We've also increased the Medicare levy low-income thresholds for 2023-24, ensuring more than one million low-income taxpayers continue to be exempt from the Medicare levy or pay a reduced levy rate. Again, they will be exempted or pay a reduced levy rate, which means more money in people's pockets. Every year over the next decade, the average tax rate for the average worker will be lower under Labor's plan than under the plan of the previous



Scott Morrison government. By 2034-35 someone earning an average income will pay \$21,915 less tax than they would have without Labor's tax cuts.

Beyond tax cuts for every taxpayer, the priorities of this government for tax reform include making super concessions fairer and more affordable; ensuring that multinationals pay their fair share of tax here in Australia; and improving tax compliance to ensure individuals and businesses who don't follow the rules don't get an unfair advantage over those who do.

This Albanese Labor government is introducing these changes because it recognises the economic realities of 2024. Australians are under pressure right now, and they deserve a tax plan that responds to the challenges they are facing in a responsible, measured manner. The advice from Treasury is quite clear. It's clear that our tax cuts will not add to inflationary pressures because they are broadly revenue-neutral. Our tax cuts are good for Middle Australia. They're good for women, good for working people, good for helping with cost-of-living pressures, good for labour supply and good for the economy.

It means, as I said when I started, more money in people's pockets and it means a bit of assistance towards cost-of-living expenses. The government's No. 1 priority is easing cost-of-living pressures, and we'll keep on working every day to deliver everything we can for all Australians and to ensure that the focus of the government is on dealing with cost-of-living pressures, inflation and doing everything we can to keep wages on par with the cost of living and put extra money in people's pockets.

**Dr RYAN (Kooyong) (16:49):** I thank the member for McEwen for moving this motion which acknowledges that Australians are experiencing a devastating cost-of-living crisis. While acknowledging the positive impact of the recent stage 3 tax cuts, I do want to speak to the other major driver of cost-of-living stress in my community.

Every day, members of the Kooyong community tell me that they are struggling with the cost of electricity and gas. They don't understand why the price of these necessities has increased so much and they ask me, 'What can we do to fix this?' I tell them this: Australians are paying too much for gas and electricity because of policy failures in our energy market. I tell my constituents that the wholesale price of electricity in Australia is three times less than what it was two years ago, because of increased rooftop solar and large-scale renewables, but that the retailers who are selling us this electricity are still increasing prices. They're doing that because we are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on supporting ageing, unreliable coal-fuelled power stations. But then we're being sluggish with huge prices during unplanned outages of those coal mines. This is because the spot price of electricity is set by the most expensive type of electricity needed to meet demand in the national electricity market, not the cheapest.

Gas is the most expensive form of electricity generation, and it is often the price setter. That drives up our power bills, massively. When we revert from renewables to power generated from coal or gas we can pay as much as 500 times more for the same electricity. Only 4.8 per cent of Australia's electricity comes from gas, but that electricity is so expensive that it drives our bills up and up and up. Australia is the world's second-largest exporter of coal and the fifth-largest exporter of gas. We do not have a shortage of gas. We use only 4.2 per cent of our gas production domestically, but Western Australia is the only state with a domestic gas reservation policy. So while the good people of WA enjoy the cheapest gas in the world, more than 80 per cent of the gas from the eastern seaboard of Australia is sold overseas by multinational companies. We pay more for that gas than the people who buy it overseas. Largely foreign owned companies are making windfall profits whilst price-gouging Australian customers for our own gas. This is a policy failure.

**Mr Katter:** We sold it for 6c, and we're buying it back for \$16.

**Dr RYAN:** Thank you, Member for Kennedy. Australia has 10 facilities for its production and export of liquified natural gas. Six of those facilities pay no state or federal royalties. The ATO has labelled the oil and gas companies 'systemic nonpayers of tax'. The ACCC has found that the LNG industry has exported uncontracted gas in preference to supplying it to Australian markets—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Young):** Order! I'll just interrupt the member for a moment. This private member's motion is on tax cuts. Is the member aware of that?

**Dr RYAN:** Yes, I am.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Okay. I'm just waiting for you to refer to the actual subject of the private member's motion.

**Dr RYAN:** I mentioned tax cuts in my first sentence, Deputy Speaker. We have been let down by successive federal governments—by the Liberal-National coalition and its inaction on climate change, and by the Albanese government, which has negotiated a gas price cap which is almost double the production cost, effectively anchoring prices higher than they need to be, and which has exempted new gas projects from that price cap. The Albanese government's Future Gas Strategy is a 68-page document about gas which does not mention royalties, tax or revenue once. This is a policy failure.

Australians are smarter than their own government. We know how to bring electricity prices down. Three million Australian households have become electricity generators by investing in rooftop solar. The 40 per cent of our power that comes from solar, wind and hydro, however, is being cancelled out by the 60 per cent that is coming from coal and gas. So when Australians are struggling with high gas and electricity bills this winter they should remember that those prices are high because Australian governments have allowed virtually unlimited gas exports. They allow LNG export companies to price-gouge us for our own gas, then they've set a price cap which is too high and then they've exempted new gas projects from that cap without a guaranteed increase in our domestic gas supply. Australians should be able to pay their own electricity bills. But, for that to happen, the government has to use its power to act on this all-important aspect of the cost-of-living crisis.

**Mr KHALIL (Wills) (16:54):** I am going to talk about tax—tax policy and tax cuts—because this is what this debate is all about. It's a very important debate, and I want to acknowledge the member for moving this motion because the cost of living remains the No. 1 concern of voters across the country. Many members of my community in Wills and of other electorates across the country have been struggling for the past few years with the cost of living. It's crunch living standards that have made ordinary working people worse off, and it's important to remember that this wasn't by accident. For 10 years we had a coalition government that squeezed ordinary Australians through raising taxes to their highest levels in over 30 years—that's a fact—and gouged hard-earned money from many in my hardworking community. This is coupled with, to quote former finance minister Mathias Cormann, a 'deliberate' policy to keep wages low, which has held our country back and left ordinary people behind.

Members will recall, I'm sure—the member for Kennedy will recall this—when former Treasurer Joe Hockey was dismissive and, in his entitled tone, talked about lifters and leaners, reflecting a sentiment synonymous with the coalition and their utter indifference to ensuring we look after working people and develop a tax system that is fair and also encourages aspiration. Given this frankly embarrassing record of supposedly being the party of low tax, which they are the opposite of—the highest taxes in 30 years—it is galling to hear the crowing from the coalition on tax and cost of living now that they're in opposition, when they did nothing about it for 10 years.

I'm pleased to say that this government, the Albanese government, has a very different approach. We have an ambitious tax reform agenda, and the cost-of-living tax cuts we delivered are a key part of that. These cost-of-living tax cuts were aimed at Middle Australia. They were aimed at building the foundations for a better future. Our tax changes mean that, in my electorate of Wills, 78,000 taxpayers received a tax cut on 1 July. An additional 2.9 million Australians who were excluded under Scott Morrison's plan now share in the tax cuts the Albanese Labor government has delivered, because we moved the bulk of those tax cuts to Middle Australia—to low- and middle-income earners, not the top five per cent or the top one per cent. Our changes to the coalition plan have also meant that 85 per cent more people in my electorate of Wills will be better off.

These tax cuts also have an eye to the future. Under the government's plan, the average taxpayer will pay approximately \$22,000 less of their income in tax over the next decade. That's money back in their pocket that they can use for the cost of living. This will also increase the labour supply and add to the efforts of both the RBA and the government to ensure inflation returns to target. These ambitions, coupled with the government's policy to stimulate wages, are aimed at ensuring Australians are better off.

Beyond the cost-of-living tax cuts, the government's reform agenda is all about making the tax system fairer. This includes ensuring that multinational companies pay their fair share of tax. It's also about ensuring that superannuation concessions are fairer and more affordable. It's about ensuring that reforms of the petroleum resource rent tax ensure that offshore LNG companies deliver more of their profits to the Australian people rather than to offshore investors. And it's about improving tax compliance to ensure individuals and businesses who follow the rules are not disadvantaged by the unfair practices of those who do exploit the system.

Ultimately, the Albanese Labor government's cost-of-living tax cuts are good for Middle Australia. We know that. They're good for women, they're good for helping with cost-of-living pressures, and they're good for the economy. Treasury advice shows that these tax cuts will not add to the inflationary pressures and will contribute to ensuring that inflation returns to target. The Labor government introduced these tax cuts because it recognises the economic realities of 2024 and the world that we're living in today. Australians are under pressure right now and deserve a tax plan that responds to the challenges they are now facing. That's why the tax cuts are going into their pockets. Gone are the days when the coalition deliberately kept wages low. This government, the Albanese Labor government, is committed to ensuring Australians can earn more and keep more of what they earn.

**Mr VIOLI (Casey) (16:59):** My good friend the member for Wills and I agree on a couple of things, mainly about how great Collingwood is, but we don't agree on these tax cuts. Like a lot of those opposite, he is very clever with his language. I notice there's been a shift in the ALP's language. They don't do policy well, they can't solve the cost-of-living crisis, they have no answer to inflation and they don't talk about productivity, but what they do do well is politics and word games. The member for Wills gave a great example of that just then.

For the first couple of months during the changes, the backflips and the broken promises from the 'word is my bond' Prime Minister, they were still calling them the stage 3 tax cuts. But, as the member for Wills showed just then, they've merged that and changed them into the 'cost-of-living tax cuts'. Now, the reason they don't like calling them the stage 3 tax cuts anymore is that they like to forget about stage 1 and stage 2, which were part of a broad, holistic, long-term package. But there's a real reason that they hate talking about stage 3. It's that they don't like talking about stage 2. Stage 2 of those tax cuts was the low- and middle-income tax offset, and that gave \$1,500 back into the pay packets of every Australian that was on a low or middle income, hence the name.

What those opposite did last year was they let that lapse, and we know that many people felt it. It went viral all over social media—how upset and frustrated people were when putting in their tax returns, wanting to get that \$1,500 back, but it was gone because those opposite let it lapse. They were happy to let that measure lapse right when Australians really needed \$1,500 in their pocket. But they now pat themselves on the back and say, 'Cost-of-living crisis over—job done. We broke our word, but we're going to give the Australian people \$15 a week extra, and that has solved the problem. We'll take away last year's \$1,500 and we'll give you \$15 a week, and you can say thank you.' We're now at a time when energy prices are through the roof, mortgages are through the roof, rents are through the roof and petrol is on average over \$2. Everything is going up, including food and groceries. But this Prime Minister, this Treasurer and those opposite say, 'Fifteen dollars a week—job done.'

This is their problem. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer can try and spin their way out of it, but the Australian people know that this government does not have a plan to address the cost of living, because they're living it every day. Every sitting week in parliament, I'll get to my feet on a PMB, an MPI or another government motion where they're talking about how great they are and the amazing job they've done for the Australian people. That's not what the Australian people are feeling. Maybe the Prime Minister has stopped listening. Maybe the Treasurer has stopped listening. But I haven't stopped listening to my community. I'll continue to share their stories in this House so their voices are heard, and maybe one day those opposite will stand up in caucus and actually have the courage to criticise the Prime Minister and Treasurer and tell them that it's not working, because that's what you should be doing when you're a backbencher in a government—holding them to account. But every media report tells us that not one backbench member opposite raises any questions or issues in caucus.

I'm going to share Bec's story today. I asked her what her biggest issue is, and her reply was this:

Cost of living. We are a young family with two primary school age children. My husband works full-time and I work 30 hours a week. It is so hard to pay for school fees, after-school activities, school excursions, plus all the household bills: a mortgage, petrol, public transport costs. We are a single car family due to cost. We can't afford to get our heating fixed, so we're struggling through winter without heating and I know we aren't the only family struggling.

I could spend hours sharing stories from my constituents, and many on this side could and will. Those opposite move motions patting themselves on the back about how their No. 1 priority is cost-of-living pressure. Well, it's not their priority, because for 18 months the Prime Minister didn't talk about the cost of living at all. For the last six months he's talked about the stage 3 tax cuts ad nauseum, \$15 a week, like it's going to solve the problem. He could have acted last year and given Bec and her family and everyone in the community of Casey an extra \$1,500, but they let that legislation lapse. And, when you criticise them for it, they say, 'It's not our fault; it was already legislated'—just like stage 3. If you're going to backflip on stage 3, you can backflip on the low-income offset. *(Time expired)*

**Ms LAWRENCE** (Hasluck) (17:04): Every taxpayer in Hasluck and around Australia is now receiving the Albanese government's tax cuts. A worker on the average wage of around \$73,000 will have a tax cut of \$1,504. Members opposite—particularly the member for Casey—ummed and ahed about these tax cuts and really did not want to support them. Only after some time, realising they would have to say no to tax cuts for the people in their own electorates, did they get behind and support this measure.

I was pleased when these tax cuts were announced but not surprised, as they are part of a consistent attitude on the part of the Albanese government to provide cost-of-living relief where possible, especially to those Australian families doing it tough, and in a manner that does not increase inflation. Those cost-of-living measures include energy bill relief, fee-free TAFE, cheaper child care, more bulk-billing and cheaper medicines.

Contrary to what the member for Casey said, many organisations have indeed welcomed the tax cuts; it's not just us talking to the virtues of them. Australian Council of Social Services CEO Cassandra Goldie stated:

The changes announced today are a better deal for people earning low, modest and middle incomes, including people earning under \$45,000.

We are pleased the Albanese Government has listened to the community to make the package fairer.

Mark Chapman, the director of tax communications at H&R Block Australia, described the Albanese government's tax cuts as 'a welcome move given the current economic situation'. He said the wider distribution

meant a useful focus on low- and middle-income taxpayers who were previously not well served by the coalition's proposed tax cuts and who have been suffering from increases in the cost of living.

Stephen Koukoulas, of Yahoo Finance, noted:

Good economics is good politics. And that is exactly what has been delivered with the revamped tax cuts to be announced by the Albanese government.

Tax cuts for all Australian workers were delivered with no net cost to the budget and with no inflationary effect. The RBA governor, Michele Bullock, stated that the tax cuts were already factored in, and that, in her opinion, monetary and fiscal policy are working the same direction.

The tax cuts are going to be more meaningful for those on lower incomes. A full-time cleaner in Midland is going to save just over \$1,000; that's almost two per cent of their wage. And it isn't a one-off saving; it's a saving going forward every year. The purpose of having a progressive tax system is to ensure that those who earn more are called upon to contribute more towards government services. In a cost-of-living crisis, providing relief to those most affected by rising costs is simply good policy. As the Prime Minister and Treasurer stated more than six months ago, when circumstances change so should policy responses.

This government has done a lot for workers on lower incomes. Would the coalition ever have supported a 15 per cent pay rise for aged-care workers? No. Would the coalition ever have supported a 15 per cent pay rise for childcare workers? No. And aged-care workers and childcare workers in Hasluck and elsewhere will also benefit from the Albanese government's tax cuts. This is a government that wants to see people earn more and keep more of what they earn.

In aged care, an assistant in nursing in Midland now on a wage of around \$67,000 will see a tax cut of around \$1,350. It's not just assistants benefiting from that policy; it's registered nurses, enrolled nurses, assistants in nursing, personal care workers and home care workers, head chefs and cooks, and recreational activities officers. In child care, a diploma-qualified early childhood educator on \$61,000 in Dayton will not only benefit from an increase in pay but keep more of what they earn too.

I was proud to be with the Prime Minister and Minister Aly at Sagewood Early Learning Dayton, in Hasluck, just a few days ago. What was going on there was good for the kiddies, although they had no idea of all the fuss happening around them! But the policy wasn't just good for the children; the pay rise was also good for the early childhood workers. It was good for workers, parents and families, the sector and the economy. It was as good for the gender pay imbalance as it was good for women. It also covers out-of-school care and so benefits families of school-aged children too.

This is a government listening, understanding and seeing what needs to happen and then taking the appropriate action. That's what the tax cuts were all about too—the government responding to economic circumstances and making the necessary alterations to ensure that cost-of-living assistance was directed where it would be of most benefit. Would the coalition ever have sat back and looked at their tax policy and changed it as circumstances changed? No, they wouldn't have.

**Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (17:09):** I begin by pointing out that the No. 1 priority of this calamitous government is not the cost of living. No. Labor have had two other priorities since May 2022: the doomed \$450 million Voice to Parliament referendum and looking after the CFMEU and their union mates with radical industrial relations reform that has bulldozed the industrial relations landscape in Australia and made productivity a distant memory. Casual employment is almost extinct under Labor's changes, and the unions are coming for part-time employment too.

God help you if you are a farmer in my electorate of Mallee, or elsewhere in regional Australia, trying to find workers. Labor's tinkering with the hiring arrangements for casuals, contract, migrant and harvest labour, at the behest of their union masters, means Australians will find it very difficult to feed their families. Why? Because farmers have to shoulder the higher input costs and labour shortages, which unsurprisingly drives up the cost of food and the cost of living.

Labor are in denial about their failed policies, and now they are in a blue with the RBA about whether their spending is driving inflation. Economists have lambasted the Albanese government for denying the fact that their \$315 billion in extra spending—equivalent to more than \$30,000 per household and rising 16 per cent in the next two years—is all exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis. On Tuesday the RBA killed any talk of interest rate cuts by year's end, yet the Treasurer told us all we'd be seeing inflation tamed by Christmas.

On tax cuts: Australians are paying 20 per cent more income tax than they were at the election. The coalition, on the other hand, are the party of lower taxes. Labor broke their promise not to tinker with tax cuts, just like they broke their energy bill pledge for a permanent \$275 relief, a promise made 97 times before the election. Even Labor's one-off \$300 bill relief isn't going to all Australians. Some tenants, and those that had to go off the grid, aren't

getting the \$300 rebate. I've asked Minister Bowen why that is the case, and the crickets have been deafening. So much for Labor helping Australians with the cost of living.

I backed the changes to the tax cuts as soon as Labor announced them because I know people in my electorate of Mallee are struggling. Even though they're used to energy bill shock, now they face energy bill trauma. The increases have been astronomical, driven by yet another Labor experiment—gambling taxpayers' and bill payers' money on mass-scale wind turbines, blanket solar panels, 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines and unproven green hydrogen.

Victorian Labor have published a map that shrank six renewable energy zones to now just 1½ zones—one very big concentration of wind and solar infrastructure in my electorate of Mallee and one half in Wannon. Labor's zone in my electorate is well over 150 kilometres away from the windy coastline and less than 200 metres above sea level, in the Murray flood plains. Victorians are paying \$620 million annually—and \$200 million a year to foreign entities—for this Wild West gold rush of customer-draining energy subsidies, generating massive price hikes on their power bills.

Mallee constituent Jason Barratt from Traynors Lagoon told the *Weekly Times*:

How on earth are our energy prices going to be lower by handing bucketloads of money to foreign-owned companies? It doesn't make sense.

Hear, hear! Farmers like Jason and Claire Grant of Bunguluke are feeling harassed, bullied and intimidated by the tactics of energy project proponents. Claire came to my mobile office in Wycheproof during the break, with her one-year-old daughter on her knee. Claire was in tears about the behaviour of the proponents of VNI West trying to get access to her land. That is the human face, the human toll, of Labor's reckless rush to renewables and devil-may-care attitude to the cost of living. This government's No. 1 priority isn't the cost of living. (*Time expired*)

**Mr BURNELL** (Spence) (17:14): Like the members for Adelaide and Wills, I acknowledge that on 1 July this year all Australian taxpayers received a tax cut under this Labor government—the end of the final countdown. But, much like the Swedish rock band Europe in 1986, this government didn't just deliver on the final countdown. Just prior to that hit single, Europe would release *Rock the Night*, and just a few months prior to these tax cuts the Albanese Labor government would rock the night, and you'd better believe it's right.

This government committed to bigger, better and fairer tax cut than those slated under the old coalition government, ensuring that changes to the tax regime this financial year would benefit the majority of taxpayers and that all taxpayers would share in these benefits as well. That is 13.6 million Australians receiving a tax cut, with 11½ million benefiting from a larger tax cut than they would have received under the Liberal plan. On average, that is 11½ million Australians receiving an extra \$800 a year, with their total tax cut estimated to be \$1,529 on average under this Labor government.

There are people in this place who cry foul over such 'lies', devastated that this government would step in when needed to deliver cost-of-living relief to those who need it most. They would prefer legislation based on an Australia five years ago, before a once-in-a-century global pandemic and global conflict and uncertainty would put Australians under unprecedented cost-of-living pressure. Instead of living in the past like those opposite, this Labor government takes action in the present to deliver a future made in Australia.

To those who are against this notion, let me ask you: of the nearly \$22,000 that the average Australian will have saved by 2035 due to these changes, would you rather that money going into your own pocket? As earners in the highest tax bracket, would you prefer the thousands of dollars every year redirected to cost-of-living relief under this Labor government to end up with you instead? That's what the Liberal plan would have resulted in. I, for one, am pleased that the money did not end up with me, because it is the 84 per cent of taxpayers with the bigger tax cut, thanks to this Labor government, who need it most.

Somehow there are representatives in this place who have said they would rather a bigger tax cut for themselves, at the expense of the every-day Aussies who elected them. One of those representatives is One Nation leader Senator Hanson, who said earlier this year on Sky News: 'I was wanting my tax cuts. I'd rather put the money in my pocket.' She was 'furious' that the situation had changed, to quote the One Nation senator again. That kind of attitude is not what Australians expect from their elected representatives, regardless of your thoughts on tax reform and wealth redistribution. It goes without saying that those who enter this building as representatives ought to work for outcomes benefitting people outside of it, rather than themselves. I am proud that our Labor government has done so—not just in delivering a tax cut for all Australian taxpayers but in establishing a better regime that ensures cost-of-living relief is received by those who need it most.

Our government's No. 1 priority is exactly as stated in the motion before the House: to tackle the cost-of-living pressures facing Australians by ensuring they earn more and keep more of what they earn. That is especially so in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, providing 91 per cent of taxpayers in the electorate of Spence—one of the most

disadvantaged metropolitan areas—with a bigger tax cut, compared to the Liberals' plan. That is 67,000 people in the north who are better off under Labor than they would have been under a coalition government, with an average tax cut for all taxpayers in my electorate estimated at over \$1,200. That is money in the pocket of Aussies saving lives at Lyell McEwan Hospital, money in the pocket of those working hard in the Elizabeth City Centre, and money in the pocket of staff educating our children at Gawler and District College. That is what good governments deliver. They adapt to the circumstances of the nation to deliver policy which meets the needs of the nation, and that is exactly what happened under the Albanese government on 1 July.

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (17:19): I rise to speak on this motion. I acknowledge the comments that the previous speaker made, but if people cast their memories back—and some people speaking today weren't here when the original stage 3 tax cuts and the amended stage 3 tax cuts were announced in the last Morrison government—what wasn't acknowledged is that the low- and middle-income tax offsets, which amounted to \$1,500 in the 2021-22 tax year, vanished in the first Labor budget. Lots of people came to me saying that they had put their tax return in and they were short by up to \$1,500. Then they brought in tax cuts, which are now lauded, but people are still \$1,500 worse off. These tax cuts are also coming at a time of stubborn inflation, which is eating away the value. They're coming with higher government spending, which is driving inflation. A lot of the jobs growth is in NDIS employment and in government related industries where it's only paid by tax dollars, rather than getting investment by people working hard and knowing that they'll keep more of it.

The original stage 3 tax cuts were far better than this. They followed on stage 1 and stage 2 that did address the low-income tax burden of people in Australia. I have one of the largest electorates with the lowest average income in the country. We don't have a high average income in my electorate; we have a lot of pensioners. Compared to the average urban city electorate, I have over 48,000 pensioners in my electorate, and we are very sensitive to how much tax we pay. But we also have people who are aspirational, who are trying to work hard and not lose all their money paying tax. We were getting rid of the whole 32 per cent tax rate, up to \$200,000. That meant people who were working hard, who were happy to do overtime, to take on more responsibility, to work harder and to work longer hours were finally going to get ahead, whereas nothing in this addresses the fact that we have inflation and we have bracket creep. It hasn't addressed the fundamental structural reform. It's a one-off sugar hit that will evaporate in a couple of years—that's what people don't realise. Our tax reform passage was structurally changing the tax rates so that middle-30s tax rate would vanish until you got up to \$200,000.

What else is happening at the moment? This inflation is driving up the cost of living: vegetables are up, processed goods are up, gas is up. Gas is a critical source of energy in the Australian economy, and this government is talking up gas, but, in effect, slowing down gas and shrinking it. As a result we have major shortages in the electricity market and in the manufacturing market; 44 per cent of manufacturing in this country, hey presto, relies on gas. You've got one side of the government saying, 'We want to make things in Australia.' The other side, with the environment driven focus on gas and anti-fossil-fuel policies, is shutting down manufacturing. They're quite schizoid. They don't fully understand the drivers of how manufacturing happens in this country. We are great at heavy smelting, but even that is going to become marginal and go offshore. Look at what has happened with the nickel industry in Western Australia. It's just shut down because Indonesia and places in Asia are buying our high-calorific content black coal, building more coal plants than you can poke a stick at, and driving the cost of electricity down as a result of it. Yet we are starving our manufacturing sector of gas. We need more exploration and more fuels opened up so that we can keep it here onshore and get our manufacturers relief. They're paying higher electricity prices, which is the other driver for manufacturing, and gas is essential in so many things—also for fertiliser. If we don't have gas, we don't make fertiliser in this country. If we have to import gas to make fertiliser and make plastics and all those other things—and it's very expensive at the moment. We could have bountiful, cheap gas making stuff in Australia again, but these tax cuts— (*Time expired*)

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sharkie):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

### Alcohol Excise

**Mr CONAGHAN** (Cowper) (17:25): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) successive, biannual increases in beer and spirits excise on alcohol now sees Australia having amongst the highest excises in the world;

(b) combined with the cost of living pressures, increased costs in energy, refrigeration, wages, raw materials and transport, the cost of alcohol products has risen substantially;

(c) the excise regime is now putting at risk the viability of Australian distillers, brewers, distributors, pubs, clubs and related industries; and

(d) this excise regime is untenable against the current global backdrop, with crucial trading partners including Japan, United Kingdom, and Canada having already moved to freeze alcohol excise duties to relieve pressure on their domestic industries; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) provide immediate cost of living measures for the domestic beer and spirits industry; and
- (b) develop a sensible package of tax reform and policy settings that:
  - (i) balances the responsible consumption of alcohol by the majority of Australians;
  - (ii) supports industry sustainability and growth; and
  - (iii) addresses the social and health impacts of risky and excessive drinking behaviours.

I rise today to speak about the ever increasing government burden being placed on family owned and run businesses in my community—in all our communities—those businesses that help to keep our local economies ticking along and add to the fabric of our uniquely regional experience. That burden is the excise on beer and spirit producers across the country.

Many people would be surprised to know that in 2023 alone the excise increase on beer was up 11 per cent, which means that 60 per cent of the cost of packaged full-strength beer and 47 per cent of mid-strength beer is now comprised of tax. That's almost two-thirds of a beer that you drink or buy from a shop. The excise on spirits has risen 17 per cent since 2020, with up to 63 per cent of the cost of an average bottle of spirits comprised of tax, and since 2014 the increase in excise has been above the CPI. So business is going backwards. We don't do that to any other business. There'd be outrage.

On the Mid North Coast of New South Wales—and, of course, in all our electorates—we're lucky to have some amazing award-winning brewers and distillers, many of whom source their ingredients locally or from their own properties. There are businesses like King Tide Brewing in Coffs Harbour, Bucket Brewery in Kempsey, Moorebeer Brewing and Black Duck Brewery in Port Macquarie, as well as Maria River Distillery and Bellingen Brewery & Co, just to name a few. We're also very lucky to have a healthy variety of pubs and hotels that have served our communities for generations in more ways than one, and if you're from a regional community you'll understand what I mean. For example, the Willawarrin Hotel doesn't just act as the local pub; it's also the go-to place, the hub during the fires and the floods that we have seen not just over the past five years since I've been in this role but for generations. The Flower hotel group sponsors more kids and sporting teams than I can count, and pubs like the West Kempsey Hotel and the Hoey Moey support live bands and live acts and play a significant role in our entertainment industry. But, due to the cost-of-living crisis and significant increases in operating and supply costs over the past three years, these very businesses are balancing on a very narrow tightrope. They're being forced to absorb more and more costs, such as increasing freight charges, electricity, insurance premiums, and they can't pass them onto the consumers. They can't continue to do that. Consumers are becoming increasingly more price-sensitive. They're deciding not to go out because of the cost-of-living pressures.

As I said, this isn't unique to my electorate. We've seen the dire predictions from the industry watchdogs that one in 11 Australian hospitality businesses are set to close over the next 12 months—one in 11. The last thing we want to see is another blow to the cost-to-consumer balance, and that's exactly what these continued excise increases will do. But I will acknowledge those who don't agree with my position on this in relation to alcohol consumption and causal effects. Does alcohol contribute to domestic violence? Absolutely, yes. It's documented and irrefutable. Does alcohol contribute to and lead to significant health difficulties? Absolutely. It's well documented and irrefutable. But the question that needs to be asked when it comes to this specific issue is this: has increasing the excise year on year twice a year reduced problematic behaviours associated with alcohol? The evidence is there. The answer is, 'No.' The price sledgehammer is not effective in improving our health or social outcomes. I call on the government to provide immediate cost-of-living measures for the domestic beer and spirits industry and to work to develop a sensible package of tax reform policy and policy settings that balance the responsible consumption of alcohol by the majority of Australians.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sharkie):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Hogan:** I second the motion and reserve the right to speak.

**Ms LAWRENCE (Hasluck) (17:30):** I need to begin by declaring that I have a conflict of interest in this field of policy. I am a founding shareholder and was until recently a director of Belu Forest Distilling Company. My husband is now a director of that establishment. I thank the member for Cowper. This is an issue close to the heart of my own electorate of Hasluck, which features the Swan Valley and Perth Hills tourism regions and has the largest concentration of breweries, distilleries and vineyards in the Perth greater metropolitan region.

This is not, however, an issue of just great importance to Hasluck. We have world-class wine, brewery and distilling sector that adds over \$11 billion in total value to the Australian economy. While much of this is in wine,

there has also been great growth and recovery across all the other products since the pandemic. According to DFAT, in 2022, we exported \$41 million of whiskey, \$31 million of liqueurs and cordials, \$24 million of beer, \$19 million of gin and \$15 million of vodka. It means wealth and jobs at the farms that grow the grains, grapes and sugars, and it means jobs in transport, infrastructure, construction, retail, hotels, pubs, cellar doors and tourism precincts. Of course, on the home front is an abundance of high-quality beverages made by businesses that come from and add to our neighbourhoods. It is important to acknowledge that, in many respects, industry is thriving, with over 800 small distilleries and over 600 independent breweries as testimony to that. I'm sure we can all agree that we want them to grow into sustainable, medium and large exporting businesses.

Clearly, however, there have been mixed consequences of the excise regime and also of the \$350,000 refund remission scheme introduced by the coalition under Scott Morrison, who on the election trail in 2022 made policy on the fly with little consideration to the consequences. Fast forward to today, and there are claims of excise avoidance, 'craftwashing' and shadow factories. Worse than that is the disincentivising of growth, particularly for the mid-tiers. The Labor government is working to understand these issues across the sector, hence the present inquiry into food and beverage manufacturing by the House Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Resources. The challenge before us is to chart a course that encourages healthy growth and competition.

I'd like to briefly share some illustrative examples and perspectives from the mid-tier manufacturers in my own electorate. Tony Williamson is the CEO of Bailey Brewery Co., a medium producer based in the Swan Valley tourist region. He points out that the current excise tax structure is complex and assists small breweries in the short term. The \$350,000 excise rebate is a great help; however, it hinders growth. Raising it to \$1 million would very much assist growth and employment. He suggests also that the increase twice a year of the excise is counterproductive, as consumers don't understand the tax system. When beer prices go up every six months, they tend to think that we are gouging. It is the complete opposite. They pay more while it eats into our small margins.

Another successful medium-sized distiller, James Young from Old Young's, points out of the excise remission scheme that the intention was to create conditions that would allow small distilleries to grow and create more jobs and investment. Unfortunately, it is having precisely the opposite effect. A producer can sell 11,666 bottles per year excise free. The result is that our cohort of medium-sized manufacturers is now competing with hundreds of small distillers that can undercut our pricing by up to \$30 a bottle. Paul White is the managing director of the medium-sized West Winds Distillers. Paul describes the steady growth of excise pressures over their 12-year journey and says the current excise rate of \$101.85, up from \$71.67 in 2010, combined with the rebate system, is killing our ability to grow and compete profitably. He also points out that in a new trend, at least in WA, any company with a tavern licence can produce their own spirits or beer. Some of these tavern distilleries don't even produce on site but instead purchase from local producers and avoid paying the excise. Paul notes:

We cannot compete against distilleries that are now charging as little as \$17 per bottle ...

He says:

... the Liberal (coalition) government and the ATO created this mess, it would be great if the current government and the ATO at least tried to help us find a way out of it.

Fortunately, the review that is underway will provide an evidence based approach. Of the 121 submissions received to date, the majority, 68, are from wine, beer and spirits producers and businesses impacted by the excise. I'm confident the review will frame their recommendations—and get them right—to lead to strong and sustainable growth and to add value to the economy for Australian consumers and businesses of all sizes.

**Mr HOGAN** (Page—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (17:35): I thank my friend and colleague, the member for Cowper, for moving this motion. I think it's a really important motion. It's important for our communities and for our small businesses that operate this trade.

I think most people would understand that the excise that we put on alcohol goes up twice every year and that it has been doing that for 30 years, so the compounding effect of these price increases is obviously making many things unaffordable. I know the member for Cowper did this when he spoke earlier, but I just want to remind the chamber of two stats, and they are these: 60 per cent of the cost of packaged full-strength beers and 47 per cent of the cost of mid-strength beers is now tax. So, basically, just under half of what a mid-strength beer costs you is a tax and 60 per cent of a full-strength beer is a tax. That's obviously a lot of the cost of the product. The other stat that I want to remind the chamber of is that 63 per cent of the cost of an average bottle of spirit comprises a tax.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker Sharkie, you would know, as I know—we all know—that the intention of this, when it was brought in, was good. The intention was to discourage antisocial behaviour or to discourage behaviour that would not be good for your health, but I think we have gone beyond that now. We've gone way beyond that. Dare I say it, governments are now a little bit addicted to the revenue that they get from this and the compounding effect of that revenue.



We have 600 distilleries operating across Australia. The majority are actually in regional areas, and they contribute over 5,000 jobs. So, besides the product, this is a serious business, a serious employer, in our communities. I know the member for Cowper did something that I won't do. He started naming the names of some of the great businesses in his electorate. I won't do that. I have some great pubs, clubs, distilleries and breweries, but there are stats that I think are important to remind people of. There are over 6,000 pubs and taverns and over 6,000 clubs across Australia. The important stat here is that 90 per cent of them employ 20 persons or fewer. I know that in my case the majority of the distilleries, breweries, pubs, clubs et cetera are small businesses, and they're really important gathering places. They're important for people socially. I think they're important for community harmony. People get together and have fun, socialise and do what they do.

This increase in excise may have a perverse health outcome as well. Every person knows that if you sell alcohol on your premises you're governed by a lot of regulation. I'm actually old enough to remember when there wasn't a lot of regulation about how you sold alcohol and who you sold it to. I probably shouldn't say this, but I think I had my first drink at a pub when I was about 16, and my local priest bought it for me. But, anyway, we won't go into that; he was a good guy. The industry now is educational. Pubs, clubs and distilleries take what they sell very seriously. They sell a good product, but they don't want people to use and abuse it. So the educational things that they do and the way in which they regulate people's behaviour is, I think, important, especially for younger people when they start going out and socialising at these places.

The accommodation and food services sector employs 900,000 full-time, part-time and casual positions across Australia. This excise is also affecting the night-time economy, which is a significant contributor to live performances. Arts and cultural events generate \$146 billion in sales turnover, and 131,000 venues employ more than a million people. The member for Cowper has mentioned this because most people in my community who are involved in this industry are basically telling us that this is now getting to a tipping point. We're not alone across the globe in this. The UK have had an interesting experience. A year or so ago they increased the price of spirits by 10 per cent, and they immediately had a 20 per cent fall in sales. The tax increase contributed to the largest rise in inflation ever recorded in the UK and to lower tax revenue. This has obviously played a role—it's played a good role—but we're getting to the point now where we need to stop this and come up with a more comprehensive policy.

I mentioned before that why this would ever have a perverse health outcome is because more people are making illicit products, which is bad for people's health. I didn't realise my time was about to run out.

**Dr REID** (Robertson) (17:40): The alcohol excise indexation is a longstanding feature of the tax system and has been under governments of both persuasions—under Labor and under the Liberals and Nationals. The alcohol excise rate is indexed to the consumer price index to ensure that alcohol excise receipts keep pace with inflation and that the tax component of alcoholic beverage prices remains broadly stable as a proportion of their total price.

As we know in this chamber, this indexation for alcohol occurs twice a year—it occurs once in February and then again in August—and then revenue from that excise goes into funding essential services for the benefit of the whole community, such as health, defence, education, infrastructure—I could go on. The government listens respectfully to the ideas put to it. We have weighed it up against other priorities and, essentially, within the budgetary constraints that we inherited from the coalition, including a trillion dollars of Liberal Party debt—all of this was taken into consideration.

Inflation is still higher than we would like, but it's less than half its peak and much lower than what we inherited from the coalition. At the election, as we know, inflation had a six in front of it, and now it's got a three in front of it. It's still too high—it is sticky—but it does now have a three in front of it. Underlying inflation has moderated, and the momentum of inflationary pressures is going downwards.

Our budgetary strategy, the last budget that was handed down by the Treasurer, is helping to fight against inflation in this country, not hamper it. Fiscal policy isn't the primary determinant of prices in our economy, but our decisions, the federal Labor government's decisions, in the budget can help, and they are helping. Our budget is helping to take some of the edge off inflation. We have delivered the first back-to-back surpluses in almost two decades, which the RBA governor has said are helping to fight against inflation. We're also on track for larger-than-forecast surpluses, which could be the largest back-to-back surpluses on record.

Demand in our economy is weak because people are under pressure, which is why our economic plan is all about fighting inflation without crunching the economy. Our cost-of-living relief is easing pressure on Australians, and ABS data shows it took half a percentage point off inflation. In the year to the June quarter of 2024, electricity prices rose by six per cent and would have risen by 14.6 per cent without our energy rebates. In the year to the June quarter of 2024, rents rose 7.3 per cent. Without the largest increase to rent assistance in 30 years, they would have risen to 9.1 per cent. In the year to the June quarter of 2024, childcare prices fell by 5.7 per cent but would have risen 14.9 per cent without our policies.

If the coalition truly cared about fighting inflation, if they truly cared about budget repair and about proper and true economic management in this country, they would be voting for our cost-of-living relief. Their track record on this is absolutely shameful. They won't back in the policies that will help everyday Australians not just in my electorate of Robertson and not just in the city centres but right across the country, from the coast to the bush, from the north to the south. An example of this betrayal of the Australian people was when they voted against our energy bill relief. They voted for higher prices. They voted for higher inflation. What the Albanese Labor government is focused on is tackling inflation through responsible and targeted cost-of-living relief, and the Labor surpluses are absolutely assisting with that.

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (17:45): I'm here to speak in strong support of the motion moved by the member for Cowper, which highlights the critical issue of alcohol excise in our country. This is not just about beer and spirits; it's about the survival of small businesses, the livelihood of thousands of Australians and the future of an industry that is prevalent in all of our communities.

We are all aware that the cost of living in Australia has been rising at an alarming rate. Electricity bills, raw material costs, transportation expenses, the list goes on—everything has been going through the roof. But what makes the situation even more untenable for our local brewers and distillers is the relentless biannual increase in alcohol excise. As it stands, Australia is ranked among the highest in the world when it comes to alcohol excise, and this is crippling our domestic industries.

I recently received a letter from Rob Callin, the owner of Macalister Brewing Company, a proud and hardworking small business in my electorate of Leichhardt. Rob's story, unfortunately, is not unique. Like many other small independent brewers, Rob has faced a staggering 40 per cent increase in production costs over the past two years. I think this is the difference we are talking about now: the significant increase that we're seeing in cost of living. It's unprecedented, and it's certainly having a significant impact in this industry. The increase in production costs, coupled with automatic six-monthly increases in excise tax, is pushing these businesses to the brink. Rob tells me that, in the past 12 months, over 20 independent brewers across the country have either gone into voluntary administration or closed their doors for good. The majority of the more than 600 small brewers that are still operating in Australia have been forced to reduce staff just to keep the lights on.

Small breweries like Macalister Brewing Company, Copperlode Brewing Co. and Hemingway's Brewery are an integral part of our local communities. They employ local people, support regional tourism and contribute to the vibrant culture of Far North Queensland. These businesses are also essential to our regional and rural economies. The craft beer industry in Australia provides approximately 35,000 jobs, two-thirds of which are located in regional and rural areas. It's important to remember that these small businesses are not just competing against each other; they're competing against the giant multinational corporations with far more resources available to them. While the excise remission scheme for small businesses is indeed a lifeline, the problem is that the remission is capped at \$350,000, and it's not indexed to inflation. This means that, as the excise goes up every year, the value of this remission effectively erodes, putting even more pressure on small businesses.

It's clear that the current excise regime is unsustainable, out of date and no longer fit for purpose. The government needs to take immediate action to provide relief to our domestic beer and spirits industry. The industry is desperate for a sensible package of tax reform and policy settings that balance the responsible consumption of alcohol with the need to support industry sustainability and growth. It's no secret that Australians like a drink, but the ever-increasing cost of shouting a round for your mates at the pub is becoming prohibitive. The government is going to send punters, publicans and brewers all bankrupt. It's unsustainable and, quite frankly, it's un-Australian.

Our trading partners, including Japan, the United Kingdom and Canada, have already moved to freeze alcohol excise duties to relieve pressure on their domestic industries. I believe that Australia must follow suit. The fact that we might have done it in the past doesn't mean that, with the changing circumstances, we should continue to do it to the point where we wipe out an industry in total. We can't afford to wait any longer. The government must now act to freeze and reduce the alcohol excise, provide targeted relief for small brewers and distillers and ensure the long-term viability of this important industry.

Lastly, I commend the member for Cowper for bringing this motion forward and I hope that the parliament will listen to these concerns of industry and decisively address what is a very critical issue.

**Dr FREELANDER** (Macarthur) (17:50): I rise to speak on the motion moved by the member for Cowper and I thank the member for bringing this matter forward. Alcohol excise indexation is a longstanding feature of the tax system under governments of all persuasions over many, many years. As has been commented upon, it's indexed twice a year to the consumer price index. This is not a new phenomenon, and the relative proportion of tax compared to the cost of these beverages has remained pretty stable over the decades. Price signals are actually very important in reducing the consumption of alcohol. Whilst there are concerns about some of these small businesses, I would be very concerned about reducing the price signals for the consumption of alcohol. There have been a number of reports

published over many years by a number of different research organisations that have shown the importance of price signals in reducing alcohol consumption.

This government is committed to easing cost-of-living pressures. Underlying inflation has moderated under our government compared to the previous Liberal-National government, but the momentum of inflationary pressures is downwards, rather than upwards. Inflation is, of course, higher than we'd like, and I've heard from many constituents in my electorate of Macarthur who own small businesses about how difficult it is at the present time. They've expressed to me their struggles and concerns due to the cost-of-living pressures and expenses. But for the coalition to argue that our government is ignoring the cost-of-living pressures is simply untrue.

We know that people are finding it difficult, and that's why we designed a budget to help take some of the pressures off people, with power bill relief and tax cuts across all taxpayers, rather than just the wealthy few. We've included meaningful cost-of-living relief measures that won't add to inflationary pressures, such as increasing the Medicare levy low-income threshold, as well as the cost-of-living tax cuts, as I've mentioned, and energy bill relief. In health care, we've increased the incentives for bulk billing by doctors. We've introduced cheaper medicines—in particular, the 60-day prescribing, as well as the reduction and freezing of many of the costs associated with purchasing medications. This is just to name a few, and there will be more to come.

The advice is clear that our tax cuts will not add to inflationary pressures, they're broadly revenue neutral and they're for everyone who pays tax. Inflation is less than half of its peak and much lower than what we inherited from the coalition, who have continually voted against cost-of-living relief.

As a paediatrician I'm also very concerned about the burden of alcohol on our health system and the health of Australians due to the consumption of alcohol, particularly that of children and families. The Australian Bureau of Statistics causes-of-death report shows that, in 2022, almost 2,000 people in Australia died of alcohol induced causes directly, such as liver cirrhosis or acute alcohol poisoning. Alcohol induced deaths as part of a cause of death are much higher than this and are recorded as a rate of six deaths for every 100,000 people living in Australia, the highest rate reported in a decade. That is very concerning, and that's why we must not reduce the cost incentives for reducing alcohol consumption.

I've treated children affected by fetal alcohol syndrome and, on a recent trip to Western Australia and the Northern Territory, I saw many people that had been affected by fetal alcohol syndrome. I've seen the burden this puts on our health system and on our criminal justice system. This condition is lifelong and causes a range of physical and mental disabilities.

Alcohol excises are used to reduce the alcohol intake and improve the health of Australians. They remove some of the burden of alcohol related illness on our health system. The revenue from excises, including alcohol excises, goes into funding essential services, not just our health system, and contributes to the costs associated with treating disorders due to alcohol consumption and related things such as involvement with the criminal justice system. We must not reduce this alcohol excise or reduce the trigger for reducing alcohol consumption. We are continually ridiculed by those opposing us who appear not to put the health and livelihoods of Australians first. We must do what we can to reduce the harm caused by alcohol in our society.

**Mr BOYCE (Flynn) (17:55):** From 5 August prices rose two per cent on spirits and beer products. As the industry pointed out, this tax is 'a pain in the glass'. The expectation is that the tax will jack up the price of a schooner of beer at your local pub or club by about a dollar to more than \$10.

I rise to support the member for Cowper's motion today, as I too acknowledge that the beer and spirits excise is unsustainable for our pubs and clubs and our hospitality industry in general. The motion notes that successive biannual increases in beer and spirits excise on alcohol now see Australia having amongst the highest excises in the world. Combined with the cost-of-living pressures, increased costs in energy, refrigeration, wages, raw materials and transport, the cost of alcohol products has risen substantially. The excise regime is now putting at risk the viability of Australian distillers, brewers, distributors, pubs, clubs and related industries. The excise regime is untenable against the current global backdrop, with crucial trading partners, including Japan, the United Kingdom and Canada, already moving to freeze alcohol excise duties to relieve the pressure on their domestic industries.

This is what the industry has said about the tax increase. The Australian Distillers Association's chief executive, Paul McLeay, said:

"The continued Government inaction on this issue is incredibly frustrating for our industry, which already contributes \$15.5bn in added value to the Australian economy and supports more than 100,000 jobs," ...

He stressed that a freeze on spirits tax was urgently needed, along with a partnering of the federal government with industry to create an export body for spirits, as has been successfully done with the wine industry in Australia over recent decades. Craig Michael, the director of Bellarine gin distillery in Victoria, added that his business now faces taxes that are \$25 a litre greater than when the company began in 2015. Mr Michael said:

"These six-monthly increases are becoming increasingly difficult for our business to sustain, and they are impossible to plan for ...

"How can we accurately undertake financial modelling and make business decisions if we don't know what tax rate we will be paying in six months' time?"

The Australian beer sector representatives also are worried about how continuously increasing duties will affect smaller businesses specifically. According to the Independent Brewers Association, while the excise increase will not be pose problems for the 'foreign-owned duopoly that controls the Australian beer market', smaller brewers 'cannot keep absorbing the ballooning costs of making beer without increasing the price of their beer', and this means that 'being able to support your local will be soon out of reach for many, and job losses will continue.' He added that 'Every cent that independent brewers spend on excise is money they cannot invest back into their staff, innovation, sustainability or supporting their communities' and that 'They also do not want to pass these costs on to consumers, but they may be forced to as the cost of materials, energy and freight are still making it almost impossible to keep these Australian owned small businesses alive.' The IBA also pointed to the excise relief measures for craft brewers in place in the UK and Canada as examples of local governments that understand the value of the industries that they bring to their communities. The excise increase marks hikes of more than 10 per cent since the last federal election, according to the Brewers Association of Australia, which its CEO, John Preston, said 'shows that these tax hikes are becoming out of control.'

The only thing more Australian than a fair go is Bundaberg Rum. The Bundaberg Rum distillery in Bundaberg East is a stone's throw away from my electorate of Flynn. So when 63 per cent of the cost of a bottle of Bundaberg Rum is taxed I reckon that's 100 per cent un-Australian. The Australian spirits tax is currently the third-highest in the world. The spirits industry alone will pay \$5 billion in excise this year in Australia, and this tax continues to grow twice a year every year.

Don't grin and bear the tax on Bundy. I'm calling on the Labor government to give a fair go to Bundaberg Rum lovers and beer and spirit drinkers across Central Queensland, and put a stop to these unnecessary price increases. I call on the Labor government to provide an immediate cost-of-living measure for the domestic beer and spirits industry.

**Dr ANANDA-RAJAH** (Higgins) (18:00): Australians have embraced the craft beer experience, and it is an elevated experience characterised by an upmarket ambience—not the beer-soaked carpets and sticky tables of street-corner pubs—restaurant standard food and a wide range of brews. And these businesses are local, with venues in our suburbs or regional areas associated with strong connections to the community. These small businesses have surged, accounting for eight per cent of the beer sector, with businesses going from a couple of dozen in 2003 to almost 700 in 2023.

The period post lockdown was lucrative as people splurged on craft beers, but those good times did not last. For many reasons the cycle of boom has been followed by bust. A perfect storm of factors has contributed to this outcome. The routine indexation of the alcohol excise is one factor, but there are many others: changing consumer behaviour—Australians are simply drinking less beer than they used to; worker shortages driving up wages—a real competition for talent; rent increases; energy shock from the war in Ukraine badly exposing our ageing energy grid that is over-dependent on fossil fuels; and supply chain shortages increasing the costs of ingredients. In short, it is an inflationary storm fuelling a cost-of-living crunch leading to higher interest rates, which has had the effect of snapping wallets shut. It's been a vicious cycle.

It is predicted up to two-thirds of these businesses will go under in an industry dominated by a Japanese duopoly, emphasising the importance of our competition and merger reforms that this government is promoting. Some describe this as market rationalisation. Businesses vulnerable to downturns without big enough moats have been picked off by the so-called free market. What's missing is the hard work of the founders—the people driving these businesses, putting their heart and soul into them, supporting locals and local communities and gentrifying neighbourhoods by attracting other businesses when they arrive.

Also missing are the social, economic and health harms associated with alcohol; that's a narrative I am more than familiar with. Patients with alcohol associated health problems were the norm when I practised but I saw a change from the usually older male or female with alcohol abuse and its advanced manifestations, whether they be cognitive impairment, dementia, memory failure, alcohol withdrawal seizures, cirrhosis, peripheral neuropathy or cardiomyopathy. 'Every major organ affected' was usually the diagnosis made from the end of the bed. The change I saw was in more younger men presenting to the emergency department after the lockdowns finished. One was a man, a young professional and IT worker, who presented with yellow eyes; he was so jaundiced from alcohol hepatitis. Another I treated was a young father in his mid- to late 40s who, in an alcohol fuelled episode, had destroyed his kitchen and punched a hole in the wall, scaring away his kids and wife. In that bed he wept, as he had been estranged from his family.

The social harms of alcohol misuse or abuse are rarely seen by most Australians because of the stigma associated with them. But they are evident to any healthcare professional. Our hospital wards are full of these patients day in and day out. Hospitals, GPs, community care, social workers, community and children's services, housing services, legal services, the justice system and police—all are the services needed to deal with one family affected by the harms of alcohol. Multiply that up by the over one in four Australians who are adults who drink too much. In 2022 the ABS reported over 1,700 alcohol related deaths; it's likely an underestimate because most of this is hidden. The social harms, like domestic violence, are even greater, and someone has to foot the bill.

The Liberals are now singling out the excise, when they did nothing about this reform when they were in power for over a decade. We have listened respectfully to the industry, but we will not be adjusting the excise at this stage. Instead, our focus is to support individuals, families and businesses during this inflationary phase, and we're doing that with a range of measures: tax cuts, energy rebates, grants for small businesses and so on. Had we inherited a more resilient balance sheet, we could have looked at short-term relief.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Archer):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next setting.

### Wages

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this House:

- (1) notes that on Monday, 1 July 2024, 2.6 million low paid workers will receive a third consecutive pay rise; and
- (2) acknowledges the Government's number one priority is to tackle the cost of living pressures facing Australians by ensuring they earn more and keep more of what they earn.

**Ms ROBERTS (Pearce) (18:05):** Today I want to talk about the significant progress the Albanese Labor government has made in supporting low-paid workers and ensuring fair wages for all Australians. From the very beginning, this government has made a clear commitment to advocate on behalf of low-paid workers, and the results have been nothing short of outstanding. Over three consecutive Fair Work Commission annual wage reviews, we have seen a remarkable \$5.30 per hour increase in the earnings of full-time award workers. To put it into perspective, that's an extra \$200 per week or \$10,400 per year. This is a direct result of our government standing up for those who need it most. For full-time minimum wage workers, the increase has been even more substantial. We have overseen a \$3.77 per hour boost to the minimum wage, translating to an extra \$143 per week or \$7,451 per year before tax. This means that, in just over two years, the annual salary for a full-time minimum wage worker has risen from just under \$40,000 to just under \$48,000.

This is what happens when you have a government that goes in to bat for low-paid workers. When you show up at the commission and advocate for people who are doing it tough, you get results, and we've achieved these wage increases while keeping unemployment at record lows and working to moderate inflation. We understand that people are under pressure, and pay rises are a tangible way that the government is helping. Just imagine how much harder things would be for families if the Liberals had their way and these pay rises never happened. It is worth noting that it took the coalition an entire decade in office to achieve the same increase in the minimum wage that we have delivered in just one term. Why? It's because the previous Liberal and National government never once argued for a rise in the minimum wage. They wanted to keep wages low, and unfortunately that's one of the few promises they actually delivered on. The Liberals want Australians to work longer for less. Labor, on the other hand, wants workers to earn more and keep more of what they earn.

The wage increases we've seen are a direct result of the advocacy from the Albanese Labor government, but our work doesn't stop there. Our industrial relations changes are also delivering incredible results, with nearly half a million more workers now covered by enterprise agreements and with award workers benefiting from \$10,000 pay rises. Our secure jobs, better pay laws are fixing the bargaining system. Just look at the numbers. The Fair Work Commission approved 1,022 enterprise agreements in the first quarter of 2024 alone, covering nearly 365,000 employees—the highest number of employees covered by newly approved agreements in over a decade. Furthermore, the Albanese Labor government has just committed to funding a 15 per cent pay increase for childcare workers over the next two years, fulfilling a commitment to better address the wage inequity for workers in this crucial sector. This initiative has received widespread support from businesses, academics, unions and industry groups alike. For an average worker receiving the award rate, the boost will mean an extra \$103 per week being paid by the end of the year, increasing to \$155 a week by December 2025. This move is another example of the Albanese Labor government's dedication to ensuring that workers in essential yet historically underpaid sectors receive the recognition and compensation they deserve.

The Liberals voted against our secure jobs, better pay legislation, claiming that our laws would close down Australia, but they were sorely mistaken. Our laws have revitalised the bargaining system, meaning employers and

employees are back at the table, negotiating agreements on both sides. As a result, employers are seeing better productivity, workers are getting better pay rises and industrial action has plummeted. In fact, the number of days lost to industrial action was seven times higher in the last quarter of the Morrison government than it is now. On the other hand, the coalition's economic policy was built on low wages. In their final submission to the *Annual wage review*, they even had a section titled, 'The importance of low-paid work'. They're upfront about wanting to keep wages low and [inaudible] that have now been made. But Labor is different. We are helping Australians with the cost of living. From July 1, we are delivering tax cuts for every Australian taxpayer, \$300 in energy bill relief for households, a freeze on the cost of PBS medicines, more funding to build homes and much more. We have already delivered cheaper child care, fee-free TAFE and the biggest investment ever in the expanding of bulk-billing. All this is part of a longer-term economic plan to help Australians right now, bring down inflation and plan for a future made in Australia. We know there's more to do, and that is why we'll keep working hard every single day to deliver for every Australian.

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina) (18:10): Here we go again—just another Labor motion taking credit for the sun coming up. It's just nonsense—this whole motion and notion that somehow Labor is there for the low-paid worker. Ask someone like Bruce Billson.

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**Mr McCORMACK:** I hear the scoffing. Bruce Billson is a friend of the worker and small business. No-one should criticise the role he plays in Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. He quite correctly pointed out in a report called *Energising enterprise*, released on 8 August, 14 steps to improve small and family business, which, I might add, employs some 2.5 million people and generates nearly \$600 billion of economic activity. We know that almost 98 per cent of businesses in Australia are small. Small business provides jobs for 5.36 million people, or 42 per cent of the private workforce. What ASBFEO does is ensure those small businesses can employ more people. At the end of the day, that's the name of the game.

Yet go out and ask those people who work for small businesses—not necessarily the people who run the small business but those who work for it—and are they any better off now than they were prior to May 2022? You'll get a resounding 'no'. Look at some of the figures those low-paid and other workers are confronting. Food has gone up by 11 per cent and housing by 15 per cent. That's if you get a house or find rent. Electricity has gone up by 22 per cent. We heard the Prime Minister on no fewer than 97 occasions prior to the election talking about a \$275 cut to power bills. Where did that go? Yes, Labor say, 'Well, we're doing \$300,' because they picked a figure that was just slightly over \$275 and then introduced it two long years after they came into power. I can see those opposite smiling because they know it's the truth; they know what I'm saying is correct.

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**Mr McCORMACK:** Gas has gone up by 25 per cent and health by 11 per cent. That's important, because, if you actually get health right, you have the people far happier than they are now. Education has increased by 11 per cent and financial services and insurance by 11 per cent. That's if you can get it, because some insurers aren't that prepared to always pay for services in those flood zones. And Labor comes in with one of these motions saying, 'The sun is shining, all is fantastic, everybody is happy, and the birds are shrill in the trees.' But it's not right, because people have far less disposable income now than when the coalition was in government. We hear the Treasurer so often talk, and all the talking points just do my head in sometimes. They'll come in and go, 'Oh, the Liberal Party—a trillion dollars worth of debt!' It's not just the Liberal Party; it was actually a coalition helped by the Nationals. What we did—

*An honourable member interjecting—*

**Mr McCORMACK:** Just listen. This is important. What we did during COVID was save people's lives. That's why a lot of money was spent.

*Ms Coker interjecting—*

**Mr McCORMACK:** Yes, Member for Corangamite, it was. It was saving people's lives. But for that assistance, people would have lost their jobs. There would have been soup kitchen and unemployment queues longer than there were in the Great Depression. Homelessness, let alone the health outcomes for the nation, would have been terrible. We saved people's lives.

Nobody in this room was in those meetings that I attended when the Chief Medical Officer said, 'We will lose tens of thousands of people within weeks if something isn't done.' We did it. We should be acknowledged for that—instead of you coming in with these silly notions and silly motions talking about how good you are and puffing out your chests out and saying: 'Well, aren't we good? Low-paid workers are being looked after.' They're not being looked after! They have far less money than they had prior to May 2022. Shame on you all.

**Ms COKER** (Corangamite) (18:15): Did you know, Deputy Speaker Archer, that 2.6 million low-paid workers have now received their third consecutive pay rise since the Albanese government came to office? This means an hourly average increase of \$5.30 for all full-time award workers. That's an extra \$200 a week or \$10,400 a year, before tax. Significantly, we've seen a \$3.77 per hour increase to the minimum wage. All in all, our government's decision to advocate on behalf of low-paid workers in three consecutive Fair Work Commission annual wage reviews has delivered astounding results. For a full-time minimum wage worker, that's an extra \$143 a week or \$7,451 a year, before tax. A full-time minimum wage worker's annual salary has gone from \$40,175 to \$47,627 in just over two years. This is part of our government's plan to ensure that people earn more and keep more of what they earn.

We've delivered these wage increases while keeping unemployment at record lows, and we're delivering much-needed cost-of-living support without impacting inflation. We know that people throughout our communities are under pressure, and pay rises are a tangible way that government is helping. Just imagine how catastrophic the cost of living would be if those opposite had blocked our tax cuts or these pay rises. It took the coalition an entire wasted decade in office to lift the minimum wage by as much as we have in our first term—in just our first two years of government. That's because the previous coalition government never argued for a rise to the minimum wage. They wanted to keep wages low. It's in their DNA. The fact of the matter is that the Leader of the Opposition wants Australians to work longer for less. In contrast, Labor wants workers to earn more and keep more of what they earn. The Fair Work Commission's decision to increase wages for low-paid workers and, in particular, for women working in feminised sectors, including aged care and early learning, was a direct result of advocacy by the Albanese Labor government.

Our approach to workforce relations is delivering incredible results, with nearly half a million more workers covered by enterprise agreements. Contrary to the coalition's scare campaign, the Albanese government's secure jobs, better pay laws are helping to fix the bargaining system. For example, the Fair Work Commission approved 1,022 enterprise agreements in the first quarter of 2024. Agreements approved in the March quarter of 2024 covered more than 364,000 employees, the highest number of employees covered by newly approved agreements in more than a decade. We had 2.14 million people covered by current enterprise agreements in the March quarter of 2024, around 480,000 more people than when we came to office, despite the coalition's fearmongering, saying our laws would close down Australia.

However, things are different. We are open for business. Workers have received a pay rise, taxpayers have received tax cuts, parents are receiving more paid parental leave, and jobs are more secure. That is what decent enterprise agreements deliver.

We know Australians are under pressure right now, and that's why Labor is focused on helping all Australians with the cost of living. We're delivering a freeze on the cost of PBS medicines for every Australian, more funding to build more homes in every part of the country, and energy price relief for small businesses and every single household. We're supporting students with fee-free TAFE and HECS relief, and we've secured the biggest investment ever in expanding bulk-billing.

For small business, our government is delivering \$641 million in targeted supports as part of this year's budget. This includes a further targeted 12 months of the \$20,000 instant asset relief and \$10 million to provide additional support for small business. This is part of our plan to provide more support for small-business owners as we continue to secure better wages for workers. In closing, I'm proud to be a member of the Albanese Labor government, a government that's committed to supporting workers with better wages, better conditions and a better future.

**Mr BRIAN MITCHELL** (Lyons) (18:20): What a big surprise—only one member of the coalition has spoken on a motion before this House on low-paid workers. Nobody else has bothered to turn up to speak on this very important matter affecting millions of Australians. Shame on those opposite!

We know in the Albanese Labor government that Australians are doing it tough. The Albanese Labor government is working hard every single day to ensure that hardworking Australians, including students and pensioners, are all getting cost-of-living relief through this tough time. In the past few weeks we have seen global stock market volatility due to a drop in US job growth and tech earnings, and we've seen Japanese interest rates affecting Asian markets which in turn has affected the Australian dollar. Some things are out of our hands; we are a small boat on global seas. But there are things we can control, and we are getting on with that job.

On 1 July, there were six reasons for hardworking Australians to celebrate. On 1 July, every Australian taxpayer received a tax cut, with almost 11 million Australians receiving a bigger tax cut than they would have under the Liberal's stage 3 plan. I'm pleased to say that something like 90 per cent of Tasmanian workers received a bigger tax cut than they would have under the Liberals. On 1 July, every household received \$300 in energy bill relief.

On 1 July, there was an increase to superannuation from 11 per cent to 11.5 per cent, and that will increase to 12 per cent next year. These incremental increases, which come after a long period of nothing happening under the Liberal Party in government, will go a huge way towards helping workers retire with thousands more so that they can enjoy a dignified secure retirement, which is what superannuation was designed for.

On 1 July, the Labor government improved paid parental leave. We've increased PPL to 26 weeks by July 2026. We've removed the dad and partner pay in favour of an expanded gender neutral and flexible scheme, and we've expanded eligibility to access the scheme. On 1 July, we expanded and strengthened our cheaper medicines policy, freezing PBS co-payments for five years for healthcare cardholders and pensioners, saving Australians millions of dollars.

On 1 July, 2.6 million Australian workers received a pay rise, including those on the minimum wage. That's 20 per cent—one in five—of the Australian workforce. Australians can now compare their pay slips from this financial year to one from June, and they can see the difference that Labor's cost-of-living measures are making to the everyday cost of living. For the average Australian working family, it can mean a saving over the year of the cost of a monthly mortgage repayment. We're talking, sometimes, in the order of hundreds of dollars extra in people's pay packets which means thousands of dollars over the year.

I'm pleased to say that our Labor government has granted aged-care workers a 15 per cent pay rise, and, just last week, we announced that early childhood educators will get a staged 15 per cent pay rise too. This retains and attracts new employees and gives carers and parents the ability to work more hours in these critical industries, which, for too long, have attracted such low rates of pay.

Becoming a family carer of the old or an educator of the young is, of course, a big part of life. Having the peace of mind that your loved ones, young and old, are cared for or educated while you earn a living alleviates the financial family burden that comes with it. There's a lot more work to do. We recognise that on this side of the House. We know the job is not done. There's a lot more work to do as we finally balance these cost-of-living measures with responsible economic management.

The Reserve Bank has forecast that headline inflation is expected to dip below three per cent in the next year due to the government's cost-of-living measures, so we are getting it right. Let's remember that when Labor came to government inflation had a six in front of it and low wages were an intended economic outcome. In 2019, a former Liberal minister was quoted as saying that under the Liberals low wages were 'a deliberate feature of our economic architecture'. Our government knows we've got work to do, and we're getting on with that job every single day.

**Ms LAWRENCE** (Hasluck) (18:26): I think one thing that completely separates us from the coalition is our position on wage policy. There can be absolutely no other area in which the fact that the Labor government will always back workers is more stark. It's our priority; it always has been and always will be. We know that without ensuring workers have the right to fair pay and safe working conditions and the means to be able to organise to ensure they get their fair entitlements, this country will not be able to grow. It won't be productive, and we won't enjoy the success that we have to date. So I absolutely do thank the member for Labor for this important motion.

We are completely proud of the fact that we have seen successive, consecutive wage rises for low-paid workers. This government has taken action across many portfolio areas to assist Australians during difficult times: energy bill relief, fee-free TAFE, tax cuts for all. I could go on, and I will: more bulk-billing in Hasluck and around the country—thanks to this government's policies—cheaper child care, cheaper medicines and rent assistance. These are making a difference to every person living in my electorate and across the country.

It is here, in wages policy, that, as I say, we unearth the true difference between the major parties and underscore the hypocrisy of each and every coalition member who stands in this place—or the other—and tries to speak coherently about the cost of living. Leaving aside the fact that the coalition would not have enacted energy bill relief, fee-free TAFE, tax cuts for all or more bulk-billing, it is this crucial area of wages policy, where the government has, from the very outset, supported the wage cases that have seen those three executive increases in the minimum wage, from which the coalition has been completely absent. Where were they for the nine years while wages flatlined and ordinary families were falling behind? Where they were and what they were doing, and failing to do, is well documented by the McKell Institute in a report from April 2022 by Edward Cavanough titled *Stuck in Neutral: The Policy Architecture Driving Slow Wage Growth in Australia*. Cavanough lists seven deliberate policy choices of the Morrison-Dutton government that he described as having constituted 'a coordinated program of wage suppression', these being support for a reduction in penalty rates, overseeing a surge in work visas for low-paid temporary migrant workers, inaction on wage theft and underpayment, opposition to increases in minimum wages, public sector wage freezes, changes in the composition of the Fair Work Commission and allowing a sharp expansion of the unregulated gig economy in which workers have little or no bargaining power.



It is salient indeed that the present government has taken and is taking action across every one of these policy areas. Average workers in Australia have nothing to thank the coalition for after nine years of policies deliberately designed to reduce wages growth. Average workers in Australia were simply worse off after the coalition years. They were in no fit state to face the pandemic when that hit, nor were they in a good position to face the cost-of-living crisis that has followed. If anyone wants to vote for the coalition in the election next year, they will need to find a reason other than their hip pocket, because the coalition let average Aussies down.

In contrast, real wages growth is back under Labor. People are now earning more under this government and, together with our tax cuts for all Australians, they are keeping more of what they earn. There are many reasons why people are earning more. Part of the story is wage growth itself. This is now recovering, after workers found their real purchasing power declining for years under the coalition. Other reasons for earning more include the government's childcare policies, allowing more people to work, and to work for longer hours, if they wish to; fee-free TAFE, allowing people to skill up without worrying about the cost; increases to parenting payments; and, of course, those tax cuts. We have managed this return to reasonable and sensible wages growth while bringing inflation down from the 6.1 per cent high left to us by the coalition. Indeed, our action across child care, rent and energy rebates has had an anti-inflationary effect at a time when this was dearly needed.

The coalition's reflex seems to be to squeeze ordinary people at every turn. Then they show up here and try to pretend that they are concerned about the cost of living. They simply cannot have it both ways. There's an election coming in less than a year. When it does, I hope and trust that the electors of Hasluck and those elsewhere recognise the true and demonstrated support of the Albanese Labor government for working people and that they hold firm against the empty slogans that the coalition has to offer.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Archer):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### Energy

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that:

(a) natural gas is a key pillar of the Australian economy which employs 80,000 people in the industry supply chain, largely in regional areas;

(b) natural gas is connected to more than five million Australian homes and provided 42 per cent of the energy consumed by the Australian manufacturing sector in 2022;

(c) natural gas is essential to Australia achieving its net zero target by 2050;

(d) Australia has a critical role in providing a reliable source of natural gas to trusted trading partners which rely on our supplies for energy security; and

(e) regional Australia has benefitted enormously from long-term investment in the natural gas sector;

(2) notes that:

(a) new natural gas supply is needed to meet energy demand and reduce emissions in Australia and overseas;

(b) natural gas shortfalls will severely impact energy security and add to cost of living pressures; and

(c) the natural gas sector provided \$17.1 billion in taxes, royalties and charges in 2023-24 allowing governments to invest in critical services and public infrastructure; and

(3) urges the Government to take urgent action to provide policy certainty which allows the industry to bring on the new gas supply needed to address forecast shortfalls, ensure Australia's energy security, and rebuild investor confidence.

**Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (18:31):** My purpose in supporting the member for O'Connor in moving this motion is to highlight the role that natural gas has played in our nation historically but also the role it continues to play today and into the future. I also want to take the opportunity to raise my concerns about some of the extreme green madness I'm seeing in my own state. It's coming primarily from members of the Greens party but also from some members of the Labor Party. They want to abandon gas altogether as an energy source in my state. It reminds me of the debate we've been having in Victoria in relation to native timber, where we have a coalition of Labor and Greens members in the urban areas telling country people what jobs they can and can't have. They're quite happy to take hardwood timber from other countries and other states but not prepared to use their own timber from their own state.

My direct experience in this area relates to the offshore oil and gas activity in the Bass Strait basin. For more than 50 years now, the joint venture partners have worked in Bass Strait generating oil and gas; in more recent times, gas has been the more dominant resource harvested. That has underpinned the wealth of Gippsland, and Victoria more

broadly. It has provided a cheap and reliable energy source which has been incredibly important for my region, and we're directly impacted by government policies in this area.

It's important to point out that natural gas remains a key pillar of the Australian economy. It employs 80,000 people in the industry supply chain, largely in regional areas like mine. Natural gas is connected to more than five million Australian homes, and in 2022 it provided 42 per cent of the energy consumed by the Australian manufacturing sector. I find it to be madness to listen to the Victorian environment minister calling for a complete ban on new gas connections in residential areas. It is also important to note the contribution the natural gas sector provides to governments, with \$17.1 billion in taxes, royalties and charges in 2023-24, which obviously allows governments to invest in critical services and public infrastructure.

I am reminded of the Treasurer's budget speech last year, when he noted the improved fiscal outlook—the improvement to the budget bottom line—and he attributed that to higher prices for 'the things we sell overseas'. I've got to say I was staggered. The Treasurer of Australia couldn't bring himself to say what those things were. He couldn't say 'coal', 'iron ore', 'gas' or 'agricultural products'. He was too embarrassed for some reason—a Labor treasurer too embarrassed to mention what those things we sell overseas are. I'm not embarrassed to mention them. I'm proud of the people right across Australia, particularly in regional Australia, in those industries. They leave their homes, often travelling interstate—they're often fly-in fly-out workers—to access these resources which underpin the wealth of our nation. They keep the lights on. They earn those export dollars that pay for the schools, the hospitals, the roads—everything we want in our own electorates—and the Treasurer of Australia was only prepared to say 'the things we sell overseas'.

This industry is desperate for some policy certainty going into the future. It's desperate for some policy certainty from government so it can make the long-term investment decisions which will allow those companies to continue to be part of the energy solution both at home here in Australia and abroad, particularly in the Asian region. It's desperate for policy certainty which will allow it to continue to employ those thousands of Australians in a wide range of areas. I believe in a balanced approach to the challenge of reducing our emissions. I believe we will be seeing more and more renewables in the market in the future. In fact, gas is an important element to that balanced approach because gas can underpin the intermittency of some of the solar and wind resources we're bringing onstream around Australia at the moment. I support the member for O'Connor in urging the federal government to take urgent action to provide that policy certainty which allows industry to bring on that new gas supply needed to address the forecast shortfalls, to ensure we can have energy security and to rebuild investor confidence around our nation.

In conclusion, I point out that Australian natural gas is the foundation of energy security and helping us achieve net zero in our region. Australian LNG represents a significant pillar of energy and demand in the region, and the forecast demand is expected to grow. Demand in the South-East Asian region is forecast to increase as much as tenfold by 2050. These exports, as I've already pointed out, are so critical in helping us as a nation achieve the funding required to invest in the resources and public infrastructure we want in our electorates right across Australia. I urge those opposite to come on board and support the gas sector.

**Mr REPACHOLI (Hunter) (18:36):** I rise in response to the motion moved by the member for O'Connor. I start by clearly stating my support for gas. We need it; there's no doubt about that. There's a lot in this motion I agree with and that the government agrees with. It is true that it is an important part of our economy and it employs a lot of people. There's a new gas-fired peaking station in Kurri, right next door to my electorate, and I'm sure a lot of people in my electorate have a job just because of this—and that's great.

The motion also points out:

(c) natural gas is essential to Australia achieving its net zero target by 2050.

This is all very true. That's why natural gas plays a very important role in our energy policy. We can't put more renewable energy into the grid without firming baseline supply of energy provided by gas.

The motion goes on to state other basic facts and figures, like:

(b) natural gas is connected to more than five million Australian homes and provided 42 per cent of the energy consumed by the Australian manufacturing sector in 2022—

and—

(c) the natural gas sector provided \$17.1 billion in taxes, royalties and charges in 2023-24 ...

At the end of the day the Labor Party backs gas, and our policies show this.

What I'm confused about is why someone who was a member of the previous government wants to have a discussion with us about energy policy certainty. The member for O'Connor, who I have a lot of respect for, must be having some trouble with his memory, because, if mine serves me correctly, there's one very important detail he's leaving out—well, actually, there are 23 important details he's leaving out in this discussion about energy policy

certainly! When they were in government they had over 20 energy policies, and just a few weeks ago, from his nice building in the city, the Leader of the Opposition announced No. 23—a policy that will impact my electorate but that he announced 200 kilometres away from my electorate without speaking to any of the voters in the Hunter. Maybe I'm being a little too harsh; maybe I can't refer to this as energy policy No. 23 because, usually, a policy has some details with it. This one doesn't seem to have that.

Either way, that lot opposite have made more energy policies over the past decade than I have fingers and toes on both my hands and feet put together. But here they are today wanting to talk to us about energy policy. Forgive me for my confusion, but I don't think this is a topic they are even slightly qualified to discuss. The only thing you can be certain about with energy policies announced by those opposite is it won't be long until another one is announced.

Let's compare and contrast that with our track record on energy. Our country went from having a government that went through energy policies faster than I can go through a burger to this government, which has taken immediate and strong action to shore up gas supply and manage price impacts by introducing the mandatory Gas Market Code, strengthening the Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism and releasing the Future Gas Strategy, and this has worked. The mandatory gas code has now secured more than 600 petajoules of domestic gas for east coast users out till 2033—and, by the way, that is something the coalition voted against. Maybe they were worried that our policies might actually work.

The coalition have no leg to stand on when it comes to gas. They have no credibility whatsoever. We know it, the public knows it, and industry knows it too. They called on you to vote for the PRRT reform, which you stood in the way of. They called on you to support legislation to implement the London protocol amendments, which you held up in the Senate for way longer than it needed to be. They called on you to support the Gas Market Code and you refused. Those opposite filled this motion with a lot of facts and figures, but let's get one thing straight: the track record of those opposite shows that, once again, it falls to the Labor government to clean up their mess and drive a responsible, orderly energy transition across the economy, with affordable renewables being the centrepiece, backed up by firmed hydro, batteries and gas-fired power stations.

**Mrs McINTOSH** (Lindsay) (18:41): Since the Albanese Labor government took office, gas prices have gone up 25 per cent. It's no wonder that so many Aussie manufacturers who rely on gas have closed their doors over the last two years. Let's not forget the five million Australian homes that use gas to power the heater in the middle of winter, cook the food and heat up water. It is a national disaster that this government has turned its back on the gas industry in this country.

Households are going into financial hardship to pay their energy bills. I have food charities in my Western Sydney electorate of Lindsay that are now paying families' power bills. Many mums and dads work so hard in my community, but under this cost-of-living crisis they are getting smashed with higher mortgage rates, higher grocery bills and higher petrol costs. But these parents are proud and don't want to take food away from those in need, so they've asked charities to help them out with paying their electricity and gas bills instead.

Recently, with the deputy leader of the opposition and shadow minister for industry, I visited a steel manufacturer in Emu Plains. They told us that their gas bill has gone up almost 40 per cent in the last two years. A local gym owner in Penrith told me that their power bill has more than doubled since Labor took office. Another manufacturer in Jamisontown spoke to me about their energy bills rising 100 per cent. This manufacturer looked at putting solar panels on their roof to assist with their energy costs, but the roof structure just can't hold them. We also need to remember that it doesn't matter how many solar panels there are in the world; we still need gas to power furnaces to create plastics and for steel and for the sovereign manufacturing that is so important in Australia.

These cases that I just mentioned are not extraordinary, but they are the crippling reality of doing business under the Labor government. These figures are dire for so many manufacturers across the country, particularly those in Western Sydney, like those in Emu Plains, Penrith and Saint Marys in my own community. Renewables are only driving up the cost of electricity and gas. Does the government not think an additional 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines across the country isn't going to raise costs? These costs will be baked into the bills of every young person renting, every mum and dad in the suburbs and every senior trying to get by.

Under Labor, 90 per cent of our 24/7 baseload power is going to be forced out of the energy grid in a matter of years. This is real, and we need to take action today to prevent blackouts and brownouts continuing to occur in our energy system. That's why the coalition supports gas alongside renewables and nuclear to boost our 24/7 baseload capacity and ensure energy security into the decades to come. Manufacturers, small businesses, regional communities and suburbs across Australia need and deserve reliable and affordable energy.

Gas being up 25 per cent isn't something the Labor government likes to talk about. Another figure they shy away from is \$275. This is the figure that the Prime Minister repeated around 100 times going into the 2022 election. He

said that, in 2025, energy bills would be lowered, based on 2022 prices, by \$275. That has not happened at all. Every single Australian knows this is a broken promise. The default market offer price for Western Sydney has gone up almost \$1,000, factoring Labor's accounting. The government need to own up to their mistake and admit that the \$275 figure will never eventuate for families and business owners.

A renewables-only approach sends negative signals to international markets who rely on our natural resources. One of our closest partners, Japan, needs our gas. We also need our gas. Unless this government does something soon, we will see our neighbours and allies go elsewhere for energy sources. We need more gas projects approved to get more gas into our domestic market to drive down energy costs and firm up our energy system. Gas sites can be turned on and rapidly produce energy for consumption across Australia. Gas is vital to produce an energy resource to power our factories and our homes. Gas is vital for domestic energy security. We need 24/7 power to keep the lights on across Australia. Gas is vital for our international partners and, in turn, our security in supporting affiliates with energy and other products that will assist our own geostrategic interests. It's about time this Albanese Labor government wakes up and backs our gas industry, for the sake of our nation.

**Mr LAXALE** (Bennelong) (18:46): Over my time in this parliament, nowhere I have seen the Liberals and Nationals in debate acknowledge—and they do not acknowledge it in this motion—that we are living in a climate crisis and that we need to take immediate action. It is not in this motion, it's not what they're saying in parliament and it's not even in any policy that they put forward to the electorate. How can the alternative government of Australia, in 2024, still not acknowledge the need for meaningful action to address climate change? The Liberals and Nationals still haven't come to terms with where Australia and the world are on this. Nothing tells us this more than their pathological and incessant opposition to renewables. They oppose renewables offshore. They oppose renewables onshore. They oppose transmission, even when it's to connect their own project, Snowy 2.0, to the grid. They promote conspiracy theories about renewables in parliament and they use inflammatory language at rallies outside of it. And their latest energy thought bubble relies on nuclear, something which would not be in the grid until at least 2040. Their 23rd energy policy now rests on this technology, the most expensive form of new power. Nuclear, of course, is not only incompatible with renewable energy but, due to its long lead time, will only give fossil fuels a new lease of life in electricity generation.

The science and the economics tell us that we need to replace fossil fuels with firmed renewable energy. It was for these reasons that this government was elected. Bennelong elected me to help reduce emissions, and Australia elected a parliament to take action on climate change. Australia has told us that we must reduce emissions, with renewables at the heart of our energy production. Our government has set achievable targets: a 43 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and 82 per cent renewable energy in our grids by 2030. They're ambitious but they're achievable. Our focus is on growing renewable energy sources like solar and wind and clean dispatchable capacity such as battery storage to meet these targets. This transition is happening right now, and it must continue.

Since we came to office, renewables in the national energy market have increased by 25 per cent. Minister Plibersek has approved 55 renewable energy projects in two years, enough to power three million homes. To meet our targets, that growth must not only continue but accelerate. Over 90 per cent of coal will exit our energy market by 2040, and that is a good thing. To replace that coal, we cannot wait for nuclear and we certainly cannot afford nuclear. Experts have told us over and over that the best way to replace coal is predominantly with renewables, with gas helping us get there. We have been historically dependent on coal for electricity generation. Fossil fuels currently contribute around 68 per cent to total electricity generation. However, this has to end and is diminishing rapidly.

We are committed to ensuring that this transition happens in a way that provides reliable and affordable energy to all Australians. The role that gas will need to play in that is an important one, but it's not a dominant one. Gas will be a bridge to firm the renewable energy in our grid, because the great thing about gas is that it can be turned off when it's not needed. In a decarbonised economy, the role of gas around the world will change. We must plan for that change and be upfront about it. In the near term, gas will firm renewables as more wind, solar and storage come online. We must prioritise the expansion of renewable energy and ensure that gas is only used when necessary to support the transition. You see, unlike the Liberals, who've had 23 energy policies and been unable to land one, our policy is working. It's clear, it's transparent, and we're delivering it.

The government want to reduce emissions, and we want an Australia powered by renewables. Our plan confronts the economic and environmental need to reduce our use of fossil fuels, while also ensuring that our renewables transition is firmed when needed. Instead of attacking renewables and giving fossil fuels a new lease of life, this parliament should be working together to make the transition to renewable energy as quick and effective as possible.

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey—Opposition Whip) (18:51): South Australia is the state that is both the least and the most reliant on natural gas to supply its electricity. That sounds a bit strange, doesn't it? But in South Australia last year our electricity grid was 71.5 per cent renewable. More than 4,000 megawatts of installed capacity in South Australia is renewable. Some 2,740 megawatts of that comes from large-scale generation, and the other 1,300 megawatts

comes from rooftop solar. Yet we pay the highest retail rate for our electricity in South Australia—and not by a small margin, but by 50 per cent. We are 50 per cent higher than the next highest state, Victoria, where they have 36.8 per cent renewable electricity. We have double the renewable capacity and double the renewable energy, but half as much again with the price. You have to ask yourself why this is.

Of course, there are two main reasons. The first is the intermittent nature of wind and solar and the need for an alternative dispatchable source capable of powering a whole network at any one time. The second is renewable subsidies. I won't go into those at length here, but they're invisible to the whole market but embedded in your retail bill. I took a snapshot on my PocketNEM last week. I know I'm not allowed to use props, but it shows me that the wholesale price in South Australia last Tuesday evening was \$9,900 per megawatt hour, which, to put it in layman's terms, is roughly \$9.90 a kilowatt hour or 20 to 25 times the retail price. I can tell you that at that time every peaking station in South Australia was going flat out. All the gas was on. We don't have coal in South Australia anymore. That was driven out by renewable energy. But every peaking station was on. Every battery was flat because we'd been through a wind drought, if you like, in recent months and we were totally reliant on either the gas or the electricity from Victoria, which is largely from coal of course. As I said, it showed that at that time what we needed was more gas generation, but there was no other viable option.

So what are we doing at the moment? South Australia's last combined-cycle gas generator was built at Pelican Point and commissioned in 2001. I won't go into details as to why combined cycle is so much more efficient, but it not only uses a jet motor to run a generator; it also runs a steam turbine to harvest the heat. Everything apart from that—and there hasn't been a lot built—is what we call peaking generation, which is basically a jet turbine mounted on a generator. So when it's dark and becalmed, as it often is in autumn, we are almost totally reliant on gas in South Australia.

It's worth noting that when renewables begin their penetration into the market it's a very easy fit, because the full backup is available from the existing generators. However, as they gain market share, the cost of backup increases on a parabolic curve. The higher the level of renewable generation, the higher the unit cost of backup. That is because it's not used as often as it would to make an economic return.

At this stage, the cheapest form of backup is gas. It's not perfect, and perhaps one day it'll be replaced. Here in Australia, interest in gas exploration is crashing. Approvals have stalled, and the government has imposed a cap on gas prices. Producers have had to comply, or are having to comply, with safeguard mechanisms, which are going up every year, year on year. Environmental approvals are on go-slow and drowning in red tape. Climate change activists have co-opted Indigenous bodies to frustrate, complicate, delay and increase the cost of new projects. The government has imposed a water trigger requirement and strengthened union bargaining positions.

I wonder why gas development has gone on an overseas holiday. It is pretty plain. The coalition has proposed a nuclear future, but, to get there, we need gas as an essential transitional energy source. The government has said they're heading for 100 per cent renewables, but guess what? In that case, gas is even more essential—not only for the transition but for the inevitable outcome in 2030 that we find we cannot reach the 82 per cent they've already laid down as their objective.

Gas is one of our economic strengths. Let's not give it away, as we've given away so many of our other economic strengths. As countries like China continue to build new power stations based on fossil fuels, we are shutting down our industry.

**Ms SWANSON** (Paterson) (18:56): I rise to speak in response to the motion moved by the member for Gippsland. Firstly, I note that this motion calls for something our government has already delivered. That is strong, clear policy and certainty regarding natural gas. From the get-go, I congratulate the Minister for Resources, Madeleine King, on the gas strategy that she has put forward. It is sensible, and everyone that I speak to from industry says what a good job this government is doing.

It is truly incredible that the opposition believe they can pretend to be experts on the subject of energy policy, like some kind of charade. The facts don't lie. They presided over 22 or 23 failed energy policies, if you count the latest nuclear fantasy. They wasted millions of taxpayer dollars over a decade full of delays. And let us not forget their former leader who secretly appointed himself to the energy portfolio. That was certainly a surprise for the minister that was already in that portfolio. They couldn't even decide amongst themselves if the science of climate change is real. As the government, we know that it is real. We aren't going to engage in a pointless culture war about it.

The opposition has a plan to change the nation based on three paragraphs in a speech, with absolutely no detail and full of untested declarations. Now they propose this cash splash giveaway to gas companies and pushing down on the nuclear button without even engaging the communities it would impact. Really? Are we going to accept this?

We just can't. Should we really be taking notes from these people on energy when, again, they had 10 years to get this right, and they squandered our opportunities?

Natural gas is the foundation of our transition to a cleaner, more affordable energy system in Australia and our road map towards a future powered by renewables. But these things don't happen overnight, and we're seeing that more and more. As we move in a progressive direction into a greener future, towards net zero by 2050, we do need gas. That is the bottom line to this.

Interestingly, gas usage is increasing the world over. It is a key ingredient in our recipe for reducing emissions and fighting climate change. Natural gas is stable, it's secure and, quite frankly, it keeps the lights on. Since the Albanese Labor government came to office, there's been a 25 per cent increase in renewables in the national energy market, and that's a terrific thing. Not dissimilar to those opposite, yes, I have the AEMO app on my phone. I watch energy prices pretty much every week to see where things are going. At the moment things are heading in the right direction. But we are reliant on a lot of change and a lot of innovation. This has driven our total emissions and emissions intensities to all-time lows, which is very important. Because we've done those things, we need to carefully consider how gas fits into our net zero commitments. Our future gas strategy also seeks to do this through a base of solid evidence that comes after a year of work and extensive public consultation.

It is time for a policy that makes sense. It is time for a policy that is cohesive over multiple portfolios, and that is what we are delivering. Let me paint the opposition a picture. Our Future Gas Strategy allows us to harness the power of gas as a transition fuel. Our Future Made in Australia plan enables us to invest in key green industries like renewables, harnessing our economic competitiveness on a global scale and rebuilding our manufacturing industry, which is so vital. Our fee-free TAFE program will train up our next generation of skilled workers, who can make this plan a reality. This is a nation-building plan, and this is what nation-building looks like. This is not about ideology, politics and game-playing; it's about data, facts and, most importantly, results, not only for now but for future generations. Our strategy is one that looks to the future, not just to the next election. Since coming to government, the Albanese government has taken immediate and strong action to shore up gas supply and manage price impacts. But, most importantly, we're keeping the lights on in the eastern seaboard, and that's what matters. *(Time expired—)*

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (19:01): This is a very important motion, and I'd like to thank the member for proposing it. Natural gas, or methane, is an essential part of the Australian economy. Most of the Western and Eastern world, across the northern and southern hemispheres, rely on gas. Gas in Australia is plentiful. We have coal-seam related gas. Many other places have their gas possibly associated with distillate, or oil. Countries like Canada have it in their oil sands, others with a lot of shale gas. It's critical that we get more gas out of our territory, because we are running out.

I would just like to open with observations in the *Guardian*, which doesn't usually speak favourably about gas. The headline: 'Gas shortfalls for eastern states worse than predicted just months ago, ACCC warns'. I quote:

East coast gas shortfalls could emerge as soon as 2027 ... and in some states in 2026—unless new sources of supply are made available, the competition watchdog has warned ...

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and AEMO have issued threat notices several times because of the very thin reserves of available gas for the eastern and southern states. They have had to extend the life of Eraring—thank goodness. That reliable source of energy is working 90 per cent of the time.

Across Australia, 80,000 people are working in the gas industry. It provides 32 per cent of all industrial processes. In fact, on the manufacturing side, 44 per cent of our processes rely on gas. Twenty per cent of our gas is used for household, residential use. It's also a key feedstock for fertilisers, chemicals and electricity generation. Open-cycle gas turbines that you can turn on, the electricity generators of which you can spin courtesy of a gas-fired turbine, can be made available in minutes if gas is at the power station. But the electricity is expensive if the gas is expensive. The energy density is not nearly as high as other forms, like nuclear. If we have low gas levels or expensive gas, we've got expensive electricity, uneconomic manufacturing and expensive fertiliser. It's critical for our food supply. The royalties from the gas industry in Australia give us \$17 billion every year, let alone all the investment activity, with up to \$300 billion invested in the gas industry in Australia. Many thousands of associated jobs rely on it.

The other thing is that our neighbours, our allies, Japan, Korea—nations in Asia that don't have any natural resources like gas or coal—depend on it. In fact, there is a huge requirement for these countries to use our empty gas fields for their carbon capture and storage. There are many fields that will be able to provide that. East Timor will get a lot of revenue from the empty gas fields that are on their territory. We've got four fields in Western Australia that can take gas, and three in the eastern states. It is also the feedstock for 99 per cent of the world's hydrogen. CH<sub>4</sub> is where hydrogen comes from. It's made by splitting the hydrogen off methane.

Even though this government has a gas strategy and talks big, the other side of government is that the environmental approvals have all been frozen, and you can't get gas out of the ground at a minute's notice or in the short term. There is a long lag period. So we don't want rhetoric; we want faster approvals and for people to appreciate that gas is an essential. America have reduced their footprint by 40 per cent by replacing their coal with gas. We could do that now. It is feasible. We've just got to approve everything and get cracking.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sharkie):** There being no further speakers, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

**Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:06**