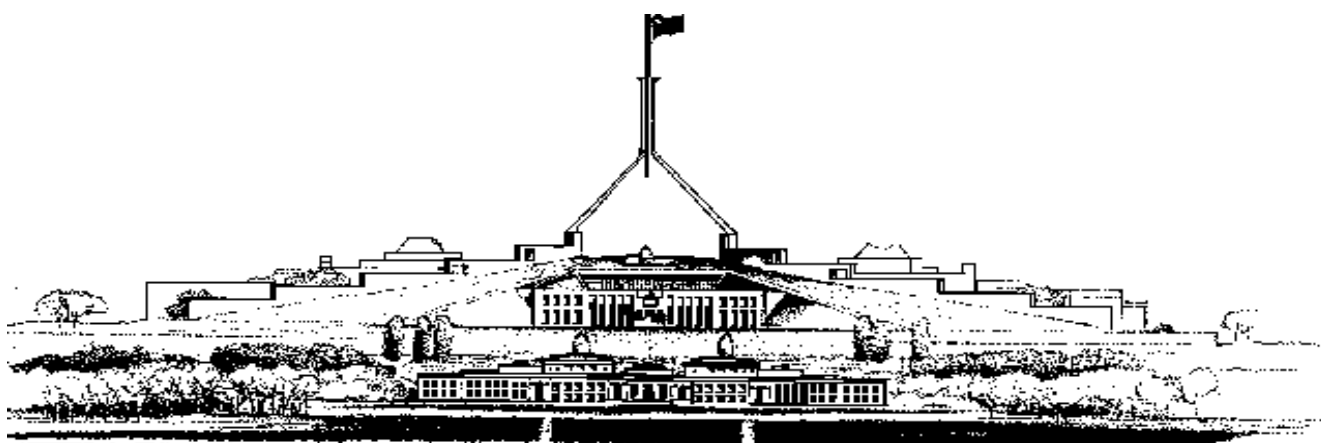




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



Senate

Official Hansard

Tuesday, 6 February 2024

FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

**FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

Governor-General

His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley AC, DSC, FTSE (Retd)

Senate Office Holders

President—Senator the Hon. Susan Lines

Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Andrew McLachlan CSC

Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Allman-Payne, Bilyk, Chandler, Cox, Fawcett,
Grogan, Hughes, McGrath, O'Neill, O'Sullivan, Polley, Pratt,
Dean Smith, Marielle Smith, Sterle and Walsh

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

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

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham

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

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

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

Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston

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

Senate Party Leaders and Whips

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

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

Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham

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

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

Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate—Senator Perin Davey

Leader of the Australian Greens in the Senate—Senator Larissa Waters

Chief Government Whip—Senator Anne Elizabeth Urquhart

Deputy Government Whips—Senators Raffaele Ciccone and Louise Pratt

Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Wendy Askew

Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Paul Scarr and Matthew O'Sullivan

The Nationals Whip—Senator Ross Cadell

Australian Greens Whip—Senator Nicholas McKim

Printed by authority of the Senate

Members of the Senate

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Allman-Payne, Penny Jane	Qld	30.6.2028	AG
Antic, Alexander	SA	30.6.2025	LP
Askew, Wendy	Tas.	30.6.2028	LP
Ayres, Hon. Timothy	NSW	30.6.2025	ALP
Babet, Ralph	Vic.	30.6.2028	UAP
Bilyk, Catryna Louise	Tas.	30.6.2025	ALP
Birmingham, Hon. Simon John	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Bragg, Andrew James	NSW	30.6.2025	LP
Brockman, Slade	WA	30.6.2025	LP
Brown, Hon. Carol Louise	Tas.	30.6.2025	ALP
Cadell, Ross	NSW	30.6.2028	NATS
Canavan, Hon. Matthew James	Qld	30.6.2028	NATS
Cash, Hon. Michaelia Clare	WA	30.6.2028	LP
Chandler, Claire	Tas.	30.6.2025	LP
Chisholm, Hon. Anthony David	Qld	30.6.2028	ALP
Ciccione, Raffaele	Vic.	30.6.2025	ALP
Colbeck, Hon. Richard Mansell	Tas.	30.6.2025	LP
Cox, Dorinda Rose	WA	30.6.2028	AG
Davey, Perin McGregor	NSW	30.6.2025	NATS
<i>Vacancy</i> ⁽¹⁾	WA	30.6.2025	ALP
Duniam, Hon. Jonathon Roy	Tas.	30.6.2028	LP
Farrell, Hon. Donald Edward	SA	30.6.2028	ALP
Faruqi, Mehreen Saeed	NSW	30.6.2025	AG
Fawcett, Hon. David Julian	SA	30.6.2025	LP
Gallagher, Hon. Katherine Ruth	ACT		ALP
Green, Nita Louise	Qld	30.6.2025	ALP
Grogan, Karen ⁽²⁾	SA	30.6.2025	ALP
Hanson, Pauline Lee	Qld	30.6.2028	PHON
Hanson-Young, Sarah Coral	SA	30.6.2025	AG
Henderson, Hon. Sarah Moya	Vic.	30.6.2028	LP
Hughes, Hollie Alexandra	NSW	30.6.2025	LP
Hume, Hon. Jane	Vic.	30.6.2025	LP
Kovacic, Maria ⁽³⁾	NSW	30.6.2028	LP
Lambie, Jacqui	Tas.	30.6.2025	JLN
Liddle, Kerryne Jeanette	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Lines, Hon. Susan	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
McAllister, Hon. Jennifer Ryll	NSW	30.6.2028	ALP
McCarthy, Hon. Malarndirri Barbara Anne	NT		ALP
McDonald, Susan Eileen	Qld	30.6.2025	NATS
McGrath, Hon. James	Qld	30.6.2028	LP
McKenzie, Hon. Bridget	Vic.	30.6.2028	NATS
McKim, Nicholas James	Tas.	30.6.2025	AG
McLachlan, Andrew Lockhart, CSC	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Nampijinpa Price, Jacinta	NT		CLP
O'Neill, Deborah Mary	NSW	30.6.2028	ALP
O'Sullivan, Matthew Anthony	WA	30.6.2025	LP
Paterson, James William	Vic.	30.6.2025	LP
Payman, Fatima	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
Pocock, Barbara Ann	SA	30.6.2028	AG
Pocock, David Willmer	ACT		IND
Polley, Helen Beatrice	Tas.	30.6.2028	ALP

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Pratt, Louise Clare	WA	30.6.2025	ALP
Rennick, Gerard	Qld	30.6.2025	LP
Reynolds, Hon. Linda Karen, CSC	WA	30.6.2025	LP
Rice, Janet Elizabeth	Vic.	30.6.2025	AG
Roberts, Malcolm Ieuan	Qld	30.6.2025	PHON
Ruston, Hon. Anne Sowerby	SA	30.6.2025	LP
Scarr, Paul Martin	Qld	30.6.2025	LP
Sharma, Devanand Noel ⁽⁴⁾	NSW	30.6.2028	LP
Sheldon, Anthony Vincent	NSW	30.6.2025	ALP
Shoebridge, David Martin	NSW	30.6.2028	AG
Smith, Dean Anthony	WA	30.6.2028	LP
Smith, Marielle Feuerherdt	SA	30.6.2025	ALP
Steele-John, Jordon Alexander	WA	30.6.2025	AG
Sterle, Glenn	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
Stewart, Jana Naretha Anne	Vic.	30.6.2028	ALP
Thorpe, Lidia Alma	Vic.	30.6.2028	IND
Tyrrell, Tammy	Tas.	30.6.2028	JLN
Urquhart, Anne Elizabeth	Tas.	30.6.2028	ALP
Van, David Allan	Vic.	30.6.2025	IND
Walsh, Jess Cecille	Vic.	30.6.2025	ALP
Waters, Larissa Joy	Qld	30.6.2025	AG
Watt, Hon. Murray Patrick	Qld	30.6.2028	ALP
Whish-Wilson, Peter Stuart	Tas.	30.6.2028	AG
White, Linda	Vic.	30.6.2028	ALP
Wong, Hon. Penelope Ying Yen	SA	30.6.2028	ALP

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

Territory	Senator	Party	Senator	Party
Australian Capital Territory	Gallagher, K.R.	ALP	Pocock, D.W.	IND
Northern Territory	McCarthy, M.B.A.	ALP	Nampijinpa Price, J.Y.	CLP

⁽¹⁾ Vacancy created by the resignation of Senator Pat Dodson on 26 January 2024.

⁽²⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice A Gallacher), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

⁽³⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice J Molan), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

⁽⁴⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice M Payne), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party;

CLP—Country Liberal Party; IND—Independent;

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

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

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

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye

Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees

Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic

Parliamentary Budget Officer—S Helgeby

ALBANESE MINISTRY

TITLE	MINISTER
Prime Minister	The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for the Public Service	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Women (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Indigenous Australians	The Hon Linda Burney MP
Cabinet Secretary	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>
Minister for Defence (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>
Minister for Foreign Affairs (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Trade and Tourism (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
Minister for 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>
Treasurer	The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Minister for Small Business	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>
Minister for Finance	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Special Minister of State	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (Leader of the House)	The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Skills and Training	The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Employment</i>	<i>The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>
Minister for Education	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
Minister for Health and Aged Care (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>
Minister for Climate Change and Energy	The Hon Chris Bowen MP
Minister for the Environment and Water	The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister</i>
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government	The Hon Catherine King MP
Minister for Communications	The Hon Michelle Rowland MP
Minister for the Arts	The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Northern Australia	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>
Minister for Social Services	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Minister for Government Services	The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Minister for Housing	The Hon Julie Collins MP
Minister for Homelessness	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>
Attorney-General	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
<i>Assistant Minister for the Republic</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
Minister for Resources	The Hon Madeleine King MP
Minister for Industry and Science	The Hon Ed Husic MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Home Affairs	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Cyber Security	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Emergency Management	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
Leader of the Opposition	The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Shadow Minister for Women	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Cabinet Secretary	Senator the Hon Marise Payne
Shadow Minister for the Public Service	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians	Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Senator the Hon James McGrath</i>
Shadow Minister for Industry, Skills and Training (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Resources	Senator Susan McDonald
Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy	Ted O'Brien MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>Senator Hollie Hughes</i>
Shadow Minister for Agriculture (Leader of the Nationals)	The Hon David Littleproud MP
Shadow Minister for Water (Deputy Leader of the Nationals)	Senator Perin Davey
Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry	Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs (Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Shadow Minister for Trade and Tourism (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>
Shadow Attorney-General	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Education	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	Angie Bell MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education</i>	<i>The Hon Nola Marino MP</i>
Shadow Treasurer	The Hon Angus Taylor MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Shadow Minister for Financial Services	The Hon Stuart Robert MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>Senator Dean Smith</i>

Title	Shadow Minister
Shadow Minister for Government Services and the Digital Economy	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Shadow Minister for Science and the Arts (Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Shadow Minister for Social Services	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Shadow Minister for Housing	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Shadow Minister for Homelessness	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>Pat Conaghan MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care	Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
Shadow Minister for Sport (Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Health</i>	<i>Dr Anne Webster MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>	<i>Melissa McIntosh MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, Aged Care and indigenous Health Services</i>	<i>Gavin Pearce MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development (Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
Shadow Minister for Communications	The Hon David Coleman MP
Shadow Minister for Northern Australia	Senator Susan McDonald
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon Darren Chester MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</i>	<i>Tony Pasin MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Defence	The Hon Andrew Hastie MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Industry	The Hon Luke Howarth MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Personne	The Hon Luke Howarth MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Phillip Thompson OAM MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Finance	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
Shadow Special Minister of State	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Finance</i>	<i>Senator the Hon James McGrath</i>
Shadow Minister for Home Affairs	Senator James Paterson
Shadow Minister for Cyber Security	Senator James Paterson
Shadow Minister for Emergency Management	Senator Perin Davey
Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	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>
Each box represents a portfolio. Shadow cabinet ministers are shown in bold type.	

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2024

DOCUMENTS	
Tabling.....	1
COMMITTEES	
Meeting.....	1
PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION	
Western Australia.....	1
Senators Sworn.....	1
MOTIONS	
Albanese Government	1
DOCUMENTS	
National Disability Insurance Scheme.....	7
Order for the Production of Documents	7
BILLS	
Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023	10
Second Reading.....	10
STATEMENTS BY SENATORS	
Renewable Energy	14
Schools.....	14
Climate Change: Oceans	14
Prime Minister.....	15
Medicare	15
Dental Health.....	15
Domestic and Family Violence.....	16
Taxation	16
Grocery Prices	17
Housing.....	17
Jewish Community	17
Environment.....	18
Live Animal Exports.....	18
Victoria: Roads.....	18
Medicare	19
Taxation	19
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
Taxation	19
Taxation	20
Taxation	21
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.....	23
Taxation	25
Housing.....	26
Environment.....	27
Medicare	28
Cost of Living.....	29
Renewable Energy	30

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS	
Housing	32
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS	
Answers to Questions.....	32
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	36
Medicare.....	36
BUSINESS	
Consideration of Legislation.....	37
Rearrangement.....	37
Leave of Absence	37
Leave of Absence	38
Leave of Absence	38
NOTICES	
Presentation.....	38
Postponement.....	40
COMMITTEES	
Reporting Date.....	40
CONDOLENCES	
Murphy, Ms Peta Jan.....	40
COMMITTEES	
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee	48
Reference.....	48
NOTICES	
Postponement.....	49
COMMITTEES	
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee	49
Reference.....	49
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	
Labor Government	50
MATTERS OF URGENCY	
Middle East	55
PETITIONS	
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	59
DOCUMENTS	
Consideration.....	59
COMMITTEES	
Dental Services in Australia Select Committee.....	60
Additional Information.....	60
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee	60
Additional Information.....	60
Human Rights Joint Committee	60
Report	60
Treaties Joint Committee	60
Report	60
Trade and Investment Growth Joint Committee	60
Report	60
National Anti-Corruption Commission Joint Committee.....	61
Report	61
Consideration.....	62
DOCUMENTS	
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	62
Launceston City Deal	62
Order for the Production of Documents	62

BILLS

Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Bill 2023	62
Returned from the House of Representatives	62
Disability Services and Inclusion Bill 2023	62
Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports Amendment (Animal Welfare) Bill 2023	62
Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Repudiation) Bill 2023	62
Migration and Other Legislation Amendment (Bridging Visas, Serious Offenders and Other Measures) Bill 2023	62
Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023	62
Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee Bill 2023	62
Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Bill 2023	62
Interactive Gambling Amendment (Credit and Other Measures) Bill 2023	62
Identity Verification Services Bill 2023	62
Identity Verification Services (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023	62
Infrastructure Australia Amendment (Independent Review) Bill 2023	62
Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2023	62
Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2023	62
Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Bill 2023	62
Nature Repair Bill 2023	62
Nature Repair (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023	62
Assent	62
Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023	62
Second Reading	62
In Committee	67
Third Reading	71
Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combatting Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023	71
Second Reading	71

ADJOURNMENT

Medicare	78
Australia	79
Renewable Energy	80
Iran	80
Prisons	81
Rare and Less Common Cancers	82
Perth: Environment	83
Western Australia: Live Animal Exports	83
Tasmania: Regional Jobs Hub Network	84
Middle East	85
Queensland: Community Events	86
Middle East	87

Tuesday, 6 February 2024

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. Sue Lines) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

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

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

COMMITTEES

Meeting

The Clerk: Proposals to meet have been lodged as follows:

Corporations and Financial Services—Joint Statutory Committee—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) on Thursday, 8 February 2024, from 9 am.

Education and Employment Legislation and References Committees—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) today, from 12.05 pm.

Electoral Matters—Joint Standing Committee—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) on Wednesday, 7 February 2024, from 9.20 am.

Environment and Communications Legislation and References Committees—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) on Thursday, 8 February 2024, from 1.15 pm.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade—Joint Standing Committee—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1)—

today, from 5.30 pm.

Wednesday, 7 February 2024, from 9 am (together with a public meeting) and from midday.

Thursday, 8 February 2024, from 11.30 am.

Intelligence and Security—Joint Statutory Committee—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) and public meetings—

today, from 4pm.

Wednesday, 7 February 2024, from midday.

Thursday, 8 February 2024, from 3.30 pm.

Law Enforcement—Joint Statutory Committee—private briefings on Monday, 26 February and 18 March 2024, from 10 am.

Treaties—Joint Standing Committee—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) and a public meeting on Monday, 26 February 2024, from 11 am.

The PRESIDENT (12:01): I remind senators that the question may be put on any proposal at the request of any senator.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Western Australia

The PRESIDENT (12:01): I table the certificate of the choice of the Parliament of Western Australia of Varun Ghosh to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Patrick Dodson.

Senators Sworn

Senator Varun Ghosh made and subscribed the oath of allegiance.

MOTIONS

Albanese Government

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (12:05): I seek leave to move a motion relating to the Albanese Labor government's betrayal of Australian taxpayers, as circulated.

Leave not granted.

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

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

I ask this Senate to give time to debate a matter that has been on the tips of Australian tongues for the last few weeks and, indeed, in doubts that have been in the back of Australians' minds for the last few months and couple of years.

That, of course, is the Albanese Labor government's betrayal of taxpayers. They are killing off reform of our income tax system. They have trashed the aspirations of millions of workers to get ahead without facing bracket creep. They have demonstrated that, when it comes to what they say on tax, they simply cannot be trusted.

Australians are all well aware of the old saying 'Lies, damned lies and statistics', but now, for many of them, it's 'Lies, damned lies, and the Albanese Labor government'. Time and time again, Mr Albanese, Mr Chalmers, Senator Gallagher—those opposite—reassured us that stage 3 tax cuts would be delivered as legislated. Do you know why they were asked time and time again whether they stood by the stage 3 tax cuts? It was because people never believed them. People had doubts about whether the commitment was genuine.

Senator Henderson interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Henderson, I ask you to withdraw that comment.

Senator Henderson: I withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. I ask the chamber to listen in respectful silence.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: People didn't believe or trust the weasel words that were coming from those opposite. But, of course, they said them again and again: 'We stand by, we will honour, what was legislated. We have no plans to change.' Prime Minister Albanese was still saying those words just a few weeks ago, even when he knew that the government was limbering up to break its election promise—to break yet another election promise when it came to the taxes Australians pay. They'd already broken their promise when it came to changing taxes on superannuation and they had broken their promise again when it came to imposing taxes on transport. They've broken promises again and again, but this one they solemnly kept standing by. Ultimately, they chose to break it, and you can't help but think they always intended to break it—that Mr Albanese and all of his ministers said one thing before the last election while thinking, 'When we get the excuse, when we can create the opportunity, we're just going to trash this promise anyway.' That's because they never liked the reform.

What their approach demonstrates is the treachery, trickery and timidity of the Labor Party. It's the treachery of saying one thing pre the election and then doing the opposite thing afterwards. It's the treachery of saying it on more than a hundred occasions—that's for the Prime Minister and Treasurer alone—and then doing the opposite. It's the treachery of continuously reassuring the parliamentary chambers, the media and, through them, the Australian public that they would stand by this and then trashing it. The trickery in what Labor's doing is the real sleight of hand of these changes, which sees Labor pursuing tax changes that will give them \$28 billion more in revenue over the years ahead.

So whilst they dress it up and want to focus on the small amount that Australians will receive relative to the huge amount by which they will be worse off—\$8,000, the average Australian will be worse off by, under your government—they are giving a bandaid to the gaping wound in terms of household budgets in Australia. Then there is the timidity of a government that has completely abandoned income tax reform in this country—

Senator Hughes interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hughes! I've called you to order. As I was calling you to order, you continued to interject. I've called you to order twice already. Senator Birmingham, please continue.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: They are keeping the 37c-in-the-dollar tax bracket, rather than having it abolished, thereby ensuring that bracket creep remains an ongoing problem which would have been abolished. The real reform of these tax changes was to abolish that tax bracket and ensure that for the vast majority of working Australians bracket creep was a thing of the past. But thanks to the lies of the Albanese Labor government, thanks to their trickery—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Birmingham, please withdraw.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: I withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Thanks to the treachery of the Albanese Labor government, to the betrayal they have shown, they are keeping that bracket creep in place. They are out to grab more dollars for the long term that no doubt they will spend in typical Labor big-spending ways, and Australians will ultimately pay the price of this in terms of extra taxes in the future, a weaker economy, poorer productivity and the abandonment of reform for Australians. *(Time expired)*

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (12:12): Do you know what this is all about, President? This is all about a distraction from the fact that they're about to roll over and vote for these tax cuts, because they know it's the right thing to do, and they're hoping no-one will notice that even the coalition knows that this is the right thing to do for the country. That is what this stunt is

all about. It's not about cost of living. It's not about the tradies and the nurses and the schoolteachers, who will be better off under this tax package. It's about the opposition hoping that they can continue a political attack while Mr Dutton is standing up, as we speak, to say, 'Actually, we're going to fold on it.' I mean, what a joke they are! If they really thought this was—let me read this—'a betrayal' that 'killed reform' and 'trashed aspiration', if they really thought this was treachery, they would have the courage of their convictions and vote against it.

But you're not going to, are you? This is the little fiddly bit of outrage beforehand, because you know that this is the best thing for working Australians that is on the table. That is what is happening. You know that every taxpayer will get a tax cut under this package, and you know that 84 per cent—

Senator Hughes interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hughes, withdraw.

Senator Hughes: I'm not sure what I'm withdrawing—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hughes—

Senator Hughes: I withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: I remind senators that when I ask you to withdraw I don't want the offensive word repeated. And, Senator Hughes, I remind you that I've called you to order three or four times, and you continue to shout across the chamber. You are being disrespectful to my orders and disrespectful to the chamber. Minister Wong, please continue.

Senator WONG: If there was one point at which Senator Birmingham reminded us just how out of touch the Dutton opposition actually is it was when he talked about the 'small amount'. Well, he and his colleagues might have forgotten what it is like to be on an average wage. Maybe he and his colleagues haven't spoken to the people they profess to represent about the cost of living. They might not be aware of how important this tax change is for the many Australians who are struggling with the cost of living. What has been demonstrated here, again, is that the Dutton opposition only ever want to score political points and create division. Even when they are forced by the inexorable logic of economics to support our tax package, on the way through they have to engage in these sorts of political tactics because they have to have a hit.

I am reminded of the fact that Ms Sussan Ley has said, 'We'll roll the changes back.' It's gone very quiet over there, hasn't it? She said, 'We'll roll them back.' That's what she said. It's very quiet, isn't it? Is that the position still? Are you going to roll them back? Are you going to go to the next election with a roll-back policy? If you really thought all of the things that are in this pathetic motion, you would have the courage of your convictions to not only oppose the legislation when it comes to the chamber but go to the next election with your roll-back policy. But you know you won't.

Do you know why you won't? Because actually you know it's the right thing to do. That's the problem with your political position. You want to have a go at us for doing this, but you're going to vote for it. It's a fundamental problem with your political position, and you know it. You think making a lot of noise in this chamber and using a lot of words in this chamber are going to distract Australia's attention from the fact that you're backing in Anthony Albanese's tax cuts for working Australians. Fundamentally, you are having to back them in because you know they are the right thing to do.

You know that 100 per cent of Australian taxpayers will get a tax cut. You know that 84 per cent will get more of a tax cut. You know this will benefit people on average wages. This will benefit working families. This will benefit middle Australia. This will benefit teachers and nurses and emergency workers and police officers and tradespeople and so many more. You know that, we know that and the Australian people know that. And they know that this motion is just a political stunt to try and hide the fact that you do not have the courage of your convictions and that you, in your heart of hearts, know that the Prime Minister is right, the Treasurer is right and the finance minister is right, and that this is the right thing to do for the country and for the Australian people.

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (12:17): The Australian Greens will not be supporting the motion that is currently before the chair. It's important that all senators and folks listening to this debate understand how we have got to where we are today. The Liberals when in government put in place a massively regressive tax package. They legislated it. It was regressive for a range of reasons, including the fact that it massively flattened out the income tax regime in this country. It was legislated because the Australian Labor Party gutlessly voted for it at the time. Now the Australian Labor Party has come with a proposal that will make this massively regressive tax plan—legislated because the Coles and Woolworths of Australian politics supported it in the last parliament—slightly less regressive. Let's be clear about that. Labor's proposal doesn't make Australia's tax system more progressive than it currently is; it simply ensures that after 1 July it will be less regressive than it otherwise

would have been. The fact that it would have been massively regressive is on the shoulders of both the LNP and the ALP in this place.

What Labor could have done is, for example, come into this place with a package that meant that no high-income earners received a tax break, and they could have used the savings that that policy would have generated to improve much-needed social services in this country. For example, they could have used the savings to help put dental care into Medicare. We've had a massive celebration from Labor about 40 years of Medicare, and rightly so. It's a great social reform in this country. But, if Labor were serious about celebrating Medicare, it would do things like put dental and mental health into Medicare, because, last time I looked, the mouth and the brain were actually parts of the human body.

What we have seen is Labor quite rightly saying, 'When economic conditions change, so should government policy.' Big tick on that! I couldn't agree more. So let's talk about negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount. What those obscene taxpayer subsidies to property investors mean is that people who are currently renting in Australia, who are getting smashed by high rents and who desperately want to buy their first home are going into the market and being outbid by property investors because those property investors have pocketed—and will pocket into the future—massive subsidies from the public purse in the form of negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount. It is a grossly unfair and inequitable system, and it is stopping hundreds of thousands of young Australians fulfilling their dream of owning their first home because the property investors, many of whom are racking up their fifth, 10th, 20th or 100th investment property, have got those public subsidies in their pockets, ready to use to outbid young people, who are getting smashed in the rental market and who desperately want to be able to afford their own home.

Economic conditions change; so should government policy. The Labor Party should reform the negative gearing and capital gains tax policy settings to give young Australians a fair crack at buying their first home and not have so many young Australians being outbid by wealthy property investors who are able to outbid them because of the massive, obscene taxpayer subsidies that they get through negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount.

We won't be supporting this motion today for all of those reasons. In addition, the Liberals have got it listed as a matter of public importance for later on in the day. They'll get plenty of chance to have their say. So will we. So will the government. So will other crossbenchers. But, for now, let's just get on with the job of the Senate.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (12:22): Let's be very, very clear about what's happened over the break. It's very, very clear what's happened. The Labor Party voted for stage 1, 2 and 3 of a very carefully calibrated tax package a few years ago. They voted for it. They took it to the election. They promised over a hundred times not to trash it. The PM campaigned on trust: 'Trust me; I won't trash it.'

What has happened over the break? If they fervently believed this was a cost-of-living measure that needed to happen for Australians doing it tough, why wasn't it part of their October budget in 2022? Why wasn't it part of their May budget in 2023? Why wasn't it part of their MYEFO considerations at the end of last year? What's the only thing that's changed? Australians have been struggling with cost of living because of this government for 18 months. As Senator Birmingham made very, very clear, Australian households are 8,000 bucks worse off as a result. Some \$24,000 a year in additional mortgage payments have to be found by the average mortgage holder in this country. Why? It's because this government can't get the fundamentals of economic management right. They can't get their spending under control. They can't lift productivity. So we have had inflation higher than it needs to be and prices going up more than people's wages. That is not Australian small businesses' fault. It is your government's fault because you cannot get your own spending under control and get inflation under control.

What is the only thing that's changed since two budgets and a MYEFO? They could have brought this forward. They could have done their triple-pike backflip. What would it be, Senator Birmingham? What would it be? Oh, I know! A Dunkley by-election. The Prime Minister has trashed his reputation to bribe voters in a by-election. That's the only reason. And why? It's because they did the internal polling. They went: 'Mate, we're going to have to do something pretty drastic here. They don't believe us. They don't trust us. They know we're not on their team. They know we've been focused on a voice referendum that no-one voted for. We spent 450 million bucks on that. How do we win their trust back? I know: we'll lie to them.'

The PRESIDENT: Senator McKenzie, withdraw.

Senator McKENZIE: I withdraw. 'We will completely trash and tear up our previous commitments, our previous voting records, because you know what? We disrespect Australians so much. They'll take the money and forget we backflipped and lied to them.'

The PRESIDENT: Senator McKenzie, withdraw.

Senator McKENZIE: I withdraw. They have actually chosen to bet on the fact that Australians don't vote on character, that Australians don't care about the character of their Prime Minister and their government. That's what

they're backing. But I tell you what: Australians love to keep more of their hard-earned cash rather than give it to the government. Every day of the week, Australians, when you ask them that question in a poll, on the street or at an election, will say: 'Thank you. I work pretty hard for my money. I want to keep more of it so I can spend it on the things that my family and I need to spend it on.' So, yes, two-thirds of Australians might think that this is a good idea by the government. But I tell you what 100 per cent of Australians don't like: being lied to. They hate being lied to. And that's exactly what this government has done.

So here we are, on the first day of parliament—another day, another broken promise by Anthony Albanese's government, counting on the fact that Australians will forget the betrayal. 'Fake it till you make it' was their proposition heading into the last election. And it turns out they did fake it, they made it and now they've exposed themselves as the absolute fakes that they are because they've betrayed themselves. If they really believed that this was the policy Australians needed, and they really believed that this was the policy that the economics needed to be achieved, then it should have been in MYEFO. It should have been in your budget, but you're too distracted by your own ideology. You say Australians are going to feel it. They're not. They are not buying what you're selling, and if we went to any kitchen table in the country they would say you don't have their backs. They know you've lied to them, and they're going to make you pay.

The PRESIDENT: Senator McKenzie!

Senator McKENZIE: I withdraw. *(Time expired)*

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (12:27): Well, it looks like we're starting the year as we left last year, with the opposition opposing, with no positive plans, with no policies, with no ideas other than to come in here and disrupt the Senate and complain as the government gets on with providing cost-of-living relief to Australian households—so nothing new. If that's the best they've got then we're in pretty solid territory. We are here, and we have spent the summer looking at ways that we can further assist Australian households who are doing it tough with cost-of-living pressures.

I note that the motion moved by Senator Birmingham today talks about everything other than the proposal we are putting forward in legislation. It talks about a whole range of things, but, as we hear them crab walking away from their initial hysterical response, we won't forget it. We won't forget when the deputy opposition leader went out and, before she'd even seen the legislation—before it had even been released—said that she opposed it and that the opposition would be against it. Then they did see it, and they said that they would reverse it and that they would roll it back; we remember that. And we remember the crab walking away as they went: 'Oh, actually, we'll have a look at it. It does look pretty good. It does mean that 100 per cent of taxpayers get a tax cut. It does mean that 84 per cent of Australians get a bigger tax cut. It does mean that 11½ million Australians will get a bigger tax cut. Hang on a minute; maybe we shouldn't have gone out and said we should reverse it and roll it back.' And they started crab walking away. That's what we're seeing now, and we've seen it from the Leader of the Opposition this morning. We see the talking points: 'We won't stand in the way of this, but we're going to take up all this time in the Senate to come in here and complain about something that we are now going to support'—for real! If you were to stick to your convictions, as our leader just said, then you would vote against the proposal, but you want it both ways. You want to say, 'Oh, actually, it is a much better deal, and we will vote for it, but we're actually going to be against it.'

Senator Ruston interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ruston, seek the call and stop interjecting.

Senator GALLAGHER: Come on! Do you think the Australian people don't see what you're doing? We've at least fronted up and said, 'We have changed our position, and this is why.' We have done every interview, and we have spoken with everybody we can, and our government—all of us—are out there talking with Australians about what this means. And they get it. When the economic circumstances change, when inflation remains high and when we've had interest rate increases that started under your watch when inflation was highest in the quarter during your final term in government, they understand that. If there is something that the government can do to provide cost-of-living relief, they expect us to do it, which is what we have done with this proposal that you're now going to actually back in while you say, 'Everything about it is wrong.' We know that, unless you vote against it, all this bitching and moaning—

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator GALLAGHER: all of this complaining that's going on over there is just politics.

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator GALLAGHER: I will withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: I remind senators to seek the call if you think something has been said that is disorderly. Stop interjecting.

Senator GALLAGHER: I've withdrawn it.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Gallagher has withdrawn. Please continue.

Senator Hanson-Young: You're all whingeing and moaning about it.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hanson-Young, that is not helpful.

Senator GALLAGHER: Thank you, Senator Hanson-Young. All the whingeing and moaning that's happening over there is all just politics. You actually support the policy, but you want to run the politics. Well, we are putting people before politics. We took this decision. We knew there would be consequences in changing our position, but we went in because we knew it was the right thing to do—not the easy thing to do and not the convenient thing to do. We knew you would run around and try and run scare campaigns and cry in your teacups and carry on. We knew that. But it's the right thing to do, and the Australian people know it. They expect their government to do the right thing for the right reason. That's why we are doing this.

The Australian people expect their governments to do this. They don't expect us to take the easy option just because we might face a motion in the Senate because the opposition doesn't like it. That's not what being in government is about.

Senator RUSTON (South Australia—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (12:32): Can I just make really clear the reason we are supporting the changes. It's not because we support the Prime Minister and the deceitful action that he has taken in the face of Australians but because we won't stand in the way of support for hardworking Australian families. That's because we are the party of lower taxes, and we will always support lower taxes. You are in here doing this right now because everything else you've tried to do has failed. In fact, despite what Senator Gallagher just said, the Prime Minister actually admitted on Sky that he'd run out of ideas. Nothing else was working, so this was the last resort.

Senator Gallagher: That's not true.

Senator RUSTON: Maybe you should go and have a look at it. Maybe you should also be a little more careful about what you come in here and say. If you want a truth check about whether 84 per cent of Australians will be receiving a tax break, I think you'll find that that's actually not correct. As I said, we stand up for lower taxes, and we will never be a party that stands in the way of Australians keeping more of their hard-earned money in their pockets. That is why we negotiated with you, and you supported a very comprehensive three-stage tax process of which this was the last stage. Of course, because convenience, not consistency, comes past in the guise of a Dunkley by-election, you're prepared to trash a third of an integrated package just so that you can buy some votes in Dunkley.

The Australian public aren't that stupid. They will remember this—I was going to use the word 'lie', but I'm sure I'll have to retract it. They will remember that this government stared them down over a hundred times and told them that the tax breaks that hardworking, aspirational middle-class Australians were going to get will no longer be available to them. They will remember that, just like they remember Julia Gillard saying, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' They will forget about a tiny bit of money in their pocket as a result of this move today, but they will remember that they have been deceived.

Make no mistake; the amount of money that the average Australian family is likely to receive because of the tax breaks that are going to be delivered to them when this goes through will not even touch the sides in comparison to the damage you've done to the family budget since you have been in government. As the shadow Treasurer said, this is a bandaid on a bullet wound, but, if you've got the bandaid, you might as well use it.

You guys have trashed aspirational Australians. We know that every Australian family is worse off by multiple times what you're proposing to give back to them, because of the actions of your government. Your own Prime Minister was prepared to stand on national television and say that they'd run out of ideas, and so this was the last thing left, and that is to trash a promise that they had agreed to, they'd voted on and they took to two elections. You think it's okay to be convenient in the eyes of a Dunkley by-election. The Australian public won't forget your deceit.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion as moved by Senator Birmingham be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [12:40]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes26
Noes33
Majority.....7

AYES

Antic, A.
Birmingham, S. J.
Cadell, R. (Teller)
Chandler, C.
Fawcett, D. J.
Kovacic, M.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Rennick, G.
Sharma, D. N.

Askew, W.
Bragg, A. J.
Canavan, M. J.
Colbeck, R. M.
Henderson, S. M.
Liddle, K. J.
O'Sullivan, M. A.
Reynolds, L. K.
Smith, D. A.

Babet, R.
Brockman, W. E.
Cash, M. C.
Davey, P. M.
Hughes, H. A.
McGrath, J.
Paterson, J. W.
Ruston, A.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Chisholm, A.
Farrell, D. E.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
McKim, N. J.
Pocock, D. W.
Rice, J. E.
Smith, M. F.
Thorpe, L. A.
Watt, M. P.

Ayres, T.
Ciccone, R.
Faruqi, M.
Green, N. L.
Lines, S.
Payman, F.
Polley, H.
Sheldon, A. V.
Steele-John, J. A.
Urquhart, A. E.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Gallagher, K. R.
Grogan, K.
McAllister, J. R.
Pocock, B.
Pratt, L. C. (Teller)
Shoebridge, D.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Walsh, J. C.
Wong, P.

Question negatived.

DOCUMENTS

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (12:45): While the government cannot agree with the assertion in the motion, we acknowledge the genuine interest from across this chamber in reforms to get the NDIS back on track. By making the scheme work better for people with disability and ensuring every NDIS dollar gets to the people who need it, we will ensure it is sustainable for future generations of Australians. I understand that discussions are progressing with the office of Senator Steele-John to address his questions about the NDIS reform agenda, which the government is advancing in partnership with the disability community. The government has previously outlined that we have claimed public interest immunity over the requested documents, as disclosure would prejudice relations between the Commonwealth and the states and the territories. The Minister representing the Treasurer has already tabled key documents for the benefit of the Senate.

The independent NDIS review also released its final report in December 2023. The review's terms of reference included the specific objective to ensure the sustainability of the NDIS for future generations. The independent NDIS review panel has said its reforms can improve the scheme and meet National Cabinet's annual growth target of no more than eight per cent growth by 1 July. The review delivered 26 recommendations and 139 supporting actions to respond to its terms of reference. In delivering its recommendations, the review provided exhaustive analysis of the key cost drivers in the NDIS and proposals to improve the operation, effectiveness and sustainability of the NDIS. These recommendations were formulated after the review panel travelled to every state and territory, including regional and remote communities. They heard directly from more than 10,000 Australians; worked with disability organisations to reach out and listen to more than 1,000 people with disability and their families; recorded more than 2,000 personal stories; and received almost 4,000 submissions.

The government is now considering the review and how its recommendations can help secure the future of the NDIS, ensuring it can continue to provide life-changing support to future generations of Australians with a disability. We look forward to working with senators in this place to ensure a sustainable future for the NDIS and the ongoing delivery of services for Australians with disabilities.

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (12:48): I move:

That the Senate take note of the explanation.

I thank the minister for his contribution. I hope that the conversations between our offices can bear fruit and result in the satisfactory compliance of the government with the orders of the Senate. Once again, we find ourselves collectively here today demanding an explanation from the government as to why they continue to refuse to release basic documents requested by the Senate, for the simple reason that these documents have a huge bearing on the lives of the over 610,000 Australians who rely on the NDIS for support.

Let's be really clear: the NDIS independent review, released by the government before the end of the year, is not in and of itself a document that is relevant to the request of the Senate, because it is a document created, published and given to the public months after the decision taken by the National Cabinet to agree to a so-called eight per cent sustainability measure in relation to the NDIS.

Disabled people and the disabled community across Australia are razor focused on attaining the information that was given to the National Cabinet as they made those deliberations because that very decision came in the middle of the conduct of the so-called independent review of the NDIS, right in the middle of a moment in time when the disability community were asked in good faith to participate in a so-called one-of-a-kind opportunity to reset the future of the NDIS. When we were assured that co-design and consultation would lead the way, the heads of every state and territory came together with the Commonwealth government and, it appears, decided the destination of that co-design and consultation—that being an eight per cent target for the growth of the scheme. This significantly undermined the community's trust in the independence of the review and the genuine openness with which the government, and the states and territories, would consider the recommendations of the review. We, disabled people, are not fools. If you tell us to come into a co-design process and then, halfway through that process, decide one of the key end points of that co-design process, we know exactly what is going on.

The government have continually claimed that the decisions made in this National Cabinet meeting did not undermine the principles of co-design with which they set out and communicated the independent review. To that, I say: If that's the case, show us the documents. Show us what you agreed. Comply with the orders of this Senate and end the insecurity, the uncertainty and the genuine fear that exists within the heart of the disability community. It's a genuine and founded fear that, after tossing out the Liberal government, after electing a new parliament and a new government that committed to genuine co-design and consultation with disabled people, in fact what we ended up getting was a government that was simply better at messaging the way in which it worked towards achieving outcomes it had already set for itself.

This is what is at the heart here. How authentic was this government's commitment to co-design? How authentic was this government's commitment to consultation? If you want us to believe that you are genuine about it then you have to demonstrate exactly what decisions that you made— *(Time expired)*

Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia) (12:53): I, too, rise to speak on the Greens motion and, again, support and endorse everything that Senator Steele-John has just said. One of the things we have in common is that we believe truth matters in this place. It still matters, and it should always and must always matter. As Senator Birmingham said, 'it's lies, damned lies' and the Lodge. It's not just in the Lodge that we're seeing that occur. We've seen it now for almost two years from the Minister for the NDIS, Bill Shorten. He, and the Labor Party, came to a fork in the road on the NDIS, on the scheme that they legislated, which, while doing wonderful things for hundreds of thousands of Australians, was flawed from its inception. When I was minister I called it out and I said publicly that this was a scheme that was on a rapidly accelerating pathway to failure without fundamental reform. He and the Labor Party could have taken the high road and actually said, 'Yes, we will join you in fixing this scheme and putting it on a sustainable pathway for participants and their families, who have now come to rely on this life-changing scheme in so many ways.' But, instead of doing that, what did Bill Shorten do?

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett): Order! Senator Reynolds, address members by their appropriate title.

Senator REYNOLDS: My apologies—Minister Shorten. What did he do? He played politics, which he does extraordinarily well. 'Ah, there's no problem with the scheme. There's nothing to fix and nothing to see here. When we come into government, there will be no cuts, because there is nothing fundamentally wrong with this scheme.' I think, deep in their hearts, many in the sector knew that he was promising something that he could not deliver. In government, instead of taking the hard decisions that need to be taken now—we've already extended the hand of bipartisanship multiple times to Minister Shorten—they just hope they can keep up the pretence that this scheme is sustainable. As Senator Steele-John has said: how are they doing that? They're hiding the figures. They're hiding the sustainability framework, which apparently is magically going to solve this. The problem is that they've also said that the sustainability framework doesn't exist. They have reduced the forward projections down to eight per cent, but they have not said how they're going to do this.

I now see why they hid the AFSR for so long. It's because they're saying that this is changes to assumptions, and that can only be in two areas; there are two levers of cost. Either they are going to significantly reduce the number of NDIS participants or they're going to cut plans. There is no other way to do that. Somehow, mystically, magically, the states and territories have agreed that they will fund the difference, one presumes, and apparently they're also going to fund all of the additional autism supports that are needed, particularly early intervention. Of course they're not. Apparently they're also going to now provide the support for the other over two million people with disability who have psychosocial disorders or any other disability. Apparently they're going to find the funding, the extra billions and billions of dollars, not only to fill this gap but also to provide those community services in less than three years time.

You only have to have a look at the AFSR to see very clearly what it is hiding. We've got the projected scheme expenses, which even the Labor Party and the actuary say, in this, will go up to 2026-27. They've actually got the projections of people and package costs. But, all of a sudden, there's a big gap till 2032-33. They've just made these wild assumptions about these big cuts that are going to happen to the NDIS, but they've hidden the data. We don't have any of the actuarial data that actually underpins how they're going to make these cuts. As Senator Steele-John said, people with disability and their families, people in this chamber and the rest of Australians are not stupid. But the Labor Party is now going into an election year perpetuating the myth, the cruellest of all myths for people with disability, that this is not going to be cut. I say: shame on you. People deserve much better than that. (*Time expired*).

Senator HUGHES (New South Wales) (12:58): Senator Farrell has come in yet again—welcome back, by the way, Senator Steele-John. We're back for 2024. Welcome back, colleagues. Yet here we are again. We thought we were going to have NDIS Monday. We didn't sit yesterday, so we've got NDIS Tuesday. Transmission Tuesday, I'm sure, will be back again this year. But here we are again because Senator Farrell has, I think, for the third or fourth time now refused to provide an effective and full response to a request by this Senate to show us how the sustainability framework is going to work.

To Senator Reynolds's point, Senator Birmingham this morning made the point in the chamber about how important it is to tell the truth. Not only is it important to tell the truth but we went to the election with now Prime Minister Albanese saying ad nauseam that his would be a government of transparency. His word was his bond. We all know now how true that is. The bond is about as strong as tissue paper, when it comes to the strength of it, because so many promises have been broken by this government, despite claiming there would be no changes to superannuation, despite claiming they would take \$275 off Australians' power bills and despite claiming they would stand by the stage 3 tax cuts that they voted for.

I'm the mother of an NDIS participant, and I received a text message asking for assistance from the father of an NDIS participant. I can assure you that those on the NDIS and their families do not trust you and do not believe you, because we have heard nothing about how this eight per cent figure has been reached. Senator Reynolds's points are completely correct, as are Senator Steele-John's points. The only way you do that is by cutting the number of participants or cutting plans.

One of the things that I'm very proud of since I've been in parliament was being a member of the Senate Select Committee on Autism, along with Senator Steele-John. It was the first time ever a committee inquiry had been held into how autism affected people with the condition, as well as their families, through the whole of an affected person's life. Our first recommendation was the development of a national autism strategy, which was an accepted recommendation. When we were in government, we committed funding for that to be developed, forcing the then Labor opposition to stump up the same amount of funding to develop the National Autism Strategy.

We're now getting very close to two years of this government, and yet we're still waiting for the strategy. I think this is important because we know autism is one of the most highly diagnosed conditions on the NDIS. We know that effective, early intervention will change the trajectory of an autistic child's life. But we also know that, since the change of the DSM, too many of the children being given autism level 2 and 3 diagnoses don't have permanent and lifelong disabilities. The NDIS should not be the only lifeboat in the ocean. State governments should be supplying lots of community supports for things like OT, psychology and speech therapy to give kids with a little bit of developmental delay a bit of a bump, a bit of help, a bit of assistance. But those kids should certainly not be on the NDIS for their whole life.

We know that there will be cuts to participants, and we know that there will probably be cuts to the participants that get to stay on their plan, because there is no other way to do it. We know that, when Peter Garrett was a member of the Labor Party, he told us: 'Don't worry. We'll say one thing before the election, and we'll change it when we get in.' That's what's happening now. Clearly, the Labor Party has not changed its stripes.

The other thing that's really disturbing for a lot of NDIS participants and their families is that there is no interest in getting the NDIS to work better, including to encourage parents who are capable of self-managing their plans,

which would reduce costs and open up the choice of therapists. We know that all Minister Shorten is interested in is boosting the number of HSU members. This is actually about driving membership to the HSU, not about supporting participants. During a conversation this morning I was saying that it would be nice if they even put a veneer on it not being just about a union membership drive, but we know that's what they want to do by making it harder to self-manage and harder to access providers who aren't part of the big providers and who aren't union members. *(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator PATERSON (Victoria) (13:04): I rise to make a contribution on the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023, which amends the Migration Act 1958 to strengthen employer compliance measures in relation to protecting temporary migrant workers from exploitation, including by implementing recommendations 19 and 20 of the 2019 report of the Migrant Workers Taskforce. Work on this bill first began under the former coalition government, which established the Migrant Workers Taskforce in 2016 to identify proposals for improvements in law, law enforcement and investigation, and other practical measures to identify and rectify cases of migrant worker exploitation. The task force was chaired by Professor Allan Fels and included members from a wide variety of government agencies, including the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force. The report produced by the task force was presented to the former government in February 2019. On 7 March 2019, the report was publicly released along with the government's response, which noted that we support taking further measures to protect vulnerable workers and ensure law-abiding Australian employers are not undercut by unscrupulous competitors. The report made 22 recommendations, and the former government accepted all 22 of those recommendations in principle.

The former government then developed legislation to implement recommendations 19 and 20 of the report of the Migrant Workers Taskforce via the Migration Amendment (Protecting Migrant Workers) Bill 2021, which was introduced on 24 November 2021 and referred to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee. The Senate committee report was tabled on 18 March 2022 and lapsed prior to the dissolution of the parliament at the 2022 election. When the previous bill was examined by the committee, the Labor members of that committee, led by former senator Kim Carr, added 10 pages of comments and concerns in the committee report, and I note none of those have been picked up in the bill before the Senate.

The current bill was referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for its consideration. The committee held a hearing in Brisbane on 21 August last year and heard from a range of stakeholders, and the committee process highlighted a range of issues with the bill. The coalition's representative on the committee, Senator Scarr, provided additional comments in the report to the Senate, and the opposition has worked with the government to develop a range of amendments in line with Senator Scarr's recommendations. I commend Senator Scarr on his work on this bill. The opposition understands that the department has committed to develop extensive educational and information material to ensure that employers understand their obligations under this legislation, and we welcome this work. We need to ensure that, while we seek to protect migrant workers' rights, we do not inadvertently create a legal minefield for small businesses.

The amendments before the Senate, which will be moved by the government, will help address these transitional issues. I understand there will be 25 amendments, including a number of minor technical amendments, and each of these recommendations made by Senator Scarr in the Senate committee have now been addressed. I understand there will be a commencement date of 1 July 2024. There is a technical amendment that creates a new definition in the Migration Act, as opposed to relying on the ordinary meaning of the words, which helps define the new powers in connection to work and helps clarify the intent and scope of the new offences in the bill. Another technical amendment will clarify that the work captured by this legislation is work done by people holding a temporary visa in Australia. Another amendment lists the objective of prohibited employer measures, to better clarify the government's intent in the bill. This articulates important policy objectives such as to prevent vulnerable workers from being exploited.

Other amendments reflect recommendations of the opposition for this bill to rely less on delegated legislation, including listing the triggers for the prohibition notices in the Migration Act as opposed to an instrument. The only exception to this is the ability to delegate for criminal penalties in the Fair Work Act. Further amendments to this

bill also address views expressed by the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills in its *Scrutiny digest* No. 10 of 2023 and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights in *Report 9 of 2023*. As a result, the coalition will be supporting both the bill and the amendments moved by the government.

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (13:08): The minister said in his second reading speech on the bill before us today, the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023:

There is a crisis of exploitation in Australian workplaces. Too many workers are forced to confront vulnerability created by our visa system.

This means more wage theft for workers ...

People are too terrified to speak out when they are mistreated. We all know this happens.

The Australian Greens couldn't agree more with the minister on those matters. We also agree with the minister's assertion that there is clear evidence of the systemic nature of exploitation in Australia's labour market and that unscrupulous employers and facilitators have misused visa rules to exploit workers. Those are undoubtedly accurate comments.

Significant research conducted and reported on by civil society organisations, including the Grattan Institute and Unions NSW, has found widespread and systemic underpayment and exploitation of migrant workers. This research has also found that exploited migrant workers are fearful of speaking out in case doing so leads to their visas being cancelled. This is a vulnerability frequently exploited by unscrupulous employers. A bill that rights these wrongs is a bill to be welcomed in this place. But I have to say the bill before us today, if it is unamended, does not meet that test in the view of the Greens.

We stood with civil society organisations and demanded more. We demanded that Labor, at the very least, table legislation that was consistent with their national platform and consistent with community expectations. We raised concerns and we made recommendations in the Senate inquiry into the bill regarding how it considered the term 'arrangement' in relation to work, because, as drafted, we had concerns that the provisions could preclude a broad interpretation. This was a concern because of well-documented evidence that employers sometimes coerce migrant workers into enduring egregious treatment within the work context that goes beyond the performance of the work itself. This may include, for example, demanding that a migrant worker accept sexual advances, accept unsafe living conditions or accept having their passport taken in return for work or for documents the worker needs in order to meet a visa requirement.

To address these concerns, the Greens circulated amendment sheet 2079, standing in my name, which would provide amendments to the coercion provisions at sections 245AAB and 245AAC to ensure that those provisions capture the full range of potential employer conduct.

Civil society and the Greens also raised concerns about the new and unfettered discretionary powers to cancel visas provided by section 116 of the bill. In our view, these powers would provide a chilling effect on potential migrant worker whistleblowers. The lack of a guaranteed protection would provide a chilling effect not only for migrant workers but also for their advocates, as, under the bill's provisions, unions and legal advocates would have to advise migrant workers that they couldn't safely defend their workplace rights without exposing themselves to the risk of visa cancellation. Experience has shown migrant workforces and advocates that, if the Department of Home Affairs retains a discretion to cancel a visa, it almost certainly will. So protections against exploited migrant workers having their visas cancelled are absolutely necessary to encourage whistleblowers to shine a light on the current crisis of migrant worker exploitation in Australia.

It's also worth noting that Labor, at its last national conference, committed to amending its national platform to include a non-discretionary protection against visa cancellation for exploited workers. This commitment, unfortunately, was not reflected in the bill that was put before this parliament, which is why the Greens circulated amendment sheet 2079, under my name—to remove the additional and chilling discretionary visa cancellation powers from the bill.

Late last year, I'm pleased to report, two-and-a-bit months on from the Senate inquiry, the government circulated amendments of its own to the bill. Government amendment sheet UB100 provides for a broad interpretation of the term 'arrangement' in relation to work, by defining the meaning of the term in the legislation rather than relying on a common English language meaning of the term. This makes it clear that both work-related and non-work-related activities are covered by these new powers and clarifies the intent and scope of the new offences and associated civil penalty provisions for those unscrupulous employers and others in the employment chain who use a person's immigration status to exploit them in the workplace.

The government has also provided civil society with assurances that the continued inclusion of the expanded cancellation power under section 116(1A) of the bill will not prevent the future introduction of a no-cancellation guarantee for migrant worker whistleblowers under section 116(2) of the act and that migration sector organisations

and trade unions will be closely involved in drafting regulations for this purpose. Those assurances have come in the form of written correspondence from the minister's office and a verbal commitment from the minister to unions—that's my understanding of the current status of those assurances.

I thank the minister for making those assurances, but I invite the minister who sums up this debate on behalf of the government to put that commitment into the Senate so that it's recorded on the *Hansard* today or whenever the concluding stages of this bill occur. I invite the minister to make an assurance that, in relation to future co-design, the Department of Home Affairs will facilitate engagement with civil society groups—including with the Human Rights Law Centre and the Migrant Justice Institute with regard to their report *Breaking the silence—a proposal for whistleblower protections*—on draft migration regulations to provide for visa protection from visa cancellation for migrant worker whistleblowers. Further, I invite the minister to make a commitment that this engagement will include non-discretionary forms of protection as per the Labor Party platform, to occur as soon as is practicable and, in any event, early this year to ensure those regulations are available to be tabled in the parliament as a priority. If we are able to get that commitment stated clearly by the government during this debate, that commitment, along with the government's amendments on sheet UB100, will achieve policy outcomes similar to those of the Greens amendments. Therefore, if we are able to get that commitment and the government does move its amendments on sheet UB100, I will not be moving the Greens committee of the whole amendments to the bill that have been circulated in my name.

In concluding my remarks on this legislation, I want to acknowledge the Human Rights Law Centre and also the Migrant Justice Institute. Both of those organisations not only provided really quality evidence to the Senate inquiry into the bill but also led work on the 2022 *Breaking the silence* report, which proposed whistleblower protections to enable migrant workers to address exploitation. That report was endorsed by a coalition of 40 trade unions, migrant rights academics and faith based organisations. That report was critical to helping the Greens understand the scope and seriousness of the problem, and it will continue to guide our consideration of migrant worker rights and protections in Australia more broadly. So I want to thank everyone involved for that invaluable contribution to the public discussion on migrant worker policy reform in Australia.

Senator WALSH (Victoria) (13:18): No matter where they come from or where they work, workers just deserve protection in this country. That is a fundamental value of this government and it's a fundamental value of the Australian people. So, when we hear that so many recent migrants are paid less than the minimum wage and that employers are making threats of phone calls to Australian Border Force if those workers speak out, we know that there is something inherently broken in our labour laws in this country. This bill, the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023, tackles that exploitation head on. It makes it a crime to exploit someone at work based on their migration status. Employers doing the wrong thing will face tougher penalties, and employers in breach of these laws will be restricted from being able to hire more temporary migrant workers. Really critically, we're scrapping that part of the Migration Act that penalises workers for speaking up, and, by putting in place appropriate protections from visa cancellation, we will support workers to speak up and to speak out and to report exploitation, because workers should never be punished for speaking up about the wrongdoing of employers.

This bill is not only about fairness in the workplace; it's also better for the economy as a whole, because wage theft and exploitation of vulnerable migrant workers is a threat to our economy. It's a threat to a competitive economy. It actually harms businesses that are trying to do the right thing. It harms businesses that want to see a level playing field in labour standards. It also undermines our trust in the migration system.

I want to acknowledge the story of Felisia, who has spoken out about the exploitation that she faced as a temporary migrant worker. She came here on a temporary visa and she was underpaid from day one. She was asked to stay late at work without pay, and she also experienced bullying and harassment at work, which we know is just all too common for temporary migrant workers, particularly women. Felisia was too scared initially to speak out and complain, in fear of what would happen to her visa. So, when she was dismissed and lost her job, she was unable to bring forward an unfair dismissal claim.

These stories are just way too common in a country that prides itself on a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. These stories show that the abuse of temporary migrant workers is chronic in our workplaces. I know this. I saw it every day in my previous role before I came to the parliament, representing some of Australia's most vulnerable workers.

So, for the first time in a decade, we are finally making a significant change to prevent the exploitation of migrant workers in this country, migrant workers who contribute to our country every day, often doing the most essential forms of work that we all rely on. We need to make sure that temporary migrant workers are afforded the same protections as all Australians and that they're afforded the protections that they deserve to make that contribution to our community, to be able to support themselves and their families and to be able to work with dignity in this

country. The Australian community expects nothing less as well. This bill is an important contribution to preventing the exploitation of migrant workers, and I commend it to the chamber.

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (13:22): I agree with most of the contributions which have been made in the Senate in relation to the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023, and I think there is broad support across this chamber generally in relation to the need to protect our migrant workers against exploitation and against, effectively, blackmail, where unscrupulous employers seek to use someone's immigration status against them in terms of coercing more work out of them, in terms of wage theft and in terms of engaging in a whole raft of practices.

At the outset, I would like to thank the department of immigration for taking on board the constructive additional comments—and which I'll certainly put forward in this sense—which I provided as deputy chair of the committee. I think the amendments definitely enhance the legislation and I think they address one of the concerns that I raised—that there needed to be further detail provided with respect to a number of matters in the bill as opposed to leaving it in regulation. So I think we actually do have a better piece of legislation because of the work which the members of the department have undertaken, through the minister, in relation to the legislation. They should certainly be commended for that and hopefully will convey it to everyone involved.

Those matters included the following. I'll go through the additional comments which I provided in relation to this bill. The first was in relation to the need to make sure that sufficient resources are provided to educate employers as to their responsibilities under this new piece of legislation. This piece of legislation is going to introduce a range of compliance measures and a range of obligations upon employers—as it should do—in order to protect vulnerable migrant workers. But the quid pro quo of that needs to be that information is provided to those employers. The new regime comes into effect on 1 July. It is now early February, so there are only five months in which to provide that education to employers. So we will be looking very carefully to make sure that the department engages in the educational process that it needs to to make sure employers are across all the detail as to how to comply.

The second point I raised in relation to the legislation, which is contained in the additional comments I provided, was in relation to the need for the criteria to be specified as to what the minister would take into account in considering whether or not an employer should be deemed or found to be a prohibited employer. I'm very pleased that item 20 of the amendment schedule actually does address that issue in very appropriate terms. Similarly, item 21 of the government's amendments addresses the issue with respect to the period for which an employer may be prohibited from engaging in hiring migrant workers. So, again, I think that was entirely appropriate, and again I commend the department in relation to taking onboard those constructive proposals and a number of other detailed amendments which I think enhance the legislation.

Finally, I want to, from the bottom of my heart, thank those migrant workers who shared their personal stories in relation to their experiences. Out of respect to them and out of respect to the civic organisations that provided evidence to the committee, which had its hearing in Brisbane, I want to place on the record some quotes from each of them, as a sign of respect and thanks to each of those workers. Firstly, Ms Jed Pica, a former international student who worked at a cafe, said:

Even in my case, when I found out that my employer was threatening me, I felt so ashamed. I thought that I had done something wrong, by working cash in hand. I really thought that, if he reported me to immigration, I would not know what to say. That is why I didn't take my case any further to the Fair Work Commission.

Well, I say to you, Jed, you should not be ashamed at all; you should be proud, and your family should be proud, that you spoke out about the situation you were put in.

Mr Bishal Sapkota, an international student who worked as a cleaner in Canberra, explained to the committee that a visa:

... is not just a legal piece of paper. It is hope for our parents, our dreams for the future and our path to make a better life.

Again, to you, Bishal: thank you so much for the evidence you provided to the committee. Thank you for speaking out on behalf of vulnerable migrant workers. You and your family should be proud of the contribution you've made. Finally, Mr Massimo Calosi, a migrant who worked as a chef in Melbourne, echoed the views of the other migrant workers:

The common factor, though, that stopped me and my fellow migrant workers from speaking up was the fear of having our visas cancelled. As it stands, that is literally a weapon that is getting used recklessly against workers by bad bosses.

Again, thank you, Massimo, for speaking out. Massimo has actually become an activist, a supporter and an advocate for workers in similar situations. So, again, from the bottom of my heart, I commend you, Massimo, on the work you've done.

With those words, I will say that I do agree with Senator McKim that we need to watch this space very carefully to make sure—and assurances were provided by the department—that workers in these vulnerable situations will

not have their visas cancelled as a result of their being put in impossible situations by their employers. But I do commend the minister and the department and all those who participated in this inquiry.

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (13:29): I congratulate both the senators who spoke previously on what they've said in a positive regard about the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023, because it's extremely important. I just came in at the tail end of Senator Scarr's comments, and those reflections that I heard I certainly very much support as well.

The widespread exploitation of migrant workers in this country has been widely understood for many years. In 2015 the Senate Education and Employment Committee conducted an inquiry into the treatment of temporary work visa holders, and the final report was titled *A national disgrace: the exploitation of temporary work visa holders*. In 2016 the Migrant Workers Taskforce was established to look into these issues. In 2018 the Fair Work Ombudsman's harvest trail inquiry reported a culture of noncompliance in the horticulture sector when it comes to—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Polley) (13:30): Order! It being 1.30, the debate is interrupted and we will proceed to two-minute statements. You will be in continuation, Senator Sheldon.

STATEMENTS BY SENATORS

Renewable Energy

Senator CADELL (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (13:30): Despite my youthful good looks and boyish charm, I am old enough to remember the good old days when the Greens chained themselves to trees, not wind towers, and when the Labor Party actively pretended to have an interest in the environment instead of bulldozing it. I see thousands of people out the front today have had a massive—there are thousands. In this chamber there are farmers from New England up there. They're on their land, trying to grow lucerne and feed animals out in the world. Straight after this, I'm meeting with VNI West. We have anti wind farm people from Port Stephens, from the Illawarra. I have Oberon Against Wind Farms out there. We have 'no' to the Central West-Arara area. All these people want a say. We have Transmission Tuesdays. We couldn't get it up today because we weren't here yesterday to lodge the motion, but it will be back.

We want to give them a say about what's happening to their land in this process. Any significant change in Australia requires all the parties of governments to agree about the way forward so it isn't chopped and changed every time there's a new government. This isn't a thing that is happening well. We have the government's own report in which Mr Andrew Dyer, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, came out and said 92 per cent of residents say this is not being done well. They are not being consulted with. They are not being engaged with. It is going poorly. Ninety-two per cent is a massive fail. It's an eight per cent mark in an exam. Even I at school didn't manage to get that low, and I was trying hard sometimes!

This is a joke. We need to have an inquiry to see how this can be done better. We are not taking land the size of Singapore under powerlines for stage 1 and stage 2 of Rewiring the Nation, more under solar areas and massive areas under wind turbines. *(Time expired)*

Schools

Senator PRATT (Western Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (13:32): Today I rise with good news. Western Australia, partnering with the Albanese Labor government, will be the first state in our nation to fully fund public schools according to the schooling resource standard. This means that, as of next year, we are starting with elevating the most disadvantaged public schools in our system to make them fully funded. If you look at how disadvantaged many of these schools have been and are, you will see it will make an enormous difference. This means that the federal Labor government, the Albanese government, is committed to providing 100 per cent of our share of the schooling resource standard, which is, of course, an estimate of how much funding is needed to meet a student's needs, matched by the Cook Labor government's commitment to meeting the schooling resource standard.

If we work together, both federal and state levels of government, we can ensure that our students in public schools right around the nation get the best education. It's worth over \$770 million of Commonwealth money over the next five years and an equivalent amount by the WA government. We've been working hard to leverage up contributions from the states by saying, 'We will commit to a greater schooling resource standard from the Commonwealth if the states do their part of the deal.' This is an equivalent of \$1.6 billion for Western Australian schools.

Climate Change: Oceans

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (13:34): In my first speech for 2024 I wanted to reflect on the summer that has been. Like a lot of Australians and ocean lovers, I've enjoyed my time down at the beach and in the sea, especially in Tasmania, but there have been some troubling developments. Many are aware that the waters off

Tasmania's coastlines have been warming at four times the global average over the last decade, and the impacts are virtually dystopian.

Within the last few weeks, we've seen an ecosystem intervention that we've never seen before. We've seen a quarter of the critically endangered red handfish populations removed from their wild homes in Tasmanian waters and put in tanks and aquariums in order to protect the species from going extinct. We've seen a captive breeding program for the critically endangered maugan skate, and we've sadly seen two of the skates in that captive breeding program die. Clearly, if we're going to remove endangered fish from dangerous marine heatwaves in the ocean and put them in aquariums in order to prevent them from going extinct, we're going to need bigger aquariums unless we act on climate change.

And it's not just fish. We heard from the CSIRO today that their latest research shows that marine heatwaves are changing the basis of the marine food chain, disrupting ecosystems and potentially global food supplies. It's a grim picture. And, once again, we've heard new research and new ratings on the damage that marine heatwaves are doing to coral reef systems. We've heard that off Tasmania's coastlines we've lost 95 per cent of our giant kelp forests due to marine heatwaves, and we've seen a scourge of invasive species. This is the year that I hope we can put oceans firmly on the political and media agenda here in Australia.

Prime Minister

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia) (13:36): The Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, is suffering from an inferiority complex. He wants Australians to accept an inferior tax plan to the tax reform plan that is already legislated in this parliament. He has chosen to sacrifice genuine tax reform on the altar of by-election politics. He has chosen to ignore two important figures. The first figure is 95. Under the original tax reform package that was already legislated, stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3, 95 per cent of Australians would have been paying 30 cents in the dollar or less. Instead—and this is the second number—he wants, in 10 years time, four million Australians to be paying more tax than they are now. This is not tax reform. This is a tax stitch-up.

Anthony Albanese is not Bob Hawke, and he's not Paul Keating. Australian taxpayers deserve better. They will quickly forget the modesty of this tax benefit when it evaporates out of their pockets because of very real cost-of-living pressures. But they will remember that this was a Prime Minister that abandoned his word. And let's remember what that word was. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said: 'And, when it comes to stage 3 tax cuts, we've made the obvious point that they are legislated. We voted for them in the parliament. People should expect those tax cuts to flow in a couple of years time on the usual time frame.' Australians were wrong to believe Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

Medicare

Senator WALSH (Victoria) (13:38): Last week we celebrated 40 years of the little green card that resides in wallets across the country: 40 years of Medicare, a true Labor legacy. I celebrated by going along to our brand new Inner Melbourne Medicare Urgent Care Clinic with the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ged Kearney. Less than two months after the clinic opened their doors, they've seen over 1,000 patients and saved 700 people from heading to the emergency department—including a little boy who'd cracked his head open while playing at his family pool. Thanks to the amazing nurses and doctors, he got patched up and was out in under an hour. All his family needed was that little green Medicare card, not their credit card. This was all without having to wait in a hospital emergency room. It's one of 58 Medicare urgent care clinics that this Labor government has opened across the country. And we've rolled out the largest investment in bulk billing in Medicare history, supporting 11 million children, pensioners and concession card holders to see a doctor for free.

It's easy to forget that Medicare wasn't always with us. It wasn't always a guarantee. In fact, this 40-year anniversary should have been longer. It was Gough Whitlam who introduced Medibank 48 years ago, only for the coalition to come in and dismantle it. And the worst health minister ever, Mr Dutton, did his best to destroy it too. Labor, on the other hand, will always defend and extend Medicare, because every Australian, regardless of their postcode or pay cheque, deserves quality and affordable health care. The Australian people can count on us to always defend and extend their Medicare.

Dental Health

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (13:40): Today I would like all senators to smile—come on, give us a grin! And then I'll ask you simply this: how important is it that you're able to smile? How important is that for your self-worth and self-respect? How important is it for you to have most of your teeth? According to last year's Senate inquiry, Australia's dental health is nothing short of appalling, and Tasmania's dental health is the worst in the country—what's new?

In just the last two years, the waiting list of Tasmanians trying to get their teeth fixed has just got longer and longer. There are now 15,000 Tasmanians waiting to get dental health care, and that's just the adults. Our Tassie kids are having their teeth removed at just five years of age. Children as young as four are having to have general anaesthetic to take their decayed teeth out. Some teenagers are having all their teeth taken out because they are so decayed.

Tooth decay and bad oral health are directly linked to bad health, including diabetes, heart disease and stroke. In Tasmania, it's the most common preventable reason for people going to hospital. It's been estimated by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare that the economic cost of tooth decay is about \$5 billion a year, but capping a scheme for vulnerable Australians to get universal dental care would cost about \$2 billion a year. And you guys call yourselves the party of the economy! Jesus. Work it out. All levels of government have dropped the ball on this, and it's time it was fixed.

The government has a few more weeks to respond to the recommendations in the latest Senate inquiry. I would like to acknowledge Senator Steele-John for his leadership on the committee. Senator Steele-John and I grew up in communities where people put off a trip to go to the dentist because they just cannot afford it. The Labor Party is busy crowing about Medicare this week. You just keep crowing; go right ahead. I've got more to come about that. Maybe they could take out some time to respond to the recommendations and do something about Australians and their teeth. I tell you what—it is a problem that you can no longer afford. Work out the mathematics. It's \$5 billion to \$2 billion, and you're calling yourselves the people of the economy. Know what you're doing with the economics. Fair dinkum!

Domestic and Family Violence

Senator LIDDLE (South Australia) (13:42): Five women have been killed, eight children have lost their mother, and it's only 37 days into 2024. It's a catastrophic start. Fifty-plus women were killed in family and domestic violence incidents last year—harrowing figures. Action, not announcements, is what's needed. Promising and underdelivering is the DNA of this Albanese government. When the Albanese government wanted your vote, it promised 500 frontline workers to deal with family violence. Right now, only a very small number of these people who help families keep safe are actually on the front line—hardly any! Australians have been let down. Women, children and vulnerable people have been let down. Those who work in this sector to help, protect and assist those fleeing violence have been let down.

I've asked this government about progress and got next to nothing. I wrote to relevant state and territory ministers and got two responses with no detail. There is no real progress. True to form, it was a headline-grabbing number without impact or substance. On 27 November, the PM, the man who said his word was his bond, told us:

My government is taking immediate and practical action ... We've delivered on our commitment of new frontline and community sector workers to support victims-survivors.

But the facts are that, 16 months later, in Western Australia they're still calling for expressions of interest, and in my home state of South Australia there is just one new frontline worker. In other states, they reckon it'll be early 2024. This sector is critical of the funding criteria that allows them to respond to significant and immediate need. Five hundred frontline workers was what the Albanese government promised us. They promised that. As with your promises, you have failed Australians again. In this case, Australian lives, the lives of children, the lives of families and the lives of people living in communities have depended on that promise, and you've broken it.

Taxation

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (13:44): The Albanese government is delivering better and fairer tax cuts for all Australians. It's a plan to address the cost of living and is putting people before politics. Every taxpayer across the country will receive a tax cut and, under Labor's plan, 11.5 million people will receive a bigger tax cut than was proposed by Mr Scott Morrison some five years ago. A nurse in my home state of Tasmania on \$76,000 will get a tax cut of \$1,579, which is more than double what they would have received under those opposite. This is a tax cut which is better for middle Australia, better for working Australians, better for women, better for nurses, truckies and teachers, and better for the economy overall. It's a fairer, more responsible way to ensure more people get more help when they need it.

Ms Ley said that, if the coalition wins the next election, it will wind back these tax cuts. We know what that means. That means that there are going to be higher taxes for 11.5 million hardworking Australians. Those opposite only ever know how to say no. Say no to the 97 per cent of nurses who will get a bigger tax cut. Go back to your home states and tell the nurses that that's what you support. They're saying no to the 98 per cent of teachers who will get a bigger tax cut.

If Mr Dutton and the coalition really cared about the cost of living, they would back this plan, because it's better for the economy, it's better for Australians, it's a better tax cut and it's based on the economic times of today. That's

the most important thing: giving Australian workers help when the cost of living is a burden on most Australians. This is good, as I said, for women. It's good for tradies. It's good for teachers. It's good for our emergency service personnel. It's good for the Australian economy.

Grocery Prices

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (13:46): The Greens conducted a comprehensive survey to learn more about people's lived experience of shopping at Coles and Woolworths. We heard from nearly 5,000 people, and the findings and what they told us are alarming and truly shocking. They reaffirm the need to take on the supermarket duopoly. An overwhelming 90 per cent of respondents have witnessed significant price hikes at Coles and Woolworths, and this has had a profound impact on everyday people, with 37 per cent of the people who responded to our survey now spending more than \$100 extra on their weekly groceries compared to just two short years ago.

The consequences of these increases are dire. Nearly half the people we heard from have had to make significant adjustments to their household budgets to cope with the rising cost of food and groceries. A staggering 56 per cent are buying fewer fruits and vegetables; 35 per cent are going without essential items; and, alarmingly and shockingly, a third of people we heard from are now skipping meals to be able to afford food and groceries for themselves and their families.

These figures lift the lid on alarming, staggering stories of distress and hardship for millions of Australians. People are being forced to compromise on their health and wellbeing while supermarket corporations are raking in billions of dollars in profits. Corporate greed is eroding the basic living standards of millions of Australians. The Greens are committed to tackling these issues head-on, and we will haul those CEOs in at the Senate inquiry and hold them—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Polley): Thank you, Senator. Senator David Pocock, you have the call.

Housing

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (13:48): This week we learnt, thanks to some profound investigative work by the *Guardian*, that homeless Australians are dying on our streets at an average age of 44 years old, younger than most of the people in this place and little more than half the life span of the average Australian. This is a disgrace in a country like Australia, but it's also a by-product of how we've come to treat housing as a country: less as a fundamental human right, as something that everyone in our community should be able to afford, and more as a wealth creation vehicle. We have a system where it's arguably easier to buy your second house than your first one. But we can't keep ignoring the 122,000-plus Australians who are homeless, the 640,000 Australians who are on the waitlist for social housing or the one million Australians who now access a food bank each month. We're an incredibly wealthy country, and we're about to enjoy a second federal budget surplus. Now is the time to redouble our efforts.

Today CHIA was out on the radio, again, calling for a doubling of the Housing Australia Future Fund. This is something that I've been pushing for the last couple of years. It makes sense to use this vehicle to build more social and affordable housing. We've seen today the debate on tax. My hope is that this is the start of this debate and that we will have the courage to tackle things like the capital gains tax discount on investment properties and negative gearing to turn this ship around, to make housing more affordable for people in our communities and to say to people who have multiple investment properties that this needs to change.

Jewish Community

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (13:50): A few weeks ago, members of the Queensland Jewish community came to meet with me to discuss their experience of antisemitism. As a matter of respect to them and in support of them, I want to take my first opportunity in this parliamentary year to speak to what they have experienced. They've provided me with a dossier of Facebook comments, emails and photos of graffiti. I was going to read some examples in this chamber, but, to be frank, (a) I don't want to give the satisfaction to the people who engaged in this behaviour, and (b) it is just vile. So, please, just think of what could be the most vile antisemitic comments, and you will understand what is in this dossier.

It is unacceptable that members of our Jewish community should be subject to such vile abuse. It is unacceptable that members of our Jewish community should be subject to personal threats, even threats against their children. It is unacceptable that Jewish businesses should be subject to property damage, the owners of those businesses subject to threats and employees of Jewish businesses harassed and subject to threats. It is incumbent upon all of us—senators and every Australian citizen—to call out this antisemitism wherever we see it and to stand in support of members of our Jewish community when they are subject to it.

Environment

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:53): Everyday Australians from Far North Queensland to Victoria Plains are protesting outside today for good reason. From speaking with these people, our constituents, it's clear that many have never protested before. Such is their outrage at the damage uncaring governments are doing to their communities, health and enjoyment of life and to their precious natural environment. They are outraged by wind turbines being installed in virgin forests and machinery blasting the tops off mountains to lay huge cement foundations for the 275-metre-high wind turbines, carving scars across mountains to get the blades in and the power out. Seaborne floating wind turbines destroy tourism and the maritime environment. What about our whales? Only a city Green, teal or Labor voter could see wind and solar installations destroy a maritime or rural vista and say, 'Ah, that's pretty.'

Apparently, in 'Greensland', steel poles can now identify as a tree. Navigation lights on top of these monster wind turbines illuminate the sky and all those living nearby all night, every night. Soaring birds can't fly in the five kilometres of air turbulence behind a modern turbine, disturbing migration and nesting. The mountains upon which these things are being built in Queensland are volcanic. Toxic arsenic occurs naturally through these rock formations. Local Aboriginals could have advised where the no-go zones are if anyone had asked. Yet they did not ask. Now the wind turbine industry is disturbing arsenic in hundreds of locations along the range. Arsenic is seeping into underground aquifers that come out—where? On our precious Great Barrier Reef. These are ancient aquifers from a time before sea levels rose to create the current reef. In the environmental impact statement for these wind turbines, aquifers are not considered—incompetence, vandalism or fraud?

Stop killing the environment in the name of saving the environment. Please stop and listen to voices outside. These anti-environment, antihuman wind and solar monstrosities are hideous frauds to nature, to science and to our nation. We have one environment. We are one community. We are one nation.

Live Animal Exports

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (13:55): Greens pressure and the incredible work of animal activists and the community, who picked up their phones and called the minister, have worked. We can breathe a sigh of relief for now. The department has finally rejected an application for the animals that have been stranded on MV *Bahijah* for over a month to be re-exported. This dangerous journey through a conflict zone should never have been approved. Even after this ship of misery was turned back, it took the government far too long to take any action while the animals suffered and died on the stranded vessel. This is animal torture. Now the 16,000 sheep and cattle on MV *Bahijah*, who are suffering in the scorching heat, must all be taken off this ship.

But let's not forget that the craven live export industry continues to shape government policy. As animals suffered and died on one stranded ship, the department approved yet another live export voyage to travel through the very same conflict zone, carrying 60,000 animals. It's been over 100 days since Labor received advice from the phase-out panel, but we have seen no progress at all. All the while there is the continued approval of ships and the suffering and torture of animals. Animals are sentient beings. They are not cargo to be offered up as fodder for profits. Animals deserve a life free of suffering, not to be sacrificed on ships as a cost of business. Labor must urgently legislate an end date and start the phase-out right now. Sheep cannot wait for the next term of government. They can barely wait another day.

Victoria: Roads

Senator VAN (Victoria) (13:57): Victoria had a bit of heavy rainfall in January. These floods have affected millions of people across our country and revealed just how vulnerable our road infrastructure is to the catastrophic effect of our climate. I commend the government on their disaster relief packages. However, communities across Australia, and particularly communities in my home state of Victoria, have been grappling with inaccessible roads, delaying crucial disaster relief efforts. Victorian councils are having to rebuild roads that they had just rebuilt after last year's floods. This is time and funds that our councils can't be wasting.

Our traditional road repair methods have proven inadequate to be resilient. Our approach to road infrastructure needs a revolutionary shift, not merely to repair but to elevate and futureproof against climate change. Traditional methods fall short, demanding innovative, flood-resilient techniques that ensure longevity and resilience. Inspired by international examples like the Netherlands, there is a clear pathway to adopting advanced, eco-friendly materials and designs capable of withstanding floods.

We're at a pivotal moment to adopt green infrastructure, aligning recovery with environmental sustainability. Global case studies spotlight the feasibility of such practices, encouraging us to adopt strategies that meet both current and future generational needs. Embracing this change towards resilient and sustainable infrastructure is crucial for navigating the challenges posed by climate change. Let's build our roads back better for a stronger, more sustainable Australia.

Medicare**Taxation**

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (13:58): I'd first like to say happy birthday to Medicare—40 spectacular years making sure that your green card is more important than your wealth. I have personally had the benefit of this. I've personally, as I've spoken about in this chamber before, had issues where I've struggled to put food on the table and a roof over my head.

So I am delighted to see the legislation for the tax cuts from the Labor government today. In the face of significantly changed economic circumstances, we have found a better way. We have found a better way to deliver tax cuts in a way that is a better manager of the cost of living, having a genuine impact on people out there who are doing it tough.

It will help to return bracket creep. It'll be better for women, better for participation, better for the workforce and better for the economy. This is a great move by the Labor government.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Taxation**

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:00): My question is to the minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Wong, Minister, rather than using the weasel words we've become so accustomed to from Labor ministers of, 'We have no plans,' which the Australian public now know will precipitate yet another Labor broken promise, can you, and will the Prime Minister, categorically rule out any change or changes that limit the use of negative gearing or franking credits by Australians?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:00): It says something that the opposition is so interested in talking about what the government is not doing, because, of course, they can't talk about what the government is doing because that particular negative campaign has fallen flat, hasn't it, President? The reality is: those opposite are desperate to find another front because, after a lot of huffing and puffing, they're now backing Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's tax plan. That is what they are doing, so they're desperate now to talk about what we are not doing instead of what we are doing. We have made our position on those which—

Senator Birmingham: Australians are scared about what you might do!

Senator WONG: Which promise might you break?

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Wong, please resume your seat. Order on my left! Senator Cash. Minister, please continue.

Senator WONG: We are reforming the income tax system and providing income tax relief to Australians who are doing it tough. That's what we are doing; that is our focus. We are not looking at other changes in the tax system; we are looking at the changes in the income tax system. The reason we are doing that is Labor MPs, Labor senators and ministers, have understood how important it is for us to respond to cost-of-living pressures.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator WONG: I know you don't want to talk about cost-of-living pressures—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have Senator Birmingham on his feet.

Senator Birmingham: A matter of direct relevance: the question did not mention income tax. The question invited the minister, very clearly, to address community concerns on negative gearing and franking credits. The minister has not come near either of those two specific topics raised in the question. I ask you to draw her to the question.

The PRESIDENT: Minister Wong, I will withdraw you—I'll draw you to Senator Birmingham's question.

Senator Birmingham: Can you do that too? Withdrawing the call is an option!

Senator WONG: Well, I hope not! That'd be interesting; I would have to accept it. We are not proposing any other changes in the areas that the senator has outlined. I again say to anybody listening: understand what is happening here. Those opposite have backed Anthony Albanese's tax plan. That's what they've done, and now they're trying to distract from it with another scare campaign. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Birmingham, a first supplementary?

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:03): I note the continuation of the words Australians now know mean a backflip like 'not proposing any other changes at this stage'

continue. Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have previously refused to explicitly rule out changing the taxation treatment of the family home. Will the minister and the Prime Minister categorically rule out applying capital gains tax or any other tax to the family home, or do the weasel words apply there too?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:04): Here we go again: another day, another of Dutton's attempted scare campaigns. No, we are not proposing those tax changes either. The reality is everybody knows that the—

Senator McKenzie interjecting—

Senator WONG: Do you know what is embarrassing? You're backing Albo. That's what's embarrassing for you. That's what you can't bear, Senator McKenzie, isn't it? After all that huffing and puffing, you've realised, 'Actually, Anthony Albanese got it right.' That's what you've realised. Now you've come in here and you've gone: 'Oh my goodness. We'd better come up with another scare campaign so that hopefully people won't notice that we're backing the Prime Minister.' You're backing a Labor prime minister's plan because you know he did it right. You know he got it right. So now you've got to try and find something else to fight about.

Senator Cash interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: When you've finished, Senator Cash, Senator Birmingham's on his feet.

Senator Birmingham: Again, on direct relevance, could Minister Wong at least utter the words 'family home' in her answer?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The minister was being relevant. Minister, did you wish to finish?

Senator WONG: We are not proposing any changes of the type you were describing. But I want to say again, everybody, I am so pleased that the opposition has finally understood that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has got it right.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Wong.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I've had to call the chamber to order a number of times, particularly on my left. I've named senators, I've called you to order and you've ignored me. I expect you to respect my calls. Senator Birmingham, a second supplementary?

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:06): After the Prime Minister broke his promise made on more than a hundred occasions to not change the stage 3 tax cuts and broke his promise to not change superannuation tax arrangements, how can Australians believe a word of this minister or the Prime Minister when all they come out with are the weasel words 'we have no plans' or 'we are not proposing any changes at this time', when every time they've said that they go and break the promise afterwards?

Senator Carol Brown: No cuts to the ABC, no cuts to the SBS!

The PRESIDENT: I'm waiting to call Senator Wong. Senator Brown!

Senator Carol Brown: All coming back to you.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Brown! I should not have had to call you twice. Minister Wong.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:06): If the opposition really believed that the Prime Minister's decision was so wrong, then they would vote against these tax cuts. They would vote against them and they would go to the next election with their deputy leader's policy of rolling back these changes—because, as soon as they vote for this, what we know is that they are agreeing that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese did the right thing by Australian workers.

Taxation

Senator CICCONE (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:07): Hello, everyone. Happy New Year. Thank you very much, President, and it's good to be back. My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Wong. Minister, the Albanese government recently announced that it will deliver tax cuts for every single Australian taxpayer. That's nearly 14 million people. Can the minister please explain to the Senate how federal Labor will deliver a bigger tax cut for Middle Australia, which will help the cost of living and build on our targeted relief while also not adding to inflation?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:08): I thank Senator Ciccone for the question and I also welcome him back and take the opportunity, again, to congratulate him and Sarah on the beautiful Amato, who we had the pleasure of meeting yesterday, although he was asleep.

The Albanese government is delivering a tax cut for every Australian taxpayer. Our No. 1 priority is addressing inflation and cost-of-living pressures, and that is exactly what we are doing. These are tax cuts which help with the cost of living while making Australia's tax system fairer. And, just like the other measures that the government have introduced to assist people with the cost of living, our tax cuts won't add to inflation. Treasury's advice is very clear on that. We on this side have listened to the community and we have listened to Treasury, and this plan is the result.

Labor is delivering fair and responsible tax cuts for all 13.6 million taxpayers. Senator Ruston may make funny noises over there about that, but having everybody get a tax cut, we reckon, isn't bad. Do you know what? Eleven-point-five million people will get a bigger tax cut—84 per cent of Australian taxpayers. This change means that taxpayers earning less than \$45,000 will now receive a tax cut. An average worker on 73 grand will receive a tax cut of more than \$1,500, and a person earning \$100,000 will get a tax cut of nearly \$2,200.

You see, we on this side are doing the right thing for the right reasons: more help for families, more help for communities under pressure from the cost of living, and a better deal for 5.8 million working women. Five point eight million working women will be better off as a result of the decisions of this government.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ciccone, a first supplementary?

Senator CICCONE (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:10): Minister, can you please also confirm that every Australian taxpayer, which does include our scientists, tradies, nurses, researchers, teachers, engineers, firefighters, hospitality workers, retail assistants and every other hardworking taxpayer in this country, will get a tax cut under the Albanese government's plan?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:10): Under this plan every single taxpayer gets a tax cut, no matter what they earn.

Senator McKenzie interjecting—

Senator WONG: I know that's hard for you, but that's what's going to happen. From pilots and police to tradies, couriers and counsellors, every hardworking taxpayer will get a tax cut. Ninety per cent of Australian working women will get a bigger tax cut. Ninety-seven per cent of childcare workers, disability carers and aged-care workers will get a bigger tax cut. Ninety-eight per cent of teachers will get a bigger tax cut. It's crystal clear that every taxpayer needs and deserves a meaningful tax cut. The fact is that wouldn't have happened under Scott Morrison's plan, but, under Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's plan, it will happen now. Labor wants people to earn more and to keep more of what they earn, and that is what this delivers.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Ciccone, a second supplementary?

Senator CICCONE (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:11): I thank the minister for that response. Could the minister please also explain to the Senate what the response has been, not just from the public at large but also from experts, to the government's plan to deliver the tax cuts to every single taxpayer?

The PRESIDENT: Before I call you, Senator Wong, I remind you to refer to people in the other place by their correct titles.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:12): Prime Minister?

The PRESIDENT: Mr Morrison.

Senator WONG: Sorry. Mr Morrison.

With a plan that delivers a tax cut for every Australian taxpayer—that's nearly 14 million Australians—it's no surprise it has been widely welcomed by the public, by experts and by economists. Unfortunately, those opposite seem to be very begrudgingly voting for it, realising belatedly that it is the right plan.

I would remind people that, when we first announced this plan to give every Australian taxpayer a tax cut, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Sussan Ley said they would 'absolutely roll these changes back'. Absolutely! What's happened to that? What happened to absolutely rolling them back? If you absolutely believed this was absolutely the wrong thing to do, then you would absolutely vote against it and absolutely go to the election to absolutely roll them back. You know this is the right plan. You know this is the right thing to do.

Taxation

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:13): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Gallagher. On 11 December last year, Treasury was instructed to undertake work that included changes to the stage 3 tax cuts. Following that instruction, the Prime Minister and the Treasurer stated at least a dozen times that they hadn't changed their position on the stage 3 tax cuts, including when the Prime Minister said, 'We're not reconsidering that position.' But we know now that the government was lying. After repeated—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, withdraw.

Senator HUME: Madam President, I am conscious—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, you're not in a debate with me. I've asked you to withdraw. That's what I want you to do.

Senator HUME: Madam President, I would say I'm not impugning a particular member of the government, but the government was lying.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, I have just instructed you (1) to withdraw and (2) not to argue with me. Please follow my directions.

Senator HUME: I won't argue with you, Madam President, other than to say that perhaps we could look at the standing orders about this sort of phrase about a collective.

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on my right! I am in charge of the chamber, and I will deal with this matter.

Senator HUME: I will obviously withdraw, but I would like you to review the standing orders on referring to a collective as opposed to individuals.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, the implication is quite clear.

Senator HUME: The implication was that the government was lying.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume! Senator Wong, please resume your seat. Senator Hume, please resume your seat.

Senator Hume interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: I've asked you to resume your seat. Senators, whilst I acknowledge there has been a lot of debate in the media and certain words used, the Senate chamber has standing orders and precedents, and one of those relates to the word that I asked you to withdraw. I don't intend to go through question time reminding every senator who stands to ask a question, or, indeed, any senator who responds, to withdraw. I've made a ruling on that. It's within the standing orders. It's within the precedents. When I ask you to withdraw, it's not an open invitation to debate with me. I note you have withdrawn. Please continue with your question.

Senator HUME: After repeatedly and egregiously misleading the Australian people, how can the Australian people ever trust you or your government again?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:15): Thank you for the question. The answer to that question is the Australian people can always trust this government to focus on cost of living.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator GALLAGHER: As much as that hurts them over there, they know—

The PRESIDENT: Minister Gallagher, please resume your seat. Order on my left! Minister Gallagher, please continue.

Senator GALLAGHER: The Australian people can always trust this government to make the right decisions for the right reason, to front up and own those decisions, to explain those decisions and to focus on their needs. Your leader was out over the summer stoking division and calling for Woolworths to be boycotted—remember that?—and threatening the jobs of 200,000 Australians. While he was wandering around doing that, we were focused on the things that matter to the Australian people: how do we provide them with cost-of-living relief, when they need it, as soon as we can? When we took that decision, we fronted up, we owned it, we explained it and we will continue to do so.

We took that decision for the right reasons. It wasn't, as some might have said, that we went in with our eyes open that this was changing our position. It wasn't an easy decision. We looked at it carefully, but it became increasingly clear that this was a real way we could make a difference, with 11½ million Australians getting a bigger tax cut and every Australian taxpayer getting a tax cut—and you are backing it. You accept that it is the right policy for the right time. It's distracted you from having to follow the scare campaigns and the politics of division because you're having to back in something that is right. This is the right policy for the right economic circumstances. It will make a difference in household budgets, and we back it absolutely.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, a first supplementary?

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:18): It's terrific to hear, Minister, that you owned it. When asked repeatedly on the *Today* program last week to rule out changes to negative gearing, you said, 'It's not my government; it's the

Albanese government', and, 'We have no plans on negative gearing.' Minister, are you trying to say, as the Treasurer did on Monday, that this was in fact a captain's call by the Prime Minister and nothing to do with you?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:18): There was a lot of preamble there. I am standing here and I am taking responsibility. I am the finance minister. I was involved in the decisions. I did work over the summer with the Treasurer and the Prime Minister, laser focused on providing cost-of-living relief to Australian households. That's what matters. That's the work we did over summer while you were preparing for *Nemesis* and all your little slots on that, and Peter Dutton was out working out a way to lose 200,000 jobs at Woolworths. We were working on making sure that middle- and low-income households got a fair share of the tax cuts. That is the proposal that, whilst you have slithered and awkwardly moved around it, you are now backing and you accept is the right policy.

The PRESIDENT: Minister Gallagher, I do remind you to refer to those in the other place by their correct titles. Senator Hume, a second supplementary?

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:19): Minister, aren't you embarrassed that no Australian will ever trust anything that you or your colleagues say ever again?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:19): The feedback I've had on the decision the government's taken has been overwhelmingly positive. They have appreciated the fact that the government is making decisions in the national interest based on the economic circumstances of the time. They're not interested in the silly games and the politics of division that you love, that you are addicted to, that you can't get off. They want a government to front up and to make decisions—sometimes hard decisions, and this is and was a hard decision. We knew it was changing our position. That's why the Prime Minister went to the Press Club and spoke about it. We've done interview after interview explaining our position. You said you opposed it, you were going to reverse it, you were absolutely going to roll it back. Now you've decided to back it. Anthony Albanese's tax plan is supported by the Liberal and National parties of Australia.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (14:21): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Penny Wong. Just when one thinks that the Labor government couldn't sink any lower on Palestine, they have made the appalling and extremely irresponsible decision to suspend funding for UNWRA. In four months of Israel's genocide, with more than 27,000 Palestinians killed, including over 11,000 children, you haven't uttered a word of condemnation, yet it took you no time at all to suspend life-saving funding to UNWRA, further enabling collective punishment of Palestinians as Israel continues its rampage and massacre in Gaza. UNWRA chief Mr Philippe Lazzarini has said that Israel has yet to present any evidence of its allegations to UNWRA. Minister, what evidence did you see before you made the catastrophic decision to suspend UNWRA's funding?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:22): There is so much in that question which is false. It reminds us again that, just like Peter Dutton, the Greens—

The PRESIDENT: Minister Wong, please refer to—

Senator WONG: I'm sorry. Apologies. The opposition leader, Mr Dutton, and the Greens are on a unity ticket which is all about dividing the Australian community and weaponising this horrific conflict.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator WONG: You're the same. You are. There are two facts in relation to UNWRA.

The PRESIDENT: Minister Wong, please resume your seat. Senator McGrath—Senator Scarr. I beg your pardon.

Senator Scarr: I take it as a compliment! The conflation of the Greens position with Peter Dutton—

The PRESIDENT: Senator, what is your point of order?

Senator Scarr: is a personal imputation.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Scarr, that is not a point of order. Minister Wong.

Senator WONG: There are two things I'm going to say about UNWRA. There are two facts we cannot ignore in relation to UNWRA. The first is that they do life-saving work. I would remind you, Senator Faruqi, that we doubled the core funding to UNWRA. I remind you of that. It's something you never say, something you do not acknowledge. You're shaking your head now. See? Here we go again. The second point is that the recent allegations

against its staff are grave and need to be investigated. Those facts are both true. That is why we have suspended, along with many of our like-minded partners, pending these matters being carefully considered.

I have to say it is of deep regret that, while the government are seeking to use our voice to advocate for the release of hostages, for the protection of civilian lives, for humanitarian access and for a pathway out of the conflict, we do not have partners in this effort in either the opposition or the Greens. They would rather see a community divided and they would rather try to use this to pick up votes. That is what is happening. That is the similarity between the opposition and the Greens. I remind the Greens that we still have 130 hostages being held by Hamas. I remind those opposite that there are 1.7 million people in Gaza who are internally displaced. The reality is that we are seeking to play a constructive role. There are two parties in this place who are playing politics with this conflict. One of them has just asked me a question. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Faruqi, a first supplementary?

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (14:24): Minister, I did not need a lesson in gaslighting. Millions of Palestinians have been forcibly displaced. Families are forced to move repeatedly in search of safety under Israel's bombardment. Over 66,000 Palestinians have been injured. Children are being starved and traumatised. Pregnant women are giving birth in tents. Given all this evidence of acute humanitarian needs and the urgency of aid, Minister Wong, when will you restore the funding? *(Time expired)*

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:25): I would say to—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Minister Wong, I'm sorry; resume your seat. Senators, there are very different opinions across this chamber on a range of matters. This is one. Senator Faruqi has the right to ask her question in silence, and the minister has the right to answer it in silence.

Senator WONG: I would invite Senator Faruqi to perhaps consider what I said in the press conference on Thursday with the New Zealand foreign minister and defence ministers, where I went through precisely some of the facts to which she has averted. In an explanation amidst those who are attacking the government for our funding and support over many years, including under the previous government, of UNWRA, I reminded people why the Australian government now and previously has funded that organisation, and that is because it is the only entity which has been capable of delivering assistance into the Occupied Palestinian Territories. That is also why we increased the core funding. I'd invite you in your social media and public media to perhaps recognise that.

I also made the point that 1.7 million people are internally displaced. I made the point that there are increasingly few safe places for Palestinians to go. I reminded people that there are one million at risk of starvation and 400,000 Palestinians in Gaza that are— *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Faruqi, a second supplementary?

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (14:26): Minister, we're coming up to week 2 of complete silence from the Labor government on the International Court of Justice ruling which found that Israel is plausibly committing genocide and gave a clear signal to Australia to stop aiding, abetting and shielding Israel. Minister, when will the Labor government break its cowardly silence on the ICJ ruling?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:27): Again, Senator Faruqi has not looked at what we have done and said. I would invite her to look at the joint statement that the Australian government—through the Minister for Defence, the Deputy Prime Minister, and I—alongside the New Zealand Prime Minister, has released with the 2+2 last week, which also specifically referenced the ICJ. I would refer her to our statement there, which included the expectation that we respect the independence of the ICJ and that we respect the critical role it plays in upholding international law and the rules based order. Both countries articulated—

Senator Faruqi interjecting—

Senator WONG: You don't want to hear the answer, Senator Faruqi? You just want to personally attack me? Is that right?

Senator Faruqi interjecting—

Senator WONG: It's par for the course. Our shared expectation is that Israel will act in accordance with the ICJ's ruling. You may not think that's of significance where two Five Eyes countries say that; I beg to differ. *(Time expired)*

Taxation

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (14:28): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Gallagher. From 1 July this year, the Albanese Labor government will deliver a tax cut for every Australian taxpayer. I know that Australians in my home state of South Australia have had it tough for the last couple of years, with cost-of-living pressures persisting. Can the minister inform the Senate about how many more Australians will benefit from the Albanese Labor government's tax cuts?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:28): I thank Senator Grogan for the question. Yes, I am very pleased to confirm to the Senate that the Albanese Labor government is delivering a tax cut for every Australian taxpayer, commencing on 1 July. Labor's new tax cuts will make a real difference to 13.6 million Australians. Our tax cuts have been deliberately and carefully designed to provide bigger tax cuts for middle Australia, to help with those cost-of-living pressures while at the same time making the tax system fairer. We know that many Australians are under pressure right now and deserve a tax cut, including those living in Senator Grogan's home state of South Australia, where 89 per cent of South Australian taxpayers will get a bigger tax cut.

We've found a more responsible way to ensure more people get a bigger tax cut to help ease the pressure they're under. Under our plan, working Australians will keep more of the wages they earn, and we are proud to be delivering this significant economic reform which helps to increase labour supply in crucial industries, such as the care economy, which will need more workers in the future, with female labour supply expected to increase by around 0.4 per cent. Our tax cuts deliver a bigger benefit to more than 90 per cent of taxpayers in in-demand occupations such as teachers, nurses, aged-care and disability carers, and childcare workers. Importantly, building on the first budget surplus delivered in 15 years, our tax plan delivers more relief to more people in a way that is fiscally responsible and doesn't add to inflationary pressures. Treasury's advice makes it clear that our tax changes will not add to inflation pressures because they are broadly revenue neutral, and our changes also mean that every Australian taxpayer will receive a tax cut this year.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Grogan, a first supplementary?

Senator Thorpe interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, come to order!

Senator Thorpe interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, order! Senator Grogan, a first supplementary?

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (14:30): Thank you, Senator Gallagher. That's very helpful. Eighty-nine per cent is significant for South Australia. It's clear that these tax cuts have been designed to offer greater relief for Middle Australia, addressing cost-of-living pressures and ensuring a fairer tax system. Can the minister outline how the adjustments to tax rates and thresholds will deliver a bigger benefit for more Australians?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:31): Thank you—

Senator Thorpe: How is it fair giving politicians a tax cut in this place?

The PRESIDENT: Resume your seat, please, Minister.

Senator Thorpe: How is that fair?

The PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, I've called you to order about four times. That's three times too many. You are being disrespectful to me and to this chamber. Minister Gallagher, please continue.

Senator GALLAGHER: I thank Senator Grogan for the supplementary question. Our tax reform package has been carefully designed to improve the financial wellbeing of Australians, particularly those in low- and middle-income brackets. From 1 July, the adjustments to tax rates and tax thresholds will deliver broader and more support to Australian taxpayers. We're reducing the 19 per cent rate to 16 per cent for incomes between \$18,200 and \$45,000, and we're reducing the 32½ per cent rate to 30 per cent for incomes up to \$135,000, amongst other changes. This provides taxpayers with broader cost-of-living relief than under arrangements previously in place, especially those on low and middle incomes, who are more vulnerable to cost pressures. Our plan is projected to benefit over 13.6 million taxpayers, ensuring that a vast majority, including those in critical sectors—such as those in your home state, Senator Grogan, in education and health care—will see an increase in their take-home pay.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Grogan, a second supplementary?

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (14:32): We know that Australians are continuing to do it tough, and the Albanese government's tax cuts are just the latest important element of the government's response to cost-of-living challenges being faced by Australians. Can the minister outline how Labor's tax cuts work to build on the existing suite of targeted cost-of-living measures that the government has already delivered for Australians?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:33): I thank Senator Grogan for the supplementary question. As Senator Grogan outlined, this is just one part of our cost-of-living plan. Complementing the tax plan—the tax relief that we'll roll out on 1 July with the support of Senator Hume and others—the Albanese government is delivering real cost-of-living relief, much of which is opposed by those opposite. We do accept that the tax plan was initially opposed, and then they said: 'Oh, I don't know about this. We'd better crab walk away from that opposition on this one.' But they did oppose electricity bill relief. They did oppose making medicines cheaper. They did oppose making it easier and cheaper to see a doctor. They did oppose the Housing Australia Future Fund and the effort that we're putting in there. I believe they may have as well opposed fee-free TAFE. With all of these measures that go to make a difference to Australian households, we've had opposition from those opposite.

Housing

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (14:34): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Housing, Senator Farrell. With homeless Australians dying on the street at an average age of 44 years, a new survey by InfoChoice last week showed that seven out of 10 Australians are experiencing rental stress. Vacancy rates are at record lows, and people are lining up in their scores—often over 100—to view a single rental listing. What progress has National Cabinet made on rental reforms?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:34): I thank Senator Pocock for the question, and I don't disagree with any of the statistics that you've referred to there. This government fully understands that many Australians are finding it very tough in the current rental market. More than 30 per cent of Australians were renting a home at the last census, and obviously we hear the concerns of renters and are trying to take action to address them.

As you've referred to, there have been discussions with the states and the territories and with local government through the National Cabinet. The National Cabinet committed to a better deal for renters to harmonise and strengthen renters' rights across Australia. This included developing a nationally consistent framework with the requirement for genuine, reasonable grounds for eviction, moving towards limiting rental increases to once a year and phasing in minimum rental standards, among other changes to make renting fairer in this country. These changes will have a tangible impact for almost one-third of Australian households who rent. But we know that the best way to improve the position of renters is to increase the supply of homes. The Albanese government has committed to a very ambitious reform agenda. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Pocock, a first supplementary?

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (14:36): Thank you, Minister. The Prime Minister said on 28 April last year:

Housing Ministers will develop a proposal for National Cabinet in the second half of 2023 outlining reforms to strengthen renters' rights ...

It's now February 2024. I'm wondering where the government's at and why this isn't more of a priority, given cost-of-living pressures being felt across the country.

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:37): I thank Senator Pocock for his first supplementary question. It is the focus of all our reforms to boost the supply of housing—more social rental housing, more affordable housing and of course more private homes to rent and more homes to buy. What the government have done in the period that you're talking about, Senator Pocock, is the National Housing Accord, which will support planning and zoning reforms as well as the investment of \$350 million in additional federal funding to deliver 10,000 affordable rental homes.

Secondly, the \$2 billion social housing accelerator has been delivered, with announcements of projects already being made, and we look forward to around 4,000 new social rental homes being delivered from this funding. The federal government's \$3 billion—*(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Pocock, a second supplementary?

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (14:38): Thank you, Minister. We'll continue to wait for the proposal to strengthen renters' rights. In the meantime, because of the cost-of-living pressures, I'm interested

to know: can you advise on how many Australians each month are accessing Foodbank around the country, and how many of them are accessing it for the first time?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:38): I thank Senator Pocock for his second supplementary question. I don't have those statistics available to me at the moment, Senator Pocock, but I will endeavour to get them as quickly as I possibly can and provide them to you and to the Senate.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Minister.

Environment

Senator VAN (Victoria) (14:39): My question is to Minister Wong, the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Water, Minister Plibersek. In light of the recent decision to reject the development proposal for the Port of Hastings project due to its projected impacts on the Ramsar listed Westernport wetlands, could the minister advise the chamber on the criteria and processes employed by the government in determining the support or rejection of significant projects, especially those intersecting with Australia's environmental obligations and renewable energy ambitions?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:40): I thank Senator Van for the question. As a matter of general principle, what I would say to him is that any decision under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is a decision that is made through the application of that law to the particular facts of the case. That is the way in which ministers of the Crown exercising their statutory obligations under that legislation have done so since its introduction, and that is the way Ms Plibersek would have approached this case. The fact is that every project—housing, mining, energy and so forth—is treated in this way—that is, the law is applied to the particular facts and the decision is made by the minister in relation to the application of the law to those facts.

I am advised the project was deemed unacceptable because the Port of Hastings failed to show it was consistent with federal environmental law, particularly with regard to the impact on internationally protected wetlands. I'm also advised that detailed reasons for the decision are publicly available online. I'm advised that the Port of Hastings is, of course, able to make another and revised application under the national environmental law and that senior officials from both the Victorian government and the federal government have already met to discuss possible next steps. The government will continue to consider each project on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the law, in the way I have outlined.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Van, a first supplementary?

Senator VAN (Victoria) (14:41): Given the paramount importance of developing clean energy infrastructure such as offshore wind farms for Australia's energy future, what steps has the government taken to reconcile the imperative of these developments with the safeguarding of our international environmental commitments and the biodiversity they aim to protect?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:42): We agree with Senator Van as to the importance of developing renewable energy infrastructure. It is a regrettable fact that those opposite ensured that there was so little investment in the energy infrastructure the country needed over the nearly a decade that they were in government. We obviously need to ensure that these projects, like any other projects, are able to obtain approval under national environmental law in the way that I have described. I'm also advised that in fact the Albanese government is approving more renewable energy projects than ever before. In fact, we have seen the approval of some 42 renewable energy projects, which, combined, are enough to power over two million homes—equivalent to all households in Tassie, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Van, a second supplementary?

Senator VAN (Victoria) (14:43): Considering the critical balance between environmental preservation and the need to reduce carbon emissions, is the government contemplating the introduction of an environmental protection mechanism of some sort within the project assessment framework to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of projects that accounts for both their environmental impact and their carbon reductions?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:43): The advice I have is that the government will continue to consider each project on a case-by-case basis under the existing law. I'm also asked to advise the Senate of the range of renewables that Minister Plibersek has approved, which included the solar farm in Queensland, producing enough power for around 200,000 households; in the senator's own home state of Victoria one of the world's largest battery systems, which will power up to a million Victorian homes; two solar farms in New South Wales; a new wind farm in one of Queensland's oldest

mining regions; and a huge battery energy storage system in WA to ease pressure on the grid and help us transition to a renewable future. I'm also advised that there are in fact a record 125 other renewable energy projects in the environmental approval pipeline. In relation to the Port of Hastings, as I said, they are able to make a further application. *(Time expired)*

Medicare

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:44): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Aged Care. Last week, the government—indeed, Australia—celebrated Medicare's 40th birthday. To commemorate this, the Prime Minister said:

My Government is delivering on its commitment to strengthen Medicare and make it easier and cheaper to get quality healthcare, by tripling the bulk billing incentive and making medicines cheaper.

The health minister said:

It was a Labor Government that built Medicare and it is only a Labor Government who will continue to protect and strengthen Medicare.

Yet, on the ground, I am hearing and seeing from an increasing number of Tasmanians that they are finding it more difficult to see a doctor. We have the lowest bulk-billing take-up in the nation, and waiting times to see specialists are way longer than they have ever been. So, Minister, what is your government and your Labor senators from Tasmania doing to encourage more doctors to take up bulk-billing in Tasmania?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:45): I thank Senator Lambie for the question. It's a really important question on how we can continue to strengthen Medicare, particularly in states where there have historically been issues around bulk-billing. We have the same issues here in the ACT as Tasmania around bulk-billing, with GP shortages and shortages for specialists as well. It is something that small jurisdictions have always struggled with because a large number of medical professionals tend to move to some of the bigger cities.

But I think when you look back on the last 18 months of what we've tried to do—and, yes, the health system is massive and it often takes time for investments to show results—what we've seen with the urgent care clinics and with the bulk-billing rates across the nation in just the few months since we provided that tripling of the incentive for bulk-billing are good results. They are early results, but they are good results. I think the GP bulk-billing rate rose by 2.1 percentage points in the first two months since that tripling of the bulk-billing incentive was introduced through the budget.

I know the Minister for Health and Aged Care has been working with the Premier of Tasmania around models of care that work for Tasmania, including, I think, partnerships between the hospitals and primary health care, acknowledging some of the particular issues that Tasmania has. I know that the urgent care clinics are up and running and are incredibly popular.

But there is more to be done. We've got to encourage more people into general practice. We've got to look at incentives to support that. The health minister is doing all of those things. But we inherited a system that was failing. Bulk-billing rates were declining. GPs were under enormous pressure. We have made the investments that those opposite never did to fix it. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Lambie, a first supplementary?

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:48): In Tasmania, especially in regional areas like the north-west, we have the oldest, sickest and poorest Australians. I am hearing from GPs, specialists and allied health professionals that it's getting harder and harder to service regional areas. Waiting times for their patients are increasing. Goodness me, in Burnie itself, it takes six months to get a podiatry appointment for anyone. Minister, how do you reconcile longer waiting times and reduced access to health services with 'continuing to protect and strengthen Medicare'?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:48): I think I answered some of that in the first question. I would say that the government's responsibility around Medicare is to strengthen it and to provide those investments in it. On bulk-billing, where I said the national average was a 2.1 per cent increase across Australia, in Tasmania in two months the incentive increased bulk-billing by 5.7 per cent. That means Tasmanians saved \$990,000 between November and December through the bulk-billing incentive. Tasmanians have saved more than \$5 million on cheaper medicines. They have saved money through the 60-day prescribing. We know that there are a lot of people who are eligible for that. We've got the urgent care clinics, where we've had over 13,500 presentations in those areas. We've got the GP grants going out. Tasmanians

have got \$3.46 million worth of those grants. But there is more to be done, because we want everyone to have access to affordable health care in this country. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Lambie, a second supplementary?

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:49): As part of its 40th birthday, Medicare is releasing a 'special edition Medicare card in 2024 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Australia's world-class universal health insurance scheme'. I'm just wondering: how much is that costing the taxpayer, for a brand-new shiny little card when we've already got one?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:50): I'll see if there's any further information I can provide on that. My understanding is: they are going to be issued to people whose cards expire this year—so it's for people whose cards are going to expire; it won't be a re-issuing for everybody. People who have a digital card—those who have it on their myGov app or through the Medicare app—will also see it reflected on that electronic Medicare card. But my understanding is: it's only to be provided to those who have a card that expires this year.

Cost of Living

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (14:50): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Social Services, Minister Farrell. Can the minister update the Senate on what measures the Albanese Labor government is taking to help ease the cost-of-living pressures felt by Australian families?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:51): I thank Senator O'Neill for her very important question. Yes, I can provide an answer to that question. From 1 July, the Albanese Labor government is delivering a tax cut for every Australian taxpayer—

Senator Ciccone: Wow!

Senator FARRELL: You're right: 'Wow!'—to help tackle the cost-of-living pressures felt by families right across this country. These tax cuts are on top of the other significant supports introduced by the Albanese government through our \$23 billion cost-of-living relief package, which is already helping ease the pressure on families and workers right across Australia. This includes: cheaper child care and extending paid parental leave; cheaper medicines and making it cheaper for more Australians to see a GP; and increasing income support payments for Australians who need them.

Now we've taken these measures even further by delivering Labor's tax cuts, which are going to put more money back into the pockets of workers and families. Under Labor's tax cuts, Australians earning low and middle incomes will receive a greater cut compared to the Scott Morrison plan—the former Prime Minister—as I recollect, including an additional—

An honourable senator interjecting—

Senator FARRELL: He's no thug; he wasn't a thug—including an additional 2.9 million people who have received nothing. Thanks to our changes to the Medicare levy low-income thresholds, more low-income families and individuals are going to pay less each year. Tackling cost-of-living pressures is the No. 1 priority of the Albanese Labor government. That's why we're working to cut taxes, boost wages, bring inflation under control and deliver—*(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator O'Neill, a first supplementary?

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (14:53): Thank you very much, Senator Farrell, for your answer. Can the minister also outline how Labor's efforts to ease cost-of-living pressures will benefit workers, families and taxpayers in my great home state of New South Wales?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:53): I thank Senator O'Neill for her first supplementary question. Labor's tax cuts and our policies do deliver cost-of-living relief—great news for New South Wales. Under Labor's plan, around 83 per cent of taxpayers in New South Wales will receive—I'll repeat that: 83 per cent will receive—a bigger tax cut. This is in addition to the cost-of-living relief that we've delivered for people in New South Wales, with 338,000 people benefiting from our increases to JobSeeker payments and 308,000 households eligible for the increased maximum rate of Commonwealth rent assistance. These measures will assist cost of living, and Labor's tax cuts will put more money into the pockets of families, workers and taxpayers right across New South Wales.

The PRESIDENT: Senator O'Neill, a second supplementary?

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (14:54): I thank the minister for his answer. It's fantastic to hear that families in New South Wales can count on this government to address the cost of living, with 83 per cent better off in New South Wales. Can the minister also advise the Senate of what the blockages have been in delivering the Albanese Labor government's plan for easing cost-of-living pressure for Australian families?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:55): I thank Senator O'Neill for her second supplementary question. We are serious about tackling the cost-of-living pressures faced by families across Australia. However, at every turn, the leader of the coalition, Peter Dutton, and the coalition have stood in the way, including when it comes to our actions on electricity bill relief, cheaper child care, cheaper medicines, fee-free TAFE, more social and affordable housing and getting wages for Australian workers and their families moving again. Cost-of-living relief remains our No. 1 priority, and we will continue to take action, even if the coalition continues its negativity and its obstruction. Labor's tax cuts are the next step in our broader plans to ease cost-of-living pressures by boosting incomes, reducing costs and delivering relief for families.

Renewable Energy

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland) (14:55): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Minister Wong. Minister, the government's own community engagement review of renewable energy projects surveyed 250 landowners and community members who live in close proximity to renewable energy infrastructure or transmission projects. The results of that survey are a shocking wake-up call: 92 per cent of respondents are dissatisfied with the engagement of project developers, and 85 per cent said their concerns were not addressed in a timely manner. Farmers like Ben Duxson, who's here in the gallery today from central Victoria, have travelled to Canberra to express their concerns about the farm-destroying projects like VNI West being promoted by this government. Minister, why has the government not listened to people like Ben and adjusted its plans to install 22,000 solar panels a day and a wind turbine every 18 hours in response to the immense opposition to these projects in rural and regional Australia?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:57): I acknowledge those who attended the rally and those who are here today in the gallery. But I would say to you, Senator Canavan, that you and your party spent nearly a decade refusing to ensure that this country had the infrastructure which was required to transition to renewable energy—to clean energy. You did. You, Mr Joyce and others had 10 years to fix this up, and all that happened because of your opposition is that more generating capacity exited the system. It's quite a remarkable achievement. At a time when demand was increasing, you actually presided over less supply. I know that is hard.

Senator Canavan: Point of order on relevance: my question went to the concerns of farmers. The minister spent almost half the answer speaking about the previous government, not those concerns that were revealed in her own government's report.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The PRESIDENT: Order in the gallery! It's not appropriate to make any comment, including clapping. Minister, I'll draw you to the question.

Senator WONG: With respect, I do think it's relevant that, in fact, the energy system in Australia was reducing in terms of the capacity which was required because there was insufficient investment in generation. That is a real fact, and it's an economic fact. Having said that, I understand that Minister Bowen stood up on Friday in regional New South Wales and released the final report of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Mr Dyer, on the Community Engagement Review. Commissioner Dyer and his team have undertaken fine work. They've engaged with communities from across Australia about their experiences of energy development. This review will help ensure local landholders and regional communities are heard and receive real benefits from the renewable energy transformation. We know that, for far too long—

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I'll remind the people in the gallery that, if you interject, you'll be removed.

Senator Colbeck interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator Colbeck! You understand the procedures in this chamber. It is my job to maintain order. That includes you. Don't talk back. You're not in a debate with me. Minister, please continue.

Senator WONG: It is the case that community engagement around infrastructure hasn't been up to scratch and we do need to make the reforms necessary to improve community engagement. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Canavan, a first supplementary?

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland) (14:59): Minister, Mr Glen Kelly is also here in the gallery. He operates a fifth-generation family farm just outside of Rockhampton. He has travelled here with thousands of others to attend the rally this morning. Glen faces the destruction of his local environment due to the construction of 50 massive wind turbines that are three times the height of the Parliament House flag and the destruction of koala and sugar glider habitats. Why isn't the government listening to people like Glen about the impacts of these industrial projects in rural communities?

Senator Whish-Wilson interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Whish-Wilson, order!

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:00): What I would say to Mr Kelly—

Senator Davey interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Davey!

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Davey, I should not have to call you twice, nor you, Senator McKim. I asked for order across the chamber. I'm sorry, Senator McKim—I meant Senator Whish-Wilson. Order across the chamber!

Senator WONG: What I would say to Mr Kelly and his friends and colleagues—and what I would say to you, Senator Canavan—is: I remind you that the system under which these complaints are being made is the system that was in place under your government. As I understand it, the reason the minister has commissioned a report from Commissioner Dyer is in order to improve it. Again, the system under which these complaints are being made was a coalition government system. We are now seeking, through the report, that—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Particularly on my left. Minister, please continue.

Senator WONG: I'll repeat myself. This system was the system in place under the previous government. That is the system under which these complaints are being made, and no amount of yelling is going to distract from that. What are trying to do is improve it, because we accept—

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator WONG: That is the intention of Commissioner Dyer's review. It's to try and improve it. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Canavan, a second supplementary?

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland) (15:02): Thank you, Madam Acting President. Well, Minister—

The PRESIDENT: Senator, I'm not the 'acting president'.

Senator CANAVAN: Sorry, Madam President. Minister, we didn't have a ridiculous 82 per cent renewable energy target, but you have. We didn't have that. Frank Future is the owner of Imagine Cruises at Port Stephens in New South Wales. He left Port Stephens at 3 am to make sure he could get here today. He is concerned that his whale watching and dolphin cruise business will be decimated by the proposed offshore wind farm, which will harm wildlife and destroy his important tourism economy. Why is this government so intent on destroying our environment in pursuit of its ridiculous 82 per cent renewable energy target?

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the minister, I remind those in the gallery that, if you interject again, you will be removed. I also remind those in the chamber that—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator Canavan interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Canavan, you've asked a serious question. I presume you want an answer. I also ask senators not to interject, because Senator Canavan has the right to ask his question in silence.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:03): I think Senator Canavan indicated yet again what is actually driving this from his perspective and what led to those opposite in government never doing anything about this: you are opposed to renewables. It's very clear.

Senator Canavan interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Canavan, you've asked your question.

Senator WONG: That's fine. At least you're upfront about it. Unfortunately Mr Morrison and Mr Dutton took a different view in not being upfront about it. I will make a second point. Let me read this quote.

Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator WONG: Can I read this quote? Please, this is a very important quote—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator WONG: A particular person said this, and I'll tell you who it was at the end: 'The habitat for renewables should be on rooftops and wind towers. It should be offshore.'

Senator Watt: Who said that?

Senator WONG: Mr Littleproud said that. So, when they come to your rallies and tell you how much of a friend they are, perhaps we should recognise that their own Nationals leader has argued that these projects should be offshore.

President, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Housing

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:04): I undertook to come back to Senator Pocock—I think he might have left the chamber—with some additional information following his question to me. I wish to provide additional information in response to the question asked by Senator Pocock in question time in my capacity as Minister representing the Minister for Housing. In response to his second supplementary question, I wish to add that the Albanese government recognises that many Australian families are doing it tough and that too many are having to rely on services like Foodbank. Each year, around 460,000 people access Commonwealth funded emergency relief support, with food being the most common relief provided. We are committed as a government to easing the cost-of-living pressures. Many families are feeling this pressure.

The government has provided more than \$51 million per year to support 192 providers to deliver emergency relief nationally. The government's investment in emergency relief and food relief is also supplemented with significant funding from the state and territory governments. We are delivering cost-of-living relief to Australian families through our \$23 billion cost-of-living relief package. This includes energy bill relief for concession card holders and small businesses, cheaper child care, cheaper medicines on the PBS and record investment to strengthen Medicare to make it cheaper for children, pensioners and other concession card holders to see a GP.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Answers to Questions

Senator BRAGG (New South Wales) (15:06): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by ministers to questions without notice asked by Opposition senators today. After 18 months of exclusively running the government of Australia in favour of a few vested interests, the government has discovered an economic policy which is a recalibration of a tax policy which the coalition developed in office, and that is a tax policy to try and eliminate the scourge of bracket creep. Bracket creep is an insidious factor. The more people work, the more likely it is that, in doing an extra shift or undertaking some more hours, they will be subject to a higher rate of taxation.

Getting to a flatter tax system has been effectively the only income tax reform undertaken in the last decade. It is true that we are living in a period where there is a very low level of ambition in Australia, particularly in relation to economic policy. When you consider the 18 months of the Labor Party's government so far, it has been exclusive economic policy for the unions, the super funds and the class action law firms, to the point where not only is policy perfectly calibrated to meet their needs but also we see funding decisions and the like taken in their favour.

Of course, people will be very interested in how this promise was broken, and that is something that we will undertake a great investigation into at Senate estimates. This is a tax policy that Labor at the last two elections said that they were committed to. In fact, the Prime Minister said in December last year that they were not reconsidering the package. You have to ask yourself: Why are we here? Why are we at this point? I would suggest that it has a lot to do with the by-election in Victoria and that this policy, the belated economic agenda of the Albanese government, which is a recalibration of a Liberal Party tax policy, was developed at this juncture because the Prime Minister wanted to ensure that his numbers in the House of Representatives are going to be assured and he wanted to take an economic policy—effectively a policy—to this by-election in Victoria.

That is because at the end of last year the government was completely rudderless. It was rudderless because of the central problem this government has, which is an absence of economic policies designed to solve the problems of today. And of course the great challenge for many Australians, particularly those under the age of 40, is housing. It is getting into a house, or it is paying the rent. The failure of the government to address even its own housing targets is a major issue for the government, which is why people are so unhappy. So this policy was concocted in order to give the government some momentum for this upcoming by-election.

But the trick here is that this is a sugar hit. It is a short-term sugar hit, and it locks in bracket creep over the long term. So, you get a tax cut today, but you get higher taxes tomorrow. You get a tax cut in 2024 but higher taxes in 2025, 2026, 2027 and 2028. You get higher taxes over the long term, because the problem with this tax policy is that it is winding back the clock to reinsert a tax bracket that was abolished. So, the only decent tax reform that was undertaken in the last decade is being unwound because of a by-election. We are now going to base the whole personal income tax system around one man's job and around a by-election in Victoria. That is the problem—that we're going to be hitting aspirational people with a higher tax bracket by reinserting the 37c-in-the-dollar bracket, and that is hugely regrettable.

Reversing a tax reform—the only tax reform in the past decade—means that the limited ambition that we have for economic policy, for economic reform, has now gone to a new low. Of course we don't want to stand in the way of a tax cut for any Australian, but the reality is that the reinsertion of this tax bracket is a bad thing for Australia. It's a tax cut today but a higher tax tomorrow.

Senator MARIELLE SMITH (South Australia) (15:11): In recent days we've seen an opposition determined to huff and to puff and to blow a policy down—until they actually picked it up and read it. When they picked it up and read it, they liked it, because it's a better economic policy. They picked it up and read it and liked it because it's better for our economy. They picked it up, read it and liked it because it's better for Australian taxpayers, because our Prime Minister got it right; former Prime Minister Morrison got it wrong.

Our policy is right, for all the 13.6 million taxpayers. It's especially right for 11.5 million Australians who will get a bigger tax cut under our government's policy than they would have under the previous government. It's better for 90 per cent of Australian women—5.9 million women who will get a bigger tax cut under Labor's new tax plan, and 98 per cent of younger Australians as well. It is a policy valued and applauded by experts, valued and applauded by economists, because it's better for Australian taxpayers; it's better for our economy. It's better for my community in South Australia, where people are under pressure and where people are telling me they're doing it really tough.

Those people welcome a tax cut. Those people on lower and middle incomes, who got nothing under the opposition's plan, now get a bigger tax cut under ours. They get something under ours, because finally they've got a government that is concerned about the pressures they're under and determined to actually do something for low- and middle-income earners. This is what the Australian people expected of us when they elected us. This is the purpose of us; this is what we're for—to be trusted to do the right thing by the Australian people at the right time.

Your policy is not the right policy for this time. Our policy is. That is why it's so clear. When you picked it up and read it, despite Ms Ley in the other place saying she'll absolutely roll it back—a clever thing to do before you've actually read something!—you've now read it, and you've come onboard, because it's a better policy, it's a better economic plan, it's better for people in my community of South Australia and it's better for 11.5 million Australians who will get a bigger tax cut compared with what they would have got under the Morrison government's plan. That's 84 per cent of taxpayers in this country. Average income earners will get a tax cut of \$29 a week, more than double what they would have got under the previous government's plan. A person on a median taxable income, of around \$68,000, gets a tax cut of \$1,379—\$804 more than they would have under the previous government. That is the right thing to do for people in my community. That is the right thing to do for people on average incomes. That is the right thing to do for low- and middle-income earners in this country. The Australian people can trust us to make the right decision at the right time for those people who need their government to step up and help out when times are tough.

For days and days we listened to the huffing and the puffing from the opposition, determined to hate something they hadn't read. They were determined to stick by a policy written in a different economic time, built and written for the few and not for all. They were determined to stick with it, claiming they were going to roll our policy back, complaining, before they'd read it, that the sky would fall down—and then you pick it up and you read it, and it is so clear that this is the right thing to do, and I am proud to stick by it.

Our government, through this measure, is taking action on the cost of living. This builds upon everything we're doing around cheaper medicines, fee-free TAFE, cheaper child care—all the sorts of things that you turned your nose up at when we brought them into this place. Our government can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people. The right thing at the moment is a bigger tax cut, which helps them with the cost-of-living

pressures that we know they are under. This is the right policy. It's the right economic plan. It's good for our country. It's good for 11.5 million people who will benefit more under it than they would have if the opposition were still on this side of the chamber in government. I am proud of that, and I am proud to be part of a government delivering for low- and middle-income Australians at a time when they need it.

Senator CADELL (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (15:16): We heard Senator Canavan's question today about the renewables rollout across Australia and the effect it's having on people from the top to the bottom and from the left to the right—right across this nation—and their inability to have a voice. We heard it in the chamber. They went close to getting kicked out, because that is the level of frustration they have at not being heard in this place. They are stuck on the footpath out the front—hundreds of them; thousands of them—trying to get heard here about the distress, about the fear and about the horror this plan is causing on the ground.

We heard an answer that said these are the rules under which we left it. If we have a street built in a neighbourhood, you don't put an entirely different policy at one end of it and make them get to the other end. The situation has changed, and the rules haven't kept up with the things you've got there. We've got entire communities fighting with each other over people that take a wind farm, take a tower or do all sorts of things because the rules aren't right. This isn't about a 2050 target; this is about a race to do it in 2030 or 2035 to look good—nothing more than that. It needs to stop now. It needs to pause now so it can be done right, if it has to happen at all. The people aren't talking about more money. They would rather have no money and no transmission lines; no money and no wind turbines on their property.

These people want to sit here and talk about how we can have better consultation—some consultation. Senator Canavan said 92 per cent were dissatisfied—that was in the government's own research. But can we get an inquiry in here to help those people? No. Eight times those opposite and those in that corner have sat here and said: 'We don't deserve to give these people a voice. We don't need to hear the challenges when 92 per cent of Australians affected don't think it's good enough.' We sit here and say, 'We'll consult.'

Let's talk about consulting. Glen Kelly, a farmer in Queensland, was someone referenced in Senator Canavan's question about the Kalapa wind farm. He was in the gallery today. In estimates in October last year, Minister Watt committed to meeting with these Central Queensland landholders about their concerns with the wind farm, and it has not happened. He promised to meet with them in this place. Glen reached out to his office last week and said, 'I'm going to be down here.' He did not hear anything back. I'd be glad to hear if there was any response. If I'm wrong, I'm wrong, but no response is what we're told.

They've come all the way from Central Queensland. A Queensland senator who said they would meet them in estimates—I have the *Hansard* with me if it's required—had time yesterday to meet with Farmers for Climate Action. 'If you're one of the eight per cent, I'll meet you. If you're one of the eight per cent, I'll hear you. If you're one of the eight per cent, I'll give you a voice. But, if you're the majority, if you're in the 92 per cent, if you're concerned, if you're part of the people that actually want to keep farming their land, if you're concerned about the process going forward, don't come to me,' he says. 'I don't want to hear about it. I just want to pretend I care about it. Come onboard.' This is the problem with this government in all these things. They talk about wanting to be transparent and clear. If my car windscreen was as transparent and clear as this government, I would crash all the time because you can't see through the mess that it is. The fix is in. If you're going to criticise this process, you cannot have a voice. If you're going to ask for a better deal, you can't have a say. If you want to have an inquiry and listen—we can't get a vote.

I go back to those days, to the heart of the Greens over here when they were up there and to their father Bob Brown and his disgrace about the wind turbines, these turbine farms, that were put all across the land. He knows where it's at because he hasn't turned his back on the reasons he exists. He is about the environment, and these things are not about the environment; they are about destroying the environment. They are about destroying our farmland. Victoria says that, if they don't do offshore, 77 per cent of prime agricultural land will have to become windfarms. It will have to come under transmission lines. It'll have to become solar farms. That's 77 per cent of that land. How will we feed ourselves? But, don't worry, because, even if we do offshore wind, they're still going to take 55 per cent of it. This is a national disaster in waiting. As we sit here doing nothing, our children will sit back in a country this size that can't feed itself and won't be able to power itself, because this stuff is ridiculously inefficient, and they won't be able to do anything. The only things we are exporting are our pollution and our problems.

Senator WALSH (Victoria) (15:21): You wouldn't know it from the carry-on from the opposition in question time today, but what the government is doing is providing cost-of-living relief through tax reform to people who need it the most. That's actually what's happening here right now. We're providing that relief to low- and middle-income Australians, who we know are feeling the cost-of-living squeeze the most. That is what we are doing. That is what we are focused on. We are focused on those Australians who are feeling the squeeze, and we are providing them with cost-of-living relief through a tax cut.

Since coming into office, we have been focused on the cost-of-living challenge that Australians have been facing. We are focused on the aspirations of Australians to live a good life in this country in the context of a cost-of-living challenge. So, in answer to Senator Bragg, who makes accusations about this government and how we see the aspirations of Australian people, I will say this: we do see the aspirations of the Australian people. We see the aspirations of low- and middle-income Australians to have a fair go into this country, and we see their aspirations to have a \$1,500-a-year tax cut if they're earning the average wage in Australia of around \$78,000. Those are the aspirations that we are responding to with our package.

We are doing that after a decade of no reform from those opposite. We're doing it after a decade of complete division amongst those opposite. We're doing it after a decade in which those opposite focused on themselves, not on the people that they were elected to actually serve. Because we on this side are actually focused on what people need right now, because we're focused on the help that they need right now, because we're focused on what they need from their government and because we're focused on what they need from their economy, as we come into 2024, wages are actually moving again in this country and job creation is at record highs.

We know that inflation is heading in the right direction too, and this is really welcome progress given the cost-of-living challenges that people face. Inflation being at the lowest rate in two years is very welcome news for Australians. And now, under our tax reform plan, on top of those good measures—the fact that wages are moving, the fact that inflation is down—every single taxpayer in this country is getting a tax cut, and 84 per cent of taxpayers will be better off under our plan. Someone on the average wage is getting \$1,500 back into the family budget as a result of our focus on them.

Now, we know that the 'no-alition' don't really know what to do about any of this. They started off, as we know, telling the Australian people they were going to roll back the tax cuts—tax cuts that we know go to every single Australian, tax cuts that mean 84 per cent of Australians are better off, tax cuts of \$1,500 a year for the average-income worker. We know they want to roll back these tax cuts that benefit middle Australia. We know they want to say no to the 14 million Australians who are now depending on our tax cut, the 11.5 million who are better off under our plan. We know how much they want to stay no, because that's all they actually know how to do. They say no to electricity bill relief, no to more social housing, no to cheaper medicine, no to every measure we put forward to get wages moving in this country.

Instead of being able to say no, what we've seen today is the opposition rolling over instead. We've seen them attempt to lodge a political attack on the government for doing the right thing, for responding to the times and for making sure that the average Australian gets a tax cut that they need. They've launched a scare campaign to hide the fact that they're supporting the Prime Minister's plan—a plan that is better for Australians than the plan that it replaces.

Senator RENNICK (Queensland) (15:27): After almost two years in government, the Labor Party has finally decided to do something about the cost of living, and what a pathetic attempt it is. It is an \$800 increase from what was originally legislated for middle-income Australia, but here is the rub. While the Labor Party procrastinated for the first two years, indulging in identity politics with the Voice, wasting \$450 million there, the cost of living per person—not per household—rose by \$8,000. They are not even giving back bracket creep. The legislative changes we made came in in 2019. Labor has had two years to do something about this as a result of their inability to control inflation. That \$800 a year, which works out to about \$15 to \$16 a week, won't cover the cost of energy. It won't cover the interest rate rises. Today the RBA governor has come out and said that she can't guarantee that there won't be any more interest rate rises. Why is that? It is because she knows that she can't trust the Albanese Labor government to control the cost of living.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, this is Hobson's choice. This is basically trying to deflect from the fact that the Labor Party can't control the cost of living. If they were really serious about dealing with the cost of living, they would have given more generous tax cuts. They would have increased the tax cuts from when we legislated them back in 2019. But they have divided and conquered, which is the only thing they know how to do. These guys love to play the politics of envy. If they are not trying to divide the country between black people and white people, they're trying to divide the country between rich people and poor people.

Let me tell you something: those tax cuts may kick in on 1 July this year, but, because that 37 per cent tax bracket is still in place, that means that everyone going forward on \$135,000—so, if you're below that level, once you get your pay rise—and let's not forget that inflation is running at five per cent, so give this a couple more years and people on \$120,000 will be going into the 37 per cent tax bracket. And these people are nurses and teachers, by the way. Up in Queensland, we've actually got a police shortage, so we've got a lot of police officers working overtime. These guys are going to be paying 37c in the dollar. And, of course, what will that do? It will add to inflation. Why? Because people won't want to work extra hours. This is some of the rubbish that's spouted by Treasury—that

somehow a tax cut's going to cause inflation. Who do they think supplies the goods and services in this country? It's the workers, so let's cut taxes further.

I will pick up on Senator Walsh's comments that we don't know what to do. I know exactly what to do, Senator Walsh. I've got a master's in tax. I've got a master's in finance as well. That's the whole reason I ran for politics: to reform the tax act. I well remember when I was a Senate candidate that I said we should raise the withholding taxes on profits offshore. I was criticised by none other than the current Treasurer. Apparently, increasing the rate of tax on withholding taxes on profits sent offshore by foreign multinational companies is a bad thing. I've been recommending that for years.

I've been recommending the abolition of section 855, which gives foreigners a capital gains tax break on non-portfolio interests. I recommend the abolition of section 880 of the income tax act that says that foreign wealth funds shouldn't be able to pay tax. I recommended the abolition of section 25.90 that says that, when Australian companies invest offshore, they shouldn't be able to get a tax deduction on the interest they pay on their investments offshore. I've come out and said that Aboriginal land councils should start paying tax. I've come out and said that universities should start paying tax on foreign students. It's about time everyone in this country started paying their way. The last and the best one is the old 28F for the public offer test in the 1936 act, which says foreign banks don't have to pay tax on interest paid offshore. So, if you want tax reform, bring it on.

Question agreed to.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (15:32): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Senator Wong) to a question without notice I asked today relating to the conflict in Gaza.

I rise to take note of Minister Wong's answer or, should I say, nonanswer to my questions on suspending funding for UNRWA. My questions were met with not only complete deflection but personal accusations by the minister. I will not be gaslighted.

On 26 January the International Court of Justice said about Israel's war on the Palestinian people:

In the Court's view, at least some of the acts and omissions alleged by South Africa to have been committed by Israel in Gaza appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the Convention—

the genocide convention. I'll say that in plain language. Minister Wong, your ally Israel, who your government unconditionally supports, is likely committing genocide on the Palestinian people—not just war crimes, not just unconscionable conduct, but the crime of all crimes: genocide. We never needed a court to tell us that Israel is on a genocidal mission. The evidence is being live streamed.

There has been not a word on the ICJ ruling from the cowardly Labor government, but they did decide within hours to suspend funding for UNRWA. How appalling—suspending funding to the largest humanitarian agency for Palestinians while they are being killed, starved and displaced by the occupation. But there has been not so much as a slap on the wrist for Israel. Everyone knows it's been Israel's dream to disband UNRWA. Shamefully, when Israel says, 'Jump,' the Australian government says, 'How high?'

Almost 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, and who knows how many remain buried under the rubble. Nurses, doctors, academics, journalists, UN workers, humanitarian aid workers—all targeted. Almost 11,000 children have been killed. The level of cruelty and inhumanity is overwhelming, and it is clear that Israel's intention is to permanently expel Palestinians from Gaza.

We live in an upside-down world, a world where a Labor government would rather side with a genocidal state than with its targets; a world where those who speak out against the killing of civilians are doxxed and their jobs and careers destroyed. But we are resolute. We will remain on the right side of history, no matter what the cost, because, as Nelson Mandela said, 'Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians.'

Question agreed to.

Medicare

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (15:35): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Finance (Senator Gallagher) to a question without notice I asked today relating to healthcare in Tasmania.

Last year the Minister for Health and Aged Care announced the biggest investment in bulk-billing in the history of Medicare. At the time, the minister said the Labor government had tripled incentives for GPs to bulk-bill. What he didn't say is that you only get bulk-billed if you're a pensioner or a child with a concession card. According to an investigation in Tasmania's *Examiner* newspaper today, some medical clinics are asking new patients to pay full

fees. One practice in Launceston is apparently begging people to pay the surgery directly, stating on its website, 'We receive no government funding at all.'

Tasmania has the lowest rate of bulk-billing in Australia, despite the fact that Tasmanians are the sickest and most poorly paid people in the country. The government and the minister have been patting themselves on the back as the figures for the first two months of the policy have come in and there has been a 2.1 per cent increase. That's great, but what happens if you're not a pensioner or a child? Then, it seems, you can't get bulk-billing in Tasmania.

I have a very dear old schoolfriend who has battled with mental illness for years. She's on a disability support pension. She called me last week. She was absolutely beside herself because she can't get bulk-billed. She couldn't afford to see her GP because she couldn't afford the gap payment, and that meant she couldn't get the critical prescription filled that she needed. I gave her the money—that's not a problem. But how many other Tasmanians still can't afford to go to the doctor? Too many. How many can't afford to get that vital prescription? Too many. How many are ignoring or putting off dealing with nagging pain? Too many.

Australia prides itself on a fair-go attitude, but, if you are a retired Australian or a low-income family in a rural or regional area, there doesn't seem to be a fair go for you when it comes to health care. In fact, the best indication of your health is your postcode. Rich people live longer because they can afford to pay. The government's website says:

Medicare is Australia's universal health insurance scheme. It guarantees all Australians ... access to a wide range of health and hospital services at a low or no cost.

But that's not quite true, is it? Because not everyone can afford to pay. Maybe the government should change the front page of the website to reflect the reality of our healthcare system. I reckon it should say something like, 'If you want to be healthy, you had better be wealthy,' because that's exactly where this country is at.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Consideration of Legislation

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (15:37): I move:

That private senators' bills be considered this week as follows:

- (a) on Wednesday, 7 February 2024—Defence Capability Assurance and Oversight Bill 2023; and
- (b) on Thursday, 8 February 2024—Australian Education Amendment (Save Our Public Schools) Bill 2023.

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (15:38): by leave—I move:

At the end of the motion add "and, in relation to the Defence Capability Assurance and Oversight Bill 2023:

- (c) the time allotted for the remaining stages of the bill be as follows:
 - (i) second reading stage—not more than 15 minutes
 - (ii) committee of the whole stage—not more than 45 minutes, and
 - (iii) questions to be put on all remaining stages; and
- (d) that paragraph (a) operate as a limitation of debate under standing order 142".

Question agreed to.

Original question, as amended, agreed to.

Rearrangement

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (15:38): by leave—I move:

That—

- (a) following the tabling of the *Set the Standard* annual report by the President, a minister may move, without leave, that the Senate take note of the report; and
- (b) senators may speak to that motion for not more than 5 minutes each, and the total time for the debate be 1 hour.

Question agreed to.

Leave of Absence

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:39): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senator McDonald from 6 to 8 February 2024, for personal reasons.

Question agreed to.

Leave of Absence

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Government Whip in the Senate) (15:39): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senators Bilyk and White from 6 to 8 February 2024, for personal reasons.

Question agreed to.

Leave of Absence

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (15:40): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senator Waters for today, for personal reasons.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senators Colbeck and Cadell to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following matter be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 15 August 2024:

- (a) the full effects of energy transition on regional and remote Australia; and
- (b) any related matters.

Senator Thorpe to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the *Criminal Code Act 1995*, and for related purposes. ***Criminal Code Amendment (Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes) Bill 2024.***

Senator Lambie to move on the next day of sitting:

That the time for the presentation of the final report of the Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience be extended to Thursday, 8 August 2024.

Senator Gallagher to move on the next day of sitting:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report as expeditiously as is practicable:

Department of Defence—Facilities to support Advanced Growler Phase 6.

Senator Chisholm to move on the next day of sitting:

That—

(a) on Thursday, 8 February 2024, the sitting of the Senate be suspended from 9.30 am till the ringing of the bells, to enable senators to attend an address by the Honourable James Marape MP, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea; and

(b) this order only apply following the reporting of a message from the House of Representatives inviting senators to attend a meeting of that House for the purposes of the address.

Senator Steele-John to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that, since the Senate resolution of 18 October 2023 concerning Israel and Gaza, which supported the state of Israel's looming invasion of Gaza by stating that the Senate 'stands with Israel', the following have occurred:

- (i) an appalling and increasing toll of deaths and injuries caused by the state of Israel's bombing and invasion of Gaza,
- (ii) a growing humanitarian catastrophe caused by the state of Israel's blockade, bombing and invasion of Gaza, and
- (iii) the state of Israel is the subject of recent International Court of Justice orders in South Africa's case regarding the prevention of genocide;

(b) therefore does not support the state of Israel's continued invasion of Gaza and calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire; and

(c) calls on the Australian Government to end its support for the state of Israel's invasion of Gaza.

Senator Gallagher to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Act 1997*, and for related purposes. ***Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Amendment Bill 2024.***

Senator Faruqi to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, by no later than 9.30 am on Thursday, 8 February 2024, the following documents relating to the decision on 27 January 2024 to pause Australia's funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA):

- (a) all documents, advice and correspondence between the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and:

- (i) the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
- (ii) the Department of Defence,
- (iii) the Attorney General's Department, and
- (iv) the Department of Home Affairs;
- (b) all documents, advice and correspondence between the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and:
 - (i) United Nations agencies including UNRWA, and
 - (ii) other foreign governments; and
- (c) all documents, advice and correspondence that the Minister for Foreign Affairs relied on in making the decision, including evidence of Israel's allegations against UNRWA.

Senator Davey to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate requests the Auditor-General to perform a comprehensive review and analysis of all water recovery programs made to date by the current Government; and that the Auditor-General's examination covers all aspects of those water recovery programs, including but not limited to:

- (a) reviewing all transactions related to the water recovery programs to ensure they comply with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules under subsection 105B(1) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*; and
- (b) assessing the financial implications of water purchases, including cost-effectiveness and value for money in achieving program objectives; and
- (c) evaluating non-financial factors, such as environmental impact, community benefits and long-term sustainability of the water resource management strategies employed.

Senator Davey to move on the next day of sitting:

That on Wednesday, 7 February 2023, the general business notice of motion no. 453, standing in the name of Senator Davey relating to a request to the Auditor-General to perform a comprehensive review and analysis of all water recovery programs:

- (a) be called on immediately after formal business; and
- (b) have precedence over all other business; and
- (c) be determined without amendment or debate.

Senator Davey to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Water, by no later than midday on 26 February 2024, all minutes, file notes, briefing notes and other communications relating to each Basin Officials Committee meeting during the period 31 May 2022 to 14 December 2023.

Senator Davey to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Water, by no later than midday on Monday, 26 February 2024, all briefing notes, media briefing notes, file notes, emails and written communications relating to visits by the Minister for the Environment and Water to Murray-Darling Basin communities.

Senator Davey to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Water, by no later than 5 pm on Monday, 26 February 2024, all briefing notes, media briefing notes, file notes, emails and written communications during the period 6 September 2023 to 4 December 2023, relating to compliance with orders for the production of documents no. 318 (Murray-Darling Basin Plan) and no. 319 (Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations Funding Agreement) between or generated by:

- (a) the office of the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Water;
- (b) the office of the Minister for the Environment and Water;
- (c) the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water;
- (d) the Murray Darling Basin Authority; and
- (e) the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.

Senator McKenzie to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Local Government, by no later than midday on 8 February 2024, the following:

- (a) any modelling conducted by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development Communications and the Arts; Treasury; the Department of Industry, Science and Resources; or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, regarding the impact of the new fuel or vehicle emissions standards;
- (b) the document titled *Fuel quality standards implementation: cost benefit analysis*, held by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources; and
- (c) any other report or modelling regarding new fuel or vehicle emission standards implementation authored by ACIL Allen Consulting held by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts;

Treasury; the Department of Industry, Science and Resources; or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

Senator Babet to move on the next day of sitting:

That, noting the issue of excess mortality in Australia has not been adequately investigated, the following matters be referred to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 31 July 2024:

- (a) Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data showing excess deaths in recent years, with particular reference to:
 - (i) all-cause provisional mortality data reported by the states and territories to the ABS, and
 - (ii) the difference between all-cause provisional mortality data for 2021, 2022 and 2023 and the preceding years of 2015 to 2020 (inclusive);
- (b) any other identified factors contributing to excess mortality; and
- (c) any other related matter.

Postponement

The Clerk: A postponement notification has been lodged in respect of the following:

General business notice of motion No. 447 for today (Senator Hume), till the next day of sitting.

COMMITTEES

Reporting Date

The Clerk: Notifications of extensions of time for committees to report have been lodged in respect of the following:

Community Affairs References Committee—Extent and nature of poverty in Australia—from today to 26 February 2024.

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee—Modern Slavery Amendment (Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner) Bill 2023 [Provisions]—from 21 to 28 February 2024.

The PRESIDENT (15:40): I remind senators that the question may be put on any proposal at the request of any senator.

CONDOLENCES

Murphy, Ms Peta Jan

The PRESIDENT (15:41): Senators will recall with great sadness the death on 4 December 2023 of Ms Peta Murphy, a member of the House of Representatives for the division of Dunkley, Victoria, from 2019. I call the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:41): by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its sorrow at the death, on 4 December 2023, of Peta Jan Murphy MP, member for Dunkley, places on record its gratitude for her distinguished service to the Parliament and the nation, and tenders its profound sympathy to her family in their bereavement.

I rise on behalf of the government, and in particular the Labor Senate team, to express our condolences and our shared grief following the passing of Peta, a loved and admired member of the House of Representatives for Dunkley, at the age of 50, and I start by conveying our deepest sympathies to Rod; her rightly proud parents, Bob and Jan; and her dear sisters, Jodi and Penni. They have all been in my thoughts, as have Peta's dedicated and loyal staff, the grieving Labor family, and the constituents who respected and relied on Peta.

Peta Murphy possessed a rare and powerful capacity to connect with others. Perhaps that explains in some small way why her passing is grieved by so many in this place and beyond. Knowing Peta was a blessing, and this has been reflected in many fine tributes. I acknowledge in particular the House contribution of my cabinet colleague—one of the most decent people in this place—Brendan O'Connor. Peta was Brendan's chief of staff—in fact, I think that's where I first met her—and their friendship, affection and respect were obvious to all. I know how heavily this has weighed upon him and all of his staff.

There are few people who have served in this place with more courage and more kindness than Peta Murphy. She was the best of this place and in many ways, I think, the best of the Australian Labor Party she represented. She was warm as she was fierce. She had a razor-sharp intellect and a dry wit, but in all things she was driven by a deep compassion and a respect for others, and anyone who talked to her could feel that respect and that compassion. She was interested. She was engaged. She was funny. She wanted to know your point of view. You mattered to her.

As a barrister, a public defender, a political staffer, a tireless representative of her community, a woman, a friend and a fighter, Peta Murphy made an enormous contribution to this place and beyond. And, of course, our grief is

compounded knowing the Peta we lost but also knowing the loss of the Peta that was yet to be, because she did have so much more to give. As Rod has said, it's impossible not to feel like we've all been robbed a little by Peta's death.

Peta was born in Goulburn, New South Wales, in November '73 and grew up in Wagga Wagga, a proud public-school girl who went on to study psychology at the ANU and later a Master of Criminology at the University of Melbourne and a Bachelor of Laws, also at the ANU.

She married Rod Glover in 1999. Rod introduced her to Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula, which would become her home. She went on to work as a public servant in the law as a solicitor and barrister, including as a public defender, and later in politics as chief of staff to Brendan. She put it in her first speech to the House:

As a solicitor, barrister and senior public defender, I have represented the damaged and the difficult, victims and perpetrators, the blameless and the blameworthy.

From this vantage point, she saw intergenerational disadvantage up close, how it limits people to unfulfilling and, too often, undignified lives and the enormous individual and shared potential that it lays to waste. It was her desire to tackle this disadvantage that motivated Peta to move from law to politics to fight on a larger scale for a fairer and more compassionate society.

Many will remember her first run for the seat of Dunkley in 2016. While unsuccessful at that first attempt, it was pretty obvious she would be back. And so it was in 2019, when Peta bucked the national political trend against Labor to become the first woman to represent Dunkley since its creation in 1994. This was a milestone of particular importance to Peta Murphy and one that she and I spoke about as proud feminists and union members. Of course, the electorate of Dunkley is named after pioneering feminist and trade union activist for equal pay and workers' rights Louisa Dunkley.

Awfully, having already defeated the disease once, Peta's breast cancer returned just weeks before she was to give her first speech in 2019. But, never one to wallow and dwell on negativity, she mined her understandable frustration and fear to become a forceful advocate for accessible cancer care for all Australians, something she continued to pursue right up to her last days in this place.

As the Prime Minister has said, her expertise on closing the gender pay gap informed so much of the government's commitment to eliminating this injustice. She also brought her intellect and her deep empathy to her work on gambling law reform to minimise the harm that problem gambling does to families in our society. She was a truly extraordinary member of parliament. I think it was a role she was born for.

I remember visiting her electorate in the last election campaign. We went to a local footy and netball club; it was packed to the rafters, which I reckon was much more about her than me. One of my staff who grew up in her region told me a story about her mum's friend, and I told the crowd this story. This was a woman who was not politically active or politically minded—quite disengaged—but year-round she kept a Peta Murphy corflute on display outside her house because of the support Peta gave her through her own struggle with breast cancer. This was one example of Peta's radiant humanity. That radiant humanity is what made her an outstanding member of parliament, and it is that humanity, along with her extraordinary drive, determination and intellect, that would have made her an outstanding cabinet minister, someone who could have been a great Labor reformer and whose contribution would have become part of that of which we are proud.

It was this humanity that took her to the United Nations in 2022 as one of the parliamentary representatives. She was determined to make her time there—as everywhere—count. I remember vividly how she got stuck into debates on human rights and legal issues, particularly advocating for the resolution against the death penalty that Australia was driving. Our diplomats also remember her warmth and empathy, recognising that, while there is great privilege in representing your country as a diplomat overseas, it doesn't come without human cost. I gave my first national statement at the UN General Assembly so proud that she was there, and I hope she was equally proud to be sitting behind the Australian flag, with all the legacy that it has.

I want to acknowledge the grace and characteristic selflessness with which Peta fought cancer. It was a mark of her character that, upon being diagnosed for the second time, she channelled her personal battle into advocacy for the millions of Australians who have fought, or supported loved ones to fight, the disease. She didn't shy away from the cruel reality she faced but she was determined to continue her work and to show up, even when she was suffering so much. She wanted to demonstrate to other cancer sufferers, and in particular to women, how, in the words of her dear friend the member for Jagajaga, 'to get up every morning and lead the life you want, even with cancer'. She showed as much courage as I have ever seen in this place.

The last time I had an exchange with Peta was in the week that she passed. I sent her a message, and she thanked me for checking up on her and said she was doing it rough. I told her I'd distract her if she wanted and come and talk to her about world affairs! She sent me a funny emoji.

Peta Murphy was someone driven by an unshakeable sense of purpose—to improve things, to build a fairer, better, more just Australia. As the Prime Minister said, she believed every minute in public life was a gift. Every minute in public life is a gift—it is. And she made the most of every minute. She embraced the challenges life threw at her and used them to power this purpose. In doing so, she became so much more than the illness she fought and more than just one of the many who come through this place to serve.

Peta Murphy was genuinely formidable, with boundless energy and penetrating insight, and she won't be forgotten by any who had the privilege of knowing her. In her first speech, with her characteristic enthusiasm and eloquence, she outlined the benchmark against which she would measure her contribution to this place. It's been referenced a number of times but it bears repeating because it is a lesson to us all:

But, above all else, I would like to be able to say that I left Australian politics—Australian democracy—in better shape than when I joined it, that I was part of a generation of Australian politicians who worked to recover the public's faith in our democratic system and who strove to reharneß politics as that vehicle for enlarging opportunities and enlarging our national imagination, and that we did so by rejecting politics based on fear and division, by refusing to see societal problems as weapons with which to wedge our political opponents and by choosing robust debates about ideas and solutions over personal attacks and petty judgements ... It's what Australians want all of us here to do. And, be in no doubt, it's what we have to do.

Peta Murphy lived up to this standard. She lived up to the standard she set for herself. She helped raise the standard for us all, and she reminds us even today that this is what we should all aspire to.

In closing, I convey, again, our sympathies to Rod, to Bob and Jan, to Jodi and Penni, and to the many in this place and beyond who knew and loved Peta Murphy.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:53): I rise on behalf of the opposition to associate ourselves with the remarks of the Leader of the Government in the Senate in honouring the life of Peta Jan Murphy. I acknowledge and thank Senator Wong for her very touching tribute and remarks in this regard.

Peta Murphy was a parliamentarian who quickly earned respect across the political aisle. Her courageous battle with cancer epitomised the very best of the Australian character. The shock and sadness of Peta's passing late last year is quite evident and still rests with our colleagues in Labor and across this building. To recognise the lives of those who once served in this building is an honour and a duty, particularly those who have served alongside us—and we have done that all too often over the years. We pay tribute to those who depart us, sadly, far too soon, and it holds a great responsibility to honour their legacy.

As those in the other place have done, today, here in the Senate, we honour the legacy of Peta Murphy. When we remember the lives of those departed, we often ask central questions—what made the person the way they were? There were many factors which made Peta Murphy who she was. Born in Goulburn, raised in Wagga and a proud graduate of the public school system, Peta grew up during the Hawke and Keating governments. She spoke about her admiration for Australia's 23rd and 24th prime ministers, and the way in which, in her words, they had enlarged our national imagination. In many ways, the inspiration Peta drew from Australia's longest-serving Labor government forged her into the idealist that she was and brought to this place. It was that idealism that saw her possess an unfaltering faith in our democratic system. She had an unbreakable belief in the cauldron of Australia's national conversation, in the power of ideas and robust debates to break through the walls of robust polity.

But Peta the idealist was tempered by Peta the realist. Prior to working in and then entering politics, Peta worked as a solicitor, as a barrister and as a senior public defender. In those roles she represented, as Senator Wong has quoted, 'the damaged and the difficult, victims and perpetrators, the blameless and the blameworthy'. And through her work in the justice system and the legal profession Peta knew only too well the vicious cycle of disadvantage and dysfunction that swallows up so many lives. It was this cycle that she very clearly wanted to help break—a motivating factor for her in seeking political office.

A further factor was the rotten circumstances that were thrust upon aspects of Peta's life. Not once but twice did she find herself in the trenches battling that indiscriminate and sneaky adversary of breast cancer. Upon Peta's passing, many have referenced an interview Peta gave to *Stellar* magazine in late 2022 and the profound letter she wrote to her past self that was published on the website of the Breast Cancer Network Australia. Peta spoke in heartbreaking ways about her utter disappointment to have not been able to have children following her cancer treatment, despite successive rounds of IVF. She compassionately put her thoughts with her husband, Rod, noting that it's no small thing for someone's partner to go through. And, as a parliamentarian continuing with cancer, Peta bore burdens of the mind and pains of the body that most of us will never fathom.

Only one word can come to mind through all of this, and that is 'remarkable'. Despite all she was going through and the pressures of public life, Peta so rarely dropped any aspect of her sunny disposition and was rarely devoid of a smile. To paraphrase Peta's words, she took a deep breath and she chose to use the bumps in her life's journey to

make a difference as a member of parliament—and make a difference she most certainly did, living up to the ideals she set for herself. Peta worked hard for the people of Dunkley, whom she described as rich with talent and compassion.

Peta strove to make a difference to the people of our nation. She often spoke in a heartfelt and heroic way about the causes dear to her, especially the bettering of the lives of women, children and families. She sought to better many Australian lives through her extensive contributions to parliamentary committees. Of note was Peta's work as the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs in its report on online gambling. That report illuminated the harm online gambling is inflicting on our communities and children, especially from the bombardment of advertising. We should all commend that meticulous work which Peta led and had a great passion for.

Peta also made a huge difference to the women of Australia. As is well known, she received her second breast cancer diagnosis almost eight years after her first and only days ahead of giving her first speech. Using her profile as a parliamentarian, Peta engaged in unrelenting advocacy for breast cancer awareness raising, treatment and funding. Thanks to Peta's campaigning, more Australian women will have booked in to get that check-up. Thanks to Peta's industriousness, Australian women have benefited from early detection. Thanks to Peta's endeavours, there is no doubt that there are Australian women with us today who would otherwise not be.

The brevity of Peta's life reminds us of her prophetic words in her maiden parliamentary speech, where she said: 'Life can be fragile, and we'd better make the most of it.' We all know that Peta Murphy, leaving us at the age of only 50, had much more to say, much more to contribute, much more to do. Many will wonder what the remarkable Peta Murphy would and could have done next. But, in that wondering heartache, we hope people find solace in gratitude—gratitude for those who worked alongside her in this parliament, gratitude to have had someone of Peta's calibre and quality serve our country and grace this parliament, and gratitude for a life which others will look back on to inspire their own idealism and ignite their own sense of national imagination.

On behalf of the coalition and all of our members across both chambers we extend our deep and sincere condolences to Peta's beloved husband, Rod; to her mum and dad, Bob and Jan; to her sisters, Jodi and Penni; to her extended family and friends; to her staff, who worked so closely with her; and, importantly, to all of her Labor colleagues; and to her many, many friends on this and all sides. May Peta Murphy rest in peace.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (16:00): I'm honoured to rise to speak on behalf of the Australian Greens, remembering and honouring the late Peta Murphy here today. I would like to associate ourselves with the remarks of Senator Wong and Senator Birmingham. The heartfelt tributes from all sides of politics that we've heard for Peta Murphy, here today in the House and at her memorial service, ring true. They all ring true.

In her first speech, Peta said that at the end of a parliamentary career she would like to be able to look back and say that she left Australian democracy in a better shape than when she joined, which is a noble task that we should all aspire to. In the public sphere she fought for equality, and her values and accomplishments in her time in this place are many.

It was true to Peta's character that she channelled her personal battle with breast cancer into public policy. Two weeks after being sworn in as the member for Dunkley, Peta received the tragic news that her breast cancer had returned. She took the fight head on. Peta continued to advocate not just for herself but for others—for better treatment, more services and stronger support. She worked with the Breast Cancer Network Australia to advocate a national registry of metastatic cancer patients. While she was going through her own treatment, she turned it into advocacy, not just for reform but also to be an example herself, and she inspired so many in doing so.

She used her skills before coming to this place to stand up for people who were doing it tough. She sought to not only improve their individual lives but to change the world so that things would be better for them. I want to recognise Peta's dedicated work with community legal centres and her commitment to prevent further damage and distress to people in need.

We have lost Peta far too soon, and the grief that people, especially in the Labor family, are feeling is heartfelt and it is real. On behalf of the Greens, I want to extend our support and our thoughts for what is not only a difficult time now but one that is likely to be a difficult time for some period to come. And to her family and close friends: we are thinking of you in this most difficult of times, particularly her husband, Rod; her parents, Bob and Jan; and her sisters, Jodi and Penni. We are all the poorer for not having Peta Murphy with us. Vale, Peta Murphy.

Senator MARIELLE SMITH (South Australia) (16:03): I'm grateful for this opportunity to make a contribution in this condolence to our dear friend Peta Murphy. I want to acknowledge the contributions of senators before me and the contributions that everyone made in the other place. I acknowledge the member for Jagajaga and the member for Lilley, who were dear friends of Peta too.

There is so much to celebrate in the life of the spectacular Peta Murphy—witty, funny, sharp, humble, hardworking. She was courageous and at times hilariously outrageous. Every space she was in and every person she met was left better for her presence. This building was no exception, and the outpouring of love, affection and admiration for our friend from all sides of this building and across the aisle shows that most sincerely. Thank you.

There has been so much spoken of Peta's drive for excellence and for service in everything that she did, be it as a lawyer, as a sportswoman, as a scholar, as a staffer and, finally, as a parliamentarian. Her legacy will live on, not just in the tangible, like her fierce takedown that killed off the former government's proposal that would have had domestic violence survivors raiding their own super for help, and all the investments now made in her name to take the fight up to metastatic breast cancer. But her legacy will live on too in the lives of all those people she touched: in every client she had that she advocated for, in the policies she shaped and in the hearts she touched.

As a friend of Peta, I can confirm that all the lovely things said about her are true. And as a friend I can say it's a little bit tough to come into a motion like this and to speak of someone who lived a public life and whom there are so many lovely things written about publicly but who we also knew privately, to navigate what deserves to be brought into the public domain in a condolence like this and what should be kept precious contained within our private memories to cherish. I would love to tell the story of how two members of the class of 2019 from different states, different houses and different internal persuasions overcame perceived differences to become fast friends, but it's too early in my political career to put such things on the *Hansard*, and I reckon Peta would understand that.

I'd also love to share some of Peta's sharpest private observations, the cut-through points and critiques that would have you either choking on your coffee—you couldn't quite believe she said it—or in absolute stitches of laughter. But, again, these moments with Peta aren't really fit for the *Hansard*, because, as well as being this brilliant mind, this overachiever and this purpose driven, service minded champion of all that she believed was right, she was also bloody funny. She was one of the funniest people I have ever met. She could always and would always strive to make you laugh, especially on the bad days and even when she was suffering herself, when she was struggling or when she was in pain.

Peta loved her community; that was so clear for everyone to see. As we would exchange texts and photos at the end of a weekend about what we'd been up to, I used to tell her over and over that her photos and her remarks on what she'd done just made me feel exhausted. It wouldn't be uncommon for her to go to six or seven or eight events in just one day and back them up into the evening. She pushed through some extraordinarily difficult things to be there for her community. She did that because she was genuinely of her community and she loved them. She knew how important it was to fight for the people of Dunkley in this place.

The contributions from members and senators across the aisle have been beautiful, sincere and meaningful to all of us on this side. It's clear she was loved across the parliament. She was loved because she was an exceptional, genuine person. She should serve as a role model to us all, because she earned that respect and affection across the aisle while still being an absolute political warrior for what she believed in. She showed that you could debate respectfully and form friendships across the aisle but do that without conceding an inch of ground on the things that you believe in.

I don't want us to ever forget that Peta was a Labor warrior. She was Labor through and through. We are a family bound by a belief in the collective and an overwhelming desire to make our country more fair. Throughout her whole career and her whole life, Peta fought for those values. She fought for our Labor family. She fought for everything we believe in and stand for. And she fought for who we fight for.

But all of us who will miss her here know and remain conscious that she also had a big, beautiful family outside of this place. I was really lucky to meet so many of them at her 50th birthday, just before she passed. This huge group of friends and her loving family knew her in a whole multitude of ways that we did not. For her family and for these friends, their loss runs deep into years and years and years of shared joy and sorrow, memories and events and traumas that we will never understand in here, whose grief will flow not just in the moments and places where they knew Peta and saw her but in their quiet moments and their lonely moments and in the everyday steps and actions they take where they had Peta, those spaces and places which Peta touched.

To Rod, especially, who has lost his soulmate, that pain is beyond my comprehension, and we are here for you. To the rest of Peta's family, her adored parents, her lovely friends, those she worked with, those she touched, those she fought for and of course her beloved dogs, Bert and Ernie, thank you for sharing her with us. Thank you for sharing her with Australia. We're all better for it.

Peta, you will forever be a Labor warrior, a policy reformer, a beloved wife, a cherished friend and a bloody wonderful human being. I'm so grateful that I got to spend some of that time with you and to have been your friend. Rest peacefully.

Senator WALSH (Victoria) (16:10): I met the amazing Peta Murphy in the Victorian Labor family a few years before we both came into the parliament in the class of 2019 with Peta's dear friends Kate, Anika, Alicia and Marielle. I was with her in 2016 when she came up short on election night, and you can imagine how she was on that night. I campaigned with her again when she came up trumps in 2019. Peta's determination has been much remarked upon in the past few months—her determination in politics, her determination on the squash court and her determination in her life with breast cancer.

Her determination to win Dunkley was indeed absolutely fierce, and matching the full force of her desire to win the seat was her desire to comprehensively defeat the sitting member, Chris Crewther, at all costs. When Peta passed away in December, Chris posted a truly gracious tribute to Peta, but it did include the following line:

In 2016, I beat Peta. In 2019, Peta beat me. There's a certain symmetry about that.

I felt I could almost hear Peta screaming and shouting, 'You only won Dunkley once and I won it twice,' and I actually had one of those moments where the person I wanted to show the post to, of course, was Peta, as if she were still here with us. I wanted to get that trademark razor-sharp, perfectly cutting and hilarious response. There will be many more of those moments as parliament returns without Peta, and we've already had them just in the last couple of days—those moments when we expect to see Peta getting on the plane to come up, when we expect to see her sitting at the back on the left of the caucus room, and when we expect to see her lighting up our screens with yet another passionate, articulate speech or interview.

As many people have said in the last few months, while Peta was incredibly determined, she was always, at the end of the day, just Peta. Lots of people in Frankston have a really tough life, and they want to be able to put their struggles and their challenges to their local members, and they want a response. They want answers. When I stood with Peta in a shopping centre or at a street stall, Peta always listened. She really listened. She had an incredibly approachable warmth about her, but she also had a real no-BS toughness about her, and people could see that, and that combination made her an incredible local hero. It really did.

So too did the courage that she displayed when she discovered the cancer that she thought was gone had come back in full force—courage that inspired so many people, like Frankston High School student Michaela. As we all said goodbye to Peta at the MCG last year, Michaela spotted former prime minister Julia Gillard. Peta had asked Michaela to introduce Julia at her annual Louisa Dunkley Oration. The oration itself was something that Peta created to inspire girls just like Michaela to strive for equality, like the early equal pay activist for whom the seat of Dunkley was named, Louisa Dunkley. Michaela wanted a photo with Julia, and so we went over to the former PM, who of course was more than happy to oblige. On the way, Michaela told me that Peta had absolutely inspired her and encouraged her to go on to university and just to achieve her dreams. I know Peta would be so proud of Michaela if she were here today, and I think and hope she would be so proud of herself, too, to know that she—Peta—had seen something in Michaela, that she'd been able to give her a lift and experience that she wouldn't have otherwise had—a bigger picture and view of the world and the place she could have within it.

When I was thinking about what to say today, I scrolled through my old phone messages to Peta. They're filled with old plans to catch up in Dunkley, a few arrangements for a G&T and lots of proud puppy pictures going both ways, and—and I think her dear friends who are here in the chamber today will understand this—there are also a few apologies from Peta for perhaps being 'too direct' in a previous interaction.

Peta was incredibly smart, and she never let you forget it. Her brilliance won her widespread respect—including amongst those across the aisle, who have been so generous in their tributes and also in their friendship to her while she was here in parliament. In particular, today I acknowledge the important friendship of Darren and Julie Chester to Peta and her husband, Rod.

Losing Peta at the end of last year was devastating for her fantastic, much-loved and loving husband, Rod, and for her devoted and proud parents, sisters, nieces and nephew, and for Peta's incredible cadre of truly excellent women friends who travelled with her in life. It was also devastating for all of us on this side, in the Labor family, too. I know everyone who loved Peta knows how much we loved her too. Our Labor heart beats a little stronger and a little more proud because such a fierce, funny, courageous and compassionate woman in Peta Murphy was ours, and because she took so much care to light a path for so many more in her community and in her country to follow. Vale, Peta.

Senator HENDERSON (Victoria) (16:17): I rise today to make a few brief remarks on this condolence motion following the passing of the member for Dunkley, Peta Murphy. Many beautiful words have been spoken in this debate and in the other place about Peta by those who knew her best. I wish to associate myself particularly with the moving contributions of Senator Wong and Senator Birmingham. To Peta's good friends Senator Marielle Smith and Senator Walsh—such beautiful contributions. I didn't really know Peta, but from afar, as a Victorian senator, I admired her courage and determination in the face of such adversity.

In her first speech in the parliament, just two weeks after learning her cancer had returned, with a diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer, Peta Murphy said:

I am neither unique nor alone in the fight that I am about to take on.

I watched my own mother, Ann, diagnosed with breast cancer while working as a sitting member of parliament, battle this insidious disease, so I have some insight into what it takes to continue to work while undergoing treatment for cancer.

Peta was exceptionally brave. She was a strong advocate for mental health, disability rights and social inclusivity and justice. In her last interview, on ABC Radio National, she struggled to speak; it was very tough to listen to. But her advocacy for a national registry for metastatic cancer patients continued. She worked right up to the end.

Before entering politics, Peta Murphy worked as a solicitor advocate and a barrister, and spent time working with Victoria Legal Aid and the Victorian Law Reform Commission. In its obituary, the Victorian Bar said:

Peta was disagreeable in the best sense of that word; she possessed an independence of intellect that compelled her to insist, plainly and without fear, on what she understood to be the real question in any problem, legal or otherwise.

In 2017, Peta joined the office of the then shadow minister for employment and workplace relations, Brendan O'Connor. She spent two years working with Brendan before her election in 2019. Following the news of her death, I sat next to the member for Gorton on a plane back to Melbourne. He was devastated. Peta was much loved by her Labor family, and you are all in my thoughts today. I am so sorry for your loss. I convey my deepest condolences to Peta's beloved husband of 24 years, Rod Glover; to Peta's broader family; and to her friends. Vale, Peta Murphy.

Senator CICCONE (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (16:20): I rise to make a brief contribution with respect to our friend Peta Murphy. I make this contribution also on behalf of my staff, one who previously worked with me and one who is currently with me—namely John Conlon, who worked for Peta up until her last day, and Sue Heath. When I first came to the Senate, Sue started working with me, and I seconded her onto Peta's campaign back in 2019. She is still with me today.

I know both of them will be watching. Both have been very special in Peta's life and are really feeling her loss right now. That's really because Peta, as we've heard, is probably one of the best examples of being an excellent local member of parliament. I don't think I've ever met someone who was so passionate, so articulate, so direct and a real champion of the people that she represented in the community of Dunkley. She was, as we've heard, someone who didn't hold back. She was a matter of fact, extremely intelligent and dedicated individual who had a number of issues close to her heart which she wanted to see improve in this country, particularly around health care. It was so fitting to see the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese; and the Premier of Victoria, Jacinta Allan, only a few days ago dedicate a new breast imaging suite at Frankston Hospital in her honour. I think that's a really touching tribute to the work that Peta managed to achieve in her brief time here at Parliament House. As we've heard, she has been a passionate advocate for the people of Dunkley and always stood up for her values. Most of us know that she was a wonderful friend, and we've heard many contributions in the other place late last year and today on that note.

Being the duty senator for Dunkley back in 2019, I really got to know Peta very well. It was a very long and difficult campaign, but it was one where we had a lot of satisfaction—obviously, as Senator Walsh pointed out, toing and froing with the former member for Dunkley. I'm sure that the voice of Peta still rings in our heads every time issues like that do pop up on social media. It was really great to see Peta finally break through and actually win that 2019 campaign. Although we came from very different parts of the party, we shared very strong Labor values. We shared the common goal to not just win Dunkley for Labor but form a Labor government, because, when you form a Labor government, you can actually implement Labor policy.

We shared a birthday together, 1 November—so two very strong minded Scorpios clashing, but the 2019 campaign proved otherwise, and we managed to get through it. We did enjoy a drink afterwards. We also shared the same day for our first speeches. We also had the member for Jagajaga attend the chamber as well. The three of us shared that special moment together.

It seems like only yesterday but such a long time ago now. I was delighted to attend her election party down in Frankston North. She was so excited, so passionate and very keen to start a long career in this place and for her community. When I was told about her cancer coming back, it really brought back a lot of memories about the struggles that she had gone through and often the hope that she saw with Rod and her lovely dogs, Bert and Ernie. But, really, it made sure that she was determined—more so than ever—to continue the fight of standing up for her community, fighting for Labor policy and making sure that we won the last election. She leaves a very big mark in this place and, as I mentioned, especially in my office, where she made some really deep friendships with those who were closer with her. All of us in the ALP are heartbroken that she's no longer with us. She'll be terribly missed.

The upcoming by-election is a difficult time for all of us on this side. Losing a friend, a colleague, is difficult at the best of times, but fighting an election in her honour presents an opportunity for us to really honour her legacy. I

want to take this opportunity to acknowledge her team, her office, her staff and all the volunteers that connected with Peta, and their loyalty to her in ensuring that we continue to serve the people of Dunkley during this time. I pass on my sincere condolences to Rod, her family, her staff and all her friends. I'm terribly sorry for your loss.

To senators Marielle Smith and Jess Walsh, you made beautiful speeches and a great contribution to someone who I think we're all proud to say was not just a colleague but a very special friend indeed. Vale, Peta.

Senator McCARTHY (Northern Territory—Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians and Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health) (16:26): I rise to join in paying my respects to an incredible woman. I pay my respects to her husband, Rod; her proud parents, Bob and Jan; and her dear sisters, Jodi and Penni, as well as her wider family, her many friends and constituents, and her staff.

It's beautiful to listen to the words that my colleagues have had to say here, but also in the other place, as we all reflect on what relationships we had with Peta. Some of us were much closer; others had a touch of being able to enjoy the laughter with her, whether it was at caucus or at events where we'd meet outside of parliament. I reflect on when I first met her, at the good old Kingo, a place where you get to meet a lot of new colleagues when they first arrive here in Canberra. I remember on that night meeting the class of 2019—those you've heard speak today, Senator Walsh, Senator Smith and Senator Ciccone; and also the member for Lilley and the member for Jagajaga.

I want to put on the record to your family, Peta, just how wonderful it was that you, on that night, wanted to know all about the First Nations caucus: what it was we did, how it was we worked in the caucus and how it was you could contribute towards our policies and to our commitment to one day, hopefully, be in government. I would just like to say to Rod and to your staff: thank you for the contribution that you made in the seat of Dunkley towards the Voice referendum; the many supporters that we had through your advocacy, Peta. I know that your passion in regard to seeing the disadvantaged across Australia, across the seat of Dunkley but in particular in First Nations people, was very evident.

Your own personal challenges in dealing with your cancer when it came back again showed all of us just the kind of character you were. You inspired us all and continue to do so. Your commitment to public service and social justice was always evident. We've heard, from previous speakers, of your role working in the Victorian justice system as a solicitor advocate and a senior public defender with Victoria Legal Aid. All of this you brought with you, in your sense of justice and in your pursuit of that for all Australians. Your energetic, funny and talented ways—they reckon you were good at squash. Well, I never had the chance to play that with you, but I did hear about it a lot.

It was certainly an emotional and special day of the weekend with the opening of the Peta Murphy Breast Imaging Suite in Frankston. It is an important place where women and girls can access diagnostic cancer services closer to home. It will save them hours of travelling into the city and from other towns to get screened. It's a vital service for Frankston women and a fitting way of paying tribute to Peta's memory. It will help thousands of women get screened to make sure they are okay or to get onto life-saving treatment earlier, if cancer is detected. Peta worked very hard to get this service up and running to remove barriers to getting a check-up, and she did this all while fighting her own battle with cancer.

With much love and respect, from all of us here to you, Rod, and to all of your family and friends, Peta: rest in peace. Bawuji barra.

Senator COX (Western Australia) (16:31): I too rise to reflect on, and associate myself with, the comments today on the amazing person that Peta Murphy, the member for Dunkley, was. I offer my condolences to her family and loved ones.

As we've heard today and, indeed, for a long time before she passed, Peta was a different type of politician. She was authentic, passionate and driven, but she was also kind, caring and funny. I had the pleasure of working alongside Peta on the Joint Select Committee on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum. Together we attended some hearings in Canberra, in Orange and in Cairns, alongside other members of this place and the other place. It was an opportunity to get to know some of my colleagues from the House, which is a luxury we seldom get to do, particularly during the sitting weeks. I remember, during these hearings, that Peta handled the sensitivities of the issues very well, especially with First Nations people who wanted to vote yes but who were understandably very sceptical about the government. She handled these interactions with grace and with a sense of curiosity but, most of all, with a sense of respect. I was always impressed with her ability to open up conversations during the deliberations of the committee for those who had reservations, questions and, in fact, doubts. She mingled and greeted people warmly with her enthusiasm and with her great smile.

It was as I watched Peta doing her thing that I knew she was different—obviously, in the best way. She had this quiet confidence, and I could see her reaching out to those who came so generously to the committee's hearings by simply meeting them where they were at. Her openness carried through to the way she listened and, in fact, heard

what people said and validated their contributions. This is what made Peta a different type of politician and it's the reason I have such a great memory of her. We shared with Senator Stewart our little Signal chat group that we called Selfie Masters. That's my little personal touch. Unlike Senator Smith, I'm happy to share that quite publicly. With our like-mindedness for fun, we also travelled without our staff and were tasked with capturing the work that we did on our trips, particularly during our committee's deliberations. We shared our pics that we took. We shared those with each other with great fun, and it was something that I'll remember dearly.

Peta showcased a way to operate in what is often a nasty and adversarial world of politics. She was full of kindness and understanding, and I think we absolutely need more of that in this place and the other. She showed that you don't need to be ruthless to be a leader. In this place some of the work that we do is done collaboratively, and our work together can build relationships and capture those moments in time together which truly reflect the people that we are.

This place has lost a leader, and we all lost a colleague, but so many have lost a friend and a family member that they loved deeply. And, in particular, I want to extend my heartfelt condolences to our Labor colleagues. To everyone who had the pleasure of knowing Peta in any capacity, I am so sorry for your loss. Rest in peace, Peta.

Senator McALLISTER (New South Wales—Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy) (16:34): It's my honour to contribute to this condolence motion and to share some reflections, just briefly, on some of the qualities that I admired most about Peta Murphy: her clarity, her intelligence, her kindness and her creativity. I want to start with the first, which is clarity.

I first met Peta when I was a new senator and was undertaking work on the gender pay gap and the underlying things that would need to change about our workplaces to address it. Of course, Peta, as a staffer to Brendan O'Connor, was immensely skilled and able to assist enormously with the policy tasks. She understood the industrial situation and she understood the law, but, most importantly, she understood deeply the needs of the people we were trying to assist, and it characterises everything Peta did. She had great clarity about who she was trying to help, why we were here, the purpose of government and her task in representing those who had little power and who most needed those of us with access to power to assist them and support them to reach the potential that their lives offered.

She was, as others have commented, incredibly intelligent. She was widely read. She was witty. She had an incisive capacity for analysis and the courage to speak up when she saw something that she thought required further interrogation or questioning. But she never used that intelligence to seek to dominate or embarrass other people. Her purpose in utilising her huge brain was to understand better, to find better solutions and to engage with the problems that we were here to fix. That kindness was evident in the way she engaged with her electorate. She respected them. She respected every person that she sought to represent, and they offered her respect in return. I had some wonderful meetings in her community with the wide range of community groups that she regularly brought together to be in dialogue with one another about the challenges that they collectively sought to meet in their community and the ways that they could work together to do that.

It really just leads me to my final observation, which was her immense political creativity. Peta entered the parliament wanting to make politics better. She wanted to restore faith in the way that politics worked, and Senator Wong spoke about that in her contribution. In practical ways, she thought very, very carefully about what that would mean on a day-to-day basis in her electorate, and she engaged regularly in very interesting ways with her community, bringing people together, trialling new ways of connecting with people and looking for ways to reinvent the practice of politics so that her community would truly know that they were represented and they could access their representative whenever they needed to and in ways that suited them.

She was an incredible talent. She formed deep relationships with her peers in the class of 2019, and the people who have spoken from that class have spoken so movingly. I offer my condolences to all of you in particular. But, more generally, this is a terribly sad loss for the country, it's a terribly sad loss for Labor and it's terribly, terribly sad for her beautiful husband, Rod; her parents; her sisters; her staff; and all of the people who loved her. I offer my condolences to them also.

The PRESIDENT: I ask senators to join in a moment of silence to signify their assent to the motion.

Question agreed to, honourable senators joining in a moment of silence.

COMMITTEES

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Reference

Senator RICE (Victoria) (16:39): I move:

That the following matter be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 8 October 2024:

The impact and mitigation of aircraft noise on residents and business in capital cities and regional towns, with particular reference to:

- (a) the effect of aircraft noise on amenity, physical and mental wellbeing and everyday life of residents;
- (b) the effect of aircraft noise on small business;
- (c) any proposals for the mitigation and limitation of aircraft noise, including flight curfews, changes to flight paths and alternatives to air travel;
- (d) any barriers to the mitigation and limitation of aircraft noise; and
- (e) any other related matters.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (16:39): by leave—I move an amendment to business of the Senate notice of motion No. 1, as circulated in the chamber:

Omit all words after "That", substitute "the following matters be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 8 October 2024:

(a) the impact, regulation and mitigation of aircraft noise on residents and business in our communities, including the impacts of aircraft noise on amenity, physical and mental wellbeing and everyday life of affected communities; and

(b) Australia's airspace management, operation and regulation to ensure the safety, efficiency and sustainability of the aviation industry, with particular reference to:

- (i) the adequacy and effectiveness of Australia's airspace management operation and regulation in meeting the needs of the aviators and communities,
- (ii) skills shortages, job vacancies and access to skills training in the aviation sector,
- (iii) aircraft noise management practices and their effectiveness in mitigating impacts on communities,
- (iv) factors contributing to on-time performance issues across Australian airspace,
- (v) the safety and reliability of airspace management across rural and regional Australia, and
- (vi) any other related matters."

Debate interrupted.

NOTICES

Postponement

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (16:40): I seek leave to postpone general business notice of motion No. 375 till 26 February 2024.

Leave granted.

COMMITTEES

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Reference

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the following matter be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 8 October 2024:

The impact and mitigation of aircraft noise on residents and business in capital cities and regional towns, with particular reference to:

- (a) the effect of aircraft noise on amenity, physical and mental wellbeing and everyday life of residents;
- (b) the effect of aircraft noise on small business;
- (c) any proposals for the mitigation and limitation of aircraft noise, including flight curfews, changes to flight paths and alternatives to air travel;
- (d) any barriers to the mitigation and limitation of aircraft noise; and
- (e) any other related matters.

to which the following amendment was moved:

Omit all words after "That", substitute "the following matters be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 8 October 2024:

(a) the impact, regulation and mitigation of aircraft noise on residents and business in our communities, including the impacts of aircraft noise on amenity, physical and mental wellbeing and everyday life of affected communities; and

(b) Australia's airspace management, operation and regulation to ensure the safety, efficiency and sustainability of the aviation industry, with particular reference to:

- (i) the adequacy and effectiveness of Australia's airspace management operation and regulation in meeting the needs of the aviators and communities,

- (ii) skills shortages, job vacancies and access to skills training in the aviation sector,
- (iii) aircraft noise management practices and their effectiveness in mitigating impacts on communities,
- (iv) factors contributing to on-time performance issues across Australian airspace,
- (v) the safety and reliability of airspace management across rural and regional Australia, and
- (vi) any other related matters".

The PRESIDENT (16:45): The question is that the amendment as moved by Senator McKenzie to business of the Senate No. 1, standing in the name of Senator Rice, be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:45]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes29
 Noes35
 Majority.....6

AYES

Antic, A.
 Bragg, A. J.
 Cash, M. C.
 Davey, P. M.
 Henderson, S. M.
 Kovacic, M.
 McKenzie, B.
 O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
 Roberts, M. I.
 Sharma, D. N.

Askew, W.
 Brockman, W. E.
 Chandler, C.
 Fawcett, D. J.
 Hughes, H. A.
 Liddle, K. J.
 McLachlan, A. L.
 Rennick, G.
 Ruston, A.
 Smith, D. A.

Babet, R.
 Canavan, M. J.
 Colbeck, R. M.
 Hanson, P. L.
 Hume, J.
 McGrath, J.
 Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
 Reynolds, L. K.
 Scarr, P. M.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
 Chisholm, A.
 Farrell, D. E.
 Green, N. L.
 Lines, S.
 McKim, N. J.
 Pocock, B.
 Pratt, L. C.
 Shoebridge, D.
 Sterle, G.
 Tyrrell, T. M.
 Watt, M. P.

Ayres, T.
 Ciccone, R.
 Faruqi, M.
 Grogan, K.
 McAllister, J. R.
 O'Neill, D. M.
 Pocock, D. W.
 Rice, J. E.
 Smith, M. F.
 Stewart, J. N. A.
 Urquhart, A. E. (Teller)
 Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Brown, C. L.
 Cox, D.
 Ghosh, V.
 Hanson-Young, S. C.
 McCarthy, M.
 Payman, F.
 Polley, H.
 Sheldon, A. V.
 Steele-John, J. A.
 Thorpe, L. A.
 Walsh, J. C.

Question negatived.

Original question agreed to.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Labor Government

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sterle) (16:49): A letter has been received from Senator Hume:

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

The Labor Government has betrayed Australian taxpayers, killed reform of the tax system, trashed aspiration for millions of workers, and can't be trusted on negative gearing, capital gains tax, and the family home.

Is the proposal supported?

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

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: With the concurrence of the Senate, the clerks will set the clock in line with the informal arrangements made by the whips.

Senator HUME (Victoria) (16:50): Only two weeks ago today, the Prime Minister performed a backflip worthy of the *Kama Sutra*. Two weeks and one day ago, he looked Australians in the eye and said, 'I have no plans to change the stage 3 tax cuts.' And then two weeks ago he changed his mind. This is despite the fact that he tells us that his word is his bond. Well, Australia found out on 25 January exactly what this Prime Minister's bond is worth, and that is exactly zero. The Prime Minister looked Australians in the eye and knowingly repeated mistruths, not once and not twice but over a hundred times since the last election.

He knowingly repeated those mistruths going into the election, but more importantly he knowingly repeated those mistruths after he had directed the Treasury to find a way to unwind the tax cuts that he had promised and that he had committed to delivering. At the cost-of-living committee on Monday we heard that the Prime Minister, via the Treasurer, actually instructed Treasury to undertake that work to revise the stage 3 tax cuts at the very same time as telling the public he had no intention of doing so. He didn't tell Treasury: 'My word is my bond, so please don't do this. Find another solution to the cost-of-living crisis that will not make me have to go back on a promise and that will not make me have to break a commitment—a commitment that I have made numerous times to the Australian people to convince them to vote for me.'

The Prime Minister was quite happy to work away at something that he had time and time again categorically ruled out doing. Indeed, he was happy to tell Australians, 'We are not reconsidering that position,' at the same time that he knew Treasury was working up those options. The Treasurer and the Prime Minister said 12 times after they had commissioned that work that they had not changed their position. These are the weasel words from this government. Perhaps the most charitable reading of this statement is that he wasn't at the time reconsidering his position because he'd already made up his mind. This is a man deeply comfortable with deceiving the Australian people, and this is a Labor government that is too weak to stand up to his captain's call to renege on that commitment, and that means they are all entirely complicit in the mistruth that has been told to the Australian public. He tried to tell Australians that they would be better off—at the same time, I might add, as banking, at the expense of the taxpayer, an additional \$28 billion in bracket creep over the medium term.

This is clearly a political response from the government to a cost-of-living crisis that has been going on for nearly two years. It's obvious that the Prime Minister and the Treasurer are not serious about Australia's long-term economic prosperity. All they care about is the politics. This is not genuine tax reform, and long-term prosperity will suffer because of this. In the last two days, in a train-wreck interview on Monday night, the Treasurer confirmed that the government didn't want to wait until after the Dunkley by-election to announce the changes. What an amazing coincidence that is! And the Prime Minister just this morning was calling on the coalition to vote against his own bill. Tell me that this government is not playing politics with this. He cares about only the political wedge, the short-term tactics, and Australians can see through that politicking. The Prime Minister blatantly told a mistruth—through his teeth—to the Australian people, and now he's treating them like mugs.

The Albanese government spent all of last year distracted by a failed Voice referendum. Meanwhile, Australians are now thousands of dollars worse off, as a result of this government's economic mismanagement. Australians have seen their living standards collapse. Somebody on \$100,000 a year has seen \$8,000 of their disposable income disappear, and now he is buying their votes for \$15 a week. I'll tell you this: you can't buy integrity for \$15 a week. People might pocket \$15 a week and say thank you, but they'll never thank you for that lie.

Senator WALSH (Victoria) (16:55): This is indeed a very bizarre start to the year for the coalition. On one hand, we've been summoned to the chamber by Senator Hume's very important matter of public importance, to debate a motion about our tax reforms, which includes words like 'betrayal', 'killing' and 'trashing'. On the other hand, we've been told today that those opposite are actually going to vote for our changes, that they're going to support our tax reforms.

Senator Hume interjecting—

Senator WALSH: The only important question before the chamber right now, Senator Hume, is: are you in the business of betraying, killing and trashing, as per the words of your matter of alleged importance, or is it the case that you now accept that we have a better plan? Which is it? Are you in the business of betrayal, or do you accept that we have a better tax reform plan—a better plan to provide cost-of-living relief to the Australians who need it right here, right now? What seems to be going on right now is that those opposite want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to talk about voting now for our tax plan, at the same time as they come into the chamber and literally scream and shout about killing, betraying and trashing. I mean, which is it? Do you support the plan—yes or no?

If you really think this plan is the end of the world, worthy of a matter of public importance, with hyperbole like this in it and with performances like this in the chamber, then vote against it. Have the courage of your convictions

and vote against it. Vote against giving every Australian taxpayer a tax cut. Vote against a tax plan that will see 84 per cent of Australians better off than they would have been with what you put on offer. Vote against a tax cut of \$1,500 for the average-income Australian. If you are so concerned about this, if you think it is so important, if you think that the right thing to do is to come into the chamber throwing around words like 'killing' and 'betrayal' and 'trashing', then have the courage of your convictions and vote against our plan.

But we know you're not going to vote against the plan, because you know it is actually good policy and you know the Australian people can see that it's good policy. It is exactly what Australians need right now. There is a cost-of-living challenge in this country right now, and we are focused on that while you are focused on playing politics. We are making sure Australians get money back into their pockets this year. That is what we are doing: 84 per cent of people will be better off; 100 per cent people will get a tax cut. This tax cut is really going to benefit lower- and middle-income Australia the most. And do you know who's in that category? A lot of women. There are a lot of women who are going to benefit from this policy.

We know that 95 per cent of teachers and nurses are going to benefit from this policy. We know that 97 per cent of aged-care workers, early childhood educators and disability workers are going to get a tax cut under our policy. We care about this workforce. We care about low-paid and middle-income women workers, and we want to make sure they can not only earn more under our government, as we get wages moving, but also keep more of what they earn. These tax cuts are good for Australians. They are good for middle-income Australians. They are good for the women workers of this country. They are good for the young workers of this country. It is time that those opposite stop all of the hyperbole and all of the talk of 'killing' and 'trashing' and just say yes and explain to the Australian people that they support our plan because it is the right plan, because our plan actually supports the aspirations of Australians to have a better go. Our plan supports them with the cost-of-living challenge they face.

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (17:00): Let's be really clear about why we are where we are in relation to the stage 3 tax cuts. We are where we are because the Labor Party was too weak to stand up to former Prime Minister Scott Morrison. We are where we are because the Labor Party voted for Mr Morrison's stage 3 tax cuts for the top end. The Labor Party voted to give \$9,000 a year in tax breaks to some of the wealthiest Australians. So Mr Morrison's stage 3 cuts for the top end then became Labor's stage 3 tax cuts for the top end. Now Labor has come back to make these incredibly regressive stage 3 tax cuts—that are currently legislated only because Labor voted for them—slightly less bad.

But let's be clear about what Labor's proposal actually does. Under Labor's tax plan, the wealthiest 20 per cent of society, the highest-income 20 per cent of society, will get 50 per cent of the tax cuts. The poorest 20 per cent of our society in Australia will get less than half a per cent of the tax cut. Labor's tax plan proposes to give politicians and CEOs an extra \$4,500 a year in their pockets. That is \$4,500 a year in the pockets of every single senator sitting in this place. That is Labor's tax plan. Labor's tax plan still sees the majority of the benefit go to men and a minority of the benefit go to women. What Labor should have done is use the money they could have saved by not giving these obscene tax breaks to the top end to improve social services in this country—for example, putting dental and mental health into Medicare.

This MPI also references negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts. In the next five years, property investors will get \$200 billion in tax concessions from the government. That's \$200 billion in tax concessions for property investors that will allow them to outbid Australians who are dreaming of owning their first home. It's a disgrace.

Senator BRAGG (New South Wales) (17:03): The central issue here is that, when you have a government which is solely focused upon the interests of just a few organisations—namely, trade unions and super funds—it means you run out of time to find solutions to the problems of today and today's economy. That is the main problem that the government and the country have; there hasn't been sufficient time given to the interests of Australians.

After over 18 months of this government, this is the first economic policy the government has come up with, and it has done so on the back of a torrid year. This is a recalibration of a Liberal Party tax policy that the decision has been made to release now in light of the Dunkley by-election. So we are now driving the nation's income tax policy around preserving the job of one person in the House of Representatives to ensure that the government has some momentum. This is a short-term sugar hit which locks in bracket creep over the long term. This is really a hugely regrettable position for the country to be in—to have unwound a significant tax reform of the past decade. As has been lamented, the country has very low ambition when it comes to reform. People are afraid to put big ideas on the table, and one of the big ideas was having a tax system which was going to be simpler and which would reward aspiration. The reintroduction of a tax bracket is something that I would never have imagined I would see in my time here, but that is what we now have.

The reality is that, yes, for many Australians there will be a tax cut today, but tomorrow and every other year there'll be a tax increase. The reason I say that is that, even on the government's own modelling, they have admitted that they are reintroducing a tax bracket which was abolished. The government is reintroducing a tax bracket which was abolished by this parliament and which was voted for with good reason. As a result of reintroducing that tax bracket, the Treasury will receive an additional \$28 billion. If Treasury is receiving an extra \$28 billion, that is \$28 billion of the people's money in higher taxes that the people are not able to spend on themselves. The central difference between the coalition and the Labor Party is that we understand that the government has no money of its own and that the money the government has is raised from the people. In this particular case, this is a long-term locking-in of a higher rate of income tax.

People should not be fooled about what this particular measure is going to do. Yes, it will provide a short-term sugar hit which is designed to improve the political fortunes of a flagging government with no other economic policies. But, in the long run, it will lock in a tax bracket which was abolished. What that means is that Australians will have to face a long future of doing an extra shift or doing an extra job and facing the prospect of being pushed into the 37c threshold. The 37c threshold does not exist today in Australian law as of 1 July. It will be reintroduced, which is an admission that the Labor Party was not able to address bracket creep in a sustainable way.

Ultimately, it is a very regrettable situation. It's a short-term sugar hit today to support Mr Albanese but a long-term problem the country has to face, which is that bracket creep will eat away at people's salaries and wages only because the government was so craven in breaking its own election commitment to save Mr Albanese's neck.

Senator STEWART (Victoria) (17:08): This motion is a desperate attempt from those opposite to distract from the fact that they know that this plan is a much better plan for every Australian taxpayer. What a rubbish motion! They didn't have a plan when Sussan Ley went on TV and said that they will roll these changes back, making 11.5 million Australians pay more tax. It's ironic that the coalition want to accuse us on this side of lies, when I clearly remember the national embarrassment that I and other Australians felt when the French President made global headlines for calling Scott Morrison a you-know-what. 'I don't think—I know' that those opposite can't be trusted to deliver for hardworking Australians, and Australians know that too. It's shameful that those opposite would rather play political games in this place instead of wanting to make a meaningful difference for Australians who are doing it tough right now in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis.

From groceries to rent, prices are going up and families are feeling it. With expenses rising in every line of the household budget, I know that many Victorians are forced to cut back on essentials. The issue is one that spans all corners of our community, with young people and working women amongst the worst impacted. Unlike those opposite, this government wants to deliver targeted relief for Australians when they need it most. Here is what we are doing. From 1 July every Australian will get a tax cut. A barista earning \$40,000 a year will get a tax cut of \$654, compared to a big fat zero under Morrison's plan. A public school teacher on yearly earnings of \$73,000 will get a tax cut of \$1,504 under Labor's tax cuts. A hospital nurse on \$80,000 each year will take home an extra \$1,679 to help make ends meet. And a train driver with an annual salary of \$110,000 will get a tax cut of \$2,429 starting this July thanks to the Albanese Labor government. Labor's tax cuts will deliver bigger tax cuts for hardworking Australians to help with the cost of living. That means keeping more of what they earn.

Tackling cost of living is Labor's No. 1 priority. The No. 1 priority for those opposite is playing political games. A lot has happened in the five years since Scott Morrison's plan. Scott was so out of touch he failed to name the price of bread or milk. Australians have endured a once-in-100-years pandemic, flooding and natural disasters, supply chain challenges, wars and international conflicts, global oil production costs and higher interest rates. When economic conditions change, responsible governments change their economic policy. It is the grown-up thing to do.

As I listened to Victorians of diverse ages, incomes and backgrounds in my recent travels across my home state it became increasingly clear that Morrison's approach couldn't deliver for Victorians in regional and rural communities. From Maryborough to Yarrawonga Victorians are under pressure right now, and the right thing to do was to change our economic policy to support families from every single community. That is what we are doing. That's why our approach will provide bigger tax cuts for more people.

Labor's tax cuts will deliver for every Australian taxpayer. More than three million Victorians, or 86 per cent of taxpayers, will receive a bigger tax cut under Labor, compared to the Liberal National government's policy. Labor's tax cuts deliver a better deal for 11.5 million Australians. They provide broader cost-of-living relief to taxpayers, including those on lower and middle incomes: young people and Australian women, who are more vulnerable to cost pressures and who were left behind by the opposition.

Labor's tax cut is a part of our economic plan to put money back in the pockets of Australians, along with boosting wages, balancing the budget and driving fairer prices for consumers. Billions of dollars are going to families, including through cheaper child care, incentivising housing supply, energy bill relief and increases to income

support payments. When Australians are feeling the pinch, they need and deserve a meaningful tax cut. These changes under the Albanese Labor government will deliver immediate cost-of-living relief up and down the income scale. Those opposite know this is a better plan and that's why they're voting for Labor's tax cuts.

Senator BABET (Victoria—United Australia Party Whip) (17:13): Prime Minister Albanese's broken promise over the stage 3 tax cuts was just the latest in a string of porky pies longer than Pinocchio's nose, in my opinion. Labor promised this: they promised more than 100 times not to make any changes to the stage 3 tax cuts—before they changed the stage 3 tax cuts. They promised we'd have a \$275 power bill saving, only to see power bills go up by 18.2 per cent in just 15 months and gas go up by 28 per cent. They promised to lower interest rates, only to have 12 interest rate rises under their watch. They promised to lift wages, only for real wages in this country to go backwards, with disposable incomes falling by five per cent in 2022-23—the sharpest fall in any OECD country. They promised not to touch franking credits, only to go on to remove franking credits connected to capital raising and share buybacks. They promised not to make any changes to superannuation. Guess what? They went on to make changes to superannuation. Breaking promises is about the only thing that this government's good at—the only thing.

Time's almost up. I can't continue too much longer. But I could go on and on about broken promises. And, yet, Labor want to introduce a misinformation and disinformation bill that won't stop them but will stop the rest of us talking about it if Labor's 'ministry of truth' don't like it. It's bad enough that this Labor government has trashed the economy, undermined social cohesion and ruined the electricity grid. But, even worse, if that's even possible, is that it has destroyed trust and dismantled Australia's identity. Just for that, they should not be forgiven and they should be punished severely at the next election.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (17:15): Labor conjures up a \$16.70 increase in tax cuts to grab headlines before the Dunkley by-election, where it's worried about losing a government MP. Yet Labor knows bracket creep will soon increase taxes much more than the headline-grabbing cut. Understandably, to many people getting \$16.70 back from the government, that's a lot of money. Yet the same people will lose it, and much more very quickly, to bracket creep, a stealth tax. The Prime Minister deceptively grabs headlines. People cannot trust Prime Minister Albanese.

Labor conjures a \$16.70 increase in tax cuts to grab headlines before the Dunkley by-election, where it's worried about losing a government MP. Yet Labor's petrol and diesel excise increase will soon increase fuel prices and inflation, offsetting the tax cuts. The Prime Minister deceptively grabs headlines. People cannot trust Prime Minister Albanese.

Labor conjures a \$16.70 increase in tax cuts to grab headlines before the Dunkley by-election, where it's worried about losing a government MP. The petrol and diesel excise will filter through the food chain to raise grocery prices in every food store in the country, offsetting the tax cuts. The Prime Minister deceptively grabs headlines. People cannot trust Prime Minister Albanese.

Labor conjures a \$16.70 increase in tax cuts to grab headlines before the Dunkley by-election, where it's worried about losing a government MP, yet Labor and Liberal energy policies are driving skyrocketing electricity prices that will soon bury the cuts. The Prime Minister deceptively grabs headlines. People cannot trust Prime Minister Albanese.

Labor conjures a \$16.70 increase in tax cuts to grab headlines before the Dunkley by-election, where it's worried about losing a government MP, yet higher electricity costs are raising grocery prices that will soon bury the cuts. The Prime Minister deceptively grabs headlines. People cannot trust Prime Minister Albanese.

As a servant to the people of Queensland and Australia, I thank Senator Hume for her matter of public importance and support it.

Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia) (17:17): This issue is not about what those opposite claim. At the heart of this is the issue of trust. Our democracy needs—it demands—that Australians can trust their Prime Minister. Leadership as Prime Minister means that people might not always like you and they might not always like your decisions, but true national leadership means that people can understand and can trust that your decisions, big and small, are made on behalf of our nation.

There is no question that, this week, the Labor government have betrayed Australian taxpayers, they have killed reform of the tax system and they have trashed the aspirations of millions of hardworking Australians. They also can't be trusted anymore on negative gearing, capital gains tax and the family home—all of those other things they have promised not to touch. As Senator Babet has just gone through, they have already broken so many promises, but this is the biggest and the worst yet.

The Prime Minister promised 100 times that they would not do what they have done in relation to the stage 3 tax cuts. He said, 'My word is my bond.' But his bond is no longer his word, and he no longer deserves the trust of the

Australian people. The Albanese Labor government have misled and betrayed the Australian people, and they know he cannot be trusted again. That is a sad, sad thing for our democracy.

As Liberals, we are the party of lower taxes. It is in our DNA that all Australians who are aspirational and work so hard to realise their aspirations for themselves, for their own lives, and for their families should keep more of what they work so hard to deliver. Many of these hardworking Australians are in my own home state of Western Australia, and they are FIFO workers. FIFO workers work so hard. They make so many sacrifices in their lives to earn money, to meet their own aspirations and, as they get a family, to meet the aspirations of their family as well. Labor is crushing the aspirations of hundreds of thousands of FIFO workers—the majority of them probably in my home state—and it is a disgrace. The real issue here is that the Prime Minister no longer deserves or gets the trust of the Australian people. *(Time expired)*

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator McGrath): The time for this discussion has expired.

MATTERS OF URGENCY

Middle East

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator McGrath) (17:20): The Senate will now consider the proposal from Senator McKim. Is consideration of the proposal supported?

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

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: With the concurrence of the Senate, the clerks will set the clock in line with the informal arrangements made by the whips.

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (17:21): At the request of Senator McKim, I move:

That, in the opinion of the Senate, the following is a matter of urgency:

The Australian Government must publicly support, and formally intervene in, South Africa's genocide case at the International Court of Justice.

Australia must voice its support for South Africa's genocide case against the State of Israel, which is currently being considered by the International Criminal Court. South Africa's case brings together compelling evidence that the State of Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians right now in Gaza.

On 25 January, the ICJ made a historic interim ruling. They decided that, based on the evidence presented by the nation of South Africa, the State of Israel is to refrain from acts contravening the genocide convention. It has been ordered to prevent and to punish direct incitement of genocide towards Palestinians, and it is to take all measures to ensure people in Gaza can access humanitarian assistance. The court has sent a clear message: it is the court's expectation that the world will not sit in silence as the State of Israel continues its ruthless military campaign against Palestinians.

Even after the UN made clear that the court's ruling must be considered binding, the Albanese government has failed to take decisive action. The Albanese government's response so far has been completely inadequate. As a signatory to the UN's genocide convention, Australia has an obligation to take measures to prevent and punish the crime of genocide. And the Albanese government has so far failed to take action that is appropriate to the scale of the devastation that we are witnessing. Instead of calling for an end to the genocide, instead of calling for an end to the war crimes, the crimes against humanity and the destruction which rains down daily upon the people of Gaza, the Australian government has cut aid funding to the very organisations trying to keep people alive while continuing to supply resources and give support to the IDF forces as they carry out these atrocities. Shame!

The Greens are imploring the Australian government to send a strong message that these war crimes are unacceptable to the Australian community. We have seen thousands joining rallies and picket lines across the country. They are united in their calls. It is time for the Australian government to publicly support South Africa's case in the ICJ. The Australian government must make its position clear in support of South Africa now, as we enter this substantive stage of consideration by the court. The community expects that the Australian government will formally intervene, and the Australian Greens will continue to place pressure upon the Albanese government to ensure that they do just that. The time for sitting by in silence is over. We must hear the voices of the Palestinian people. We must answer their cry for justice. We must take tangible action to ensure that crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes are punished under international law.

Senator CHANDLER (Tasmania) (17:25): I rise to speak on this urgency motion moved by the Greens. We are all extremely troubled by the ongoing loss of life in Gaza caused by Hamas. We all want the conflict to end as soon as possible. But once again we see the Greens come into this chamber with a motion that completely ignores the fact that the Hamas terrorists can end the conflict in Gaza today. They could have ended this conflict on any day during the last four months by surrendering and by releasing the hostages who they have now held in cruel and inhumane conditions for more than 120 days.

Of course, this motion also doesn't mention that the only reason there is an armed conflict in Gaza right now is that Hamas terrorists carried out one of the most barbaric, deliberate mass murders the modern world has ever witnessed. Not only did they murder in cold blood more than 1,200 Israelis and take hundreds of hostages; they then promised to carry out such attacks again and again as soon as they were able. Hamas have stated genocidal intent to wipe Israel from the face of the map. They aim to kill as many Israeli Jews as they can, and they openly celebrate when they are able to do so. They have hidden themselves and the hostages they've taken in a tunnel network that they have spent 15 years building, with the specific intent of placing the civilians of Gaza in danger. That is the context in which Israel are attempting to rescue their citizens and destroy the terrorist group Hamas, and it's the context which, sadly, the Greens choose to ignore once again.

Members of the Senate are, of course, entitled to express a view about Israel's attempt to rescue its people and destroy a terrorist group which murdered 1,200 of its people. But what members of parliament should not be doing is misusing the word 'genocide' in a way which directly parrots the propaganda of Hamas and their funders in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nor should governments, including the Australian government, be misusing that word, as this motion calls for the government to do.

The Albanese government should have been faster and clearer in providing Australia's response to this claim and making clear that, along with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other like-minded partners, we do not believe that Israel is committing genocide and we do not believe that South Africa's application to the ICJ is appropriate. Israel has an inherent right to self-defence, which was recognised in the ICJ ruling. Israel is in an incredibly difficult position of conducting a defensive war to remove Hamas from a position of power and influence and as a terrorist threat in the region. Hamas, incidentally, have repeatedly refused not only to surrender but even to accept a ceasefire which would see hostages released and further aid able to be safely provided to civilians. The only way the lives of civilians in both Gaza and Israel can be protected is to remove Hamas from a position where they deliberately use Palestinians in Gaza as human shields and place them in greater danger and jeopardy.

It is deeply troubling to have propaganda being spread in our country that seeks to save Hamas, keep them in power and keep the civilians of Gaza under this oppressive, misogynistic, murderous rule of a terrorist regime. We want to see civilians protected and terrorism defeated. Hamas, on the other hand, wants to see civilians on both sides killed, and they have done and continue to do everything in their power to make that happen. Any effort which ignores the need for Hamas to be removed from power is not a serious proposal for peace; it is a proposal for ongoing violence against Jews, women and the innocent civilians of Gaza.

Senator CICCONE (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (17:30): I want to make a short remark with respect to the urgency motion before the Senate this afternoon. The government won't be supporting this motion that has been brought forward by the Australian Greens regarding the International Court of Justice matter brought by South Africa concerning the State of Israel. We do so because Australia is not a party to the matter that South Africa has brought to the International Court of Justice. Indeed, the ICJ has not invited interventions from other states, a point that sometimes has been missed in some of the commentary of late.

This motion shows, with the greatest respect, sheer ignorance to the reality of what is actually before us today. Australia respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. We respect the role that it plays in the international legal system and the maintenance of an international rules based order. It's with this respect that it also follows that we also expect every single state around the world will act in accordance with the rulings of the court. I note in particular that the court has already made a ruling on provisional matters in the matter, a ruling that constitutes merely an interim decision, not a final determination.

I stood here in October of last year to condemn without qualification the horrific terrorist attacks that were committed by Hamas against many people in the State of Israel on 7 October. What happened on that day will always be remembered in the hearts of many with great sorrow. Since that time, the Australian government's position has been unequivocal and consistent. There is no justification for terrorism. There can be no excuse for what happened on that day. Like any other state, the State of Israel has a right to defend itself, and, in doing so, like any state, it must have regard for international law.

Whilst not a party to the matter brought by South Africa to the ICJ, that does not mean that Australia isn't continuing to work for peace in the region. Indeed, although not a central player in the Middle East, we are a respected voice, and with that voice we are able to advocate, and have said so many times, for sustained peace. Throughout this conflict, the Australian government has been consistent in calling for civilians to be protected. We have consistently called for more humanitarian aid into Gaza and unimpeded passage for relief for those in great need. We've also used our voice to advocate for the immediate release of hostages, the delivery of humanitarian assistance, respect for international humanitarian law, caution at the prospect of regional escalation, and a sustainable ceasefire—a ceasefire which cannot be one sided.

As Australians, we mourn the loss of innocent life in all conflict and pursue enduring peace in the region. That is our shared goal. Therefore it remains our view that such peace can only be achieved through a two-state solution where security and dignity for both parties is guaranteed.

Senator THORPE (Victoria) (17:34): I stand before you today to advocate for a cause that resonates with our shared values of justice, compassion and human rights. I support the motion that the Australian government must publicly support and formally intervene in South Africa's genocide case at the International Court of Justice. Our commitment to truth demands that we confront injustice wherever it occurs, regardless of borders or political affiliations.

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has resulted in untold suffering and loss of life, particularly amongst innocent civilians, including women and children. In a historic legally binding ruling, the ICJ declared that it is highly likely that genocide is occurring in Gaza and that Israel is not doing enough to prevent it. By endorsing South Africa's efforts to hold Israel accountable at the ICJ, we send a powerful message that Australia stands on the side of justice and humanity. Our support is not just a matter of policy. It's a reflection of our values and commitment to the promotion of peace and justice in the world.

As a signatory to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, we cannot turn a blind eye to such horrendous violations of human rights and to crimes against humanity. Let's not ignore our duty to speak against inhumane cruelty. Let's stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed and marginalised, wherever they may be, so that it actually never happens again anywhere to anyone. Thank you.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (17:36): Today we're asking this place to support something that millions of Australians want our government to do: to publicly support and formally intervene in South Africa's genocide case at the International Court of Justice, to do what we all have an obligation to do—not to be complicit in a genocide, not to be silent, not to be indifferent and not to do what our government seems quite willing to do: to actually be complicit. But we have an obligation individually and collectively, under the genocide convention, to prevent genocide and to prevent a potential genocide. That's why South Africa, to their great credit, brought this case in the ICJ—to identify the evidence as to why any fair-minded observer believes that genocide is occurring in Gaza and being directed by the Israeli military.

Let's remember the evidence the ICJ had before them. I'll read from the judgement:

On 9 October 2023, Mr Yoav Gallant, Defence Minister of Israel, announced that he had ordered a "complete siege" of Gaza City and that there would be "no electricity, no food, no fuel" and that "everything [was] closed". On the following day, Minister Gallant stated, speaking to Israeli troops on the Gaza border:

"I have released all restraints . . . You saw what we are fighting against. We are fighting human animals. This is the ISIS of Gaza. This is what we are fighting against . . . Gaza won't return to what it was before. There will be no Hamas. We will eliminate everything. If it doesn't take one day, it will take a week, it will take weeks or even months, we will reach all places."

Since then, to the eternal shame of the Israeli military and to the eternal shame of those governments who have been willing to support it, that's what's been happening. It wasn't hiding; it was in plain sight. And when we called for an urgent ceasefire it was because we saw this happening. When the world called for an urgent ceasefire and Australia, the United States and the UK, in a tiny little club, refused it, it was because these statements were made, and then it was happening in real time.

I've spoken with NGOs like Doctors Without Borders. We keep hearing from the government about delivering more aid. Doctor Without Borders say aid is not the answer, because they can't run the hospitals, because their patients are killed by Israeli snipers shooting through the windows, because the Israeli military storm into hospitals and execute patients in their beds and because they get blown up by weapons platforms that are in part delivered by Australia. Doctors Without Borders aren't saying we need more aid. Doctors Without Borders are saying, 'Stop the war, the violence and the genocide, and don't be complicit; care about Palestinian kids.'

Many millions around the world have seen the images of what this war is doing to kids, mums and families who are told that they should—go where? Nowhere is safe in Gaza. Imagine having your kids in a place where nowhere is safe, where at any moment your kids could be killed by bombs, snipers or a tank. Imagine that was you and your family, and your government did nothing or, what's worse, was complicit. Join the case. Advocate to enforce the convention. Do what we all have an obligation to do—individually, collectively, through our government—and prevent a genocide. For the Albanese government to come in here and oppose this and, in their opposition, not even mention the word 'Palestine' is shameful. Join the case.

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (17:40): I think we all need to be very clear about what the Australian government's position currently is, what the Australian Labor Party's position currently is and actually what this Senate's and this parliament's shameful position currently is. It is to stand with the State of Israel in regard to what that state, what its government and what its armed forces are doing in Gaza. Let's be very clear about what

they are doing in Gaza: there is a genocide underway in Gaza perpetrated by the State of Israel, and the Australian government is complicit. If there is a genocide underway and you are not doing everything you reasonably can to stop it, you are complicit. If there's a genocide underway and you are not railing against that genocide at every opportunity, you are complicit. If there is a genocide underway and you are facilitating that genocide by selling military hardware that is being used in that genocide, you are complicit.

The Australian government is complicit in this genocide because it is supplying military hardware, because it is failing to speak out against it at every opportunity and because it is failing in the obligations it has under the genocide convention to do everything it reasonably can to stop that genocide and prevent it from happening. That's the position of the Labor Party, and, shamefully, the position of this parliament is to stand with the State of Israel in the perpetration of that genocide. The very least we should do is join with the case in the International Court of Justice brought by South Africa, and the very least we can do is reverse the frankly catastrophic decision made recently by Labor and by the Australian government to suspend funding to the United Nations relief and works agency, the primary provider of humanitarian relief in Gaza. That is a shameful decision made with absolutely no evidence to support the contention that UNRWA did anything wrong, and it was taken, as Minister Wong implicitly admitted today, because we were told to by Israel and the United States.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (17:43): Twenty-six thousand—that's a conservative underestimate of the number of Palestinians who have been killed in Israel's attacks on Gaza since 7 October. Twenty-six thousand people is one per cent of Gaza's population—one per cent of the population wiped out at the hands of the Israeli government in just four months. It's more than the number of people killed in the Nakba of 1947-49, when the State of Israel was created and approximately 15,000 Palestinians were killed in a series of mass atrocities. It's more than the number of civilians killed in the Russia-Ukraine war over the last four years.

This statistic does not account for the thousands of Palestinians unaccounted for or the millions more displaced. It does not account for the grief, the terror, the fear and the trauma that each individual has faced as their families, their homes and their communities have been viciously destroyed by the Israeli government. In these four months of violence and devastation, Australians have watched in horror while the Labor government has stubbornly refused to even call for a permanent ceasefire. Personally, I broke down in tears a few weeks ago as I was cooking a recipe from a Palestinian cookbook and I thought of the home cooks of Gaza who have been killed in the last four months and those Palestinians who are still alive but for whom cooking their special meal is currently impossible, who are living in stench, in mud and under flimsy plastic shelters, cooking on wood fires if they are cooking at all, and whose kids are starving rather than being nurtured and nourished with maqluba, falafel and fattoush.

Silence in the face of these atrocities is not an option. Australia has a responsibility to act decisively to stop the crime of genocide and support punishment for genocide wherever it occurs, which is why the Australian Greens are calling for the Labor government to publicly back South Africa's proceedings against Israel in the International Court of Justice. The Labor government has previously intervened in ICJ court cases involving Ukraine, and we see no reason for it not to intervene now. South Africa's case presents serious and compelling evidence that Israel is committing the crime of genocide. By supporting these important proceedings, Australia can demonstrate that no country is exempt from international law. The Greens are also calling on the government to sanction Prime Minister Netanyahu and his entire war cabinet, to end all military and security trade and cooperation with Israel and to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Labor, show courage and demand justice for Palestinians.

Senator COX (Western Australia) (17:46): I rise to speak in strong support of this motion brought by my colleague and to urge the Australian government to publicly support South Africa's case before the ICJ. The Greens have proudly supported Palestine and will continue to do so. As a proud First Nations person, I join the calls for an immediate end to the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, for allowing unrestricted humanitarian access and for ending Australia's complicity, which is making Israel's war crimes possible and which is what my colleagues have already spoken about. I stand in solidarity with Palestinian people in their struggle against settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing, and I join the many calls to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people and for these rights to be enshrined in international law.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed. Over half of these have been children. The deaths also include thousands of women and hundreds of health personnel and journalists. These are just the deaths that we know about. Even more have been injured and even more still displaced. Israel continues to cause massive destruction and severe damage to vital infrastructure facilities in the Gaza Strip. These facilities include: schools; industrial facilities; health facilities, including hospitals, clinics and ambulances; mosques; and churches. Water, food, electricity and all humanitarian assistance have been cut off, with the United Nations, the World Health Organization and other international bodies describing this as an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe that is inhumane and amounts to a death sentence.

The history of state sponsored dispossession is one that we are familiar with here in Australia. We, as First Peoples of Australia, continue to live with the colonial legacies of disenfranchisement, poverty and economic devastation that have been imposed on us and manufactured by British, European and US imperialism. Just as my ancestors before us were subjected to massacres, enslavement and oppression, Australia continues to carry an outstanding and ongoing colonial debt that it is yet to settle with the First Peoples, as far back as the invasion of this country.

In recent weeks and months, we have seen an acceleration of Australia's campaign to criminalise and defame those who stand in solidarity with Palestinians. A perfect example was the Invasion Day rallies across Australia on 26 January. Defamed and dehumanised by the media and by politicians, Palestinians and their allies have been actively pursued, targeted and threatened with criminalisation when showing expressions of solidarity, including their national identity and especially the Palestinian flag. I see the many attempts, small and large, to suppress the voice of Palestinians in Australia and make them invisible. First Nations communities right across this country continue to support and stand in solidarity. Join the ICJ case.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Pratt): The question is that the motion moved in the name of Senator McKim be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [17:53]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Pratt)

Ayes11
Noes23
Majority.....12

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Rice, J. E.
Thorpe, L. A.

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

Faruqi, M.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.

NOES

Askew, W. (Teller)
Chisholm, A.
Ghosh, V.
McCarthy, M.
O'Neill, D. M.
Scarr, P. M.
Smith, M. F.
Urquhart, A. E.

Ayres, T.
Ciccione, R.
Grogan, K.
McGrath, J.
Polley, H.
Sheldon, A. V.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Brown, C. L.
Farrell, D. E.
McAllister, J. R.
McLachlan, A. L.
Pratt, L. C.
Smith, D. A.
Stewart, J. N. A.

Question negatived.

PETITIONS

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (17:55): by leave—I table a non-conforming petition, of over 13,000 signatures, demanding that Australia reinstate funding for UNRWA.

DOCUMENTS

Consideration

The government documents tabled today were called on, but no motion was moved.

COMMITTEES

Dental Services in Australia Select Committee

Additional Information

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (17:56): On behalf of the Chair of the Select Committee into the Provision of and Access to Dental Services in Australia, Senator Steele-John, I present additional information received by the committee.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

Additional Information

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Government Whip in the Senate) (17:56): On behalf of the Chair of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee, Senator Sterle, I present additional information received by the committee on its inquiry into the Customs Legislation Amendment (Commercial Greyhound Export and Importation Prohibition) Bill 2021.

Human Rights Joint Committee

Report

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Government Whip in the Senate) (17:56): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, I present *Human rights scrutiny report: report 14 of 2023*.

Treaties Joint Committee

Report

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Government Whip in the Senate) (17:56): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, I present the 213th report of the committee.

Trade and Investment Growth Joint Committee

Report

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (17:57): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth, I present the report of the committee on the inquiry into the Australian government's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements. I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I want to make some comments if I can. I rise, as I said, to table the interim report for the Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth inquiry into the Australian government's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements. My good friend the member for Adelaide, Mr Steve Georganas, was the chair of this committee, and I am delighted to be able to table that report. He did the same thing in the other place.

Australia is a trading nation with a strong record of participation in the global rules-based trading system. Australia has an extensive framework of bilateral and regional trade and investment agreements. Australia's agreements reduce barriers to international trade and investment, creating well-paid and secure jobs and improving Australia's standard of living and our overall economic resilience as a country and as a global trading partner. Australia's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements, led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has served us well over many decades. This inquiry is examining how Australia can strengthen its approach to build on our success and ensure the greatest benefits for all Australians.

Throughout the inquiry to date, the committee has heard about the immense benefits of Australia's participation in international trade as well as the need to consider how the benefits are shared across the community and the potential effect of these agreements on a wide range of stakeholders. While Australia's approach to negotiating trade agreements has served us well, as agreements become more complex, it's important to ensure that the level of transparency, accountability and oversight in the process is appropriate to the potential impacts of agreements on stakeholders, the public, policy and lawmaking. The committee has been particularly drawn to evidence outlining how more transparent consultation and engagement processes to better understand the impact of agreements on stakeholders and to utilise their insight and expertise can assist us to avoid unintended consequences and improve negotiation outcomes.

The five recommendations made in this interim report focus on strengthening Australia's approach to negotiating trade and investment agreements by improving transparency, accountability and oversight. These measures will contribute to better trade negotiation outcomes for Australia and ensure that agreements are of the greatest benefit to the community. These include establishing a tripartisan trade advisory committee across business, trade unions and civil society to achieve a better balance between transparency and confidentiality in negotiations to enable in-depth and informed feedback to government; codifying the practice of publishing information outlining negotiation

aims and objectives for all future trade and investment agreement negotiations; considering adopting a practice in the negotiation of agreements to provide transparency and information to stakeholders and the public equivalent to the information provided by other parties; ensuring relevant parliamentary committees have oversight of the development of trade and investment agreements through regular briefings on the status and progress of agreements; and undertaking periodic independent reviews of agreements to ensure that they're operating as intended and achieving the expected benefit.

In closing, I thank the business community, unions, industry bodies, government agencies, community groups and academics who provided written submissions and appeared at public hearings for this inquiry. I also thank the committee secretary for their work and my fellow committee members for their participation and valuable contribution during these inquiries. Again, I want to place on record my thanks to Steve Georganas for his leadership as the chair of this important parliamentary joint committee. The committee will continue to explore the extensive evidence received during the inquiry to date and provide its final report in due course.

I commend the interim report to the chamber. I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

National Anti-Corruption Commission Joint Committee Report

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (18:03): I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I urge all senators to read the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Anti-Corruption Commission's *Report on proposed recommendation for appointment of a Deputy Commissioner of the National Anti-Corruption Commission*, dated 24 January 2024. It is short. It's a matter of a handful of pages. In that report, the eventual nominee that came from the Attorney was supported unanimously by the committee. I wish them well, and I believe that they will be an effective, credible and—I hope—capable deputy commissioner. The evidence would suggest that. The work done by the department enabled the committee to come to that conclusion.

But, if you read the report carefully, you will see that there was a prior nomination which came from the Attorney and which was vetted by the department. Then some sanitised documents from that vetting process were provided to the committee—not the original document provided in the application process. Some sanitised documents and a modest amount of additional information were provided to the committee. The committee was not satisfied with that and sought further information from the department and some detailed briefing from the department. At the conclusion of that, the committee was not minded to forward and endorse the nomination from the Attorney. Thankfully, the nomination was withdrawn.

I'm not casting any aspersions on the character or the qualifications of the person who was the nominee, who is a highly capable person. The concern I have, which is expressed in the report in somewhat guarded language, is: how did the department fail to do adequate due diligence and, if they did adequate due diligence, why was that information not supplied to the committee? This is a really important committee to oversight appointments to the National Anti-Corruption Commission, and there is an absolute obligation on the department and on the Attorney to ensure that that committee has all the information it needs to make a fully informed decision about something as critical as the appointment of a deputy commissioner. We didn't have that information. Either it wasn't obtained by the department in their due diligence process, which would be an indictment of the department for not doing its job properly, or it was obtained by the department but not supplied to the committee, which would be a different form of indictment.

Ultimately, the Attorney is responsible for ensuring that process—for ensuring that due diligence is done and the department does its job properly. There needs to be a good, hard look inside the department about it, and there needs to be a good, hard look in the Attorney's office at what happened, because we shouldn't have got the situation where, over the end-of-year break, we had a nomination put forward, endorsed by the Attorney, which ultimately wasn't accepted by the committee. The committee was put in a very invidious situation without adequate information to deal with that. The NACC itself, the National Anti-Corruption Commission, which we all want to succeed and which must be above politics and must be seen to be irreproachable in its appointments and processes, had its reputation put at risk in this process.

I come back to this: I'd urge members here who haven't read that short report to read the report, to familiarise yourself with the circumstances that led to the nomination being withdrawn and with the concerns raised by the committee, and to place pressure within your own parties to ensure that the government does better next time.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Consideration

Committee reports and government responses reserved for future debate will be listed on the *Notice Paper*.

DOCUMENTS

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Launceston City Deal

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (18:08): I table documents relating to orders for the production of documents concerning the swift parrot recovery plan and the Launceston City Deal project.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (18:08): In respect of the documents regarding the swift parrots, I move:

That the Senate take note of the documents.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

BILLS

Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Bill 2023

Returned from the House of Representatives

Message received from the House of Representatives agreeing to the amendments made by the Senate to the bill.

Disability Services and Inclusion Bill 2023

Inspector-General of Live Animal Exports Amendment (Animal Welfare) Bill 2023

Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Repudiation) Bill 2023

Migration and Other Legislation Amendment (Bridging Visas, Serious Offenders and Other Measures) Bill 2023

Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023

Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee Bill 2023

Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Bill 2023

Interactive Gambling Amendment (Credit and Other Measures) Bill 2023

Identity Verification Services Bill 2023

Identity Verification Services (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023

Infrastructure Australia Amendment (Independent Review) Bill 2023

Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2023

Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2023

Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Bill 2023

Nature Repair Bill 2023

Nature Repair (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023

Assent

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the Senate of assent to the bills.

Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (18:09): I am continuing in my comments. After three inquiries, from 2015 to the 2019 inquiry, the Migrant Workers Taskforce, led by Professor Allan Fels, handed down its report, in which it said:

... there are unscrupulous employers in some industries who blatantly breach the law ...

It handed down 22 recommendations. That was five years ago. The previous Liberal-National government abandoned many of those recommendations, despite having years in charge to act on them.

Then, in 2021, there was the Senate Select Committee on Job Security, which I chaired. We heard from five courageous workers from Vanuatu and Samoa who had earned as little as \$6 an hour picking fruit. As one of them, Sergio, told us:

I came here to work for money. I did not come here as a slave.

We have to extend that inquiry because concerns were raised that workers were punished by their labour hire employer for giving evidence to the Senate.

We on this side have not forgotten the horrific stories that have come out about the treatment of temporary migrants. Under those opposite, our migration system effectively became a caste system, where temporary migrants would come to this country and be freely ripped off, paid below the minimum wage and denied basic rights and protections—and if they complained, they were duly deported. We saw the 7-Eleven scandal, going all the way back to 2016. Pranay Alawala, an international student, was owed more than \$30,000 in unpaid wages. When he confronted his boss about the money, the franchisee's lawyer sent him a letter threatening to report him to Immigration for working more than 20 hours per week—a breach of his student visa conditions. Mohammed, a student from India, was paid just \$5 an hour at 7-Eleven. When he complained and attempted to resign, he, too, was threatened with deportation. These are just a few of the stories of how shonky employers have exploited vulnerable people in the workplace.

This bill makes it a criminal offence to use a person's migration status to exploit them at work. That means employers threatening temporary migrants with deportation will now be treated as the criminals they really are. This bill enacts recommendation 19 of the Migrant Workers Taskforce, which the Liberals and Nationals were handed five years ago and never acted on. This bill also enacts recommendation 20 of the Migrant Workers Taskforce, which will prohibit employers who exploit workers from engaging more workers on temporary visas. This is absolutely essential to breaking the cycle of exploitation. Again, this was given to the previous government five years ago, and it was never acted on. How many thousands of migrant workers have suffered as a result of their indifference?

Many of these horrific stories have only come to light because of the tireless work of the trade union movement and the services they support, including the Migrant Workers Centre in Victoria and the Visa Assist service in Unions NSW. When people come into this chamber and denigrate unions, this is what they're denigrating: services which have provided a voice to the voiceless; vulnerable people who have come to this country to get an education and to build a better life for their families, and who have been subject to some of the most horrific abuse; migrant workers who have been sexually assaulted by their employers and suffered horrific injuries at work or been jammed into unsafe and unsanitary living conditions.

Last year, Unions NSW brought a delegation of migrant workers into parliament to discuss these issues. I met with two of those workers. One was a woman on a 457 temporary skilled visa who worked as a massage therapist. She was forced to pay her wages to her employer, who also restricted her movement. When she complained, she was threatened with deportation, and threats were made against her family's safety. When she finally escaped her employer, she was in breach of her visa conditions. She came to the union for help.

Likewise, the other person I met here was on a PALM scheme temporary visa, working in fruit picking. He wasn't provided with suitable safety equipment, and one day he sustained an injury that resulted in him partially losing vision in one eye. Then his employer forced him to come back sooner than advised by the doctor, which exacerbated the injury and forced him to get surgery, resulting in the loss of vision becoming worse. As a final insult, his employer then stopped sponsoring his visa, which made it difficult for him to remain in Australia and to get medical treatment which was unavailable in his home country.

These stories are just horrific, but they are out there and they happen far more than you think and to many, many people. As Unions NSW secretary Mark Morey has said:

The current system that was established by the former coalition government ... is set up to facilitate ongoing exploitation.

I want to thank the minister for immigration for stepping in and assisting those two workers. As Minister Giles has said:

When migrant workers are being underpaid—it hurts all of us, driving wages and conditions down for everyone ...

If not for unions, many of these stories would never have come out. I want to acknowledge the Retail Supply Chain Alliance, the Transport Workers Union and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, who have shone a spotlight on these issues in recent years.

The laws introduced in this bill are important, but the fact is that legal protections do not help people if they cannot be enforced. They need to be able to be enforced. A set of laws are just that—something that's proclaimed. It's in a written document. You might even read it on the internet. But what gives it life and breath is the opportunity to turn around and speak out—the opportunity to actually have people who support you when you speak out. That's the critical role that's played by unions. We know that the Fair Work Ombudsman will never and could never have the breadth and resources required to deal with the scale of exploitation of migrant workers. That's why ensuring highly trained and officially registered union officials have the powers needed to inspect compliance with workplace laws is so important.

Right now, in another piece of legislation to come before this chamber, the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes No. 2) Bill, there are measures to remove the red tape around unions' right of entry where there is a reasonable suspicion of wage theft. Wage theft impacts migrant workers on an astronomical scale. The final report of the Migrant Workers' Taskforce cited a 2016 survey, which found the following:

- almost a third (30 per cent)—

of migrant workers—

said they earned \$12 per hour or less and 46 per cent said they earned \$15 per hour or less ...

- one quarter of international students and one third of working holiday makers ... were paid around half the legal minimum wage ...

When wage theft is endemic, we need to cut red tape in order to allow unions to help uncover it—because, when good employers are doing the right thing, they're competing with mongrel employers doing the wrong thing. You have to make sure the playing field is not only justified for business and justified for the workers; it's about fairness within our economy.

There's a reason that the only groups opposing those laws are groups like the National Farmers Federation. It's because some of their members—some of their members—have profited from exploiting and ripping off vulnerable people. But what about the farmers who are doing the right thing? Why should they be undercut by a minority who are mistreating their employees? I commend these laws and other protections for migrant workers introduced in the protecting worker entitlements bill last year. But, again, these laws will need to be enforced, and unions must play a pivotal role in doing so. It's not surprising that big business groups like the National Farmers Federation and their lackeys in the Liberal Party and the National Party oppose that concept, because the Liberals and Nationals are always for low pay. At every step, they're always opposed to fair pay, fair conditions and a fair playing field between businesses. They are opposed to horticultural workers being entitled to minimum wage. They refused to implement the recommendations of the Migrant Workers Taskforce for years.

I know a number of the senators on the opposite side and I know they hold very similar values to many Australians on these issues I've raised. So I put to all of those who are in the majority of the Liberal Party and National Party: start holding the values of all Australians. It's so critical. What this bill goes to the heart of and what we were seeing through the job security inquiry that I chaired was that, under the old system, if your employer abused you, if your employer ripped you off, if you left that employer, it was called absconding. Some in this chamber will remember two really wonderful missionaries that live and operate in Vanuatu and are Australian citizens operating in Bundaberg. One of those wonderful people is a granddaughter of a blackbirded family who turned around and was one of those missionaries. They had people who had been abused and had money stolen from them coming to their place to get sustenance, to be able to eat and to work out, 'What in the heck do I do?' because they had broken the law by breaking the chains.

Slavery under the old laws, under those existing laws, was identified by the migrant taskforce and also by the job security inquiry. They found a critical need for these laws to be changed. There is a critical need for these new laws to make sure that those fighting for what's right and those who have the strength to turn around and say, 'I'm going to fight for what's right,' have the capacity to turn around and stand up for what's right without having the repercussions of the state, the national government, abusing what should be a human right within this country. Be under no illusion. This is a human rights rectification in the Australian economy. It means that good businesses will have a chance to compete with businesses that have been doing this sort of atrocious exploitation in so many parts of the labour market across the economy.

Too many of those opposite have consistently opposed every measure we've introduced to improve pay, improve job security and close the loopholes some businesses use to undermine our laws and unfairly compete with businesses doing the right thing. Here's a chance not only to do the right thing by passing law into paper, emails and technology. This is an opportunity to empower people in other legislation that complements this to make sure that it's actually a living, breathing document so that next time you abscond you are not absconding; you have a right.

Senator STEWART (Victoria) (18:23): Today I am happy to support the passage of the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill through the Senate. These are much-needed, long-overdue reforms affecting the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our community, in our society. We know that migrant worker exploitation has been widespread in Australia. According to a report by the Grattan Institute released last year, between five and 16 per cent of employed recently arrived migrants—that's between 27,000 and 82,000 workers—are paid below the national minimum wage. In addition, between 1.5 and eight per cent of recent migrants are underpaid by at least \$3 an hour. That's between 6,500 and 42,000 people underpaid. Migrants are twice as likely to be underpaid as long-term residents. They struggle to find work or are employed well below their education levels. This is despite the fact that migrants have, on average, a higher level of education than people born in Australia.

The Migrant Workers Centre in Victoria has some useful case studies that bring some of these statistics to life. Felisia's story is a good example. Felisia came to Australia from South-East Asia as a 29-year-old on a student visa in 2009. She had a bachelor's degree in business management and continued her studies in Australia with a diploma in business management. Despite having experience working in her field, Felisia had a tough time finding work after her studies. She eventually found a job as a marketing manager, but she was underpaid from the beginning. She stuck it out because she was relieved to finally have a job and it meant she had a pathway to a skilled sponsorship visa. But, in addition to the wage theft, Felisia's boss had also begun to harass her and bully her at work. He made her stay late without pay and began asking her to accompany him to events outside of work hours. She experienced outbursts of anger when she refused his requests, and his behaviour had escalated to sexual harassment. After Felisia reported his behaviour, she lost her job. Her fears around her uncertain visa circumstances meant she did not pursue an unfair dismissal claim. Additionally, she had to restart her permanent visa eligibility process despite the harassment that she had endured.

Then there's Ravi's story. Ravi was a 26-year-old who came to Australia in 2019 with his wife, who was studying. He got a job as a truck driver with an on-demand delivery company that operated in a gig economy model. His employer asked him to apply for an ABN instead of a tax file number, which is usually required for independent contractors that run their own business. By asking Ravi to attain an ABN instead of a tax file number, his employer sought to take advantage of him to avoid paying award wages and entitlements.

Both Felisia's and Ravi's difficulties highlight how Australia's visa system has historically pushed migrant workers to accept exploitative conditions in the hopes of securing their life in Australia. Thankfully, Ravi's and Felisia's stories end relatively happily. In Ravi's case, he was successfully able to reclaim over \$9,000 in wages after fighting against his employer's incorrect classification of him as an independent contractor. Felisia eventually found another job in her field and learnt about unions and her rights at work. But this isn't the case for thousands of other exploited migrant workers in Australia.

Exploitation like this can occur for a range of reasons. In 2019, a report by the Migrant Workers Taskforce highlighted some factors which may contribute to migrant workers' vulnerability to exploitation. They include: limited English language skills, lack of knowledge of workplace laws and standards, a willingness to accept below-award wages, the remoteness of some working locations, business models that rely heavily on labour hire companies, and franchise models that make it difficult for franchisees to run at a profit without underpaying wages.

The Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023 introduces several mechanisms to address some of these vulnerabilities and the crisis of migrant exploitation in Australia more broadly. This bill makes it a criminal offence for people to coerce someone into breaching their visa conditions. It bars businesses from further hiring people on temporary visas where they have exploited migrants via the introduction of prohibition notices. It increases penalties and compliance tools to deter exploitation. It repeals section 235, which makes it an offence for a noncitizen to contravene conditions of their visa and was seen to discourage the reporting of exploitative behaviour. In short, dodgy employers will no longer be able to assume that international students and other migrants will suffer in silence if they are underpaid or abused.

Professor Allan Fels AO, co-chair of the government's Migrant Workers Taskforce, says that it was obvious 10 years ago that the actions that the government is taking now were required. He notes that the problem of migrant exploitation is so widespread that strong, comprehensive remedies are required but that they would not have been required on this scale had the problem been tackled at the outset.

It's an absolute shame that the previous government failed to act against migrant worker exploitation when they had a decade to do something about it. By stepping through some of their actions over the last decade, it's clear that the coalition have been more than willing to capitalise on migrant labour without wanting to spend a cent on safeguarding their rights. A large number of people come to Australia with the promise of well-paid jobs working on farms. People who held temporary protection visas and safe haven enterprise visas worked, paid taxes, started businesses and built lives in our communities, often in rural and regional areas. However, without permanent visas,

they couldn't get a loan to buy a house, build their business or pursue further education. The coalition government blocked the ambition of thousands and thousands of migrant workers, and it's an absolute shame on the coalition. The previous government's inaction and wilful ignorance also ensured that migrant workers were highly vulnerable to extreme exploitation and wage theft. They were at the beck and call of the agents and labour hire companies that arranged to bring them to Australia. Shame.

Secondly, those opposite refused to increase the minimum salary for skilled temporary entrants for a decade. The temporary skilled migration income threshold was frozen at \$53,900 from 2013 on, after successive coalition governments chose to do nothing about it and chose not to raise it. Shame. The Albanese government, on the other hand, increased the minimum income threshold to \$70,000 from July last year. This adjustment ensures that the income threshold is in line with the current job market.

Thirdly, the coalition government allowed overseas students to work unlimited hours. A representative of the International Education Association of Australia, Phil Honeywood, said that the coalition's 2021 decision—which was made to plug workforce shortages—involved no consultation whatsoever with the international education sector. There was no consultation whatsoever before they made this important policy decision. When he contacted the former minister for education, the message he received was that corporate Australia needed unskilled labour because there were no more people on working holiday visas, and the easiest way to fund the labour force was with full-time students.

Prior to COVID border restrictions, international students were able to work 20 hours a week while completing their studies—in line with laws in other jurisdictions like Canada and the UK. This meant that international students could focus on a quality education in one of the best education destinations in the world. The impact of this change, according to the Council of International Students Australia, was that students who came to Australia for legitimate study reasons were under severe mental health pressure to capitalise on the unrestricted working hours. This also meant that students were less likely to achieve their main goal, which was to complete their course and complete it well.

Last year the Albanese government reduced student work hours to 48 hours per fortnight that classes are taking place. This change allows students to focus on obtaining a quality Australian education and qualification while also gaining valuable work experience and contributing to Australia's workforce needs. International higher education graduates with eligible qualifications were also granted an extra two years of post-study work rights from 1 July 2023. This increases the availability of a well trained and highly capable workforce and helps plug the skills shortage that we have in our nation right now.

Finally, the coalition government refused to progress key recommendations of its own Migrant Workers Taskforce. The Albanese government isn't looking the other way on this issue. We are tackling complex, wicked problems head-on and doing it correctly. We're doing it by driving systemic changes to our migration system, which will ensure it works in the interests of Australian workers and Australian businesses. We are doing the work required to ensure that no-one who comes to this country is exploited or abused.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (18:34): I thank those who've contributed to this debate. Australia is a safe and prosperous country in which to live, work, study and travel. We must work hard to ensure that this remains. So many workers who hold a visa make essential contributions to our economy, whether it's through their work in agriculture, hospitality, construction and aged care or in our hospitals and universities. We have an obligation to ensure their rights are respected in the workplace. Unfortunately, there are too many situations where people are exploited. Unaddressed exploitation puts downward pressure on wages and conditions for all workers. It creates a competitive disadvantage for all those employers who do the right thing. The Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023 will strengthen the compliance and enforcement framework available under the Migration Act. The bill provides a framework to strengthen employer compliance and to help ensure that law-abiding Australian employers are not undercut by unscrupulous competitors.

The government has made a number of amendments. I thank the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for the spirit in which the inquiry was undertaken, as these amendments improve the bill. These amendments focus on providing clarity and transparency, and they provide assurance the bill is comprehensive. I can also note, in response to Senator McKim earlier today, that the bill will of course continue its deep engagement with civil society, unions and indeed business organisations as further work is developed. This will include our platform commitments concerning protection against cancellation and encouraging people to speak up. This will occur in the coming weeks and months. It is time to move ahead with these reforms to protect workers. The government has made a strong commitment to tackling exploitation and has taken a number of steps already to acquit this. This bill is another important milestone in the government's reform agenda. I commend this bill to the chamber.

Question agreed to.

(*Quorum formed*)

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (18:39): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum relating to the government amendments to be moved to this bill and seek leave to move government amendments (1) to (25) on sheet UB100 together.

Leave granted.

Senator CHISHOLM: I move government amendments (1) to (25) on sheet UB100 together:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table), omit the table, substitute:

Commencement information

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Provisions	Commencement	Date/Details
1. The whole of this Act	1 July 2024.	1 July 2024

(2) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (lines 7 and 8), omit "a work arrangement", substitute "an arrangement in relation to work".

(3) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (lines 17 and 18), omit "a work arrangement", substitute "an arrangement in relation to work".

(4) Schedule 1, page 4 (after line 19), after item 1, insert:

1A After paragraph 245AA(2)(b)

Insert:

(ba) section 245AGA (defines *arrangement in relation to work*);

(5) Schedule 1, item 2, page 5 (after line 7), at the end of subsection 245AAA(1), add:

Note: For the meaning of *arrangement in relation to work*, see section 245AGA.

(6) Schedule 1, item 2, page 5 (line 29), omit "the arrangement provides for the work to be done", substitute "the work is done, or is to be done,".

(7) Schedule 1, item 2, page 6 (after line 4), at the end of subsection 245AAB(1), add:

Note: For the meaning of *arrangement in relation to work*, see section 245AGA.

(8) Schedule 1, item 2, page 6 (line 27), omit "the arrangement provides for the work to be done", substitute "the work is done, or is to be done,".

(9) Schedule 1, item 2, page 7 (after line 7), at the end of subsection 245AAC(1), add:

Note: For the meaning of *arrangement in relation to work*, see section 245AGA.

(10) Schedule 1, page 7 (after line 21), at the end of Part 1, add:

2A After section 245AG

Insert:

245AGA Meaning of *arrangement in relation to work*

(1) For the purposes of this Subdivision, *arrangement in relation to work* means an arrangement, in connection with a person (the *first person*) allowing another person to work, for the other person to:

(a) accept certain conditions; or

(b) perform, or refrain from performing, an activity, whether for the first person or someone else; or

(c) participate in, or refrain from participating in, an activity, whether for the first person or someone else.

(2) To avoid doubt, a reference in subsection (1) to an activity includes a reference to a work-related activity or a non-work-related activity.

Examples: An arrangement in relation to work includes, but is not limited to, an arrangement for a person to:

(a) accept unsafe housing provided or arranged by the first person or another person; or

(b) surrender the person's passport to the first person or another person; or

(c) perform sexual favours for the first person or another person.

(11) Schedule 1, item 5, page 8 (before line 23), before section 245AYA, insert:

245AYAA Objects of this Subdivision

(1) The objects of this Subdivision are as follows:

- (a) to protect, to the extent possible, non-citizens (other than holders of permanent visas) from being exploited, or further exploited, by employers;
 - (b) to ensure that such non-citizens are not exposed to employers or workplaces that have engaged in serious, deliberate or repeated non-compliance with certain laws;
 - (c) to ensure that non-compliance is dealt with in a way that considers the impact of any sanctions on such non-citizens, the employer and the community as a whole.
- (2) This Subdivision aims to achieve its objects by:
- (a) empowering the Minister to declare persons to be prohibited employers; and
 - (b) requiring the Minister to ensure that imposing such a prohibition, including the duration of such a prohibition, is proportionate to the person's misconduct; and
 - (c) requiring the Minister to consider the impact on non-citizens (other than holders of permanent visas) of making such a declaration; and
 - (d) encouraging employers to demonstrate their ability to:
 - (i) remediate their non-compliance; and
 - (ii) comply with the law relating to migrant worker sanctions in the future.
- (12) Schedule 1, item 5, page 9 (line 25), omit the definition of *involved in*.
- (13) Schedule 1, item 5, page 9 (line 29) to page 10 (line 26), omit the definition of *relevant fair work provision*.
- (14) Schedule 1, item 5, page 10 (lines 27 to 36), omit the definition of *remuneration-related matter*.
- (15) Schedule 1, item 5, page 13 (line 27) to page 14 (line 4), omit subsection 245AYG(1), substitute:
- Contravention of certain civil penalty provisions of this Act*
- (1) A person is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if:
- (a) a civil penalty order has been made against the person in relation to the contravention of a work-related provision; or
 - (b) both of the following apply:
 - (i) a civil penalty order has been made against the person in relation to a contravention of another civil penalty provision prescribed by the regulations;
 - (ii) the contravention related, wholly or partly, to another person who, at the time of the contravention, was a non-citizen (other than the holder of a permanent visa).
- (16) Schedule 1, item 5, page 14 (line 18) to page 21 (line 29), omit sections 245AYH and 245AYI, substitute:
- 245AYH When a person is subject to a migrant worker sanction—contravention of certain civil remedy provisions of the Fair Work Act 2009**
- Contravention of civil remedy provisions (within the meaning of the Fair Work Act 2009)*
- (1) A person is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
- (a) a FW order has been made against the person in relation to a contravention of a civil remedy provision (within the meaning of the *Fair Work Act 2009*); and
 - (b) the contravention related, wholly or partly, to another person who, at the time of the contravention, was a non-citizen (other than the holder of a permanent visa).
- Contravention relating to the advertisement of rates of pay*
- (2) A person is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
- (a) a FW order has been made against the person in relation to a contravention of subsection 536AA(1) or (2) of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (employer obligations in relation to advertising rates of pay); or
 - (b) both of the following apply:
 - (i) a FW order has been made against the person in relation to a contravention of subsection 716(5) of that Act (failure to comply with compliance notice);
 - (ii) the relevant compliance notice given under section 716 of that Act related to a contravention of subsection 536AA(1) or (2) of that Act (employer obligations in relation to advertising rates of pay).
- Contravention relating to compliance notices*
- (3) A person is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
- (a) a FW order has been made against the person in relation to a contravention of subsection 716(5) of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (failure to comply with compliance notice); and
 - (b) the relevant compliance notice given under section 716 of that Act related to a contravention (the **original contravention**) of:
 - (i) a provision of the National Employment Standards (within the meaning of that Act); or

- (ii) a term of a modern award (within the meaning of that Act); or
- (iii) a term of an enterprise agreement (within the meaning of that Act); or
- (iv) a term of a workplace determination (within the meaning of that Act); or
- (v) a term of a national minimum wage order (within the meaning of that Act); or
- (vi) a term of an equal remuneration order (within the meaning of that Act); and
- (c) the original contravention related, wholly or partly, to another person who, at the time of the original contravention, was a non-citizen (other than the holder of a permanent visa).

245AYI When a person is subject to a migrant worker sanction—contravention of term of enforceable undertaking etc.

Undertaking in relation to contravention of civil remedy provision (within the meaning of the Fair Work Act 2009)

- (1) A person (the **first person**) is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
 - (a) the Fair Work Ombudsman has accepted an undertaking given by the first person under section 715 of the *Fair Work Act 2009* in relation to a contravention of a civil remedy provision (within the meaning of that Act); and
 - (b) a court has made one or more orders under subsection 715(7) of that Act in relation to the undertaking; and
 - (c) the contravention related, wholly or partly, to another person who, at the time of the contravention, was a non-citizen (other than the holder of a permanent visa).
- (2) A person (the **first person**) is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
 - (a) the Fair Work Ombudsman has accepted an undertaking given by the first person under section 715 of the *Fair Work Act 2009* in relation to a contravention of a civil remedy provision (within the meaning of that Act); and
 - (b) all of the following apply:
 - (i) the undertaking has not been withdrawn;
 - (ii) an application for an order under subsection 715(7) of that Act in relation to the undertaking has not been made;
 - (iii) a court has not made one or more orders under that subsection in relation to the undertaking; and
 - (c) the contravention related, wholly or partly, to another person who, at the time of the contravention, was a non-citizen (other than the holder of a permanent visa); and
 - (d) the first person has contravened a term of the undertaking.

Undertaking in relation to contravention relating to advertisement of rates of pay

- (3) A person is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
 - (a) the Fair Work Ombudsman has accepted an undertaking given by the person under section 715 of the *Fair Work Act 2009* in relation to a contravention of subsection 536AA(1) or (2) of that Act (employer obligations in relation to advertising rates of pay); and
 - (b) a court has made one or more orders under subsection 715(7) of that Act in relation to the undertaking.
 - (4) A person is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
 - (a) the Fair Work Ombudsman has accepted an undertaking given by the person under section 715 of the *Fair Work Act 2009* in relation to a contravention of subsection 536AA(1) or (2) of that Act (employer obligations in relation to advertising rates of pay); and
 - (b) all of the following apply:
 - (i) the undertaking has not been withdrawn;
 - (ii) an application for an order under subsection 715(7) of that Act in relation to the undertaking has not been made;
 - (iii) a court has not made one or more orders under that subsection in relation to the undertaking; and
 - (c) the person has contravened a term of the undertaking.
- (17) Schedule 1, item 5, page 22 (line 3) to page 23 (line 37), omit subsections 245AYJ(1) and (2), substitute:
- Compliance notice in relation to contravention of relevant fair work provision*
- (1) A person (the **first person**) is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
 - (a) an inspector has given the first person a compliance notice under subsection 716(2) of the *Fair Work Act 2009* in relation to a contravention of:
 - (i) a provision of the National Employment Standards (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (ii) a term of a modern award (within the meaning of that Act); or

- (iii) a term of an enterprise agreement (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (iv) a term of a workplace determination (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (v) a term of a national minimum wage order (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (vi) a term of an equal remuneration order (within the meaning of that Act); and
 - (b) a court has confirmed the compliance notice after reviewing it under subsection 717(1) of that Act; and
 - (c) the contravention related, wholly or partly, to another person who, at the time of the contravention, was a non-citizen (other than the holder of a permanent visa); and
 - (d) the first person has failed to comply with the compliance notice and the first person does not have a reasonable excuse for so failing.
- (2) A person (the **first person**) is subject to a **migrant worker sanction** if the Minister is satisfied that:
- (a) an inspector has given the first person a compliance notice under subsection 716(2) of the *Fair Work Act 2009* in relation to a contravention of:
 - (i) a provision of the National Employment Standards (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (ii) a term of a modern award (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (iii) a term of an enterprise agreement (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (iv) a term of a workplace determination (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (v) a term of a national minimum wage order (within the meaning of that Act); or
 - (vi) a term of an equal remuneration order (within the meaning of that Act); and
 - (b) all of the following apply:
 - (i) the compliance notice has not been withdrawn;
 - (ii) the first person has not made an application under subsection 717(1) of that Act in relation to the compliance notice;
 - (iii) a court has not cancelled the compliance notice after reviewing it under that subsection; and
 - (c) the contravention related, wholly or partly, to another person who, at the time of the contravention, was a non-citizen (other than the holder of a permanent visa); and
 - (d) the first person has failed to comply with the compliance notice and the first person does not have a reasonable excuse for so failing.
- (18) Schedule 1, item 5, page 24 (line 34), after "employer", insert "for a period".
- (19) Schedule 1, item 5, page 25 (line 14), after "employer", insert "for a period".
- (20) Schedule 1, item 5, page 25 (lines 28 to 33), omit subsection 245AYK(5), substitute:
- (5) In making a decision about whether to declare a person (the **first person**) to be a prohibited employer for a period, the Minister must consider:
- (a) any written submission made by the first person under subsection (3) that is received by the Minister within the period covered by subsection (4); and
 - (b) the nature and severity of the non-compliance (the **relevant non-compliance**) to which the migrant worker sanction relates; and
 - (c) the impact the relevant non-compliance has had on:
 - (i) the non-citizen to whom the migrant worker sanction relates; and
 - (ii) any other individuals affected by the non-compliance; and
 - (iii) the relevant industry, including impact on the reputation of the industry, economic repercussions and any other relevant issues that may have an impact on the operations of the industry; and
 - (d) whether the relevant non-compliance was intentional, reckless or inadvertent; and
 - (e) the likely impact making the declaration would have on:
 - (i) other persons employed by the first person; and
 - (ii) services in the community provided by the first person; and
 - (f) the first person's history of compliance or non-compliance with the laws to which migrant worker sanctions relate; and
 - (g) the first person's response to the relevant non-compliance; and
 - (h) how much time has passed since the relevant non-compliance occurred and any sanctions that have already been imposed on the first person in relation to the relevant non-compliance; and
 - (i) any action the first person has taken to report the relevant non-compliance or to ensure future compliance with the laws to which migrant worker sanctions relate.
- (21) Schedule 1, item 5, page 26 (after line 11), after subsection 245AYK(8), insert:

(8A) For the purposes of subsection (8), the maximum period that can be specified in the declaration is set out in the following table.

Item	If the non-compliance in relation to which the person is subject to a migrant worker sanction is ...	the maximum period for the declaration is ...
1	an offence against one or more of the following provisions of the <i>Criminal Code</i> : (a) Division 270 (other than section 270.7B or section 270.8 to the extent an offence against that section relates to an offence against section 270.7B); (b) Division 271 (other than Subdivision BA)	No maximum period
2	another offence (other than an offence mentioned in item 2)	10 years
3	any other non-compliance not mentioned in item 1 or 2	5 years

(22) Schedule 1, item 5, page 27 (line 6), omit "subsection (3)", substitute "subsection (2)".

(23) Schedule 1, page 42 (line 2), omit the heading to Division 1.

(24) Schedule 1, item 41, page 43 (after line 29), at the end of subsection 245APA(2), add:

Note: Section 40B of the *Fair Work Act 2009* also provides that for the purposes of that Act, any effect of this Act, or an instrument made under this Act, on the validity of a contract of employment, or a contract for services, is to be disregarded.

(25) Schedule 1, page 44 (lines 1 to 8), Division 2 **to be opposed**.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator O'Sullivan): The question is that amendments (1) to (24) on sheet UB100 be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR: The question is that division 2 of schedule 1 stand as printed.

Question negatived.

Senator McKIM (Tasmania—Australian Greens Whip) (18:41): As I indicated in my second reading contribution, on the basis of assurances made by the government and the amendments that have just passed, we will not be proceeding with our amendments.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator O'Sullivan): Can I confirm, for the clerks, to make sure we have this correct. There are two groups of amendments listed, one on sheet 2078 and one on sheet 2079. You're not proceeding with those.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments; report adopted.

Third Reading

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (18:42): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combatting Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (18:43): I rise in support of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combatting Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023. Through this bill, Labor has finally, albeit begrudgingly, moved to address a serious issue that the coalition has been pursuing for some years. Unfortunately, though, with the bill presented to it, Labor has done too little, too late. What Labor has done is

produce an incomplete solution that ignores how the prosecution of foreign bribery is significantly enhanced by allowing deferred prosecution agreements. We, of course, will support the bill because we are committed to opposing foreign bribery, but we will also move amendments to add a deferred prosecution scheme, because doing so makes the enforcement of foreign bribery offences significantly more effective.

Foreign bribery, as we all know, is an incredibly serious criminal offence. It is bad for business, it hurts us economically and it damages our international reputation. The coalition has been fighting foreign bribery for decades. That is our record. That is why it was the coalition government that introduced the first foreign bribery offences into the Criminal Code, in 1999; that is why, under the leadership of John Howard, Australia ratified the OECD anti-bribery convention; and that is why we introduced these measures.

Now, I say 'we introduced these measures' because, although this is a government bill, the Attorney-General has frankly admitted that these measures are almost an exact copy of measures the coalition introduced in 2017 and then reintroduced into the last parliament. Labor has, once again, been copying the coalition's homework. But why not? It's actually very good policy, and I'm personally pleased that the Attorney-General and Labor have finally come to this realisation. But the wisdom of the measures in this bill is not the whole story. These measures should have become law in the last parliament, but the reality is that the Labor Party did everything they could do to delay action on foreign bribery.

You only need to look at how they approached this issue at the public hearings when these measures were examined by a committee in the last parliament. The very first question from Labor was this: 'Should the bill be deferred?' The second question expressed surprise and concern that the provisions of the bill, including the schedule that set out the very provisions that we're looking at now, hadn't been changed following the banking royal commission. The third question asked why the legislation was necessary at all. And the fourth suggested that 'the whole matter'—being legislation to address corporate crime—'should be put on hold'. So, having made it clear that they did not want to progress the matter, Labor's dissenting report then recommended the removal of key parts of the bill.

And Labor of course wasn't alone. The Greens also made clear that they did not support the legislation proceeding at the time. They also wanted the bill deferred. But it is worth putting on the record Labor's history of opposition, delay and obstruction when it comes to foreign bribery because it illustrates a recurring problem with this government and with this Attorney-General. The measures in the bill we have before us are lifted almost directly from the coalition playbook from the last parliament. They were a good idea then and, yes, they are a good idea now.

But in 2020, when given the opportunity to support measures that are clearly in Australia's interests, Labor decided it would prefer to delay—to play politics. Why? Because the policy came from the coalition. Labor could not and would not put Australia's interests ahead of their own tricky political games, and, now that the Labor Party and, as I said, the Attorney-General have finally and begrudgingly come to the party, they have done so too late and, even worse, with a weaker solution than the coalition had put before us. This bill is weaker than the coalition's proposals and the ones that we had based them on because, very fundamentally, it does not include deferred prosecution agreements.

Now, it's worth spending a bit of time here exploring what deferred prosecution agreements actually are and why they are so important in foreign bribery prosecutions. A deferred prosecution agreement, also called a DPA, allows a prosecuting body to negotiate conditions with a defendant in exchange for deferral of prosecution. It often involves paying a significant fine and making changes to the way business is done. If the conditions are not met then the prosecution can be re-enlivened. DPAs use corporate offences like foreign bribery and false accounting. These crimes—it's a fact—are notoriously difficult to prosecute. They require intensive investigation. They involve paper trails that cross jurisdictional boundaries. The volume of documents and data can be immense. Proceedings can be protracted and expensive, and defendants are often well resourced. This means that, when these crimes are prosecuted, scarce investigatory and prosecutorial resources are tighter in protracted and uncertain litigation.

The risk and expense is what Labor says Australians should have, hence the significant deficiencies in the bill we have before us. Deferred prosecution agreements are an obvious solution. They allow the punitive element of justice to be satisfied. Under a DPA, prosecutors will typically secure significant penalties, sometimes involving fines amounting to billions of dollars. They serve corrective purposes through measures like enhanced compliance programs and ongoing monitoring to ensure the offending cannot happen again, and they can assist in the prevention and deterrence of crime—for example, through measures requiring ongoing cooperation in prosecuting individuals involved. Everything that you'd achieve in a successful criminal prosecution can be achieved through a deferred prosecution agreement.

When it comes to foreign bribery, these are the benefits Labor does not want Australians to have. By cutting DPAs away from this bill, Labor and the Attorney-General are saying, 'Rather than achieving similar results at a fraction of the cost and risk, we want our limited investigative resources tied up, potentially for years.' Labor and the Attorney-General are saying this: 'We do not want Australia to get its share, as multiple jurisdictions did with a DPA that saw Airbus pay around US\$3.9 billion in penalties to countries around the world.'

In terms of the international experience of DPAs, it's clear that DPAs are the cornerstone of foreign bribery prosecutions in places like the US and the UK, and it's not hard to see why. They incentivise self-reporting, a good thing, and limit adverse impacts, another good thing. They lead to an increase in prosecutions and increased fines, they allow a result to be achieved much more quickly and they are subject to overriding safeguards. Under the coalition's proposal, for example, a former judge would need to certify that every DPA was fair, reasonable, proportionate and in the interests of justice.

This bill is meant to enhance implementation of the OECD antibribery convention, but in 2021 the OECD Council itself recommended that parties consider using non-trial solutions like DPAs. In short, the international body responsible for stopping foreign bribery expressly calls for mechanisms like DPA schemes. Then, of course, we have what the stakeholders have said about this bill. It is little wonder that a litany of stakeholders came out in support of DPA schemes. In the inquiry into this bill, Allens Linklaters, the Law Council of Australia, Transparency International Australia and the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania all made submissions in support of a DPA scheme.

Then let's have a look at what the Attorney-General and Labor say. Compare those submissions to the Attorney-General's defence of this bill. In the Attorney-General's second reading speech, he told the parliament this:

... it is premature to entertain the introduction of a deferred prosecution scheme.

The introduction of such a scheme should only be entertained after the measures in this bill have been enacted and given time to work.

Clearly, the Attorney-General of Australia thinks, 'Guess what, Australians: you just have to wait a few more years,' because, when you take a closer look, that is what his argument about giving these offences time to work will actually entail.

Needing time to work means you would need to wait until the bill passes. Well, when's that going to happen? Then you have to wait another six months until it commences, and then you need to wait until a person is prosecuted under these new laws. In fact, you'll probably have to wait until a few prosecutions are concluded so that you have a reliable evidence base. The Attorney knows full well that, as we explained when we last introduced these changes, the experience across the OECD was that foreign bribery cases took an average of—lo and behold—7.3 years. So even with the improvements in this bill—which, as I said, is a coalition bill, basically—it still might take years before we can say we've given these improvements, to quote the Attorney-General, 'time to work'. In other words, what does the Attorney-General of Australia want? He wants to wait until the next parliament, or maybe even the one after that, before entertaining what stakeholders are asking for and what the international experience shows, and that is, of course, a DPA scheme. Maybe if we give these amendments, to again quote the Attorney-General of Australia, 'time to work', we might have a DPA scheme by—I don't know—2030. With the very greatest of respect, the Attorney-General's excuses are, quite frankly, flimsy and unpersuasive. And, let's face it, they are certainly not supported by the submissions or the international evidence.

Why won't the Attorney-General improve this bill by introducing a DPA scheme now and supporting the amendment the coalition will be putting forward?

Senator Scarr: He's stubborn.

Senator CASH: He's stubborn—absolutely. But perhaps, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, he is genuinely persuaded by the silly rhetoric of the Labor senators who spoke about two-tiered justice in the last parliament. That is contradicted, as I said, by the experience internationally. It is contradicted by stakeholders here in Australia.

The truth is—and we all know this; stakeholders know it—that the Attorney-General has been cornered. He has been snookered by his own Labor senators. I would have thought, given the body of evidence and the international experience, that in private the Attorney-General may well recognise the wisdom of a DPA scheme and the experience internationally; if he doesn't, one might say he's burying his head in the sand like an ostrich. But he knows he can't adopt one now without shredding the credibility of those Labor senators who were so keen to rip the guts out of this bill when it was last in the parliament. What is so sad is, as a lawmaker, he is missing an opportunity now to enhance Australia's enforcement of foreign bribery offences around the world. Ultimately, guess who gets to pay the price? That would be the Australian people.

As I said, this is basically the coalition's bill. The coalition will support the measures in this bill even though they are deficient. We are glad Labor has introduced this bill because it is our policy. It was good policy at the time; we liked it then, and we like it now. But, as I said, we'll introduce amendments to reintroduce the DPA scheme that was coupled with these measures last time, and we will include a statutory review to ensure the scheme is working as intended. The Attorney-General can use that time, if he likes, to reverse-engineer his own DPA scheme, one that is just different enough from the coalition's policy for him to save face with his party and with Australian voters—and I certainly hope that he does.

Senator Scarr: So he can claim the credit!

Senator CASH: Absolutely! We can also use a statutory review as an opportunity to consider whether broader corporate crime measures should also be considered. This could again mean changes like the ones we proposed last time, which would have meant that, when prosecuting a corporate entity, 'dishonesty' means the same thing in both the Criminal Code and the Corporations Act. How refreshing would that be? It could bring in other ways to improve the prosecution of corporate crime.

In the meantime, we invite the government to reconsider its opposition to deferred prosecution agreements. As I said, we will support this bill because, basically, it's ours.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (18:58): I indicate that the Greens will be supporting the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combatting Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023. The core thing this bill does is replaces the existing offence of bribery of a foreign public official contained in the Criminal Code Act with a new offence designed to make it actually achievable to get a prosecution to stick. The new offence expands the scope of the existing foreign bribery offence. It does things such as capture candidates for office in the definition of 'foreign public official' and apply the offence where a personal, as opposed to a business, advantage is being sought.

The bill introduces a new corporate offence based upon the UK experience of failure to prevent bribery of a foreign public official. The bill makes some related changes to income tax legislation that, quite reasonably, prohibit a person from claiming a tax deduction for the money they spent on bribing a foreign official. The thought that corporations in Australia are currently able to do that is remarkable, but this bill is closing that loophole.

The bill is incredibly similar to two bills that were introduced by the coalition. I think the first one was in 2017 and the second one was in 2019. The difference is that this bill doesn't contain the deferred commencement provisions that were included in each of those bills. Whilst I acknowledge the shadow A-G's contribution that points out just how similar the bills are, I will say this about the current Attorney-General: not only has Labor introduced the bill; they're actually now moving on it, and we're, hopefully, going to vote it up, and it will become law. I think that's an important distinction. Yes, the coalition introduced two bills, but it never found the energy or enthusiasm to bring it to a vote and have them become law. Why that happened hasn't been explained. So I will give the Attorney this credit. Yes, it's very similar—in large part a cut and paste of the coalition bills of 2017 and 2019—but we're actually debating it and might make it law, so tick.

Of course, the bill went off to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, and I want to acknowledge the chair and members of that committee. I particularly want to acknowledge the forensic work of Senator Scarr. I think the additional comments that Senator Scarr put into the report made the best case possible for a deferred prosecutions regime, but, for reasons I will explain very briefly, we won't support those amendments in their current form, although we do support a broad-ranging review of the act. I would hope one of the key things that broad-ranging review does is to look at the absence of deferred prosecution provisions, look at the international experience and work out whether or not we should promptly put that into law.

The history of foreign bribery in Australia is probably quite long; the history of foreign bribery law in Australia is actually quite brief. In fact, internationally, the world has largely been chasing some reforms that were put in by the Carter administration in the United States, which was the first jurisdiction on the planet to pass legislation to make it a crime to bribe a foreign official. At the time, it was resisted by corporate America. It was considered to place corporate America at an international disadvantage. If their opponents could bribe foreign officials, they should be able to bribe foreign officials too! At different times we've heard that same argument applied in relation to Australian business. 'It's not fair,' says extraction company A, 'that our competitors can go to this country, corrupt their legal system and bribe their officials, and we can't. We're at a competitive disadvantage.' There are many things that we disagree on in this chamber, but I'm glad to see that all significant parties in the chamber recognise that argument as rubbish. If it had any resonance in the 20th century, I'm glad it has no resonance now. We have a collective global obligation to uphold the rule of law and to do everything we can not to see our corporate interests corrupting and tearing down the rule of law, democratic institutions and good governance in other countries. I'm glad to say that's a common understanding between the Labor Party, the Greens and the coalition in this regard.

In fact, it wasn't until the mid-1990s that we saw other jurisdictions moving to criminalise the corruption of foreign officials. That came about after some really important global work done at the UN level, where we had the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions. It was initially in the OECD but then picked up broadly as an antibribery convention. It was signed in 1997 and, a year and a half or so later, ratified by Australia, and then legislation followed.

What has become clear in the two-and-a-bit decades since is that there are significant gaps and loopholes in the legislation that was passed in the late 1990s. One of those loopholes is being closed in this bill. It might be useful to read from the explanatory memorandum in that regard. It explains just one of the difficulties in prosecuting foreign bribery under existing law:

Challenges relating to the existing foreign bribery offence include the need to show that both the bribe and the business or personal advantage sought were not legitimately due. In some cases, the threshold of 'not legitimately due' can present challenges. For example, bribe payments can be concealed as agent fees, making it difficult to show, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the payments were not legitimately due. Further, proving the existing offence can also require reliance on international legal assistance processes. Reliance on such processes may be required, for example, to prove that a benefit or advantage was not legitimately due or that a foreign official was working within their official duties. International legal assistance processes may take time and/or prove unsuccessful, and the investigation/prosecution may be compromised as a result.

I think we can all acknowledge, for example, if there was evidence of an Australian corporation bribing an official in Russia, China or Iran, that there would be very real barriers to having that kind of international cooperation we'd need in order to prove the offence. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be seeking to prosecute offences in those circumstances.

One of the other key changes that is happening in the bill is the proposed new offence of failing to prevent foreign bribery. The law in relation to failure to prevent bribery has really developed in the United Kingdom. Section 7 of the UK Bribery Act 2010 is probably the global standard in this regard. It requires corporations to put measures in their contracting arrangements, employee controls and cost controls that actively prevent the use of funds for the purpose of bribing a foreign official. The extended definition of 'foreign officials' includes candidates for office and the like. The UK Serious Fraud Office has some data about how section 7 has operated in practice and, if you look at the data, it's been reasonably effective. The evidence that we got in the inquiry was that it's led to a change in business practice in the UK. It's led to better practice and stronger controls, moving towards—I don't think it's yet achieved—an anticorruption culture in the UK corporate sector. Obviously we should be picking that up and implementing it in Australia, and this bill—I'm glad to say—does that. That is a good thing.

I'll say this as well, though. Perhaps there's urgent work we should be looking at for some furthering of our anticorruption measures in the corporate space. In 2017, the UK also brought in legislation to make it a corporate offence to prevent the facilitation of tax evasion. That offence was modelled on section 7 of the UK Bribery Act 2010, and I look forward to the coalition bringing forward amendments when we come back to review this in two years also criminalising any corporate efforts to facilitate tax evasion. Clearly that would be a useful further development of law in this area.

There is strong support for this bill amongst a variety of stakeholders. Yes, there are lawyers, like Allens and Linklaters, there is the Law Council of Australia and there's Ashurst Australia. Many of them also support a deferred prosecution scheme. There's also support from the likes of the Uniting Church in Australia. The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania strongly supports these changes, as do Transparency International. So the Greens will be supporting the bill. We won't be supporting the coalition's amendments at this stage in relation to a deferred prosecution scheme. The legislation is incredibly detailed drafting. There is quite a broad definition of the types of offences that may be picked up in the deferred prosecution scheme. The scope of those offences is something that the Greens believe requires some very close study and some very close consideration. I think the kind of scaremongering from some elements in this chamber, that any kind of deferred prosecution scheme is a kind of get out of jail free card for corporate Australia is something that we should treat with very real scepticism. Of course, a badly drafted deferred prosecution scheme could be a get out of jail free card for corporate Australia, and that is something we would absolutely want to avoid. I'm not saying that the coalition amendments fall within that category, but they haven't been properly tested at this point to where we would have a level of comfort to pass them and not see within them some potential misuse by corporate Australia, some potential for a lesser standard for corporate Australia in the scheme.

There are many good reasons to have some form of deferred prosecution scheme in a bill like this. In that regard, I'll read for the record the concerns of the Uniting Church in Australia—again, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. They said, in submissions to the inquiry:

The current Government's opposition to DPA schemes appears to rest on the mistaken belief that if DPAs are not offered, then all cases will proceed to prosecution. The reality is that in the absence of a DPA, many corporate crimes carried out by middle

managers that would otherwise be self-reported to law enforcement agencies by the corporation itself will go undetected. Those responsible will never go to trial. The experience of other jurisdictions is that a DPA scheme increases the detection of corporate crimes and results in more prosecutions of the individuals inside the corporation that engaged in criminal conduct.

I think there is significant strength in that submission. A well designed, tested DPA scheme has the potential to remedy that defect in the current law. I know that the government says: 'Oh well, we're going to make these changes. We're going to make it easier for prosecutions to stick. We're going to make it easier to prove key elements in it. Let's see how those changes happen before we do that.' That could be seen in some quarters as a delaying tactic. That could be seen in some quarters as just wanting to find a basis on which to say no to a DPA scheme. Nevertheless, we would want to ensure that any DPA scheme that came forward had had that kind of vigorous testing. So we acknowledge the place where those amendments are coming from. We're not in a position to support them now, but we will be supporting that review—a prompt, thorough statutory review. A core element of that will be whether or not the amendments achieve the goal and whether or not we should be rapidly moving towards a DPA scheme.

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (19:12): I acknowledge the comments Senator Shoebridge made in his thoughtful contribution—and it was thoughtful—in relation to deferred prosecution agreements. I say through you, Chair, that I think there are plenty of tried and tested precedents—and I'll touch on this—around the world which could inform a deferred prosecution agreement regime in Australia.

My deep concern is that this will be the only opportunity we have over, say, the next five years to actually deal with this in legislation. My deep concern is that we're losing an opportunity. This is a missed opportunity. Senator Shoebridge will know—all the senators in this place will know—how difficult it is to find time on the legislative calendar, and this legislation is an example of that. It's been mooted for seven or eight years. It's taken that long to get here. In that time we're going to lose opportunities to participate with like-minded countries all over the world as part of deferred prosecution agreements which are being entered into on an international basis. That's my concern and that is why I am profoundly disappointed, to be frank, that we're missing this opportunity, because I just don't see the logic in it. Senator Shoebridge referred to those who have some sort of misguided in-principle objection to deferred prosecution agreements. I really don't know what the thinking is amongst those on the government side of the chamber as to why they're so resistant to a system that has worked quite effectively over a number of years, and I'll touch upon that.

By way of background, in my previous life I was company secretary and general counsel of a company that had operations in some jurisdictions which were ranked by Transparency International as some of the jurisdictions or countries most prone to corruption. Corruption of this nature is a disease. It is a dry rot that infects civic society wherever it is practised. I cannot emphasise enough the disruption, the undermining of civic society in those countries that have issues with foreign bribery and corruption. It undermines the faith of the population in the institutions and their leadership, and it is a disease, a dry rot in civic society where it's practised. And I think we, as a member of the OECD, have an obligation to do all we can to stamp out the practice. So, it is something that's dear to my heart, and that is why I feel the gravity that we really are losing an opportunity here, and that genuinely grieves me.

I want to refer to three cases, and this is perhaps the best way to draw out how we're losing an opportunity here. The first case was in 2017. It was a deferred prosecution agreement entered into in 2017; that's seven years ago. Indeed, the investigations leading to this deferred prosecution agreement started in 2013. Rolls-Royce entered into a deferred prosecution agreement with the governments of the United States, Brazil and the United Kingdom, with a total value of 671 million pounds. It was in relation to conduct that Rolls-Royce had engaged in with the governments of Indonesia, Thailand, India, China and Malaysia—all countries in the region, and Rolls-Royce carries on business here in our own country. Yet that deferred prosecution agreement in relation to corruption in our own region could be entered into only by the USA, Brazil and the UK. Australia should be on that list. By not having a deferred prosecution agreement regime, we were deprived from participating in the discussions that led to that 671-million-pound fine.

With respect to that case, I want to read an extract from what the judge, one of the highest judges in the UK, said when considering the deferred prosecution agreement. The way the system works in the UK, and I think it works very well—and I'm sure those on this side of the chamber would be happy to enter into discussions about the best system, but gee, we need a system—is that it goes to court and a judge considers the proposed deferred prosecution agreement. I want to quote from the judgement of that judge, Sir Brian Leveson:

... the investigation into the conduct of individuals continues and nothing in this agreement in any way affects the prospects of criminal prosecutions being initiated if the full code test for prosecution is met.

So, this deferred prosecution agreement that was entered into with the corporate Rolls-Royce did not prevent criminal proceedings proceeding against the individual managers who were involved.

He goes on:

So the question becomes whether it is necessary to inflict the undeniably adverse consequences on Rolls-Royce that would flow from prosecution because of the gravity of its offending even though it may now be considered a dramatically changed organisation. In any event, it will have to suffer the undeniably adverse publicity that will flow from the facts of its business practices which will be exposed by the DPA so that the way in which it has done business will be obvious. Any public procurement exercise will be conducted in the light of its history and it will doubtless only win contracts on the merits of its products. That, of course, is as it should be. Neither will the conduct of Rolls-Royce escape sanction: it could only ever be fined and the DPA has to be approached on the basis that it must be broadly comparable to the fine that a court would have imposed on conviction following a guilty plea.

So you can see the thought that the judge put into the case in terms of the competing interests and the balancing of consideration. That is a process which is robust and has integrity and independent oversight, and it led to this result. As a result of those agreements, US\$170 million was paid to the US government and the taxpayers of the US, \$25 million was paid to the government of Brazil and the balance went to the United Kingdom. Australia should have had the opportunity to be a party to that. Because we don't have the scheme, we were denied that opportunity.

The second case I want to refer to is that of Airbus, which Senator Cash referred to, in 2020. We didn't have a deferred prosecution agreement regime in 2017, when the Rolls-Royce case occurred. Legislative action wasn't taken up to 2020, and then we got the Airbus case. Airbus was sentenced to pay \$3.6 billion under a deferred prosecution agreement. Where did that money go? Who was a party to those agreements? The USA, the United Kingdom and France. What was the region in which that corrupt conduct occurred? Again, it was in our region—Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. And Airbus does business here. Because we don't have a deferred prosecution agreement regime, again, none of that \$3.6 billion was paid to our authorities to enable them to conduct further investigations and pursue further prosecutions. It all went to other countries that have deferred prosecution agreements. We weren't at the table. We were denied the opportunity to be at the table to discuss and to be part of the bargaining of that deferred prosecution agreement.

That was in 2020, and now here we are in 2024, and we still don't have it. We've got an opportunity—a bill before the house where we could introduce a deferred prosecution agreement regime—and it sounds like we're not going to have one. Another four years have passed. When is the next big global case going to occur where again Australia is deprived of the opportunity of being at the table to negotiate with the corporate wrongdoer? When is that opportunity going to arise?

Now I want to give the third example, and perhaps this will underline how silly this all is. This example hasn't been referred to. This is an Australian example, OZ Minerals—or, I should say, one of its predecessors, Oxiana. It has had to meet confiscation orders to the value of at least \$9.3 million. This was announced in Australia recently. It had to pay a pecuniary penalty of \$3.65 million. This was 30 May 2023. It had to forfeit \$5.71 million received by the company and all future right and entitlement to all ongoing payments to the company under a sale agreement with respect to mineral tenements in Cambodia—one of those high-risk countries. This was announced in May 2023. Senator Shoebridge referred to extraction companies, and in effect this was an extraction company that had to pay a pecuniary penalty in relation to its conduct in Cambodia and had to forfeit proceeds in May 2023.

This was entered into without us having a deferred prosecution agreement regime. This was cobbled together under other pieces of legislation which are not in the nature of formal deferred prosecution agreements. With respect to this, there was a reference to the Australian Federal Police and Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions Best Practice Guidelines. This agreement was entered into in May 2023 under cobbled-together guidelines—not a legislative scheme that we in the parliament have actually considered and passed but guidelines. Let me read you one of the horrifying things about these AFP and CDPP Best Practice Guidelines. They say:

AFP and the CDPP will review the operation of this Guideline—

it's not legislation or regulation. It hasn't come before this parliament. It says:

AFP and the CDPP will review the operation of this Guideline within two years or earlier in the event that a Deferred Prosecution Agreement Scheme commences.

These guidelines are from 2017, and I haven't seen any update. Fast-forward to 2023: these guidelines are used as the basis for something that sort of looks like a deferred prosecution agreement but has not been done under a deferred prosecution agreement regime. So this is the worst of all worlds. We're losing the opportunity of participating in cross-border resolution of corruption penalties with major multinational companies because we don't have a deferred prosecution agreement regime. That \$3.6 billion fine that Airbus was hit with went to taxpayers in the UK, the US and France, and that was with respect to corruption activity in our own region. So we lost that opportunity. We're using cobbled-together guidelines that were meant to be reviewed within two years of 2017—and I think they're still in place—to come up with something that is trying to do what a deferred prosecution agreement does, without it being on the basis of a regime approved by this parliament. That's the worst of all worlds.

I genuinely do not understand the reticence amongst government members. Maybe some of the government members can inform you off the record. I won't refer to it. I do not understand what they discussed in their party room when they came up with this position. It really baffles me. You've got stakeholders like Transparency International, and I want to read what they said. This is a great conclusion, I think. Transparency International is an outstanding organisation. This is what they say:

We note the proposed Bill does not include a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) scheme. This reduces the incentives for companies to self-report examples of foreign bribery involving their operations and will continue to undermine Australia's foreign bribery laws. DPAs are used in jurisdictions including Canada, France, the UK, the US and Singapore.

... ..

Unless the use of settlements for foreign bribery can be seen to be delivering real deterrence and effective sanctions, public confidence across the world in the fight against corruption will be undermined. The experience of the US and UK is that a DPA scheme increases detection and results in more prosecutions of foreign bribery and other criminal offences.

I would have thought that is something we should be trying to achieve in this place.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Grogan): Senator Pocock, you have only a few minutes before we go to a hard marker. You'll be in continuation.

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (19:27): I'm going to try to finish this. I rise to speak in support of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Combating Foreign Bribery) Bill 2023. As has been said, this is the third attempt to get this legislation through. This bill makes much-needed updates to the Criminal Code Act to make it easier to investigate and prosecute offenders. I welcome the creation of a new corporate offence of failure to prevent bribery of a foreign public official. This change is supported by the OECD, the Law Council and others and is a long-overdue improvement. The prohibition on tax deduction claims for foreign bribery also enjoys widespread community support.

While these are significant improvements to combat foreign bribery, there are further opportunities to strengthen the legislation. We've seen evidence and we've heard much talk about deferred prosecution agreement schemes elsewhere. Clearly, establishing a DPA scheme in Australia is worthy of consideration, and I thank Senator Scarr for his advocacy on this important issue. I found his additional comments to the committee report on the bill helpful and insightful. I'll be moving a second reading amendment that calls for consideration of a DPA scheme in Australia. In my view, the model put forward by the coalition in Senator Cash's amendments is imperfect. Any scheme must prioritise transparency and avoid creating a two-tiered system where corporate criminals are extensively protected in a way that private individuals are not. Clearly more reform is also needed to abolish facilitation payments, which we know can, in many cases, be bribery by a different name. The parliament should give consideration to using procurement as a lever to combat foreign bribery. Companies convicted of foreign bribery should not be winning contracts with the Australian government, and a whole-of-government debarment scheme could prevent that from happening.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Grogan): Thank you, Senator Pocock. I'm afraid I'm going to have to stop you there. You will be in continuation.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Grogan): Order! I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Medicare

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (19:30): Happy birthday, Medicare. That's right, 1 February 1984 is a significant date in the history of our country, and just last week we celebrated 40 years of Medicare in this country. It is a policy which has shaped our country since its inception and a policy which has made our country stronger. As I reflected last week on Medicare's creation, I thought to myself that there is no more powerful action a government could take than to improve the livelihoods of citizens through the creation of Medicare. The primary concern of government is to keep the public safe from harm, and Medicare does just that every day across my home state of Tasmania. The ability of any Tasmanian or Australian to access health care when they need it most could easily be taken for granted, but it saves lives every day and it should never be taken for granted.

The 23rd Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, and Labor created Medicare. It was controversial at the time. It created a new, simpler and fairer health insurance system whereby all Australians were equal when accessing health care. The distinct change was that it didn't matter who you were. You would be equal in accessing health care with the historic reform. It meant the federal government would assist you in paying for your health care regardless of where you lived and how much money you earned. Without Medicare, can you imagine how much harder it would be for people who have chronic illnesses? Life would be far more difficult and more burdensome without Medicare.

Families would be under enormous strain if they didn't have universal access to health care in this country. There's not a dollar figure you can put on that, but we know that those opposite, when they've been on the government benches, have always done everything they could to undermine Medicare in this country.

Every single day in this country, 400 Australians are diagnosed with cancer. This is significant and heart-wrenching, but imagine facing that diagnosis of cancer without Medicare at your back—without reduced costs for treatment of a life-threatening disease. In my home state, we have some of the worst chronic illnesses in the country, and we are so reliant on having Medicare to ensure that we have access to the world's best health care. The Albanese government understands what Medicare means to the Australian way of life. It's a safety net. We could never ever afford to lose it. That's why, every single day while we are in government, we are doing everything we can to ensure we can strengthen it and provide greater access to health care in this country for all Australians.

Last year, we made the decision to triple the bulk-billing incentives so more Tasmanians could access bulk-billing at their doctors. Bass, my duty electorate, has seen an increase of 4.2 per cent in the rate of bulk-billing in the first two months since the Albanese government tripled the GP bulk-billing incentive, amounting to an estimated 3,196 additional bulk-billed service trips to GPs. This has saved patients an estimated \$144,000 in gap fees in just two months, delivering cost-of-living relief for families living in Northern Tasmania when they need it most. This means that children, pensioners and healthcare card holders in Bass are finding it easier to see a bulk-billing doctor than they have for decades. It means that our local GPs who bulk-bill are getting more government support for their vital services.

Labor introduced Medicare. We now, as a Labor government, will strengthen Medicare. We're delivering real cost-saving measures. We've provided an urgent-care clinic in Launceston. We've introduced 60-day dispensing of prescriptions and cheaper medicines. We're doing this because we're a government that understands the cost-of-living pressure that our families are under. Our communities deserve nothing less, and they can rely on this government to deliver where we can to assist them in their cost-of-living challenges. *(Time expired)*

Australia

Senator ANTIC (South Australia) (19:35): What happened to the Australia of yesteryear—the Australia that was hopeful, the Australia that was proud? What happened to the Australia that in 1988 assembled a group of entertainers of different backgrounds to 'make it great in 88' and to have a celebration of the nation in relation to Australia's bicentenary? As a 13-year-old Aussie boy who lived and breathed sport, whose heroes were the rough-and-tumble characters of the Norwood Football Club, like legend Garry McIntosh, and cricketing great DK Lillee, I knew I was living in the greatest country in the world. I was proud of our history and I was hopeful for the future.

Sadly, that's no longer the experience of Aussie kids today. It's hard to find sporting heroes that stick to their lane of playing their sport. Today kids get lectures about climate change, diversity and other such issues from their sports stars. Today they get Pride Month and one—albeit contested—Australia Day. And it's not much better for the adults. They get a Labor government with a penchant for distraction and scoring cheap political points rather than addressing the cost-of-living crisis and the degradation of our culture. This is the same Labor government, by the way, that spent around \$300 million on the failed Voice to Parliament referendum, which really represents what would be almost the most expensive indulgence in virtue signalling and identity politics in our nation's history.

This is why Australians are feeling less optimistic about the future than previous generations. For younger Australians, the prospect of owning their own home seems dim as interest rates, rent, grocery prices and fuel prices increase. But it's more than simply an economic malaise that the Australians are enduring. For a start, many young students are being indoctrinated by an activist led education system into believing that climate change is going to incinerate the earth in the next 20 years unless something drastic is done right now. We often hear about the youth mental health crisis in this country. Frankly, if I were a younger person—which I'm not—I'd be depressed as well if adults that I'm supposed to trust such as schoolteachers were constantly telling me the world is going to end soon. The public school system is now so preoccupied with ensuring that children adopt subversive progressive ideology. Whether it be sowing gender confusion or seeking to make children ashamed of heritage, this cultural self-loathing is fuelled by the factors that I just described.

Australians are worried about the trajectory of gender ideology and why such a thing is being actively promoted in government funded institutions such as hospitals and schools. The University of Adelaide, I recently discovered, have female sanitation bins in the male toilets. They're worried about the prospect of more coercive restrictions and policies like they experienced during COVID, whether it's another virus like disease X or something as ludicrous as the climate hysteria. They're worried about central bank digital currencies and the erasure of cash in our society making participation in the economy a privilege and not a right. They're worried about the increasing influence of those who claim that you'll own nothing and you'll be happy. Indeed, at the recent globalist talk fest in Davos, one of the anointed speakers did actually say:

There is no realistic solution to the climate transition that does not involve a globally coordinated system of carbon taxes.

Those opposite, I'm looking at you.

But it's not all doom and gloom. There is reason to be hopeful. People are starting to wake up to the narrative of the globalist left, and they're doing it by the thousands. Those who call out the absurdity of a net zero utopia or the horrendous damage inflicted on vulnerable young people by gender ideologues are rewarded by the gratitude of the quiet Australians. The rise of what is pejoratively called populism throughout the Western world—

Senator Pratt interjecting—

Senator ANTIC: and pushback against wokeness is evidence that this global trend is coming to an end. And that's a good thing, not a bad thing, Senator Pratt.

Renewable Energy

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:39): How remarkable that in 2024, on the first day of parliament for the new year, the Liberal Party and National Party facilitated an antirenewable energy rally outside these halls on the lawns of parliament on the same day that a new scientific report tells us we have likely exceeded 1.7 degrees of warming since the pre-industrial age. We've seen a conga line of Liberal and National senators come into this place telling us how much they care about the environment and how much they care about the whales and the seabirds.

I want to get it on record tonight that I understand that for all renewable energy projects we need to have the best possible assessment process we can. It's good to put politicians and decision-makers under scrutiny. We need to listen to communities. We need to consult. But we also need to transition to renewable energy if we do truly care about the creatures in the ocean and life on this planet.

It's a bit rich to have the Liberal and National senators come in here today and tell us that we don't care about the environment because we're putting offshore wind farms off our coasts. Honestly, it would bring a tear to a glass eye for those of us who have been here through the swamp and desert years of the Liberal and National parties, that wasted lost decade of climate action. For Mr Barnaby Joyce, Senator Matt Canavan or whichever other Liberal and National senators—Senator Cadell, who was in here today, spoke at this rally—to be talking about opposing renewable energy and protecting whales is like going to a peace rally and hearing Vladimir Putin as the lead speaker. It's that cynical.

Let me tell you what happened this summer, for those who don't know, in January 2024. In my home state of Tasmania the federal environment minister and the scientists working on this project have had to take two critically endangered marine species out of their environment and literally put them in tanks in aquariums so they can survive a marine heatwave, perhaps the largest ever recorded. It's a marine heatwave caused by the burning of fossil fuels and directly linked to climate change. When did we ever think that would happen in our lifetime? It happened three weeks ago. They are so desperate that the red handfish survive this summer that they have had to take a quarter of the population and put it in captivity as an insurance against an extinction event in the months to come. For the Maugean skate in Macquarie Harbour there's a captive breeding program so we have some chance of the skate surviving another marine heatwave expected on the west coast of Tasmania and pollution from fish farms.

Look around you. Wake up. Open your eyes. It's happening right before you. There are the changes we've seen to coral all around the world. NOAA in the US has had to bring in new categories for heat stress because the previous categories for judging the health of coral reefs weren't adequate to categorise the changes we are seeing in the physical world from the burning of fossil fuels. This is not a conspiracy. This is black and white. It's clear as daylight. To oppose renewable energy projects so you can whip up fear and hysteria and run a culture war and a fear campaign is not only irresponsible; it's bloody insane. It's insane and it's got to stop.

I want to see offshore wind farms closely scrutinised, but I want to see them go ahead because we must transition to renewable energy if we are going to make sure future generations can experience what we have been lucky enough to experience in our lifetime. That's the science. There's no myth to that. There's no conspiracy to that. That is what the science tells us. That is what our eyes, if we would only open them, will tell us. It's got to stop. This year is the year we campaign on real climate action. *(Time expired)*

Iran

Senator CHANDLER (Tasmania) (19:44): The world is at a critical turning point. War has broken out not as a result of a miscalculation but because of a deliberate strategy by the Islamic Republic of Iran regime to grow their own power through fear. The Western democratic world needs to recognise and adapt immediately to these tactics which are being successfully used against us to undermine our security and our interests.

Iran is a case study in how appeasement of evil regimes does not work, and it's a case study in how Western governments are being easily manipulated by authoritarian regimes. Those of us who have been warning about the

danger of the IRI regime for a long time have lost count of how often we've heard officials say that their diplomatic approach was working and that it wasn't strategic to take strong diplomatic action to isolate the regime and reduce their ability to leverage and threaten violence.

The IRI regime doesn't want the IRGC listed as a terror group, and here in Australia our government has told us that it wasn't strategic to list the IRGC as a terror group. Now we have IRGC terrorists helping Iran-backed groups fire rockets and drones at our allies and at civilian ships. The IRI regime wants to be able to exert influence over the United Nations by being appointed to leadership positions, and yet our government told us it wasn't in our interests to oppose the election of that regime to all UN bodies. The IRI regime wants to be able to operate in secret, and we were told that our government couldn't or wouldn't tell us how many senior regime officials or IRGC operatives were in Australia, for privacy reasons.

There is nothing strategic or diplomatically skilful about failing to take difficult diplomatic decisions until you find that you are forced to take military decisions. How could an authoritarian regime intent on using fear as a weapon be anything other than emboldened when watching Western governments avoid holding the IRI regime accountable out of fear of their response? Those who stopped tough diplomatic action because they were worried about how Tehran would react are now relying on airstrikes to respond to deadly attacks by Iran-backed terrorists. And still we hear this commentary, often from anonymous officials, downplaying Tehran's involvement in the very attacks that they funded and provided the weapons and intelligence for.

We hear officials claiming that Iran doesn't want a war, despite the fact they've deliberately started one. The truth is that what they don't want is consequences. When they didn't see diplomatic consequences for their abhorrent behaviour, they judged that it was safe to go even further. The reality is that trying to appease and negotiate with the IRI regime has resulted in nothing but that regime growing their influence, expanding their violence and moving closer to achieving their aims.

If our governments don't learn the lessons of failure on Iran right now, we are going to see this pattern repeated over and over again as authoritarian states elsewhere move to grow their power through coercion, threats and war. We need to pay particular attention to how the propaganda of a dangerous regime has infected our public debate, media commentary and even the decision-making process of our institutions.

As citizens of a democracy, we are entitled to the plain truth from our governments about the risks that we face to our safety and security. And yet, as the world has grown increasingly more dangerous over the last two years, we are fed more and more inane talking points designed to be acceptable to authoritarian governments. We've witnessed a self-defeating cycle of responding to bad behaviour, whether that's violence or that's economic coercion, by measuring our response so as not to upset the perpetrator. We cannot continue to sleepwalk through the most dangerous security environment since the 1930s by acting as if we can avoid trouble by using the right words and incentives.

After the failure to foresee the 7 October attacks, we cannot rely on previous assumptions that we will have several years warning of conflict elsewhere, including in our own region. We need to learn and understand very quickly the ways in which the IRI regime and Russia have manipulated the international community to create space for their violent pursuit of power. If we don't learn these lessons, we can guarantee that they will not be the last regimes to use these tactics against us.

Prisons

Senator THORPE (Victoria) (19:49): This summer saw heatwaves across the continent, particularly in the Northern Territory, WA and the north of the continent. While many of us escaped the heat in air conditioning or by a river or an ocean, not everyone had these opportunities to stay cool.

People in prison are people. They are fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and grandparents. They're actually people. When they make a mistake, they end up in prison systems with horrendous conditions, where human rights simply do not exist. While we were staying cool during the heatwaves, people in so-called protective custody were sweltering, with temperatures consistently above 40 degrees. This continent has some of the hottest prisons in the world. In prisons like Roebourne Regional Prison in Western Australia, temperatures regularly soar above 50—50!—degrees, and this prison still does not have air conditioning.

The World Health Organization, the Australian Medical Association and our own national guidelines state that safe living temperatures are between 25 and 30 degrees Celsius. Above this temperature, our physical and mental wellbeing starts to be impacted. Extreme heat affects the entire body, and at temperatures above 50 degrees the body's cooling mechanisms become useless. The brain and vital bodily functions are impacted, causing intense fatigue and brain fog before vital organs begin to shut down. Lawyers and former inmates have likened the conditions inside prison to torture, a furnace or an oven. They have described it as feeling like their brains are boiling, with advocates saying a death in custody is highly likely. Fancy that! Many people in prisons have

underlying physical or mental health conditions or are on medications that make them more susceptible to heat stress.

To those who say, 'Do the crime, do the time'—all those people on their Twitter and all of that—I say: do you think that people in prisons deserve this? Seriously, I ask those hackers: do you seriously approve of a human being sweltering in these conditions? The Northern Territory Ombudsman has called for air conditioning to be installed in prisons, which the government previously said is too expensive. Yet millions are being spent on building more prisons and giving money to private security companies and police. First Peoples on this continent are the most incarcerated people on earth, and the prisons with the highest number of First Peoples are the ones with no air conditioning in the cells. Coincidence?

Last year, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture's scathing report about the conditions in this country's prisons noted that cells are often dangerously hot and found that prison guards used removing ceiling fans as a form of punishment. How do you rehabilitate when you're gasping for air because you're frying in the cell? How does that fit into any definition of rehabilitation? This country's human rights records in prisons is so bad that the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture cancelled its tour after being denied access to detention facilities. I wonder why they were not supposed to see what is really happening inside our prisons. What are you hiding? For nearly two decades, experts, custodial services inspectors and the independent prison watchdog have been asking for air conditioning in cells. This is such a simple measure. At over 50-degree temperatures, air conditioning is a human right.

Rare and Less Common Cancers

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (19:54): Statistics tell us that everyone here will have supported someone close to them as they face a cancer diagnosis, or the diagnosis may have been even closer, and it may have been you. Cancer touches us all.

This situation changes when the diagnosis is of a rare or less common cancer like neuroendocrine tumours, or NETs, lymphoma, neuroblastoma or appendix cancer. Around 52,000 Australians are diagnosed with a rare or less common cancer each year, but the medical professionals with experience in treating these cancers are generally located in capital cities, meaning that the prognosis is directly impacted by where those patient live. Rare and less common cancers are labelled as such because they impact a small number of people. A rare cancer affects fewer than six people per 100,000, while less common cancers affect fewer than 12 in 100,000 people. Any cancer affecting a child or a teenager is considered rare because cancer affects only a small number of children.

The Senate Community Affairs References Committee's rare cancer inquiry was established in June 2023 to address the inequity faced by those diagnosed with a rare or less common cancer, particularly those who live in regional or rural areas. I note the presence of two of my colleagues in the room, Senators Pratt and Kovacic, who are members of the committee with me. Since entering the Senate, as a long-term member of the community affairs committee, I have had many people share their personal health stories with me. One of those was racecourse owner Rob Hammond, who lives on Tasmania's east coast. Rob has been raising awareness of neuroendocrine tumours after his own diagnosis and has raised thousands of dollars through his Racing for a Cure fundraiser to help fund specialist neuroendocrine care nurses to support Australian NETs patients. Receiving a rare cancer diagnosis leaves many feeling unsure about what happens next, but patients like Rob and those who shared their personal stories with me need support too. Arguably, they need more support because what they face is less known than the path ahead of someone with, say, breast cancer. I am hopeful that this inquiry will highlight the most effective methods to achieve equity for patients with rare cancers, no matter the type of cancer or where they live.

The terms of reference for the inquiry cover the barriers to screening and diagnosis, such as geographic location, costs, cultural and language barriers; type of cancer and the availability of treating practitioners; barriers to accessing appropriate treatment; adequacy of support services after diagnosis; and the adequacy of Commonwealth funding for research into rare, less common and neuroendocrine cancers. Since this inquiry was established, the committee has been flooded with submissions from those with an interest in rare cancers, from industry stakeholders to government departments and, importantly, from individuals and families sharing their own stories.

The first two hearings for this inquiry were held in Sydney and Melbourne last week. Committee members heard important evidence about the financial and psychological costs faced by those facing a rare cancer diagnosis and treatment, including how charities step up to offer financial and counselling support for patients, the inadequacy of travel programs when patients have to travel for treatment and the difficulties faced by patients who are so far away from their support network. We also heard about the difference new technologies and treatments like genomic sequencing, precision medicine and tele-oncology can make in rare cancer treatments. Clinical trials are vital in developing our understanding of how to deal with rare cancers, but pharmaceutical companies find it difficult to source enough patients to run the trials here. Then there is the value of effective data collection systems in helping

to track rare cancer diagnosis at an individual and community level to inform treatment and further research. We know the value of collaboration and sharing information, particularly when knowledge is scarce. In the case of rare and less common cancers, the medical practitioners who are able to provide expertise are often concentrated at centres of excellence.

I was pleased to note the announcement over the weekend of a \$20 million research investment to find new treatments for DIPG, or diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, and other childhood brain cancers. I thank the government for this response and acknowledge Professor Matt Dun for his tireless work in this area. As I read in many heartbreaking submissions and heard in person during our hearings last week—particularly from Professor Dun, who lost his daughter Josie to it—DIPG is a rare but aggressive childhood brain cancer from which just one in 10 children currently survive beyond two years. I'm pleased to see the government turning its focus to rare cancers, and I look forward to furthering this conversation as the inquiry continues.

Perth: Environment

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (19:59): Perth has a proud and green heart, and tonight that heart is heavy with a sadness that really cuts to the core. We value, we love, our precious green spaces with a unique intensity, particularly because, given our very, very hot summers, they are some of the few places that we can get into the shade.

Hyde Park in particular lives in the heart of so many in the Perth metro area as that one space, often, on that kind of day, where you can take a stroll around in the shade and gather your thoughts. I've done that many times, with many a good friend—entering the park, wondering how I was going to solve a problem, strolling around with somebody that I care about and finding a solution by the end of it.

Kings Park is, I will shamelessly and parochially say, one of the most beautiful places in Australia. The opportunity to visit that space and to watch families play together, watch people meet for the first time and watch people say 'I do' under the wonderful fig trees—it is like nothing anywhere else in the world.

It is not just in those iconic spaces. Anyone that's ever visited the Perth Zoo knows the experience of dodging beneath the trees there, wondering if you're going to be pooped on by a bird as you eat an ice cream—or taking the opportunity to take a stroll around Lake Claremont and just breathe for a moment. It is part of our identity as a community to be able to visit these spaces, breathe in, breathe out, and reflect on the joy of nature.

I share this with the Senate tonight with a deep sadness because those spaces right now are sick. Those trees, the veins of those green spaces that hold them together, are dying. Now, as a Green, when I hear that green space is under threat, my response is to ask: Where is the dozer to jump in front of? When do we lock on? When do we build together the community campaign? Yet in this instance that's not possible because the threat to these trees, what's killing them, is not developers or greedy corporations. No, no. Just this once, it is actually an invasive beetle species for which the only treatment is the complete and total removal of the trees.

Let's just put this in context. This means that, in places like Hyde Park, entire sections of bushland that are currently home to nesting birds and that literally form the centre of the park will have to be completely demolished. Hundred-year-old Moreton Bay fig trees that have stood and watched so much around them change will now be brought down.

The reality is that there is not currently money allocated at any level of government to knit these spaces back together, and that's got to change. There needs to be urgent action from the federal government, supplying the funds to the City of Vincent and to the City of Perth, to help these spaces and the communities that rely on them recover. We cannot allow these precious green spaces to simply be left empty and to fill with weeds and rubbish. Labor has representatives at every level of government in these spaces. They need to make a firm commitment—and join with the Greens in making that commitment—to provide the funding that is needed to restore these green spaces to their former glory.

Western Australia: Live Animal Exports

Senator BROCKMAN (Western Australia) (20:04): I rise tonight to speak on an issue that I've risen in this place to speak on a number of times, and it's one that's very close to my heart—that is, the sheep industry of Western Australia. The sheep industry is facing a very challenging time at the moment, with the threat of the live export ban putting at risk thousands of lives and livelihoods in my home state of WA. This is solely a Western Australian industry, so this threat to the industry is a threat to Western Australia.

We currently have the serious issue of the MV *Bahijah*, which is currently in the port of Fremantle after beginning its journey to a Middle Eastern port in Israel on 5 January. I emphasise that date, 5 January, because that date, when the department of agriculture approved that vessel leaving Australia with a consignment of sheep and cattle, was three weeks after the US government had asked the Australian government to supply a naval ship to their efforts in

the Red Sea to combat the terrorist activities of the Houthi rebels—three weeks after the US government had asked the Australian government to supply a naval vessel, not a small request by any stretch. Yet, after this time, that consignment of sheep and cattle was approved. Subsequent events took place, and on 19 January—that is my understanding, although there is some debate about this in the media—the Australian government required the MV *Bahijah* to return to the port of Fremantle. There it lies.

This government needs to take responsibility. The department needs to take responsibility for its actions in allowing the ship to depart in the first place and then bringing that ship back to Western Australia. What is the minister saying? 'It's up to the owners of the animals.' But they are left with very few options, especially without the active cooperation of the Australian government. In the meantime we have members of the Australian government—in particular Josh Wilson, the member for Fremantle—out with protest groups, using this very difficult situation as another excuse to attack the Western Australian sheep industry and advance the idea of banning this trade. Yet this government, Mr Wilson's own government, has played a significant role in the current difficult situation the industry finds itself in. It's not only Mr Wilson, the member for Fremantle, that has taken this pass; others in the other place, senators in this place and animal activist groups have all used this as an opportunity to once again attack the sheep farmers of my home state of Western Australia and this vital industry in which they play a part.

I want to, in the last minute I have remaining, set the record straight. The MV *Bahijah* arrived back in Fremantle. Health and welfare checks were conducted on those sheep immediately, and those sheep were found to be in good condition; in actual fact, both sheep and cattle had been gaining weight on the voyage. There were no problems with conditions aboard the vessel, as some in this place, in the other place and in the animal activist groups wanted to tell the public. The boat has been in Gage Roads for cleaning purposes—live stock transport boats need to be cleaned on a regular basis—but the ventilation has been running, and running at full capacity, for the entire time. There is no need for the boat to be moving in order for ventilation to be provided for the animals on board. And the mortalities are absolutely minimal—well below the reportable thresholds required by the government.

Tasmania: Regional Jobs Hub Network

Senator TYRRELL (Tasmania—Jacqui Lambie Network Whip) (20:09): It's hard to describe the feeling when you help a client get a job. It's a bit like it's their birthday and kind of like it's yours as well. The transformation is instant. Their eyes light up and they lift their head a little higher. They walk into the office with the biggest smile on their face. I always told my clients the best gift they could give to me was to never see me again. Working in employment services is one of the most rewarding things I've ever done because of that moment. It's something we try to live every single day.

But, at the same time, I hated working there because the system I worked in was, and still is, broken. It's broken because people are seen as dollar figures. It's like a video game where, if you put all the things in the right boxes in a certain time frame, you win a gold star. You get a client off the books as quickly as you can to get the money and you spend more time doing the paperwork than actually trying to get them a job. My clients were never a game to me. I tried my best to work around the system to get the best outcome for them, but it wasn't always possible.

I've said before that being unemployed is a kind of trauma that's hard to come back from. There's a stigma attached that's hard to shake off. People think employment services are there for so-called dole bludgers. But I saw a broad range of people come through the door, from teachers and lawyers all the way to sex workers. It didn't matter how educated someone was or where they'd grown up; the fears and anxieties each person had about finding work, about finding a purpose again, were the same. Everyone thinks it won't happen to them until they're in that position. And when you're there you deserve a hand up—an employment services system that takes an interest in what a person actually wants to do, at the same time as giving the community what they need. It sounds impossible—a flying unicorn. But it already exists and it's in my backyard in Tassie.

The Tasmanian state government runs a program called the jobs hub network. It's so good that so far it's produced 3,000 job outcomes and engaged 5,500 employers. There are seven jobs hubs across the state, located in regional areas like Sorrell, Fingal and Scottsdale. They each operate a little bit differently, but the gist of it is the same. They're grassroots organisations that work with local businesses to match them up with clients who might be a good fit for them. It doesn't sound like rocket science, does it?

We saw it work recently in St Helens. A major construction project was happening and they did haven't enough workers for the job, so the hub worked with them and other providers to help fill the gap. They found clients who were capable and suited to the work and helped them with the necessary pre-employment training. All of these clients were then offered work. The employer said it was such a good experience that they'd work with the job hubs again.

These hubs are successful because they're focused on a good outcome for the client and a good outcome for the local business—not focused on a dollar figure attached to the client. And they don't have excessive demands for paperwork and reports. They take away the red tape and put the people back into employment services.

The Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services has recognised that Tassie is onto a good thing here. They want us to show the rest of the country how to do it. The committee recommended that the federal Labor government fund a trial of the jobs hub network as soon as possible. All going well, the model will be used as a blueprint to roll out similar hubs across the country. It's a no-brainer. This is something Labor can jump onto right now. I don't want to wait eight months for their formal responses to the committee report and then another four months for them to decide to take action. The proof is in the pudding. The jobs hub network has the numbers to show they work. Minister Burke shouldn't delay in giving funding to these hubs to shore up their future and show the rest of Australia how it can be done. And, when that pilot is funded, the government needs to let the hubs run how they want—no mindless paperwork for the sake of it and no excessive red tape. These guys are good at what they do because they aren't trapped in a cage of bureaucracy. They're good at it because they understand their communities and the people in them.

I spent 15 years working in our current employment services system. It's not a secret that it's failing people. Funding a jobs hub pilot in Tasmania is a chance to start doing things differently, so let's start right now.

Middle East

Senator KOVACIC (New South Wales) (20:14): Like many Australians I watched the news in horror on 7 October as Hamas terrorists proceeded to torture, rape, kidnap and murder innocent civilians. In the many months since that event, there are still a hundred people being held hostage by Hamas and there is a death toll of over 1,200 people, proving to be the deadliest period for Jewish lives since the Holocaust.

In the weeks and now months that have followed, we have seen disturbing displays of antisemitism across the world. It was no less than 48 hours after the attack that we saw large crowds of people celebrating unspeakable violence and scenes of crowds chanting offensive statements on the steps of the Sydney Opera House. What continues to deeply concern me are the many justifications for the attacks on innocent Israelis and Australia's Jewish community. While there is no doubt that our Jewish community has ties to the Jewish state, it is wrong to bring them into a conflict that is beyond their borders and beyond their control.

It should also be noted that there are innocent Palestinians caught up in this conflict who equally deserve protection and safety, and they too are very different to Hamas, who deserve our condemnation. We mustn't forget that innocent women, children and the elderly are being deliberately and strategically placed in danger by Hamas.

If your movement requires fear, chaos, disruption and intimidation to get its message across then your movement does not have a place in a liberal democracy like Australia. If your movement inspires people to vandalise Catholic schools with hate speech, like we saw at Campion College in Parramatta, or it normalises antisemitism then it's not about Israel; it's about Jews. If your movement sacrifices its own people for political gain then it is not about freedom but about power at any cost.

This conflict has allowed the mask to slip for antisemites, who have capitalised on human suffering to attack Jewish communities across the globe. This antisemitism is so toxic it has skewed the way we see our fellow human beings. I was sickened by the accounts of vicious and targeted sexual assaults and rapes carried out against Israeli women and girls. An account from a combat paramedic, recently reported by CNN, described what he witnessed, and I warn the chamber that this recount is graphic:

'Her pants are pulled down toward her knees and there's a bullet wound on the back side of her neck near her head,' he recounted. 'There's a puddle of blood around her head and there's remains of semen on the lower part of her back.'

It appears we now live in a world where we are able to believe all women unless of course those women happen to be Jewish.

The Australian government made the right decision by suspending funding to UNRWA after strong evidence was presented linking that organisation with Hamas operatives. Funding should not be reinstated until it is proven that none of the money could land in the hands of Hamas. We expect commercial businesses and financial institutions to do their due diligence in ensuring they do not fund sanctioned countries, terrorism or modern slavery, and rightly so. The absolute least we should expect of government and UN agencies is that they do the same.

We face a challenging set of circumstances here, where an overseas conflict that is beyond the control of anyone in this chamber, let alone the control of Australians who exist outside it, has put the safety of Australians at risk—especially so in a multicultural Australia, where we choose to live side by side in harmony. Here, we respect the freedoms of all Australians. That includes the safety of Jews and Palestinians.

It is the majority view of this parliament that Israel has the right to defend itself against these attacks. I would also say that it is the majority view of all Australians that our Jewish brothers and sisters have the right to safety, security and peace within the borders of our nation and that we don't allow them to be the target of violence or hatred.

Queensland: Community Events

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (20:19): Before I commence my remarks, I say to the senator that it's a real privilege to follow that contribution. I associate myself with every word of that contribution.

One of the great joys, one of the great privileges, one of the great honours of being a senator is having the opportunity, as I have today, to describe to this chamber and to the Australian people some of the great things happening in my home state of Queensland, including the wonderful work of many members of the community. First, I'd like to talk about our wonderful Niuean community in Queensland. I was going to make a contribution in this respect towards the end of the last parliamentary year, but there was pressing legislative business which prevented me from doing so. This is my first opportunity.

On Saturday 18 November, I had the privilege of attending the Logan City Rugby Union Club to attend the blessing of jerseys and uniforms for young Niuean athletes who are going to the Solomon Islands to participate in the Pacific Games. It was a wonderful event. It was a real privilege to meet all of the Niuean members of our Australian community who are on their way to the Pacific Games. They performed admirably and did Niue and Australia proud, and I'd like to recognise a number of the participants and contributors to their efforts.

Firstly, in relation to the touch football tournament of the Pacific Games, there were Josilina Silimaka, Kathleen Love, Quincy Ikifana, Anita Silimaka, Milinui Utia, Bradley and Malina Pulsea, Beverly Toki, Richar Masters and Remus Gentles. The netball team had wonderful contributions from the manager, Carol Edwards; the Australian and Queensland based managers, Malama Rex and Ane Sipeli-Holamotu; coach Michelle Dufty, who is an absolute inspiration; and the playing group. They included the captain, based on the Queensland Sunshine Coast, Jenessa Noble; the vice-captain, Tiana Ikinofu; Queensland Brisbane players Jaselle Dilworth, Riley Nothdurft and Francine Falaniua-Morris; Gold Coast player Rosalina Tausi-Holamotu; New South Wales players Charina Jackson and Kiana Kinofu; Victorian players Shakaya Tanevesi, Khalias Tanevesi and Florence Ngan Woo; and Niuean based player Leilani Lui-Ikiua. I also acknowledge the Niuean chef de mission, Sidney Lui, and vice chef de mission, Tony Edwards. I also thank my very good friend Kautau Taleni for giving me this wonderful tie to wear as I give this presentation. It is in Niue's wonderful blue and yellow colours.

Congratulations to our Niue community. Every one of you is an absolute inspiration. Thank you so much.

Another inspiration is our wonderful Queensland African community and its members. The president of the Queensland African Communities Council, my good friend Beny Bol OAM, has sent me their most recent annual report, for the years 2022-2023. I want to quote to you what Beny says in his message from the president, because these are powerful words:

Once again, we as a community, have proven in 2022—2023 period that communities are at their best if they are practically empowered, trusted, resourced, believed and respected.

I couldn't agree more.

One of the greatest satisfactions I've had in my 4½ years in this place has been successfully advocating for funding for the Queensland African villages. There are three Queensland African villages, located at Moorooka, Geebung and Redbank Plains. I want to quote Beny as he describes the importance of those facilities: 'The establishment of the African villages has truly enabled QACC and the African community to realise the vision of embedding a system where service providers and government agencies operate jointly with the local community.'

In addition to hosting youth and family programs, the centres also host regular meetings and workshops—language workshops, specifically tailored professional seminars, interagency meetings, sport organisations' coaches' meetings and so on. Those Queensland African villages are just so important in terms of supporting young people in the community. I'm proud to have been associated with the provision of Commonwealth government funding to those villages.

But those villages and the work of the Queensland African Communities Council would be nothing without their volunteers. The Queensland African Communities Council has an absolutely outstanding cohort of volunteers. In fact, when I was putting the case for Commonwealth funding for the Queensland African community villages, I thought the best way to make the case was to invite the then minister for multicultural affairs the Hon. Jason Wood to come and visit some of the villages and introduce him to some of the youth mentors. And, sure enough, that made a lasting impression on the minister and helped provide a pathway to providing that funding.

I want to sincerely thank, from the bottom of my heart, all the volunteers at the Queensland African Communities Council who were involved in doing all the wonderful work that was required to organise the Queensland African Communities Council's wonderful night of celebration which they had to give out a number of awards to outstanding community members. I thank all of the youth mentors and everyone involved in those activities and all of the volunteers who gave up their time during the two wonderful football tournaments that the council puts on, including the African challenge of the nations and also the Mandela Cup.

I think it's important that I actually put on the record the names of those volunteers, because I think they should be recognised in this place. They should be recognised because the work they are doing in their community is so profoundly important. I was at the African cup of nations tournament. Let me tell you: it was hot and it was a challenging environment, and those volunteers were out there working extraordinarily hard. It was quite inspiring. So I want to thank each and every one of these people: Jimmy Bin, who is the QACC sport coordinator; Sekou Turay; Momona Adgala; Paul Joseph; Araki Abdulrahman; Su Atem; Trecine Kitwanga; Edwin Lubari; Wilson Madit; Ronaldo Alfred; the mentors of the African Youth Support Council, Attis Cole, Sebson Sibanda, Samuel Kimanuka, Henry Kon, Girmay Gebremedhin, Jean Bosco and Belleange Thisbangu; and everyone else who volunteered their time and put their effort into supporting our wonderful Queensland African community in its endeavours over the last 12 months. The work you do is so incredibly important. You will always have my support. I am honoured and it makes me proud to have the opportunity to rise in this chamber and pay tribute to each and every one of you.

Middle East

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (20:28): Australia has become deeply involved in the harm industry, fuelled by the two war parties. We've handcuffed ourselves to the US and, in doing so, we've ensured that every time their hands get bloodier so do ours. The community wants Australia to be a force for peace in the world and to promote cooperation. How far away we are from that.

Since the Albanese government came into office in May 2022, they've signed fresh or extended contracts worth over \$300 million with the Israeli defence industry for military equipment for the Australian Defence Force. This includes at least \$18 million of contracts that were signed after Israel's invasion of Gaza in October last year. We are literally sending taxpayers' money to support the very corporations that are benefiting from the genocide in Gaza. We're buying equipment like spike missiles from Rafael defence systems. These are missiles that have been tested on the population of Gaza for decades, missiles recently used to kill journalists in Lebanon and missiles designed to penetrate the concrete walls of Palestinian apartment buildings and send shrapnel through the rooms to kill every occupant.

The Albanese government is also paying Israeli defence contractor Elbit Systems to construct turrets for the multibillion-dollar infantry fighting vehicles. That's the same Elbit Systems that's meant to be on a blacklist due to the production of cluster munitions. It's the same Elbit Systems that, only a few years ago, had to be stripped from Australian military equipment for fears it was stealing data covertly. It's the same Elbit Systems that proudly states on its website right now:

...since the beginning of the Swords of Iron War, Elbit Systems has experienced a considerable increased demand for its solutions from the IMOD—

the Israel Ministry of Defence. 'Solutions', of course, is code for weapons and systems to kill Palestinians.

Numerous human rights organisations have called for a two-way arms embargo with the State of Israel, but, instead, Australia is also selling military equipment to Israel. DFAT data shows we've sent over \$13 million in arms and ammunition exports to Israel over the past five years. 'Arms and ammunition' is defined by DFAT to be bombs, guns, bullets et cetera. As Declassified Australia has shown, Australia also provides key parts of every F-35 fighter jet used by Israel in its bombing of Gaza.

We've uncovered many Australian companies, which includes Bisalloy Steels, which provides armoured steel to Israeli arms company Rafael, which is used as add-on armour for armoured fighting vehicles used by the IDF in the ongoing violent destruction of Gaza. Bisalloy also provides steel for Plasan Reem, an Israeli company that makes armoured cars used in occupied Palestine by the police, military and settler militias. Let me say that again: extremist Israeli militias illegally occupying Palestinian land are doing so literally protected by Australian armour.

Meanwhile, the Albanese government, led in this case by the foreign minister, is gaslighting Australians, saying we've sent no weapons to Israel for five years, that her own department figures are in error and that there's nothing to see. This is the kind of response we would expect from George Orwell's ministry of truth, where war is peace, slavery is freedom, ignorance is truth and weapons are tennis rackets. The Albanese government must start taking action: stop military exports to Israel, stop buying Israeli weapons and do everything in its power to cause a permanent ceasefire.

In recent months, Iran and Turkiye have stepped up their attacks on Kurdish communities across the Middle East. In December last year, Turkiye carried out devastating air strikes in north-east Syria targeting civilian service facilities and infrastructure, causing extensive damage and worsening the fragile humanitarian situation in the region. These attacks followed a five-day air strike in October, where Turkiye literally obliterated electricity, gas and oil facilities in the same region. Many Kurds were killed and injured.

It's not just Turkiye that is targeting Kurds; Iran is also stepping up attacks on Kurds. In January 2024, four Kurdish Iranians were executed after a secret trial conducted by the Iranian regime. They were denied their right to appeal the death sentence and forced to accept a government lawyer to represent them. These deaths are the most recent killings of Kurdish people by the Iranian regime for the crime of calling for Kurdish self-determination, calling for human rights and calling for cultural rights. In Iran, the Kurds' fellow oppressed peoples, most prominently the women of Iran, have proven through the *jin, jiyan, azadi*—women, life, freedom—resistance movement that acts of violence such as executions, arrests, torture or disappearances will not defeat them, as brutal as those things are.

This is all occurring under the tragic cover of the invasion of Gaza and the ongoing appalling war in Ukraine. While the world is focused on the genocide in Gaza and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Turkiye and Iran face minimal to no scrutiny for their crimes against the Kurdish peoples. When will Australia say enough is enough? Enough of the violence; enough of the harm. When will the foreign minister call on the Turkish government to stop bombing Kurdish communities? Until we make a stand against this kind of violence, until we stand up for international human rights regardless of where those breaches happen, it will continue to grow.

Having recently returned from a trip to Indonesia, I've seen what good can be done if even a fraction of the effort and the wealth that we put into war, weapons and harm is instead used to help people. During my recent trip to Indonesia, organised by Save the Children as part of a cross-party parliamentary delegation, I saw just how essential it was that aid provided was long term and directed and controlled by local communities to address local needs and issues. While there, I went to visit RS Islam hospital in Jakarta with my parliamentary colleagues to see the work they do on fighting stigma and improving health outcomes for thousands of people with TB, HIV and malaria. This work treats patients as whole people, often supporting them to travel to and from hospital and to survive economically while undergoing complicated and long-term treatment, particularly for drug-resistant TB. The doctors, nurses and support staff, who are incredibly dedicated and professional, and with international assistance from the global fund, are able to deliver so much good.

I was also lucky enough to visit a program that was being delivered in Lombok, supported by Australia, for women's economic and political empowerment. There, women were using locally created dyes and traditional weaving to create a fresh income stream through the village co-op. They're now selling on Facebook in local markets, and they're excitingly about to get a fresh online distributor. Their women-owned co-op keeps the profits.

The Fred Hollows Foundation eye centre in Lombok is also doing fantastic work. Indonesia continues to grapple with the significant public health issue of avoidable blindness. Given the size of the country and the challenges they face, there are an estimated 3.6 million blind citizens and 120,000 new cases annually in Indonesia. Hearing about the life-changing impacts of cataract surgery, where people's vision is returned almost in an instant, was profound. The pure joy, the release from poverty and dependence, and the reinvigoration of life that result from cataract surgery are genuinely incredible. It is the skill and knowledge of Indonesian partners that are enabling this work to reach out and change lives right through the island of Lombok. Hundreds of thousands of small donors right across our country, Australia, have helped make this happen, and the impacts are immeasurable. I want to thank all involved. It was and is a privilege to see.

On Lombok, we also heard from local communities about the very real impacts of climate change on water security, especially on small-scale village brick-making economies, where the costs of pretty much every input, from water to fuel, rise with a longer and hotter dry season as a result of climate change. That for me was another clear lesson on the need to keep our coal and gas in the ground and invest in climate resilience, both in our neighbours and at home. Experiences like this, I hope, will allow this parliament to vote to increase our level of international aid and to direct it where it can make the greatest possible benefit. As we saw on this trip, that happens through long-term partnerships with friends and colleagues in countries like Indonesia on the priorities they identify through programs they design.

I want to thank everyone involved in the delegation—my fellow MPs and senators, the incredible team at Save the Children, the embassy staff, the Gates foundation and so many generous, knowledgeable and thoughtful Indonesian community members, government officials and local leaders—for making it happen.

Senate adjourned at 20:37