



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

House of Representatives

Hansard

THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2016

CORRECTIONS

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Thursday, 18 February 2016

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BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

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SITTING DAYS—2016

Month	Date
February	2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22 23, 24, 25, 29
March	1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17
May	10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31
June	1, 2, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29,30
August	23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31
September	1, 19, 20, 21, 22
October	10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20
November	7, 8, 9, 10, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30
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**FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—EIGHTH PERIOD**

Governor-General

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

House of Representatives Office Holders

Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith

Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP

Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,

Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP,

Hon. John Kenneth Cobb MP, Mr Patrick Martin Conroy MP,

Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,

Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP, Mr Stephen James Irons MP,

Mr Craig Kelly MP, Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP, Ms Clare Ellen O'Neil MP,

Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Ms Melissa Lee Price MP,

Dr Andrew John Southcott MP, Mr Michael Sukkar MP,

Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP and Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP

Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP

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

Party Leaders and Whips

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP

Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

Government Whips—Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP and Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

The Nationals

Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP

Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP

Deputy Whip—Mr George Robert Christensen MP

Australian Labor Party

Leader—Hon. William Richard Shorten MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Tanya Joan Plibersek MP

Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

Opposition Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Abbott, Hon. Anthony John	Warringah, NSW	LP
Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Alexander, Mr John Gilbert, OAM	Bennelong, NSW	LP
Andrews, Mrs Karen Lesley	McPherson, QLD	LP
Andrews, Hon. Kevin James	Menzies, VIC	LP
Baldwin, Hon. Robert Charles	Paterson, NSW	LP
Bandt, Mr Adam Paul	Melbourne, VIC	AG
Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick	Dunkley, VIC	LP
Bird, Hon. Sharon Leah	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Bishop, Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen	Mackellar, NSW	LP
Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel	Curtin, WA	LP
Bowen, Hon. Chris Eyles	McMahon, NSW	ALP
Briggs, Hon. Jamie Edward	Mayo, SA	LP
Broad, Mr Andrew John	Mallee, VIC	NATS
Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan	McMillan, VIC	LP
Brodthmann, Ms Gai Marie	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Brough, Hon. Malcolm Thomas	Fisher, QLD	LP
Buchholz, Mr Scott	Wright, QLD	LP
Burke, Ms Anna Elizabeth	Chisholm, VIC	ALP
Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher	Port Adelaide, SA	ALP
Butler, Ms Terri Megan	Griffith, QLD	ALP
Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael	Holt, VIC	ALP
Chalmers, Dr James Edward	Rankin, QLD	ALP
Champion, Mr Nicholas David	Wakefield, SA	ALP
Chester, Hon. Darren	Gippsland, VIC	NATS
Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie	Bendigo, VIC	ALP
Christensen, Mr George Robert	Dawson, QLD	NATS
Ciobo, Hon. Steven Michele	Moncrieff, QLD	LP
Clare, Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Cobb, Hon. John Kenneth	Calare, NSW	NATS
Coleman, Mr David Bernard	Banks, NSW	LP
Collins, Hon. Julie Maree	Franklin, TAS	ALP
Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin	Charlton, NSW	ALP
Coulton, Mr Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	NATS
Danby, Hon. Michael	Melbourne Ports, VIC	ALP
Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC	Isaacs, VIC	ALP
Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, QLD	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Ellis, Hon. Katherine Margaret	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Entsch, Hon. Warren George	Leichhardt, QLD	LP
Feeney, Hon. David	Batman, VIC	ALP
Ferguson, Mr Laurie Donald Thomas	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Fitzgibbon, Hon. Joel Andrew	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Fletcher, Hon. Paul William	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Frydenberg, Hon. Joshua Anthony	Kooyong, VIC	LP
Gambaro, Hon. Teresa	Brisbane, QLD	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Giles, Mr Andrew James	Scullin, VIC	ALP
Gillespie, Dr David Arthur	Lyne, NSW	NATS
Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald	Moore, WA	LP
Gray, Hon. Gary, AO	Brand, WA	ALP
Griffin, Hon. Alan Peter	Bruce, VIC	ALP
Griggs, Mrs Natasha Louise	Solomon, NT	CLP
Hall, Ms Jill Griffiths	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Hartsuyker, Hon. Luke	Cowper, NSW	NATS
Hastie, Mr Andrew	Canning, WA	LP
Hawke, Mr Alexander George	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick	Fowler, NSW	ALP
Henderson, Ms Sarah Moya	Corangamite, VIC	LP
Hendy, Dr Peter William	Eden-Monaro, NSW	LP
Hogan, Mr Kevin John	Page, NSW	NATS
Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald	Petrie, QLD	LP
Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, VIC	LP
Husic, Hon. Edham Nurredin	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Hutchinson, Mr Eric Russell	Lyons, TAS	LP
Irons, Mr Stephen James	Swan, WA	LP
Jensen, Dr Dennis Geoffrey	Tangney, WA	LP
Jones, Mr Ewen Thomas	Herbert, QLD	LP
Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick	Throsby, NSW	ALP
Joyce, Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard	New England, NSW	NATS
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, QLD	AUS
Keenan, Hon. Michael	Stirling, WA	LP
Kelly, Mr Craig	Hughes, NSW	LP
King, Hon. Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, VIC	ALP
Laming, Mr Andrew	Bowman, QLD	LP
Landry, Ms Michelle Leanne	Capricornia, QLD	NATS
Laundy, Mr Craig	Reid, NSW	LP
Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin	Groom, QLD	LP
Macklin, Hon. Jennifer Louise	Jagajaga, VIC	ALP
MacTiernan, Hon. Alannah Joan Geraldine Cecilia	Perth, WA	ALP
Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Markus, Mrs Louise Elizabeth	Macquarie, NSW	LP
Marles, Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, VIC	ALP
Matheson, Mr Russell Glenn	Macarthur, NSW	LP
McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis	Riverina, NSW	NATS
McGowan, Ms Catherine, AO	Indi, VIC	IND
McNamara, Mrs Karen Jane	Dobell, NSW	LP
Mitchell, Mr Robert George	McEwen, VIC	ALP
Morrison, Hon. Scott John	Cook, NSW	LP
Neumann, Hon. Shayne Kenneth	Blair, QLD	ALP
Nikolic, Mr Andrew Alexander, AM, CSC	Bass, TAS	LP
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John	Gorton, VIC	ALP
O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond	Flynn, QLD	NATS

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
O'Dwyer, Hon. Ms Kelly Megan	Higgins, VIC	LP
O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen	Hotham, VIC	ALP
Owens, Ms Julie	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Palmer, Mr Clive Frederick	Fairfax QLD	PUP
Parke, Hon. Melissa	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Pasin, Mr Antony	Barker, SA	LP
Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas	Moreton, QLD	ALP
Pitt, Mr Keith John	Hinkler, QLD	NATS
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Porter, Hon. Charles Christian	Pearce, WA	LP
Prentice, Mrs Jane	Ryan, QLD	LP
Price, Ms Melissa Lee	Durack, WA	LP
Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice	Sturt, SA	LP
Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Ripoll, Hon. Bernard Fernando	Oxley, QLD	ALP
Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Robb, Hon. Andrew John, AO	Goldstein, VIC	LP
Robert, Hon. Stuart Rowland	Fadden, QLD	LP
Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Roy, Mr Wyatt	Longman, QLD	LP
Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell	Berowra, NSW	LP
Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine	Lalor, VIC	ALP
Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig	Maranoa, QLD	NATS
Scott, Ms Fiona Meryl	Lindsay, NSW	LP
Shorten, Hon. William Richard	Maribyrnong, VIC	ALP
Simpkins, Mr Luke Xavier Linton	Cowan, WA	LP
Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn	Casey, VIC	LP
Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Southcott, Dr Andrew John	Boothby, SA	LP
Stone, Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy	Murray, VIC	LP
Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth	Gilmore, NSW	LP
Sukkar, Mr Michael	Deakin, VIC	LP
Swan, Hon. Wayne Maxwell	Lilley, QLD	ALP
Taylor, Mr Angus James	Hume, NSW	LP
Tehan, Mr Daniel Thomas (Dan)	Wannon, VIC	LP
Thistlethwaite, Hon. Mr Matthew James	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Thomson, Hon. Kelvin John	Wills, VIC	ALP
Truss, Hon. Warren Errol	Wide Bay, QLD	NATS
Tudge, Hon. Alan Edward	Aston, VIC	LP
Turnbull, Hon. Malcolm Bligh	Wentworth, NSW	LP
Vamvakinou, Ms Maria	Calwell, VIC	ALP
van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes	Forde, QLD	LP
Varvaris, Mr Nickolas	Barton, NSW	LP
Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier	Bonner, QLD	LP
Watts, Mr Timothy Graham	Gellibrand, VIC	ALP
Whiteley, Mr Brett David	Braddon, TAS	LP
Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth	Robertson, NSW	LP
Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien	Denison, TAS	IND

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Williams, Mr Matthew	Hindmarsh, SA	LP
Wilson, Mr Richard James	O'Connor, WA	LP
Wood, Mr Jason Peter	La Trobe, VIC	LP
Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George, AM	Hasluck, WA	LP
Zappia, Mr Antonio	Makin, SA	ALP
Zimmerman, Mr Trent	North Sydney, NSW	LP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
AUS—Katter's Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen

TURNBULL MINISTRY

Title	Minister
Prime Minister	Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
Minister for Indigenous Affairs	Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion
Minister for Women	Senator Hon. Michaelia Cash
Cabinet Secretary	Senator Hon. Arthur Sinodinos AO
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Michaelia Cash</i>
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Digital Government</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Mitch Fifield</i>
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter Terrorism</i>	<i>Hon. Michael Keenan MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>Hon. Alan Tudge MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>Senator Hon. James McGrath</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Productivity</i>	<i>Hon. Dr Peter Hendy MP</i>
<i>Assistant Cabinet Secretary</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Scott Ryan</i>
Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)	Hon. Warren Truss MP
Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects	Hon. Paul Fletcher MP
<i>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</i>	<i>Hon. Michael McCormack MP</i>
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Hon. Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Trade and Investment	Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP
Minister for International Development and the Pacific	Hon. Steven Ciobo MP
Minister for Tourism and International Education	Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
<i>Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck</i>
Attorney-General (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator Hon. George Brandis QC
Minister for Justice	Hon. Michael Keenan MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</i>
Treasurer	Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Minister for Small Business	Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer MP
Assistant Treasurer	Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer MP
<i>Assistant Minister to the Treasurer</i>	<i>Hon. Alex Hawke MP</i>
Minister for Finance (Deputy Leader of Government in the Senate)	Senator Hon. Mathias Cormann
Acting Special Minister of State	Senator Hon. Mathias Cormann
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources	Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Anne Ruston</i>
Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science (Leader of the House)	Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia	Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Science</i>	<i>Hon. Karen Andrews MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Innovation</i>	<i>Hon. Wyatt Roy MP</i>

Title	Minister
Minister for Immigration and Border Protection	Hon. Peter Dutton MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</i>
Minister for the Environment	Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Acting Minister for Cities and the Built Environment	Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health	Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Minister for Aged Care	Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Minister for Sport	Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Minister for Rural Health	Senator Hon. Fiona Nash
<i>Assistant Minister for Health</i>	<i>Hon. Ken Wyatt MP</i>
Minister for Defence	Senator Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Hon. Stuart Robert MP
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</i>	<i>Hon. Stuart Robert MP</i>
Acting Minister for Defence Materiel and Science	Senator Hon. Marise Payne
<i>Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Hon. Darren Chester MP</i>
Minister for Communications	Senator Hon. Mitch Fifield
Minister for the Arts	Senator Hon. Mitch Fifield
(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	
Minister for Employment	Senator Hon. Michaelia Cash
Minister for Social Services	Hon. Christian Porter MP
Minister for Human Services	Hon. Stuart Robert MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs</i>	<i>Senator Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>Hon. Alan Tudge MP</i>
Minister for Education and Training	Senator Hon. Simon Birmingham
Minister for Vocational Education and Skills (Deputy Leader of the House)	Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP
Minister for Tourism and International Education	Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck

Each box represents a portfolio. Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the Ministers of State Act 1952.

SHADOW MINISTRY

Title	Shadow Minister
Leader of the Opposition	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science	Senator the Hon. Kim Carr
Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on State and Territory Relations	Senator Katy Gallagher*
Shadow Minister for Women	Senator Claire Moore
Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)	
<i>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Jacinta Collins</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Hon. Michael Danby MP</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Hon. Ed Husic MP</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting with Digital Innovation and Startups</i>	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Senator Sam Dastyari</i>
<i>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</i>	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Terri Butler MP</i>
Deputy Leader of the Opposition	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment	
Shadow Assistant Minister for Trade and Investment	Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate	Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy
Shadow Minister for Defence	
Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence	Hon. David Feeney MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Hon. David Feeney MP
Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC	Hon. David Feeney MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</i>	<i>Gai Brodtmann MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport	Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Shadow Minister for Cities	
Shadow Minister for Tourism	
Shadow Minister for Northern Australia	Hon. Gary Gray AO MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government	Hon. Julie Collins MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</i>	<i>Hon. Alannah MacTiernan MP</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Western Australia</i>	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
Shadow Treasurer	Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Shadow Minister for Small Business	Michelle Rowland MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP
Shadow Minister for Competition	
Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation	Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Shadow Assistant Minister for Productivity	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</i>	<i>Hon. Ed Husic MP</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</i>	<i>Julie Owens MP</i>

Title	Shadow Minister
Shadow Minister for Finance Manager of Opposition Business (House)	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Shadow Special Minister of State	Hon. Gary Gray MP
Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Water</i>	Hon. Mark Butler MP <i>Senator the Hon. Lisa Singh</i>
Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry Shadow Minister for Vocational Education Shadow Assistant Minister for Higher Education <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</i>	Senator the Hon. Kim Carr Hon. Sharon Bird MP Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP <i>Nick Champion MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Communications	Hon. Jason Clare MP
Shadow Attorney-General Shadow Minister for the Arts Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (House) Shadow Minister for Justice <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General</i> <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</i>	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP Hon. David Feeney MP <i>Graham Perrett MP</i> <i>Hon. Michael Danby MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Education Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Shadow Assistant Minister for Education <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education</i> <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Youth</i>	Hon. Kate Ellis MP Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP <i>Julie Owens MP</i> <i>Senator Sam Dastyari</i>
Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Shadow Minister for Rural Affairs	Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP
Shadow Minister for Resources	Hon. Gary Gray AO MP
Shadow Minister for Health Shadow Minister for Ageing Shadow Minister for Mental Health Shadow Minister for Sport Shadow Assistant Minister for Health <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</i> <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</i>	Hon. Catherine King MP Hon. Shayne Neumann MP Senator Katy Gallagher Dr Jim Chalmers MP Stephen Jones MP <i>Tony Zappia MP</i> <i>Senator Helen Polley</i>
Shadow Minister for Families and Payments Shadow Minister for Disability Reform Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness Shadow Minister for Human Services Shadow Minister for Carers Shadow Minister for Communities <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</i> <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Child Safety and Prevention of Family Violence</i>	Hon. Jenny Macklin MP Senator Katy Gallagher* Senator the Hon. Doug Cameron Senator Claire Moore <i>Senator Carol Brown</i> <i>Terri Butler MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism <i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</i>	Hon. Richard Marles MP Michelle Rowland MP <i>Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>

Title	Shadow Minister
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs	Hon. Shayne Neumann MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Shadow Minister for Employment Services	Hon. Julie Collins MP

Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.

* Senator Katy Gallagher's appointment to the Shadow Ministry is effective from 1 November 2015. Senator the Hon. Jan McLucas will serve as Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness and Shadow Minister for Mental Health, and represent the Shadow Minister for Northern Australia, the Shadow Minister for Health, the Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, the Shadow Minister for Sport and the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs in the Senate until 31 October 2015.

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Thursday, 11 February 2016

The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Transport Security Amendment (Serious or Organised Crime) Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (09:02): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Organised crime is a serious threat to our security and prosperity as a nation. Recently, the Australian Crime Commission estimated that organised crime cost the Australian economy \$36 billion annually. In 2013, this government made a commitment to ensuring that people with a history of serious or organised crime would not receive a security clearance to work at our Australian airports and seaports. In 2015, the government also committed to comprehensive action on the drug ice. The National Ice Taskforce, in its final report released late last year, estimated that there are currently well over 200,000 Australian users of the crystalline form of methamphetamine (commonly known as the drug 'ice'). The National Ice Taskforce identified as a clear priority the need for targeted and coordinated law enforcement efforts to disrupt the supply of ice, specifically by protecting the aviation and maritime environments against organised crime by strengthening the eligibility criteria for the aviation and maritime security identification card schemes, also known as the ASIC and MSIC schemes.

The Transport Security Amendment (Serious or Organised Crime) Bill 2016 will amend the Aviation Transport Security Act 2004 and the Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Act 2003 (which I will henceforth refer to as the aviation and maritime acts). This bill is aimed at reducing criminal influence at Australia's airports and seaports by strengthening the ASIC and MSIC schemes.

The aviation and maritime acts establish a regulatory framework to safeguard against unlawful interference with the aviation and maritime sectors. Unlawful interference is defined in the aviation and maritime acts as conduct that threatens the safe operation of aircraft and airports, ports and ships, and thus, behaviour which may cause harm to passengers, crew, aviation and maritime personnel and the general public or damage to property. This bill will create an additional purpose to prevent the use of aviation and maritime transport or offshore facilities in connection with serious or organised crime. This additional purpose will only apply in relation to the administration of the ASIC and MSIC schemes and not the regulation of the aviation and maritime sectors more broadly.

The ASIC and MSIC schemes are important security measures that are intended to protect Australia's aviation and maritime sectors. The ASIC and MSIC schemes require all persons, including foreign nationals, who require unescorted access to secure aviation and maritime areas, including offshore oil and gas facilities, to undergo a comprehensive background check. The background check includes a criminal history check, a national security assessment and for non-citizens an immigration status check.

Under the current system, if an applicant for an ASIC or MSIC is convicted of a wide range of serious and minor aviation or maritime security-related offences, this person is likely to be given an adverse security status. The list of aviation and maritime security relevant offences is contained in the Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005 and the Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Regulations 2003 (or the aviation and maritime regulations), and is collectively known as the eligibility criteria for the ASIC and MSIC schemes. Applicants who receive an adverse security assessment are ineligible to be granted an ASIC or MSIC. However, they can make an application to the secretary of the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development for discretionary approval to be granted an ASIC or MSIC, depending on the nature of the offence (known as the discretionary card process).

The amendments proposed by the bill provide the regulatory framework to enable the introduction of new eligibility criteria for the ASIC and MSIC schemes. The new criteria better targets serious or organised crime, and will ensure that people with a history of serious or organised crime do not receive clearance to access secure areas

and exploit our aviation and maritime sectors in connection with serious or organised crime. However, modelling suggests that the new eligibility criteria will also result in more people with minor criminal offences being found eligible for an ASIC or MSIC, without needing to go through the discretionary card process.

The new eligibility criteria will be set out in the aviation and maritime regulations and introduce additional categories of offences such as offences under anticriminal organisation legislation, foreign incursion and recruitment offences, illegal importation of goods and interfering with goods under Border Force control.

Currently, the same offence can have different implications depending on whether you are applying for an ASIC or MSIC. The bill will provide for the alignment of the eligibility criteria in the aviation and maritime regulations, so that the same criteria apply across the aviation and maritime sectors.

The bill also promotes greater consistency between the aviation and maritime acts. The change will also result in greater transparency and accountability, with express regulation-making powers, for the administration of the ASIC and MSIC schemes, rather than the current reliance on general regulation-making powers in the act. Specifically, the bill will amend the maritime act to clearly provide for all persons seeking to access secure maritime zones to undertake background checks. This change in the bill seeks to reinforce and clarify the legislative basis for a system that is already in place in administering the ASIC and MSIC system, and reflects existing provisions in the aviation act.

This bill will continue to give effect to Australia's international obligations under the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code. It will also improve the government's ability to combat transnational and domestic organised crime.

Importantly, this bill implements one of the government's key strategies in the fight to combat the drug ice. In December last year, the National Ice Taskforce, chaired by Ken Lay APM, released its final report, which made 38 recommendations across five priority areas. One of these recommendations, adopted by the government in its response to the final report, was to continue to protect the aviation and maritime environments against organised crime by strengthening the eligibility criteria for holders of ASICs and MSICs. This bill will give effect to this element of the government's comprehensive package of action across the five key priority areas, which together are intended to tackle Australia's ice problem head on.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Single Appeal Path) Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC) (09:11): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to present legislation that will give effect to one of the Veterans' Affairs 2015 budget measures.

Since coming to office, the government has honoured its strong commitment to recognise the unique nature of military service.

The amendments made by the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Single Appeal Path) Bill will simplify and streamline the appeal process under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act by changing to a single appeal path.

Currently, a claimant may seek a first tier right of review through either, but not both, the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission or the Veterans' Review Board.

They then have a second tier right of review to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Following the changes in this bill, the first tier right of review will be to the Veterans' Review Board.

The second tier right of review to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal is not changing.

The chair of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission has given a written undertaking to the Senate that, upon an application to the Veterans' Review Board being received, there will be an internal commission review under section 347 of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. The internal review will operate in the same way as the section 31 review process under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986, which is

well understood by ex-service organisations and has been operating successfully for nearly two decades. This undertaking has been described in the explanatory memorandum to this bill.

The purpose of the change to a single appeal path is to avoid the complexities that claimants currently face relating to different time limits for the submission of appeals, different times taken to determine the review and the choice they make impacting on entitlement to legal aid and the awarding of costs for appeals that progress to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

The original proposal to change to a single appeal path has been modified so that the Administrative Appeals Tribunal will have, under certain circumstances, the discretion to order costs in favour of the claimant in relation to proceedings before the tribunal in respect of reviews of Veterans' Review Board decisions.

By limiting the circumstances under which AAT may award costs in favour of the claimants, the amendments also seek to ensure that this extension does not discourage the presentation of evidence at the earliest possible opportunity and the full participation and cooperation of claimants in the decision-making process.

As a contiguous matter to the substance of this bill, over the years ex-service organisations have sought an increase in the prescribed maximum amount for reimbursement of medical reports obtained by applicants seeking review by the Veterans' Review Board. Acknowledging this amount has devalued since its introduction in 1994, I commit to review this amount—currently \$467.50.

Additionally, since 1 January 2015 the Veterans' Review Board has been conducting a trial of alternative dispute resolution in the NSW-ACT registries. The initial results have been positive. This trial is now being fully evaluated and I will examine the potential for a national rollout of alternative dispute resolution at the Veterans' Review Board.

These amendments will introduce a single pathway of appeal under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act but will also ensure that the right decision is made at the earliest possible time at the lowest possible appeal level.

I want to acknowledge the very strong support for these changes from the veteran and ex-service community and the support in writing from the RSL and ADSO, the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Dairy Produce Amendment (Dairy Service Levy Poll) Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (09:16): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As requested by the Australian dairy industry, this bill amends the Dairy Produce Act 1986 to remove the requirement to conduct a dairy levy poll every five years.

In 2015, Australian Dairy Farmers, the industry representative body, and Dairy Australia, the industry research and development corporation, conducted an independent review of the dairy levy poll process. This review followed concerns raised by dairy levy payers about the cost of conducting a levy poll every five years, which is estimated to be up to \$1 million.

Under the current legislation, the dairy industry must hold a poll every five years to seek the views of levy payers on whether changes should be made to the rate of the dairy services levy. This levy is used to fund the activities of Dairy Australia.

Dairy Australia's role is to help farmers adapt to a changing operating environment and strive for a profitable and sustainable dairy industry. This is achieved through investment in research, development and extension activities, and provision of services such as farm-accounting systems, dairy industry forecasts and information on farm management practices.

The recommendations of the review supported a flexible, streamlined poll process where a dairy levy poll would only be held if a change in levy rate is being considered. The amendments in the bill will provide industry with more flexibility around the levy poll.

In September 2015, Australian Dairy Farmers, with the support of Dairy Australia and the state dairy farming organisations, embarked on a program of national consultation with dairy levy payers regarding the proposed changes to the dairy levy poll process.

Every Australian dairy levy payer was contacted at least once through the consultation period and provided with opportunities to provide feedback on the proposed changes, including by formal vote.

Consultation with dairy levy payers has demonstrated support to simplify the levy process.

The bill complements the government's commitment to creating a stronger business environment for the agricultural sector by reducing unnecessary regulatory costs imposed on individuals, businesses and community organisations.

Subordinate legislation will be developed which: removes the five-year timing of the dairy levy poll; establishes an advisory committee to consider the dairy levy rate every five years; and includes a mechanism for Group A members of Dairy Australia to request a poll if they disagree with the levy poll advisory committee's decision not to convene a levy poll. This proposal must be supported by at least 15 per cent of levies paid by Group A members.

Dairy Australia has two categories of membership. Group A members are dairy farmers who pay the dairy levy. Membership is voluntary and entitles members to vote at Dairy Australia annual general meetings. Group B membership covers the peak dairy organisations. Australian Dairy Farmers and the Australian Dairy Products Federation are Group B members of Dairy Australia.

This approach is deregulatory, reduces red tape and focuses levy funds on growing an even more productive and profitable dairy industry.

The issue of levy payer polls has also been investigated by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee in the report of its inquiry into agricultural levies. The government will provide a response to the committee's report in due course.

The dairy industry has been in a structural transition since deregulation in 2000. The number of farms has more than halved from 12,896 in 1999-2000 to around 6,100 in 2014-2015 and volatility in the international market and a weaker Australian dollar have challenged the industry.

Despite these challenges, the dairy industry has improved productivity and has demonstrated a willingness to embrace new technologies and implement new farming practices.

The bill will enable the dairy industry to redirect investment into research and development priorities to allow the industry to progress its goals of profitability, productivity and sustainability. The dairy industry is affected by an appreciating dollar as well.

I would also like to note someone—and he is with us here at the moment—who came from the dairy industry, whose family were in the dairy industry—that is, the trade minister, Andrew Robb. I am absolutely certain that the minister in his time has maintained an incredible interest in and been a great benefactor of the dairy industry. On behalf of the dairy industry, I would like to thank Minister Robb for the work that he has done. Minister Robb is certainly a person who has been lauded far and wide in all circles and at every country barbecue. All the best and God bless, mate.

Debate adjourned.

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In Australia, offshore petroleum exploration and development is regulated by a title system, authorising titleholders to carry out petroleum operations in Commonwealth waters. Governing the regulation of these offshore petroleum operations is the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 (OPGGS Act) and related acts and regulations. These instruments ensure that operations are carried out in a safe and environmentally sustainable manner.

A petroleum title granted under the OPGGS Act is defined as a 'prior usage right' for the purposes of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) if the title was in force immediately

before the proclamation of a Commonwealth reserve that overlaps the title area. If a title is a 'prior usage right', activities may be carried out under the title without being subject to the requirements of the EPBC Act relating to a reserve, or of any management plan for the reserve. Under the EPBC Act, it is stipulated that such a usage right may only be extended or have its term renewed with the consent of the Minister for the Environment.

A recently identified administrative oversight, extending back to 2008, has led to certain petroleum titles being renewed or extended under the OPGGS Act without the Minister for the Environment's consent being sought as is required under the EPBC Act. Without a curative legislative amendment, there is a question as to the validity of the relevant extension and renewal title decisions made under the OPGGS Act.

The amendments contained in this bill therefore seek to validate the affected titles. Despite the aforementioned administrative oversight on affected title decisions, the government is confident that all petroleum titleholders have undertaken their activities in good faith. They have continued to be subject to, and compliant with, the stringent environmental management requirements set out under the OPGGS Act and environment regulations.

Australia applies international leading practice in the regulation and management of environmental, safety and integrity risks associated with offshore petroleum operations.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Aged Care Legislation Amendment (Increasing Consumer Choice) Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Ms Ley**.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health, Minister for Sport and Minister for Aged Care) (09:25): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Aged Care Legislation Amendment (Increasing Consumer Choice) Bill 2016.

This bill creates the legislative framework for a more flexible, consumer-driven aged-care system that will support older people to remain living at home.

The bill gives effect to the first stage of the home care reforms announced in the 2015-16 federal budget. These changes will provide consumers with more choice and control over their aged-care services and will reduce red tape and regulation for aged-care providers.

The government has a strong track record when it comes to aged care. The changes announced in the budget will build on our successful record and set the platform for future reform.

The 2011 Productivity Commission *Caring for older Australians* report identified a number of key weaknesses of the system including that:

- it is difficult to navigate;
- services and consumer choice are limited; and
- coverage of needs, pricing, subsidies and user co-contributions are inconsistent or inequitable.

The government has implemented a range of measures to address these weaknesses. Some were started by the previous government but this government has landed those changes and is going further—moving the system more in line with the Productivity Commission's recommendations.

In January this year, the government transferred responsibility for the Aged Care Complaints Scheme from the Department of Health to the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner, creating a more independent and robust approach to complaints.

The My Aged Care gateway is now supporting people to find their way through the aged-care system and, despite some initial difficulties, is now undertaking assessments for those people who need low-level care at home. It is increasing its role as the one identifiable place to go for information and support to access aged care.

There has been significant work on addressing inconsistency and inequity in the pricing and consumer contributions to the cost of their care.

The Productivity Commission's report also stated that competition, rather than extensive regulation, is the key to delivering innovative, quality services and an efficient and sustainable system.

The government maintains a crucial role in setting policy and in ensuring safety and compliance in aged-care services. It will be there to promote equity of access, support vulnerable consumers and address market failures.

But it has to be acknowledged that market-based solutions and consumer choice will increasingly be the driving force for quality, value and performance of services.

Moving to a market-based system, giving consumers choice and allowing providers to run their own services, is central to the government's plan for the future.

The aged-care system in Australia is world class and well respected, with high-quality services that reach and meet the needs of a very diverse population.

However, as people are living longer thanks to better health and better health care, the demands on Australia's aged-care system are changing. Older Australians want more choice and control over the care they receive. This demand will only increase as the 'boomers' and future generations require aged-care services.

The government's home care reforms, announced in last year's budget, place a priority on ensuring choice and flexibility for older people.

At the same time, the reforms will strengthen the aged-care system to provide high-quality and more innovative services through increased competition.

These reforms will occur in two stages.

From February 2017, home care packages will be allocated to assessed consumers who will be able to direct government funding to the provider of their choice. Even more importantly, they will have the flexibility to change their provider if they want to, or if they move to another area or state they can take their package with them.

Once these changes come into effect, providers will no longer have to apply for home care places through the Aged Care Approvals Round, significantly reducing red tape for businesses. The changes will also establish a consistent national approach to prioritising access to care.

This major policy change has received widespread support and the implementation arrangements for these changes have been developed in close consultation with stakeholders, including the National Aged Care Alliance and groups representing consumers, carers and providers.

Building on this first stage, the government has also clearly signalled its intention to move to a single, integrated care at home program. The second stage of home care reform will further simplify the way that services are delivered and funded, and will commence from July 2018.

This next stage provides an opportunity to explore different funding and service delivery models, including activities that promote restorative care and firmly put the consumer in control.

The integration of the Home Care Packages Program and the Commonwealth Home Support Program in the second stage will be informed by extensive consultations with stakeholders.

This bill implements stage one of the reforms and will amend the Aged Care Act 1997 and the Aged Care (Transitional Provisions) Act 1997 in three main areas.

Firstly, funding for a home care package will follow the consumer, rather than be allocated to an approved provider in respect of a specific location or region.

This will mean that the consumer will be able to take their package to any approved home care provider—consumers will no longer be restricted to providers that hold an allocation of places. Put simply, a consumer will be able to choose a provider that is suited to them. For example, a consumer may seek a service that specialises in providing linguistically and culturally appropriate care.

A home care package will also be portable for the consumer, if they wish to move location or change to another provider. The package, including any unspent funds, will move with the consumer to their new provider.

Approved providers will no longer have to apply through the Aged Care Approvals Round to receive home care places. This will reduce red tape and also increase competition in the sector by allowing more consumer focussed and innovative providers to expand their businesses to meet local demand and consumer expectations, including the needs of consumers with dementia and other special needs. The current Aged Care Approvals Round is expected to be the last round in which home care places are allocated to approved providers.

Secondly, there will be a consistent national system for prioritising access to subsidised home care. Currently, waiting lists for packages are managed by individual providers. There can be significant variation in the waiting periods for packages across Australia with no systematic way of measuring or addressing the variation.

Once these changes take effect, there will be a national system to manage eligible consumers' access to packages within My Aged Care—the aged-care gateway. An effective national system is important to ensure there is equitable access to care, as the total number of home care packages will continue to be capped in line with the aged-care planning ratio.

A prioritisation process will take into account the relative needs and circumstances of consumers, determined through the comprehensive assessment undertaken by an aged-care assessment team, and the time that a person has been waiting for care. A consumer who has been assigned a package will be supported by My Aged Care with referrals to approved providers, but the consumer will be able to choose which provider delivers their care.

There will be close monitoring of the new arrangements to ensure that all consumers, including people with special needs and those living in rural and regional areas, are able to access care in an equitable manner.

Thirdly, the bill will reduce the red tape associated with providers becoming approved under the Aged Care Act 1997.

Increasing the number of approved providers able to provide home care will support greater choice for consumers, but importantly, new providers will still be required to demonstrate their suitability to become an approved provider. All approved providers will need to meet the Home Care Standards and will be subject to independent quality reviews.

The legislative criteria for assessing the suitability of a person to become an approved provider will be streamlined and made more contemporary. This will encourage new providers, including some current Commonwealth home support providers, to enter the home care market, expanding the choices available to consumers.

Existing providers of residential and flexible care will also be able to become providers of home care through a simple 'opt-in' process. This recognises that these providers have already been tested against the standards required to become an approved provider of aged care.

Further, an organisation's approval to provide home care will commence as soon as the approval is granted and will not lapse. Currently, approved provider status lapses after two years if the provider does not hold an allocation of places. To streamline the approved provider arrangements, the lapsing provision will be removed across all care types—home care, residential care and flexible care.

The changes proposed in this bill are an important step in reforming the home care system so that older Australians have more choice and flexibility to receive care and services at home.

The changes also lay the platform for future aged-care reforms, which will be informed by, and developed with, the Aged Care Sector Committee Roadmap for Reform. I thank the House.

Debate adjourned.

Business Services Wage Assessment Tool Payment Scheme Amendment Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (09:35): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will amend a payment scheme established by the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool Payment Scheme Act 2015 to give effect to a recently mediated settlement agreement between the Commonwealth and the applicant in a representative proceeding in the Federal Court of Australia, notably, *Duval-Comrie v the Commonwealth of Australia* VID 1367 of 2013.

The Australian government provides funding to Australian Disability Enterprises through the Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth) to provide employment support to workers with moderate to severe disability. There are 184 organisations supporting around 20,000 workers with a disability in such employment across Australia. Australian Disability Enterprises can use wage tools prescribed in the Supported Employment Services Modern Award 2010 to determine pro-rata wages for workers with a disability. The Business Services Wage Assessment Tool, the subject of the Federal Court proceeding, was previously used for this purpose.

In 2012, two supported employees were found through a separate Federal Court decision to have experienced indirect discrimination under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), because their wages were assessed under the BSWAT, as it is known, based both on their productivity and on their competency. That case was that of *Nojin v the Commonwealth of Australia* [2012] FCAFC 192. The subsequent representative proceeding on behalf of a limited group of supported employees was then initiated and remains before the Federal Court of Australia. The applicant seeks compensation calculated on 100 per cent of the difference between the wages that they were paid and the wages that they would have been paid if their wage was assessed based only on their productivity.

As a result of the earlier Federal Court decision, the Commonwealth government established the BSWAT payment scheme in 2015. That has been providing one-off payments to eligible supported employees of Australian Disability Enterprises at 50 per cent of the difference between the wages they were paid and those they would have been paid if the competency component was not included in the wage assessment tool.

The Commonwealth's payment scheme is helping to provide certainty to supported employees that their employers will not close because of concerns about employers' perceived liability for discrimination following that earlier Federal Court case.

With very significant Commonwealth support, Australian Disability Enterprises are commercial businesses employing people with a disability who need support to stay in paid work. These supported employees are paid wages using revenue from the enterprises' business activities.

As I have previously noted, there are 184 organisations operating Australian Disability Enterprises in communities across Australia—supporting 20,000 workers with moderate to severe levels of disability.

Supported employees are paid a pro rata wage. Their wage is determined using a wage tool stipulated in the Supported Employment Services Award 2010, which is one of the 'modern awards' in the Commonwealth workplace relations system.

The BSWAT was one of these wage tools. It was developed by the Australian government in consultation with stakeholders, and was first introduced and used in 2004. The tool determined a worker's wage by measuring both their productivity and competence in performing a job.

On 16 December 2015, the Commonwealth announced that a settlement had been agreed with the applicant in the representative proceeding that I previously described before the Federal Court. The amendments in this bill will give effect to that settlement agreement.

If the bill is passed, and the terms of the settlement are agreed by the Federal Court, the representative proceeding will be dismissed by the consent of the parties, and the supported employees concerned, along with their families and carers, will move into a more stable and certain future.

Importantly, the terms of the settlement are supported by advocates for supported employees, including the AED Legal Centre and People with Disability Australia, who have called the agreed settlement terms 'an outcome which sees wage justice for these employees'.

In essence the parties have agreed to settle if, amongst other matters, the payments under the current scheme are calculated at 70 per cent of the difference between the wages the person was paid and the wages that would have been paid if only the productivity component of the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool had been used, that is, not including the competency component of the wage tool. Under the current legislation, a person receives 50 per cent of the difference.

If employers had used productivity-only tools, it is clear that the average wage of supported employees would have been higher than it was. But this undoubtedly would have raised employers' labour costs. It is equally clear that some employers would have responded by reducing employees' work hours or, in some instances, stopping the hiring of some or all supported employees. In these circumstances, the important benefits of supported employment for the employees, their families and carers may well have been lost.

The parties have taken initial steps to overcome these difficulties, and have reached a payment amount that is fair to all of the relevant eligible supported employees.

The payment scheme is currently available to all intellectually impaired persons. While the representative proceeding represents a more limited class of employees, the Commonwealth, via this bill, will ensure that everyone eligible under the scheme will receive the increased payment. The government has taken this approach to maximise equity between all supported employees with intellectual impairment who were paid wages under the tool.

Under the current act, eligible supported employees will only be paid if they register for the scheme by 1 May 2016. The bill extends the dates for registering, applying for, and accepting the payments from the payment scheme by 12 months so that people have more time to register for the scheme and submit applications.

The bill will also allow a deceased person's legal personal representative to engage with the payment scheme on their behalf. The money that would have been paid to the person, if the person were eligible and the offer accepted, will now be able to be paid to the person's estate.

Importantly, the bill does not remove or weaken any of the protections of the current act. For example, the payment scheme retains key features that provide supported employees with choice and control, including:

- the applicant's ability to nominate a person to assist them with the payment scheme and be appointed as a nominee;
- the ability for applicants to seek both internal and external reviews on decisions regarding eligibility and offers of payment;
- extension of times for acceptance periods and review periods; and
- the ability for applicants to seek financial counselling and legal advice, at the Commonwealth's expense.

Any person who has already received a payment under the BSWAT payment scheme that has been operating to date will receive a top-up to reflect the increased payments provided for by this bill. Importantly, people will not have to make an application or seek further legal advice or financial counselling to receive these top-ups.

The bill will still allow people who have received offers of payment to seek independent legal advice and financial counselling. The bill will amend the legal advice provision to make it voluntary, rather than mandatory. This will remove a current impediment to participants receiving their payments quickly, especially for those who receive small offers of payment. Access to these services continues to be funded under the scheme by the Commonwealth, and the government remains committed to ensuring people are able to make informed choices about their access to payments as a result of previously having been assessed using the BSWAT.

People receiving payments under the scheme are eligible for a lump sum in arrears tax offset. In addition, a payment under the scheme does not count as income, which therefore reduces the risk of affecting an individual's social security entitlements. Payments under the scheme are also indexed to the CPI for each year in the period relating to payment amounts. The effect of these protections and enhancements is to effectively increase the payments made to individuals under the payment scheme.

To ensure people participating in the scheme have the opportunity to provide further information regarding their applications or raise any other concerns, the scheme will have both internal and external review processes.

Self-evidently, any person who previously was assessed using the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool has a choice as to whether they receive a payment from the tool payment scheme. As with the resolution of any legal claim, if a person accepts an offer under the payment scheme, they will be unable to make any further claims in relation to the assessment of wages under the BSWAT.

As part of the representative proceeding's processes, class members have had an opportunity to opt out. As agreed with the other parties to the representative proceeding in the Federal Court, if this bill is passed by the parliament and the terms of the settlement are accepted by the court, the proceeding will be dismissed.

Nonetheless, this bill does not take rights away from individuals who are not members of the class currently before the Federal Court. As long as they have opted out of the proceeding, or never joined it, people who disagree with the terms of the settlement or the payments offered by the payment scheme can choose to continue to pursue their rights through the courts. Neither the current payment scheme nor the proposed amended form of the scheme prevents an individual from making that choice.

The Commonwealth government is of the firm view that the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool payment scheme provides the most favourable outcome for employees, their families and carers by removing any perceived liability on the part of supported employers Australian Disability Enterprises, who have previously used the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool to assess the wages of their employees.

Self-evidently, it is both economically rational and socially just to support employment for people with disability. This bill is one of many measures that the government has put forward to achieve that important goal. These include funding to help the supported employment sector transition to new wage arrangements as well as funding to help the sector become more independent, sustainable and robust.

Together with the improved payment scheme proposed in this bill, these additional measures demonstrate the government's commitment to help to ensure all forms of employment for people with disability are widely available and secure for the future.

Debate adjourned.

Corporations Amendment (Life Insurance Remuneration Arrangements) Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer) (09:46): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Corporations Act 2001 to better align the interests of financial advisers who sell life insurance products with their customers.

These changes represent the most significant improvements to the remuneration arrangements in the life insurance advice sector since the Wallis inquiry recommendations were implemented in 2001. Consumers will benefit through improved quality of advice as a result of better alignment of interests, more product choice and enhanced competition.

In introducing this bill today, the government is implementing part of our broader commitment to ensure better consumer outcomes from the financial system, as set out in our response to the financial system inquiry. It is the product of hard work and compromise on the part of industry and I want to publicly acknowledge and thank industry for their constructive engagement. This bill shows what can be achieved when government, business and the community come together to achieve better outcomes.

In particular I wish to specifically acknowledge the work of the Association of Financial Advisers, the Financial Planners Association and the Financial Services Council in working together to achieve sensible reforms for the sector which will benefit consumers through the provision of more appropriate advice and the long-term sustainability of the industry.

Following the final industry agreement of 6 November, 2015 the industry participants had this to say. 'Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer the Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer's statement on the way forward on life insurance advice is a positive first step in lifting industry practices to improve consumer outcomes,' Financial Services Council Director of Policy Andrew Bragg said.

The Financial Planners Association (FPA) welcomed the industry package as 'fair and workable'. The CEO of the FPA, Mark Rantall, said: 'The government's final response to proposals by the Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP on 25 June and the FSI report is a sensible outcome that will help ensure the sustainability of the industry.'

The Association of Financial Advisers (AFA) acknowledged the timely and collaborative approach taken by the government. The AFA National President, Deborah Kent, said that the 'reduced clawback to two years brings greater fairness to the Life Insurance Framework' and is 'a great relief for our members, particularly those that own and operate small businesses'.

The life insurance sector is vital for our community. Life insurance advisers and product manufacturers help to provide essential financial security to Australians and their families.

However, recent inquiries have shown that there is a clear need for change in the sector.

A series of reports have identified a range of worthwhile improvements. These include a review by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, otherwise known as ASIC, the Trowbridge Review commissioned by industry and the financial system inquiry.

The ASIC review identified a strong correlation between high up-front commissions in the sector and poor consumer outcomes, including high lapse rates where consumers are 'churned' through products. It also found unacceptable levels of poor quality advice. In particular, 45 per cent of cases reviewed involved high up-front commissions and failed to meet the relevant legal standard for financial advice. This is unacceptably high.

Rather than acting unilaterally, the government asked industry to respond to ASIC's review so that any reforms were driven by industry itself. The result of this was the Trowbridge review, chaired by industry veteran John Trowbridge.

The Trowbridge review recommended a package of reforms, including a significant reduction in up-front commissions to limit the inducement for advisers to write new products for consumers where the circumstances did not warrant it.

Further, the financial system inquiry recommended a complete abolition of the up-front commission model for life insurance advice and a move to level commissions where the commission is the same for each year of the policy.

Following these reports, the government called on industry to propose sensible and genuine reform. This bill gives effect to the reform package agreed by the life insurance industry.

While the Corporations Act broadly bans conflicted remuneration in the financial services sector, life insurance policies held outside of superannuation have been largely exempted from this ban.

This bill removes this exemption for life insurance advisers receiving conflicted remuneration, such as commissions, for life risk insurance products and enables ASIC to determine the acceptable benefits payable for these products.

Under the approach in the bill, advisers will be able to receive commissions for selling life risk products provided certain requirements are met. These requirements are twofold. Firstly, there is a cap on the size of allowable commissions. Secondly, they relate to 'clawback' arrangements, where a share of the up-front commission will be paid back to the life insurer by the adviser if a policy is cancelled or the premium is reduced.

I will take each of these requirements in turn.

Up-front commissions, which provide an incentive for advisers to replace or 'churn' policies where there is no consumer benefit, will be significantly scaled down. ASIC will have the power to ensure that they will go from an average of 110 to 120 per cent of the premium today to a maximum of 60 per cent from 1 July 2018. Permitted ongoing commissions will be set at a maximum of 20 per cent.

Currently, up-front commission arrangements are the dominant remuneration arrangement, covering 82 per cent of advisers.

It is not uncommon for up-front commission models to pay 110 per cent of a new business premium to an adviser with an ongoing commission of around 10 per cent.

By reducing the incentive to churn clients through products, the new commission structure will provide a better basis for advisers to give advice that is more appropriate to consumer needs.

Commissions will be calculated on the total of the product premium, the product fee and frequency loading (the extra amounts charged to make payments on a monthly basis rather than annually).

No caps will be placed on level commissions, or on fee-for-service arrangements as these arrangements are less likely to result in an incentive to provide inappropriate advice.

The second element of permissible payments relates to clawback requirements.

Clawback refers to the share of the up-front commission that will be paid back to the life insurer by the adviser if a policy is cancelled (or the premium is reduced). Under the industry agreement an insurer may recover 100 per cent of a commission from the financial adviser in the first year of a policy and 60 per cent in the second year.

The clawback provisions will significantly reduce the incentive for advisers to unnecessarily replace policies after the expiration of the first year of the policy. At the same time, advisers will not be required to pay back the full amount of the up-front commission earned if the policy lapses in the second year of the policy.

The government has responded to industry concerns about ongoing business viability by moving from a three-year to a two-year clawback period. However, through these reforms the government is ensuring that there are strong incentives to prevent replacement of policies where there is no consumer benefit.

The bill gives ASIC the power to create an instrument which covers acceptable commissions and clawback amounts. The government acknowledges that the final form of the instrument is a matter for ASIC, as the independent regulator.

Payments made to advisers by insurers on or after the commencement day come under the new legislation. The new legislation also applies to payments made to advisers under policies entered into before the commencement day but where the product is issued after the commencement day, subject to a three-month grace period.

The bill contains provisions which grandfather certain payments. These provisions are consistent with those introduced as part of the Future of Financial Advice laws and allow certain arrangements to continue to be subject to attract the current commission levels.

These legislative changes strike the right balance between protecting consumers and recognising the need for ongoing business viability and industry stability.

The government believes that consumer interests will be best served by a competitive life insurance sector which delivers products appropriate to consumer needs and includes both small and large participants.

Being such a significant reform to the sector, government understands that it is important for business to have time to adapt to this change. That is why there are transitional provisions which scale down the maximum permissible up-front commission over three years.

Following a four-week consultation period on the draft legislation, over 20 submissions were received. I thank people for their views and for taking the time to contribute to the development of this legislation during this time and part of the earlier reviews.

Industry also has a role to strengthen the quality of advice and insurer practices. The Financial Services Council will develop a life insurance code of conduct to set best practice standards for insurers. In addition, the life insurance industry will develop a new industry standard to widen approved product lists to broaden the choice of products available to consumers.

ASIC will undertake a review of the reforms in 2018. If this 2018 review does not identify significant improvement in product churn and the quality of advice, the government will move to mandate level commissions, as was recommended by the financial system inquiry. The bill enables ASIC to collect necessary information from industry to monitor and enforce the reforms, including in electronic form.

ASIC will also conduct a broader review of statements of advice. The objective of this review, which will commence in the second half of 2016, is to make disclosure simpler and more effective for consumers, as well as assisting advisers to make better use of these documents. The review will also consider whether the disclosure of adviser remuneration could be made more effective, including through prominent up-front disclosure of commissions. The government will look favourably at any recommendations to achieve these aims.

The full details of the amendments are contained in the explanatory memorandum. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Tax Laws Amendment (Norfolk Island CGT Exemption) Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer) (09:58): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the income tax laws to implement improvements to Australia's tax laws.

This bill will provide a full capital gains tax (CGT) exemption on assets held by Norfolk Island residents, to assist the Norfolk Island community in transitioning into Australia's mainstream taxation system.

On 14 May 2015, the parliament passed the Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Act 2015 ending decades of uncertainty for the residents of Norfolk Island. The Australian government will integrate Norfolk Island with mainland social security systems, including access to Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Immigration, customs and quarantine services will also be extended from 1 July 2016.

Norfolk Island residents will begin to fully apply the mainstream taxation system to all of their income for the first time and gain access to a broad range of Australian government programs to help improve vital infrastructure and other community assets.

Following further consultation with the community, it was found that a historical lack of formal documentation for asset sales, as well as cultural practices relating to inheritance assets, are likely to inhibit the legislated application of CGT in some instances. To address these concerns, this bill will provide a full CGT exemption on assets held by Norfolk Island residents prior to 24 October 2015, the day after the exemption was announced.

This exemption will apply to those Norfolk Island assets that were exempt from CGT before Norfolk Island was fully brought within Australia's mainstream tax system. Similar to the treatment of assets when CGT was first introduced in Australia in 1985, these assets will continue to be exempt until a CGT event happens (for example, the asset is sold).

The CGT exemption demonstrates the government's commitment to actively and regularly engage with the Norfolk Island community to ensure all residents have significant input into their future governance, including through the Norfolk Island Advisory Council.

This exemption is part of a broader reform package which addresses longstanding issues facing Norfolk Island, which were explored in a royal commission, numerous reports, 12 parliamentary inquiries and submissions over a 35-year period.

The Australian government is committed to delivering the broad reform package with a focus on economic growth and prosperity for Norfolk Island.

Unlike any other community of its size, Norfolk Island has been required to deliver its own local, state and federal services since 1979. Asking a community of around 1,800 people to deliver federal functions (such as immigration, quarantine and customs, social services and taxation), and state and local government services, is neither appropriate nor sustainable.

The reality is much infrastructure on Norfolk Island is in poor condition, the health system will be improved by better delivery of health and aged-care services and many laws will be modernised to reflect those in other Australian jurisdictions.

This is why the government is putting in place the necessary structural reforms to improve service delivery and boost economic growth, whilst preserving the island's culture and local representation through concessions such as the CGT exemption in this bill.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Norfolk Island community to progress these important reforms.

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

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Publications Committee

Report

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (10:02): I present a report from the Publications Committee. Copies of the report are being placed on the table.

Report—by leave—agreed to.

Privileges and Members' Interests Committee

Report

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:03): In accordance with standing order 216, on behalf of the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests, I present the report concerning the registration and declaration of members' interests during 2015.

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

Agriculture and Industry Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (10:04): Mr Speaker has received advice from the Chief Government Whip notifying of a change in the membership of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer) (10:04): by leave—I move: That Mr Tehan be discharged from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry and that, in his place, Ms Marino be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Criminal Code Amendment (Firearms Trafficking) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (10:05): In continuation, I support measures to make the firearms owners more robust and thorough, but the registration of firearms to licensed owners should be made less bureaucratic. Given that some 90 per cent of firearm related crimes are committed with unlicensed firearms, the focus of law enforcement should be directed at clamping down on the estimated 260,000 illegal firearms in Australia. Legitimate shooters support tough legislation to prevent illegal firearms from being brought into the country.

In summary, I am strongly in support of this legislation, which will be effective in combating the illegitimate use of firearms by setting a mandatory minimum sentence of five years imprisonment for firearms trafficking offences and doubling the existing maximum penalty to 20 years imprisonment or a fine of 5,000 penalty units or both. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:06): Back on a cold winter's night on 25 June 2009, a hardworking truck driver named Bob Knight—a resident of Canberra's northern suburb of Macgregor, an employee of TNT and a truck driver of some 40-plus years experience—left for Sydney, as he had done many times, at about 5 pm in the evening. He drove up the Hume Highway, as countless other truck drivers do. He had his white prime mover towing along a B-double behind him. He got to Sydney, transferred his trailer around and started to head back home to Canberra.

In doing so, he was driving along Milperra Road, a road very well known to my constituents, a road that I would have driven on thousands of times. He was heading south and west along Milperra Road and he went past the big Bunnings warehouse there on the right-hand side. He came up to Bankstown golf course on the left-hand

side and Bankstown Airport on the right-hand side. On the south-west corner of Bankstown Airport, at the intersection of Milperra Road and Henry Lawson Drive, there is a KFC, an ALDI and a car park. At about 10 pm at night Bob Knight was driving along Milperra Road, taking his B-double back to Canberra, doing nothing other than a hard day's work, as millions of other Australians do—getting on with their business, adding value to the economy, being good people.

It is said of Bob Knight that he was a good bloke. It is said that he laughed and he knew all the best jokes. He was happy-go-lucky.

There was another side to Sydney on that night. A couple of young people were having a fight at Bankstown Centro, the shopping centre. The dispute escalated and they called their mates, as they do, and they ended up going to have a fight at the KFC car park on Milperra Road. Instead of bringing their fists, as they had done in the past, these gangs brought illegal firearms with them, and they started to randomly shoot at each other. One of those bullets fired in that gunfight travelled from the KFC car park. It went 120 metres, passing through trees and across six lanes of traffic, and it struck Bob Knight in the head as he was simply driving up to that intersection.

The paramedics attended, but they said that he had little chance, having suffered a horrific gunshot wound to the head. A stray bullet from the reckless gunfight of a group of hoodlums in a car park 120 metres away claimed his life.

There was not only the effect it had on his family. First of all, there was the effect on his wife of such a tragic death of someone just going about their everyday work. In an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* his son was quoted as saying:

Every time I see a similar truck go by I look in to see if dad is driving ...

His daughter said:

I don't think I've ever really hated anyone before. It just eats away at me ...

His wife, to whom he had been married for over 40 years, was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and was admitted to a psychiatric hospital about nine months after her husband had been killed. His daughter said:

I had not only lost my father but the mother I knew and loved had begun to disappear ...

All she kept repeating was, 'That bloody bullet—how does a bullet go through trees, across six lanes of traffic and kill my husband like it did?'

This is not just an isolated incident in Sydney. We know some statistics. In just a two-year period from January 2012 nearly two dozen people died from illegal firearms and another 100 were injured in shootings across Sydney. These illegal firearms can only come into the country one way, and that is through the illegal importation. We need to send a very loud and very clear message to our judiciary and to the public at large that this parliament is not going to tolerate such lawlessness and such gun crime in our suburbs.

Bob Knight's wife also said:

He was a very caring person, he cared for the other bloke.

It is about time that we as politicians started caring for the 'other bloke', the hardworking citizens of this country who are doing nothing other than getting on with their jobs and yet who are at risk of a stray bullet from a gunfight by hoodlums and villains. That is why I support this legislation.

This legislation, the Criminal Code Amendment (Firearms Trafficking) Bill 2015, will bring in a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment for five years for trafficking firearms and firearm parts within Australia under division 360 of the Criminal Code. Mandatory minimum sentences are tough, but we cannot allow the gun crime that is currently going on in Sydney to continue. We need to take a strong stance. We need to send a strong message. Additionally, this bill will increase the maximum penalties to imprisonment for 20 years or a fine of 5,000 penalty units or both. We need to send the loudest possible message that we can from this parliament that we are taking a very strong stance about those that are involved in the illegal importation of firearms. I do not want to see another Bob Knight. Our citizens in our community of Sydney deserve to be able to go about their business without the risk of being hit by a stray bullet as Mr Knight was.

I commend the minister on his strong stance on this issue. I hope that members of the Labor Party, especially members for electorates in Western Sydney, where most of the gun crime occurs, think carefully before they vote against this bill. We need to send the strongest message. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism) (10:15): I thank all members who have made a contribution to this important debate on the Criminal Code Amendment (Firearms Trafficking) Bill 2015. The coalition at the last election made a commitment to the Australian people that we would implement tougher laws for gun related crime. Illegal firearms are an ongoing threat to the Australian community. The Australian Crime Commission conservatively estimates that there are

more than one-quarter of a million long-arms and 10,000 handguns within the illicit firearms market. Although there is no single individual or group which dominates the trafficking and supply to this illicit market, we know that the illegal use and possession of firearms is a significant element in organised criminal activity.

Once illicit firearms cross our borders and enter our communities, they are used to facilitate violent crimes, fuelling violence, fuelling intimidation and fuelling fear on our streets. This bill will ensure that the punishment for those who traffic in firearms or in gun parts reflects the grave threat that they present. It will introduce a mandatory minimum sentence of five years imprisonment for offenders convicted of trafficking firearms or firearms parts under the Criminal Code Act 1995. This reflects the seriousness with which the government views gun crime, and the gravity of supplying firearms and firearms parts to the illicit market. That is why, in addition to the mandatory minimum sentence, the government is also doubling the maximum penalties for firearms trafficking from 10 years imprisonment and 2½ thousand penalty units to 20 years imprisonment and 5,000 penalty units. This is consistent with comparable offences in Commonwealth, state and territory jurisdictions. For example, similar offences for firearms trafficking in the ACT, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia have maximum penalties of 20 years imprisonment. Both of these measures are necessary to ensure that the serious offences of trafficking firearms within our country, and into and out of Australia, are matched by appropriate punishments. It is vital that we put in place substantial penalties on all trafficking offences, with the aim of preventing even one more firearm from entering the illicit market.

However, these mandatory minimum sentences for firearms trafficking are not without safeguards. In response to the findings of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, additional clarification regarding two matters has been provided by way of an addendum to the explanatory memorandum. Those matters were in relation to who bears the onus of proof in relation to the age of defendants, and the operation of the mandatory minimum sentences in relation to individuals with a significant cognitive impairment. In relation to the first matter, the addendum clarifies that the defendant bears an evidentiary burden regarding their age. If the defendant discharges that evidential burden, the prosecution must prove beyond reasonable doubt that the defendant is aged over 18. In relation to the second matter, the addendum confirms that, as there is no non-parole period attached to the mandatory minimum sentence, a court is able to take into account mitigating factors, such as cognitive impairment, in determining how long an offender will spend in custody. The addendum also points to relevant sections in the Criminal Code which protect people with a mental impairment from criminal responsibility.

The combination of mandatory minimum penalties and increased maximum penalties will send a strong message to the community that the illegal trafficking of firearms will not be tolerated and will act as a strong disincentive for people seeking to import firearms or firearms parts illegally into Australia. We do this because even one illegal gun entering the country can cause an enormous amount of damage, and we want to make sure that we are sending the strongest possible signal that we are not going to tolerate it. I present the addendum to the explanatory memorandum.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism) (10:20): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2015-2016

Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2015-2016

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:21): In my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2015-2016 and the Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2015-2016, I would like to start by remembering that, this week, we commemorate the 18th anniversary of the passing of the great economist Julian Simon. I will start with two of Julian Simon's quotes. The first is on what our most valuable resource is. He said:

The ultimate resource is people—especially skilled, spirited, and hopeful young people endowed with liberty—who will exert their wills and imaginations for their own benefits, and so inevitably they will benefit the rest of us as well.

Another of Simon's quotes is: 'Our species'—the human species—'is better off in just about every measurable way.' Just about every important long-term measure of human material welfare shows that there has been improvement over the decades and the centuries. Raw materials have become less scarce rather than more. The air in the US and other rich countries is irrefutably safer to breathe. Water cleanliness has improved. The environment is increasingly healthy and there is every prospect that this trend will continue.

I would like to set out the reasons behind Simon's prediction that our air pollution and our environment will continue to improve—by an error of logic that we are currently making here in Australia and that is being made across many parts of the world. When it comes to air pollution, we are actually targeting the wrong enemy. In doing so we are making our air pollution worse and we are taking steps that are costing lives in Australia today. I am talking about the lack of focus in this nation on what is called particulate matter pollution. Particulate matter is the mixture of solid particles or liquid droplets found in the air, such as dust, dirt, soot and smoke—often large enough to be seen by the naked eye. We hear about carbon pollution from many so-called environmentalists and those who supposedly care about the environment. They stand up and they rant and rave about carbon pollution. What they are generally referring to is carbon dioxide—that clear, odourless gas. If the member sitting at the table had sparkling mineral water rather than still water, those little bubbles coming out of it would be carbon dioxide. What I am talking about is the dust, the dirt and the soot that comes out of our diesel trucks, wood fires and also burning coal.

We should be most concerned about this because the World Health Organization has confirmed that fine particulate matter is carcinogenic. It causes cancer. That is the carbon pollution that we should be worried about. The World Health Organization confirmed that it is from diesel exhaust and it causes cancer in humans. They say the decision was unanimous and based on compelling scientific evidence. The pollution they talk about, from diesel trucks, buses and other diesel engines, is technically called 'particulate matter'. This is why we should be concerned.

There was a very interesting paper prepared by the National Environment Protection Council, authored by three most distinguished gentlemen: Associate Professor Geoff Morgan, Dr Richard Broome and Professor Bin Jalaludin. They found that, in 2008, 1,586 deaths were caused by fine particulate matter pollution in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane. That is more than 1,500 people a year who are dying in our major cities from fine particulate matter pollution. And yet we have this irrational concentration on carbon pollution being carbon dioxide. We need to refocus on what is killing people—thousands of Australians every year—and that is the real carbon pollution, which is fine particulate matter.

They also found that the figure of 1,586 deaths is based on an average fine particulate matter reading of 6.7 micrograms per cubic metre. They estimated that if we go from 6.7 to 10 micrograms per cubic metre it would lead to a 48 per cent increase in deaths. That is an extra 760 potential deaths from air pollution in our major cities. If we are to have emissions reduction schemes, they should be focusing on the reduction of emissions of particulate matter first, because that is what is causing deaths in our country today.

The figures for Sydney are just as dramatic. In Sydney, the learned professors and doctors estimated that 520 deaths occurred in the year 2008 based on 6.7 micrograms per cubic metre. The years of life lost are estimated to be 6,300. That is a reduction in longevity of 10 years for those people who died from exposure to fine particulate matter. By focusing our guns on carbon dioxide, we have implemented policies that have pushed up the price of electricity. So when we think that all these renewables are wonderful—which actually push up the price of electricity—what do consumers do?

In Western Sydney, in a cold winter, if a consumer finds that his electricity price is too high, he has options, and one of those options is to light a log fire—to simply burn wood. We know that the burning of wood to heat homes is the largest source of fine particulate matter in Western Sydney. So it comes as no surprise that, if we look at the fine particulate matter readings in Western Sydney, in Liverpool, we see that, since we had these large increases in electricity prices, the levels of fine particulate matter have increased. I note that, for the first time ever, in the last couple of winters there have been companies advertising on the radio selling wood. If you go to any garage in Western Sydney, they have bags of firewood lined up to sell.

So what do we see from the readings at Liverpool? These are the readings in micrograms per cubic metre. In 2010 the annual average in Liverpool was 6.4. In 2011 it was 5.9. These figures can bounce around a little bit, depending on underlying conditions—bushfires and things. But in 2012 we had a jump to 8.5. In 2013 we had a jump to 9.4. In 2014 that high level persisted at 8.6. And in 2015 we were at 8.5. Those levels above eight for Liverpool are actually above the standards that we have recently set through our national air pollution guidelines. We have set a limit: that no Australian should be exposed, on an annual average basis, to any greater than eight

micrograms per cubic metre. Yet in Liverpool, for all of the last four years, coinciding exactly with the increase in electricity prices, we have been above that level of eight.

If we continue on the rate that we are going, as shown in this report, as the learned professors have said, and if we lift the level from that 6.7 average up to 10, we are going to get a 48 per cent increase in deaths from fine particulate matter, from lung cancer and cardiovascular disease, in Western Sydney. We should be declaring a national emergency over this. There are more deaths from this than from the road toll. Yet this is something we can do something about. We should divert some of the funds—the multiple billions of dollars' worth of funds—that we are putting into reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and put those funds into reducing emissions of particulate matter, because particulate matter kills and it kills thousands of people across Australia. It kills over 500 people a year in Sydney.

That brings me to the intermodal project—one of the most flawed and poorly-thought-out pieces of infrastructure in our country at the moment. What they are proposing is this wonderful plan: 'Let's take the containers off the road and put them onto rail.' That's wonderful! But what happens? On the current locomotive fleet that we have transporting or shuttling containers around Sydney on that Southern Sydney Freight Line, there are no pollution controls whatsoever. So if you take a litre of diesel fuel that you would have burnt in a modern truck engine—a post-2007 truck engine; almost any truck that is less than 10 years old—and you burn that litre of diesel fuel in one of these locomotives, you will get something like 20-plus times more particulate matter spewed into the atmosphere. And that is the plan of the so-called environmentalists: 'Isn't this wonderful! We're going to take the containers off the road and put them on trucks.' That plan is flawed anyway, but I do not have the time to go into that. But they are saying: 'It is wonderful! We will produce less CO₂ because we will need less diesel fuel because steel on steel, on the rails, is more effective than rubber on the road.' And yes, you will get a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by doing that, but this plan will see an increase in particulate matter, not of 10 per cent, not 50 per cent but 1,000 per cent. For every container that we move from Port Botany out to Moorebank in Western Sydney, we are going to have a 1,000 per cent increase in particulate matter—a carcinogen that kills people—when we are already at a level above our national standard. That should not be an option.

If we are going to do this—if this is such a wonderful plan—then we must implement pollution control standards on those diesel locomotives that travel through our cities. There should be no alternative. They should have exactly the same pollution controls as trucks. Otherwise, it is completely counterproductive to try to do what is planned with the intermodal project. So I call on our environmental ministers, state and federal, to get together and introduce the protection standards on diesel—(*Time expired*)

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (10:36): At the outset, can I thank the member for Hughes for taking the jump due to my not being in the chamber at the exactly right moment. I very much enjoyed listening to his discourse on particulate matter—

Mr Craig Kelly: As always!

Dr LEIGH: as always.

It will please the House, I am sure, to know that the opposition does not intend to block supply. We will support the appropriation bills, which, combined, appropriate an additional \$2.2 billion for the 2015-16 financial year, largely to reflect measures in the 2015-16 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, as well as machinery-of-government changes resulting from the leadership change last year.

The 2015-16 MYEFO was released on 15 December last year, passing largely unnoticed. But those who were following it would have noticed that the deficit was again up. The deficit blew out by \$26 billion over the forward estimates—a blowout of \$120 million a day between the 2015-16 budget and the 2015-16 MYEFO. Most economists would not regard the No. 1 test of economic management as being a government's ability to deliver razor-thin surpluses. That is why independent economists would not generally regard a Treasurer like Peter Costello as being Australia's best ever Treasurer. Certainly, that is reflected in the fact that poor old Peter never managed to get the *Euromoney* award, unlike treasurers Keating and Swan.

The coalition before the election did make clear that they thought that debt and deficits were the signal test of economic leadership, so we need to assess them on that test. On that basis, net debt for 2016-17 is nearly \$100 billion higher than forecast in the 2013 Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook. Gross debt headed to \$550 billion by the end of the forward estimates. The Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook, prepared independently by the secretaries of Treasury and Finance during the election period, had the budget returning to surplus at the end of the forward estimates period. Now the budget is not forecast to return to surplus until 2020-21, largely on the back of bracket creep. Most of the work of returning the budget to surplus is due to bracket creep. Of course, if the Treasurer gets his way and is able to prevent bracket creep occurring, it is entirely possible that the return to surplus stage could blow out even further still, past 2020-21.

The economic context for all of this is absolutely critical. We need strong productivity growth in Australia in order to sustain living standards. Productivity growth in the years since the global financial crisis, in labour productivity terms, has been 2.4 per cent, which is around the level of the last 40 years—2.3 per cent. Labour productivity growth in the period since the global financial crisis has not been bad, but the question that many independent economists are asking is: where will the productivity growth of the future come from? A glass half full person might well point to some of the stimulatory factors: an Australian dollar at 70 US cents stimulating our exporters; the lowest global interest rates, if you believe in analysis by the Bank of England, in 5,000 years, stimulating businesses that seek to borrow; oil sitting at around \$30 a barrel, which is good for manufacturers and transport-intensive industries; and other potentially positive signs—bipartisan interest in innovation, for one.

But there is a range of concerns on the horizon. Net disposable income per capita has been falling for six consecutive quarters. We often make the mistake in this country of thinking that GDP is our best proxy for living standards. It is not. GDP is adjusted to account for inflation, but it is not adjusted to account for population growth. Given that Australia over the last decade has been enjoying more rapid population growth than any other country in the OECD, failing to adjust for population growth is going to skew the metrics of living standards. Adjusting also for income accruing to foreign shareholders gives you a more precise measure of living standards. Net disposable income per capita is a measure which I believe we ought to be paying considerable attention to in Australia. That is now down two per cent since 2013. Real living standards are down two per cent since the coalition government took office.

We have had a huge share market shock this year. The earnings outlook in the Australian share market is now lower than the earnings outlook on the British stock market, the US stock market or the Japanese stock market. ASX dividend payout ratios are now above 60 per cent. We want companies to be paying out dividends, but to be paying dividends of such scale suggests a degree of timidity among boards as to their potential for making productive investments. Geopolitical concerns are everywhere from the South China Sea to the Middle East. There is significantly higher inequality with inequality now sitting at about a 75-year high in Australia. We have the highest carbon emissions per person in the advanced world and there is too little innovation. Just six per cent of ASX 300 firms say that Australia is a 'highly innovative' nation. We need more innovation if we are to enjoy that long run of productivity growth.

We have had capital expenditure falling. The latest data from September 2015 showed the worst quarterly fall since records began in 1987. This is not just a drop in mining capital expenditure, which all of us expected to decline as we moved from the construction to the production phase of the mining boom; capital expenditure is falling right across the economy. This is entirely at odds with what we were led to expect when the coalition government won office. Former Prime Minister Abbott used to say that he would be an 'infrastructure Prime Minister' and yet we have had steady falls in public sector capital investment growth. We have consumer and business confidence far lower than when the Abbott-Turnbull government took office. Consumer confidence on the Westpac measure is eight per cent lower than it was in the 2013 election. The NAB business confidence measure is 10 points lower than at the 2013 federal election. The transition from the mining boom and the fall in commodity prices are reflected in the budget, but we do not see from this government a clear plan to deal with that. If Peter Costello can deal with an Asian financial crisis and Wayne Swan can deal with a global financial crisis, surely this government can deal with commodity prices being back where they were in the mid-2000s.

The 2015-16 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook also contained some new measures with which Labor has serious concerns. They include cuts to diagnostic imaging and pathology services, yet another instance of a coalition government keen to attack Medicare. We know the coalition have wanted to disband Medicare for many, many years. Elections from 1969 to 1993 were fought over sustaining Medicare. But then, ever since, at every turn the coalition have looked for ways to undermine and degrade Medicare. The 2015-16 MYEFO also locked in a range of budget decisions with which Labor has serious concerns—imposing \$100,000 degrees on university students, increasing the cost of pharmaceuticals, raising the pension age to 70, calling parents 'rorters' and 'double dippers', cutting back on paid parental leave and \$80 billion of cuts to schools and hospitals.

Labor have put forward a positive plan: a higher education policy that does not involve six-figure degrees; proposals to increase the number of students engaged in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; a suite of innovation policies which increase the pool of investment that is available for innovative firms; provide an entrepreneur's year for talented university graduates wanting to start a business; and funding the 'Your child. Our Future' plan, an investment to fully fund years 5 and 6 of the Gonski school reforms at a cost of \$4½ billion and total provision of \$37 billion over the decade.

We do this not because we believe that simply spending more money will invariably raise results but because we know that money spent in the right way will be able to get us past the educational challenges that Australia faces. Few countries in the world have gone backwards in PISA tests, but Australia has gone backwards in

science, reading and mathematics. This is deeply concerning to those of us on this side of the House. We realise that proper funding is a key instrument in ensuring that our schools can attract and retain great teachers. Teacher quality is at the heart of our productivity agenda and innovation agenda and should be supported by all those on both sides of the House. Our agenda reflects the necessity of making sure we have great teachers in all schools.

We have other policies to fund our commitments. Labor have plans that have been costed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office, the most rigorous independent costing authority in the nation. These policies ensure making multinationals pay their fair share of tax—

Ms O'Dwyer: You opposed it.

Dr LEIGH: rather than just talking about multinationals, not just coming up with thought bubbles, such as suggesting, 'Maybe we'll pay employees to snitch on their bosses,' but costed policies that will add to the budget bottom line. I heard the Assistant Treasurer at the table suggesting that somehow Labor opposed the coalition's uncosted multinational tax plan. We said on budget night that we would support it despite the fact that it had asterisks where the budget numbers should have been and despite the fact that when we asked the question, 'How much revenue will it raise?' the answer from the Assistant Treasurer and her colleagues was, 'Meh. We do not know. We've just got asterisks. That's the best we can do.' But we said we would support their plan. We only said that we wanted to ensure that there was tax transparency and that we thought it was appropriate for Australians to know how much tax big companies had paid.

Mr Champion: You had to rely on the Greens.

Ms O'Dwyer: We did. We had to rely on the Greens.

Dr LEIGH: In the end, as the Assistant Treasurer has acknowledged, the government had to do a deal with the Greens. They did a deal with the Greens to wind back tax transparency. Labor had always supported the government's multinational tax bill. We did not think it was as good as our proposal. Frankly, if you simply looked at how much the two would raise, you had \$7.2 billion versus 'Meh.' But we said we would support theirs. We simply thought that good laws needed to be accompanied by transparency and a well-resourced tax office. Instead, the government cut 4,700 jobs from the tax office.

Labor have also put forward careful plans on high-income superannuation. Unlike the government, which seems to think that it is okay having superannuation tax concessions increasing at four times the rate of the age pension, Labor believe that our superannuation tax concessions are not fair and are not sustainable. People in Australia with many millions in superannuation are receiving a bigger super tax concession than someone on the full-rate pension. It just is not fair that someone with multimillions in super is getting more government assistance than a full-rate pensioner.

Labor have proposed increasing the tobacco excise, a measure which would both add to the budget bottom line and have a health benefit. We proposed scrapping the Emissions Reduction Fund. We opposed the return of the baby bonus, which is a sop to the Nationals without strong economics behind it. Labor also oppose a costly marriage equality plebiscite, a position which was held by now Prime Minister Turnbull just before he won the leadership. A couple of years ago, Prime Minister Turnbull was critical of the Emissions Reduction Fund. He has been critical of a marriage equality plebiscite. But he has now flipped his position in order to maintain support in the party room.

I would be remiss if I did not say a few words about the particular impact of this government's decisions on the nation's capital. We read in the papers today about three major body blows being inflicted on Canberra as a result of the government's decision to move the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and to move staff from the Grains Research and Development Corporation. The decision to take these core staff out of the nation's capital again reflects this government's propensity to pork-barrel with Public Service jobs.

Through the Senate estimates process, we have heard of the impact on Canberra of the cuts to six national cultural institutions. I commend my Senate colleagues for extracting this information; it is like pulling teeth, but they have gotten that information for the public. These cuts, which amount to some \$20 million over four years, affect the National Museum of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Film and Sound Archive, the National Gallery of Australia, and the National Library. All of these institutions will have to find that money through job cuts and changes to operations.

The Museum of Australian Democracy director Daryl Karp has said:

We've cut fat, we've cut muscle, now we've got to look at what we stop doing.

The Museum of Australian Democracy is a beloved tourist site for school children around Australia wanting to learn about the history of Australian democracy. Its kids space is fantastic, and the ability to stroll through King's Hall and into the House and the Senate in Old Parliament House is an exceptional opportunity for Australian

students. But the cuts that have been inflicted by this government will make it more difficult for those institutions to do their jobs.

Then we have the cuts to the Taxation Office. My colleague Senator Deborah O'Neill has described the movement to Gosford of tax staff as 'a dirty deal done in the dark'. This fit-out is costing \$20 million, and it is being queried by residents of the Central Coast. The land on which the tax office building will be located had been earmarked for a performing arts school. Instead the government has decided that it will pork-barrel with Public Service jobs, despite the fact that the tax office has 6,200 desks sitting empty in its buildings around Australia and despite the fact that it is trying to get out of leases on office space equivalent to 2½ times the size of the Melbourne Cricket Ground's playing surface. Nonetheless, this government has decided to pork-barrel with public servant jobs, moving staff to the ATO and opening an office which Central Coast residents are concerned about and which the ATO still cannot tell taxpayers what it will be used for.

It takes a special talent to annoy both Canberra voters and Central Coast voters with your attempts to pork-barrel Public Service jobs. I say to this government: stop with the pork-barrelling. Just get on with good public administration. Recognise the value of a healthy Public Service and stick to your promise before the election not to cut more than 12,000 Public Service jobs. Instead, we have seen many more Public Service jobs go—another broken promise from this government.

The savage cuts to the Public Service of course inflict harm on the great city of Canberra—the OECD's most livable region—but they also do damage to our long-term capacity. As Laura Tingle's *Quarterly Essay* recently noted, the cuts to the institutional memory of the Public Service will harm the ability of public servants to make long-term decisions. That institutional knowledge is important in the area of economic policymaking, where there are now precious few public servants in place who recall the last Australian recession, but it is important in other areas too: that we have a Public Service that is able to give frank and fearless advice informed by what has worked in the past and what has not worked in the past.

What this government does not seem to realise is that the Public Service in Australia is relatively lean. When we look at the share of Australians employed in the public sector, it is lower than the OECD average. Australia's Public Service is not bloated. It does not need to be taken to with a meataxe. It does not need to be disrespected by ministers. We need a government which can respect the Public Service and which can offer them pay rises, at the very least, in line with inflation rather than inflicting real pay cuts at the same time as excessive job cuts. It seems that the only people that the government is willing to look after are those at the very top of the Public Service. I do not begrudge those at the top their pay packets, but it would be good if we had a government also willing to offer fair pay bargaining, as the Community and Public Sector Union has called for. The CPSU's claims are not excessive, and its desire to have good wage deals across departments reflects a recognition that well-paid public servants and a Public Service that has an appropriate number of jobs will deliver the programs for the government of the day. Those of my constituents who work in the federal Public Service are willing to work for either side of politics; they just ask that their work be properly respected.

There are significant economic challenges facing Australia, and we lack the economic leadership that the Prime Minister promised before coming to office. The tax debate is at sixes and sevens. The Prime Minister, who thought that he was going to have tax ideas, seems to have advanced no further than the 281 different proposals that he put on the table back in 2005. The share market is nearly back to where it was in 2005, and, frankly, Malcolm Turnbull's ideas on tax reform do not seem to have advanced very much further.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (10:58): The south-west of Western Australia is the jewel in the crown of the state's economic and cultural development, and the electorate of Forrest sits at the heart of the south-west. It is also an environmental icon, being listed as one of the world's international biodiversity hotspots.

Our major industries include: agriculture, beef and dairy cattle, sheep, fruit and vegetables, wine, and flowers; forestry, with both hard and softwoods; mining, with alumina, coal, mineral sands, tin and tantalite; fisheries; manufacturing; commerce; and tourism. The region is a tourism and holiday destination of choice for the majority of people from the Perth metropolitan area. This wide range of activity, coupled with the significant population growth of the region that exceeds both Western Australian state and national growth, has put significant pressure on the transport infrastructure of the region. Planning for, and investment in, road infrastructure has not been able to kept pace with the growth or demand in the South West, and this has been a long term trend.

There has been considerable investment in roads leading to the South West, as evidenced by the opening of the Perth to Bunbury Highway in 2009 and the extension of dual lanes on the Old Coast Road by the Court government in the nineties. It must be noted that, while these important assets have improved travel between the South West and Perth, the outcome is that even more traffic is entering and will continue to enter the South West, putting even more pressure on local roads. The completion of the Perth to Bunbury Highway was the first step in

meeting the road needs of the area. There is now dual lane access from Bunbury north to Perth and beyond. This has moved the traffic bottleneck on this service corridor from Mandurah through to the south of Bunbury and has highlighted the inadequate arterial roads that radiate traffic out from Bunbury. The Bunbury Outer Ring Road and the Port Access Road are being delivered. I attended the opening of stage 1 in 2010. Stage 2 was completed by 2013. However, funding has not yet been committed for the completion of this project, and it must be prioritised.

The Bussell Highway is the coastal route that runs from Bunbury to Augusta, servicing the major population centres of Capel, Busselton and Margaret River. It links these iconic tourist destinations to the world and is the freight corridor for wine, agriculture, forestry and manufacturing industries. It contains sections of single-lane and dual-lane road. The section from Busselton to Margaret River can now be identified as containing the most inadequate and, indeed, dangerous single-lane section, with high traffic loads and poor overtaking capacity. My vision for transport in the long term includes dual lanes on this road, all the way from Bunbury to Margaret River. I recognise that this represents significant additional investment in the region, but the time to start planning is now. I want to see both of these projects on the state and Commonwealth government's plan for development in the near future.

The government has, of course, been investing in the South West, and I would like to mention some of that investment now. The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup has received funding under round 2 of the Australian government's Bridges Renewal Programme to support vital upgrades of local bridge infrastructure. The Bridges Renewal Program underpins the government's support for local bridges, which are, particularly in rural and regional areas, vital in ensuring communities and local businesses have easy access to essential services, traffic movement and the efficient transportation of road freight. The project will be managed by the shire and involves replacing a one-lane timber bridge with a two-lane concrete bridge over the Preston River on Trevena Road. The government's Bridges Renewal Program will contribute \$750,000 to the project, which is expected to cost a total of \$1.5 million.

This project complements another excellent investment by this government under round 1 of the program, as construction is well underway on a new \$16.54 million bridge over the Collie River between Burekup and Roelands. The Australian government is providing \$8.27 million to the project. The timber Collie River bridge is 86 years old and nearing the end of its life, so this new concrete structure will help improve safety for all road users. An average of 6,000 vehicles use the Burekup bridge each day, of which around 18 per cent are heavy vehicles. These works include a new culvert across the Collie River floodway, realignment of around 1.7 kilometres of the South Western Highway between Russell Road and Raymond Road and modifications to existing intersections, including Raymond Road, Russell Road and Orchard Drive.

In the tourist area, Forrest has received a boost with the announcement of \$400,000 for local projects under the federal government's Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure Program. This investment in tourism infrastructure will help attract more visitors to Forrest and provide an even better traveller experience. It will also encourage them to stay much longer in what is the Margaret River region. The government contributed \$200,000 to the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association for their Lighthouses Project, which will see the restoration and redevelopment of eight buildings at the Cape Leeuwin and Naturaliste Lighthouse precincts. Another \$200,000 went to the Busselton Jetty Environment and Conservation Association for a project aimed at attracting international tourists to the region by updating the offerings of new, high quality marine experiences. There are a lot of those in this area. Of course, direct access to the tourism market via an expanded Busselton airport is still a critical investment requirement.

The South West has also been a major beneficiary of investment in communications, and I personally want to thank the Prime Minister for his support as the previous communications minister in getting 'better broadband sooner' to the South West. Unlike the Labor debacle, when we were looking at action at least a decade away, my region is today seeing towers going up and boxes being built on street corners. Around 7,300 premises in Greater Bunbury are a step closer to getting access to the National Broadband Network, with construction on the fibre-to-the-node network now underway. It is an important milestone, with greater certainty for homes and businesses as they prepare for fast broadband in the suburbs of Usher, Withers, South Bunbury, College Grove, Dalyellup, Gelorup, South Bunbury, and Carey Park. Final network designs are now complete, and we have already seen nbn co subcontractors in the streets of South Bunbury, laying out fibre and building cabinets to house the electronics needed to supply superfast broadband. Around 376 premises in South Dunsborough are also a step closer to getting access to the NBN, with construction on the fixed-wireless network now underway. The NBN national rollout plan to September 2016 identifies approximately 55,000 premises that will be able to connect to the NBN by means of fixed-line technology and an additional 3,320 premises getting access via wireless technology throughout the South West. This was an underserved area and now it is being prioritised, like many other underserved areas around Australia.

The Greater Bunbury region will now see a total of 32,300 premises accessing the NBN via fixed-line technology much sooner than previously thought. The Busselton region will also see a lot more people accessing the NBN, much faster than previously thought, with a total of 16,600 premises that will now receive fixed-line access to the NBN and another 2,500 to receive wireless access. In addition it was fantastic to see the interim satellite launched, the first of NBN's two world-class communication satellites. The launch of the Sky Muster satellite from South America means the wait for access to the National Broadband Network is almost over for many of the more remote homes and businesses in my electorate of Forrest.

The South West has also been a major beneficiary of the federal government's Mobile Black Spot Program. The Commonwealth has committed \$3 million towards 14 new or upgraded mobile phone towers in the Forrest electorate to provide mobile services in a number of, again, underserved areas in the South West, especially in more regional and remote parts. The program will see mobile phone towers constructed or upgraded in: Cundinup, Darradup, East Barrabup, Jalbarragup, and Nannup East in the Shire of Nannup; Baudin, Hamelin Bay, Leeuwin, Rosa Brook and Rosa Glen in the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River; Ferguson Valley and the Wellington Mill in the Shire of Dardanup; Lowden in the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup; and Yallingup East in the City of Busselton. In total, 75 of the 106 identified mobile black spots in the Forrest electorate will receive coverage under the program. The program includes funding from the Commonwealth, the state of Western Australia and service providers, and will see a total spend of \$15.52 million across the Forrest electorate. It is urgent that the WA state government signs up to this funding program as soon as possible.

The South West has seen additional funding granted to local governments throughout the South West as part of the federal government's Financial Assistance Grant program. Councils in the electorate of Forrest have, this week, received an additional \$2.2 million as the first quarterly payment for the 2015-16 financial year. This brings the total of the Financial Assistance Grant to the Forrest electorate to \$7.9 million for this financial year. This is in addition to the government's \$3.2 billion Roads to Recovery Program under which councils in Forrest received nearly \$1.5 million in March last year to spend on locally identified road projects—locally identified, which is really important—with a top-up of \$212,852 in May 2015.

The government has also committed a further \$200 million under the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program, providing councils with funding for important local infrastructure over five years from 2014-15. To further reduce crashes on Australian roads, an additional \$200 million had been committed by the government over the next two years under the \$500 million Black Spot Program, of which \$2.3 million was announced last year to fix seven dangerous black spots on South West roads. The approved projects are: a new shared pedestrian path on the Busselton Bypass in West Busselton; the installation of street lighting at the Forrest Highway-Hynes Road intersection in the Shire of Dardanup; the clearing of roadside hazards and upgrading road shoulders and signage on the Balingup-Nannup Road and Charley Creek Road in the Shire of Donnybrook; the installation of street lighting at the corner of Bussell Highway and Spurr Street in Capel; and improving the delineation through the roundabout at the intersection of Blair Street and Clarke Street in South Bunbury.

The coalition government has also funded support work to revive and maintain Indigenous languages in the South West. There was \$250,000 provided to the Noongar Language Centre to support the administration of an Indigenous language centre in Bunbury, and to undertake language revival activities on the Noongar language across the South West of Western Australia. This funding will support community-driven activities designed to address the erosion and loss of Indigenous languages across Australia. I went to the announcement and launch of this project recently in Bunbury and there was a great deal of excitement. I know that all of those involved in this project are going to work particularly hard to make sure that the Noongar language is not just recorded but also spoken and passed on to subsequent generations. It is something that the local community is particularly passionate about.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (11:12): I am very aware of the potential power of symbolic acts. One of my proudest days in this parliament was the day, in 2008, when the parliament delivered a national apology to the stolen generations. I have supported the RECOGNISE campaign to include recognition of Indigenous Australians as the First Australians in the Constitution. But at the end of the day symbolism can only take you so far. It is practical action which makes the difference.

It was distressing to hear, once again, in yesterday's *Closing the Gap* report just how little progress has been made in accomplishing employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians. We all know about the dignity of work and how there is nothing like it for building self-respect. But the goal of halving the employment gap by 2018 is not on track. Indeed, the Indigenous employment rate fell from 53.8 per cent in 2008 to 47.5 per cent in 2012-13. I believe it is a national disgrace that we have not done more to ensure Indigenous Australians have job opportunities.

In order to do better, we should look closely at what is going on in rural and regional Australia. When we do this we find that employers choose to bring in, and are allowed or even encouraged to bring in, temporary migrant workers. Let me give a classic example. In August 2009, Boys from the Bush Projects, an organisation working with remote Indigenous young people, said the following:

The employment of choice for many young Indigenous people living in remote communities is working in a meat processing plant, and they have proven to be very good workers. The Remote Area Work Scheme was developed specifically to help disadvantaged Indigenous youth living in remote communities, to gain employment in the meat processing industry.

However, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations favours the importation of foreign workers for these positions instead of young Aboriginal workers. This outcome is achieved by fast tracking the application of foreign workers.

The unnecessary protracted delay by the Department to provide modest funding for the Remote Area Work Scheme to recruit and support young Indigenous people into immediate employment in the meat industry ... makes mockery of the Australian Government's clearly defined stance on closing the unemployment gap for Aboriginal people.

In addition to the fast tracking of foreign worker applications, one of the approval requirements for a foreign worker, is that the applicant employer must have exhausted all efforts to employ available Indigenous people. Yet the department makes no check on whether or not the applicants have rejected an offer by the Remote Area Work Scheme to provide young Indigenous workers.

New regulations now see boners and slicers identified as skilled workers under the 457 visa process. Nearly all the young people placed into abattoirs by Remote Area Work Scheme were given the job of boning and slicing. These are tasks that can be mastered by these young people within a few weeks. This is exactly what some meat processors and overseas recruitment companies are doing. They are going to places like China and South Korea to run short training courses and then bringing these people into Australia as skilled and unskilled labourers.

The most glaring examples of how temporary work visa programs disadvantage Indigenous Australians in regional areas are the 457 visa program, especially the so-called 457 labour agreements, and the working holiday visa program, the 417 and 462 visas. The 457 labour agreements involve, in theory at least, some effort to establish that Australian workers are not available to do the work, though the systems are opaque and can be rorted.

The working holiday visa program does not even pretend to do that. In 2015 the World Bank did a study which concluded that employers' ready access to working holiday visa holders, backpackers and illegal foreign workers was 'undermining' demand for Pacific islanders under the seasonal worker pilot program. The World Bank report recommended that the government scrap or scale back visa extensions for backpackers who work on farms, and spend more money monitoring compliance with the rules.

This government needs to put the same effort into researching the adverse effects of all these visa programs on demand for Indigenous Australians and then remedying them. The findings will be the same. Labour agreements allow employers to access 457 visas for lower skilled foreign workers not eligible for the standard, or 'non-concessional', 457 visa program. These 'concessional' foreign workers are in semiskilled occupations or, where they are in skilled occupations, they have substandard English language skills or qualifications, or wages below the standard 457 minimum.

According to the latest Department of Immigration and Border Protection annual report, at 30 June 2015 there were 213 labour agreements in place and a further 29 agreements still to be finalised. Around 3,000 concessional 457 visa workers would have been working in Australia in mid-2015 under labour agreements—assuming they represent 2.9 per cent of all 457 visa holders, their share of total 457 visa grants. Many of these concessional 457 visa workers are doing jobs located outside the major capital cities, mainly in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. The vast majority are probably in regional or rural areas. Labour agreements operate in many sectors of Australian primary industry, including the meat, pork and fishing industries.

The meat industry is the most important for 457 labour agreements. For the past five years, around 1,000 so-called skilled meat workers have been employed at any one time on concessional 457s in Australia. At the end of March 2015, the figure was 900. Nearly all are from countries where English is not the first language. Around 85 per cent are from the Philippines or Brazil, with the rest mainly Vietnamese or Chinese. The partners of these 457 meat workers often also work for the same meat industry employer, so the real size of the 457 workforce in this sector is larger than the official figures suggest.

The Senate inquiry into temporary work visas has heard evidence that 457 meat worker numbers are declining because employers have found an even cheaper temporary foreign labour supply—417 visa holders from Korea and elsewhere are said to be replacing 457 meat workers because the 417s can be engaged as 'contractors' or ABN workers and paid below-award wages, often through labour hire companies. The 2015 joint investigation by the ABC's *Four Corners* program and Fairfax exposed some shocking examples of this practice.

In the first six months of 2015-16, 'skilled meat worker' is still one of the top 15 occupations for 457 visa grants in two Australian states—Queensland and South Australia. In South Australia, there were actually more 457 visa grants for 'skilled meat workers' than any other occupation. In Queensland, 'skilled meat workers' are ranked sixth by number of 457 visa grants.

According to the immigration department's guidelines on meat industry labour agreements, employers granted access to concessional 457 visas are meant to 'maintain a good record of training Australians through the provision of employment, training and career progression' during the three-year term of the agreement. The departmental guidelines do not even mention training or employing Indigenous Australians. I have not seen any published information from the department on what, if anything, has been achieved, or even tried, in terms of providing a foothold into stable employment for the first Australians, by employers of the 1,000 or so 457 meat workers over the last five years.

For all Australians, but especially for Indigenous Australians, the worst features of the working holiday visa program are probably the so-called second year working holiday visa and the coalition government's recent extension of work rights for working holiday visa holders in northern Australia. The second year working holiday visa is available to all 417 visa holders who do three months work in regional Australia in the agriculture, construction or mining industries. There has been huge growth in the number of 417 visa holders taking up the second year visa, especially in horticulture and other sectors of agriculture. Between 2005-06 and 2013-14, the number of second year 417 visas granted grew from just 2,700 to over 45,000. In 2014-15, visa grants fell to 41,000 but will rise again under this government's visa deregulation agenda. Over 90 per cent of these young foreign nationals do their work in the agricultural sector.

I endorse the CFMEU submission to the Senate inquiry into temporary work visas, which said:

... employers seeking access to WHM—
working holiday maker—

labour should not have the benefit of the state providing them with a form of 'forced labour' of temporary visa holders. That is what parts of Australian primary industry now have, with a captive workforce of 41,300 WHMs doing 88 days work in agriculture to gain their second 417 visa in 2013-14. That is equal to 13% of average total employment in Agriculture, forestry and fishing in that year of 310,000, as measured by the ABS. The percentage is even more significant, if considering only horticulture where most WHMs do their '88 days'.

What chance have Indigenous Australians got of finding regular seasonal work in agriculture when the Australian government is funnelling thousands of often desperate young foreign workers into the sector, with the incentive of getting a visa allowing another year's stay and work in Australia? There is no legal obligation on employers to even look for Australian workers before hiring foreign nationals on working holiday visas, and some subclass 417 visa holders will work for nothing just to get a visa for the second year.

The coalition government has two initiatives to extend work rights for working holiday visa holders in northern Australia. This area includes all of the Northern Territory and those areas of Western Australia and Queensland above the Tropic of Capricorn. The first has already been implemented and gives subclass 417 and 462 visa holders the right to work for 12 months with the same employer in five designated industries: agriculture, forestry and fishing; construction; mining; aged and disability care; and tourism and hospitality. The standard 417 or 462 visa limitation is six months with the same employer. The second initiative will enable subclass 462 visa holders to obtain a second year visa for the first time, by doing three months work in Northern Australia in the agriculture, tourism and hospitality industries.

I would like to hear from the government how these working holiday visa initiatives will help the employment prospects of Indigenous Australians in northern Australia. How does the government think that employers will respond to an increased labour supply of young foreign nationals, many desperate for work to stay in Australia? Does the government seriously believe that injecting this increased supply of temporary foreign labour into northern Australia will increase incentives for employers to hire and train Indigenous Australians? The government should table the independent assessment of the impact of these working holiday visa initiatives on the labour market opportunities for Indigenous Australians in northern Australia, which it should have commissioned. If it does not have one, it must explain why.

Instead of hand wringing about our failure to close the gap, the government needs to take practical steps on its temporary visa programs. On 457 labour agreements: especially in the meat industry there must be stronger measures and legal obligations to ensure that employers engage, train and retain progressively more Indigenous Australians over the life of these agreements and that, where there are problems, measures are instituted to address these, with government financial support.

On the 417 and 462 second year working holiday visa: the government should heed the recommendation of the World Bank report and scrap or scale back access to this visa, instead of expanding access, as it is recklessly doing. If the government were serious about improving the employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians, it would commission serious research to identify the full impact of its working holiday visa initiatives on the First Australians and act on the findings.

On the problem of foreign workers working in agriculture either with no valid visa or in breach of the visa conditions identified by the World Bank: the government must get serious about enforcing the employer sanctions provisions put into the Migration Act by the former Labor government. Only serious enforcement action and substantial financial penalties under the no-fault civil penalty provisions will effectively deter employers of illegal workers. At 30 June 2015 there had been no prosecution at all of any employer for the civil or criminal offences of the employer sanction provisions.

Finally, employers should make an annual contribution to a training fund for each 457 visa holder they sponsor. The money in this fund should go towards the training and employment of Indigenous Australians. I think Indigenous Australians are entitled to better than they have been receiving. The closing the gap report makes it clear that we are not making progress in relation to Indigenous employment. The steps I have outlined would enable us to make greater progress in relation to Indigenous employment.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (11:27): I appreciate this opportunity to reflect on the progress that we have made in my home state of Tasmania since the September 2013 election. We took a plan to the last election to support Tasmania's economic recovery after 16 years of Labor and Labor-Green government in Hobart and six years of Labor and Labor-Green government in Canberra, which regrettably had left my home state of Tasmania at the very bottom of national benchmarks when it came to things like employment. I am pleased to say that, whilst there is still a lot of work to do, the trends are indeed most encouraging.

Our plan is working, as evidenced by the national figures, and our job achievements in Tasmania testify to that. In December 2015 employment data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that 427,200 jobs had been created in Australia since we came to office. That is 427,200 more Australians who are earning a living, buying from local suppliers, paying taxes and generating the revenue that government needs for public policy priorities. That is 427,200 more families that are better off today than they were at the 2013 election. I am pleased to say that in 2015 national jobs growth was 10 times what it was under Labor during their last year in office. In fact, jobs growth in 2015 was the strongest calendar year growth for a decade.

In Tasmania the jobless statistics have improved even more dramatically since the 2013 election. When I went to the 2013 election the jobless rate in Tasmania was 8.6 per cent. I am pleased to say that 2½ years later, as a result of the policies of this government, it is now 6.6 per cent and we are no longer on the bottom of the national job statistics. Ten thousand full- and part-jobs have been created. I get a sense in my community that there is purpose and optimism everywhere that I go.

A good example of that is the Sensis Business Index, which last month confirmed that business confidence in Tasmania is the highest in the nation, with confidence among small and medium businesses having more than tripled. That is why we are investing so heavily in jobs and infrastructure packages that are aimed at generating even higher confidence, growth and investment. No-one can deny that we have led a significant turnaround in Tasmania's unemployment rate. No-one can deny that the strategic investments we have made in Tasmania will enable us in the longer term to benefit from the four bilateral and multilateral trade deals negotiated by our outstanding Minister for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb. I take this opportunity, in the aftermath of Minister Robb's recent announcement about his future, to congratulate him and to thank him for his great service to our nation.

When I talk about big investments in Tasmania, there are three things that I will mention—although there are more. There is a billion dollars for Tasmanian infrastructure. A large chunk of that, some \$400 million, will be for the Midland Highway, to make sure that that is a much better highway into the future. That translates into many hundreds of small projects, including, for example, the Kings Meadows Connector in my electorate of Bass, which was completed last year and now ensures that, during busy periods of morning traffic, cars are not backed up onto the Midland Highway. It has certainly made the Kings Meadows Connector a much safer part of the road system in my electorate. A billion dollars in infrastructure is certainly a long-term strategic enabler of Tasmania's future prosperity.

There is, of course, the \$203 million commitment that was made to enhance the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme and \$60 million in federal funding for tranche 2 irrigation schemes. When we add a \$30 million contribution from the Tasmanian state government and \$30 million from the private sector—people who are buying into these irrigation schemes—what you are going to see in the areas of these schemes, including one

at Scottsdale in my electorate of Bass, is 95 per cent water certainty. Tagged onto that, we have done a phase 3 power study, because, when you are talking about converting marginal farmland and marginal agricultural land to something more productive, the two key things that you need are reliable water and reliable phase 3 power. My hope is that when this tranche 2 irrigation scheme is completed at Scottsdale and the other four areas across the rest of Tasmania, we will indeed see significant growth in the productive capacity of our farms in Tasmania.

These investments that I have just mentioned are important because many of them will be located predominantly in Northern Tasmania, where we have competitive advantages like advanced manufacturing, forestry, agriculture and tourism. Tourism has been particular strong in the last couple of years. Later in my speech, I will mention some of the ways that we are trying to make northern Tasmania more of an entry point for our state. I am also actively supporting our major industries, like Bell Bay Aluminium, through reforms to the renewable energy target and repealing the damaging coastal shipping laws introduced under Labor and the Greens. That is because fixing Australia's coastal shipping collapse is becoming more and more critical each day, with two more operators recently withdrawing their Australian crewed vessels from domestic waters.

In the aftermath of Labor's disastrous 2012 coastal shipping laws, the coastal shipping fleet halved, with huge losses in the industry. The Productivity Commission received evidence from Bell Bay Aluminium, in my electorate of Bass, that their freight costs increased by 63 per cent in the aftermath of Labor's ill-considered coastal shipping laws, which—let's face it—were a gift to the MUA. The MUA said, 'Jump,' and those members opposite involved with the MUA said, 'How high?' Demurrage rates tripled. In fact, there has been a two-thirds decline in the carrying capacity of the major Australian coastal trading fleet. When the coalition left office in 2007, there were 30 major Australian trading vessels with a general licence. By 2014 the fleet had halved, to just 15 vessels. In addition, the number of vessels with a transitional general licence has dropped by more than half—from 16 to seven vessels—and, with the most recent decision by CSL, this has dropped further to six.

Put simply, the system that Bill Shorten brought in at the behest of his MUA masters is a disastrous failure that is hurting my home state of Tasmania. It is a disgrace that the coalition's coastal shipping reforms are being blocked in the Senate. Cargo is stuck on wharves, threatening Australian jobs in sectors that use shipping and disrupting entire communities. The Australian shipping industry is simply not competitive, and it is costing Australian jobs. That is why we will be bringing the coastal shipping legislation back into the parliament this year, and crossbench senators need to consider why they should continue to back a system which has seen such a marked decline in Australia's coastal shipping.

The coalition not only has articulated a vision about more local jobs and strategic investment for our future but also has good results to show from it. I am pleased to inform the House that much-needed resources have been won for my electorate of Bass so far. There is \$34 million for north-east freight routes, including the widening of Bridport Main Road from Dalrymple Road to the East Tamar Highway. Works will be undertaken on Emily Street, Edward Street and Waterhouse Road to facilitate the increasing number of heavy vehicles which will be accessing Bridport Main Road in this area. This region caters for substantial agricultural traffic, so these works are vital to improving the safety and productivity performance of the road network. Improving freight outcomes is important for existing Tasmanian businesses to remain competitive and to attract new business investments to our state.

There is so much other good news to highlight for my community. There is \$19 million in grants to the Launceston campus of the University of Tasmania. It is worth noting in particular a strengthening partnership between the university, the DSTO facility at Scottsdale and the Centre for Food Innovation, in particular in securing a microwave assisted thermal sterilisation machine for Scottsdale. That is something that I am advocating for very strongly.

There has been \$17 million in financial assistance grants provided to councils in my electorate. There has been a \$23 million funding injection for elective surgery, improving access to elective surgery in my electorate of Bass. There has been \$10 million to save the John L Grove rehabilitation centre. This cleaned up a Labor mess, because this centre was opened with much fanfare in August 2013 just before the 2013 election but no provision was made in the Tasmanian state budget by the Giddings government for the ongoing operation of this centre. I was very pleased in May last year to announce that we had secured \$10 million to stop the John L Grove centre from closing and give the Tasmanian government time to make sure they could integrate the centre's operation into the broader Tasmanian health system.

There has been \$9 million in Bass from the Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package; \$6 million for North Bank redevelopment, turning an unattractive industrial site into something that is much more family friendly; \$5.7 million provided for Roads to Recovery funding; \$3 million in innovation and investment grants to local business to expand their productive capacity and create more local jobs; \$3 million for Dorset Renewable Industries to establish an integrated timber-processing facility at the Ling Siding site at Scottsdale; and \$2.7 million to establish

the Major Projects Approval Agency, which will be focused on enabling investment. I understand that the agency is talking to proponents with hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in mind for my home state of Tasmania. There has been \$2½ million for Tamar River silt removal; \$2.45 million to establish the Blue Derby mountain bike trails, where two Australian championships will be held and new businesses are opening, which is great for Derby and the north-east; an estimated \$2 million for Green Army projects, which focuses our environmental improvement strategies on the projects that are most important to local communities and local people; and \$1.47 million for the North East Rail Trail project, building infrastructure that enables other investment and, as I said, helps make northern Tasmania more of an entry point for our state.

I am the patron of cycling in Tasmania. When you think about the infrastructure that is being established—the Hollybank mountain bike trails in my electorate, the Trevallyn mountain bike trails, the Blue Derby mountain bike trails and, in the last budget, the funding we secured to build a rail trail between Launceston and Scottsdale—we are establishing backbone infrastructure for cycling tourism which will be beneficial for so many other businesses establishing themselves within my electorate.

I had great pride in opening the \$1.25 million Invermay Park redevelopment, rejuvenating the home of the Mowbray Cricket Club, where champion cricketer Ricky Ponting first made his mark. There was \$1.15 million for the Flinders Island airport upgrade, to deal with long-overdue maintenance issues, and I am working with the council to make sure that we address the longer term needs of Flinders Island airfield. There was \$850,000 in capital grants for non-government schools; \$790,000 to save St Giles speech pathology services; \$500,000 to fix a traffic black spot outside the Prospect Vale Marketplace on Westbury Road; \$500,000 to look into Launceston's sewerage and stormwater problem and find out how we can turn the seven archaic, inefficient sewage treatment plants into something that is more First World; \$134,000 in Anzac Centenary grants; \$71,500 to support the Ravenswood Neighbourhood House and the outstanding work the centre does; \$70,000 to upgrade the Launceston Police and Citizens Youth Clubs; \$66,000 in grants to local sporting champions; and \$21,000 for Men's Sheds in Riverside, Norwood, Rocherlea and Flinders Island. There is the Tamar River Recovery Plan, which is making a real difference to the health of our river and will do so into the future. There is a lot more that I could say.

It is an honour to represent the people of Bass in the federal parliament, and I want to continue building on the momentum achieved to date so northern Tasmanians can look to the future with even greater confidence. We have made some great progress, but there is more to do. Growth is up, jobs are up, and I am working with my state colleagues to make sure that our policy is joined up and coherent. In this election year, I will be asking the people of northern Tasmania for their continuing support. I thank the House.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (11:42): Let me take you back a bit more than two years, to the 2013 election campaign. This government, we were told, would be the infrastructure government. There would be cranes in the sky and bulldozers working on major projects within a year of the election. Two years later, the only thing we have seen in the sky from this government is the helicopter of the former Speaker Bronwyn Bishop.

Mr Frydenberg: You never saw that. You only saw a photo of her landing.

Mr ALBANESE: And the only bulldozer we have seen, in terms of holes being dug, is the one they used to bury Tony Abbott's prime ministership. We have seen no projects built under this government.

Mr Nikolic: What about the Midland Highway in Tasmania?

Mr ALBANESE: What we have seen is a magical infrastructure re-announcement tour where the government has gone around the country promoting—

Mr Nikolic: What about the Blue Derby mountain bike trails?

Mr ALBANESE: Are you going to hold these clowns to order, Mr Deputy Speaker?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): I think you can look after yourself.

Mr ALBANESE: I can indeed, and I note that it is fair game in this chamber from this point on. The fact is that the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that public investment in infrastructure is down by 20 per cent when you compare the September 2015 quarter with the September 2013 quarter.

Of the government's three big-ticket items when it comes to roads, the East West Link, as we know from the audits that have taken place and from the business case that was prepared for that project, would have produced 45c of benefit for every dollar of taxpayers' money. It is like the government going to an individual taxpayer and saying, 'You give me \$100 and I'll give you \$45 back next time I see you'—an extraordinary proposition. Of course, we know that \$1½ billion was pre-paid in order to prop up the Victorian state government budget but with a consequential negative impact on the Commonwealth budget—an extraordinary proposition. The Perth Freight Link has been knocked over in the courts because it was a project that was done on the run, where the WA minister responsible indicated that there was no business case and no planning had been done that was worthy of

any public scrutiny, and where the courts have determined that the approvals were made incorrectly because the route goes through a wetland in Perth and simply is not ready to be approved in an appropriate way. WestConnex, in Sydney, is a project that began with a \$10 billion price tag and is now priced at \$16.8 billion. Again, advance payments have been made with respect to that project. Some \$2.75 billion has been forwarded to New South Wales. It is quite an extraordinary proposition.

We have had a range of ministers responsible whom I have seen off as the shadow minister. One of the new ministers has been given the title of minister for major projects. He should be called the minister for Labor projects because NorthConnex, the Pacific Highway, the Bruce Highway, the Gateway Upgrade North, NorthLink WA, the Perth Airport gateway, the North-South Road Corridor, the Midland Highway in Tasmania and the Inland Rail project are all projects that were funded and begun under the former Labor government.

What we have seen from the government from time to time is that, extraordinarily, it has given projects new names. The Swan Valley Bypass, for example, has become NorthLink WA. The F3 to M2 project in New South Wales has become NorthConnex. They are the same projects. Giving them a new name does not make them new projects, but the government has pretended that they are. Among the projects, just in New South Wales, that have been re-announced by the government as part of its magical infrastructure re-announcement tour, Pacific Highway projects were re-announced on 8 January, 21 March, 17 September and 22 December 2014, and 26 March, 1 April and 28 April 2015. The F3 to M2 was re-announced as NorthConnex on 15 March 2014. The Hunter Expressway was re-announced at its opening—the government pretending that it had anything to do with it at all—on 21 March 2014. The Great Western Highway was re-announced on 10 July 2014. The northern Sydney freight upgrade was re-announced on 28 November 2013. The Moorebank Intermodal was re-announced on 13 December 2013. The Port Botany upgrade program was re-announced on 13 May 2014. The Port Botany rail line was re-announced on 7 March 2014. These projects were commenced and under construction. Indeed, in the minister's state of Victoria, the Regional Rail Link was actually opposed as part of the economic stimulus plan by those opposite, and yet the government has pretended that it was somehow responsible.

We know that what occurred when the government came to office was that Tony Abbott, the former Prime Minister, and the government cancelled funding for every single public transport project that was not already under construction, including the Melbourne Metro, Brisbane's Cross River Rail line and the Tonsley Park upgrade in South Australia. The Gawler line electrification was stopped halfway through. These are all cuts that were made. Cuts were also made, of course, to road projects—projects like the M80 in Victoria and the Midland Highway in Tasmania, which was cut by \$100 million.

Mr Frydenberg: What about the East West Link?

Mr ALBANESE: The minister opposite appears to be not embarrassed, as he should be, by the performance on the East West Link, but he raises it. He should look at the Auditor-General's assessment of that project or look at the cost-benefit analysis, because the government did provide that \$1½ billion advance payment as part of \$3 billion that they committed to a project that would return 45c for every dollar invested—but that, of course, was not new money. That was money that was cut from the Melbourne Metro, some \$3 billion; from the M80, \$500 million; and from the Managed Motorways Program. More than \$70 million was cut from that program. That is a great example of what the government have done on infrastructure, because they cut the program and then went back and announced the Monash Freeway managed motorways project in a splash, as if it were new, a year and a half after they cut it in their 2014 budget.

What those projects had in common was that they had all been approved by Infrastructure Australia. This government has funded projects that were promised during the election campaign but cut projects that would actually produce productivity benefits in order to do so. As a result, because they have not proceeded—projects like Perth Freight Link and other projects that they talked up—you have seen that 20 per cent decline in infrastructure investment.

It is extraordinary that the new Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects told the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects yesterday:

If our cities are pretty good by world standards, then, why is there a need for federal government involvement in cities policy? After all, previous attempts at such involvement—the grand schemes of the Whitlam years, for example, or the 'cities unit' Anthony Albanese created as Minister for Infrastructure—have not made much difference.

The fact is that federal involvement in our cities does make a difference. I thought that when the Turnbull coup against Tony Abbott occurred last year—against the elected Prime Minister—and a minister for cities was appointed, in Jamie Briggs, it was a good signal and I welcomed it. Unfortunately, Jamie Briggs was given no department, no major cities unit and no real job to do, just a title. They have not even bothered to replace him in

the two months since he has gone, and it would appear that there is no real difference when it comes to their policies.

It is extraordinary that rather than building new infrastructure and having a program of their own to go out there and promote in this election campaign, they have actually cut the infrastructure budget by \$18 million and reallocated that money to an advertising campaign. It is breathtaking in its boldness. They have said in Senate estimates that it will include newspapers and TV with state and even regionally based television ads. It will cover 88 projects, most of which will be projects that were funded and which began under the former Labor government. Having presided over a 20 per cent decline in infrastructure investment, the government will now cut funding even further to fund spin. If you cannot deliver actual infrastructure projects, deliver propaganda. That is the policy of this government. It takes a special kind of arrogance to cut investment to the bone and then cut it even further so that you can pretend that you have made no cuts. No doubt in the member for Petrie's electorate they will pretend that they had anything to do with the Moreton Bay regional rail line that was, of course, funded by the former government. It was promised in 2010. The funding clicked in and construction began in 2012. The government have, to their credit, supported Badgerys Creek as Sydney's second airport. That is an important project that will create jobs for Western Sydney. They need to make sure that they get it right. This is an opportunity to have world's best practice in terms of the environment, the amenity and the boost that it will provide for employment in Western Sydney. It can be done in a way that is sensitive to environmental concerns and minimises the impact on the local community, and they need to make sure that they do that.

The truth is that you cannot have an airport on day one without also having a rail line on day one. The government should be funding that rail line, not just roads. But when it comes to rail, this is a Prime Minister who wants to ride on trams and trains—and take selfies on trams and trains—but not fund trains, buses and trams. This is government by selfie. The fact is that the government has to fund public transport, it has to get serious about urban policy and cities policy and it has to restore Infrastructure Australia's independence. There is an opportunity with the reshuffle to do just that, but this government is so internally chaotic that it seems incapable of doing so.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (11:57): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2015-2016 and Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2015-2016. I would like to start by thanking the people of Petrie for showing confidence in me in the September 2013 election when I was elected as the member for Petrie and took my place in the House of Representatives. It was approximately two years ago that I made my first speech in this House, in December 2013. There are a lot of people in the Petrie electorate who go about their lives on a daily basis and who showed faith in me. They are raising their families, they are paying off their houses, they are building relationships with their kids, they are going to work, they are paying their taxes and they are doing great things for the community. We are very blessed to live in a country with a stable environment and a great democratic system, and I am certainly proud to have been the member for Petrie for the last couple of years. I would like to use this time as a bit of a reflection, and I look forward to delivering more over the next 12 months.

We have delivered a lot nationally over the last couple of years. The federal coalition government has achieved a lot. Despite what the previous member said, I think that through infrastructure funding throughout this country—not just in my home state of Queensland but in all the states, up in the northern part of Australia, the Territory, North Queensland and WA, and throughout the southern states, including Tasmania—we have delivered a lot.

Border protection, of course, has been a fundamental plank in change we have seen in the last couple of years. Australia has been able to take back its sovereignty as a nation and not allow people to just rock on up by boat. We have put the people-smuggling trade out of business. There were 1,200 deaths at sea over that time. There has been a lot achieved in that area, and I am proud to be part of that particularly because of the fact that when we came into government two years ago there were 2,000 children in detention and the minister said the other day that we are down to 75. We want to get that to zero, as was the case under the former Howard coalition government when they left office in November 2007.

We have had record funding for schools and health right across this nation over the last couple of years. That has been very significant as well, and I will touch on that locally in a moment. Environmentally, we have been able to meet our targets with the RET and we have seen the Green Army rolled out as well. There has been increased funding for defence as well. The former speaker spoke about cuts; well, the former Labor government cut the guts out of defence. I had some people recently come and see me about shipbuilding in this nation, concerned that there were no projects for shipbuilding, and that is because the former Labor government cut it and ordered no projects over that time. We have recently been able to order some more frigates. That will start to take place in 2020. Believe it or not, people in the Petrie electorate care about that. They want to see ships built locally and the defence budget restored under this government. Ship orders are an important part of that.

We have been able to look at the debt and deficit disaster that we were left with under Labor and try to make some changes there to address that so that we do not leave spiralling debt to future generations, but there is a lot more to do. We are currently paying \$12 billion—or just over—a year in interest only. The people in the gallery can imagine what we could do with that money if, like when the Howard government left, we were not paying that \$12 billion in interest. I say to the Senate and to those opposite: we need to look at what we can do as a nation to make savings and to be very productive with taxpayers' money. That means working together with those opposite in the House and the Senate to make sure we can make legitimate savings in this place to benefit taxpayers right across the nation so that the next generation is not left to fund the interest bill for the generations that are here today.

Locally, of course—it is not just nationally—we have been able to achieve a lot throughout the federal seat of Petrie. We have seen infrastructure funding with the Gateway Motorway. One billion dollars was promised to upgrade the Gateway Motorway. We will see that go from four to six lanes from the Brisbane River right through to Bracken Ridge. That is very important because one of the fastest-growing areas in the country is the area that I represent and the north Brisbane area as well. So it is very important what the federal government has been able to achieve with the Gateway Motorway, whilst it continues to be built over the next 18 months, for the people in the southern part of my electorate and in particular around that Bracken Ridge, Fitzgibbon, Carseldine, Aspley, Bridgeman Downs and Balls Hills area. They really benefit from better funding for the Gateway Motorway.

There is also an intersection at Carseldine which I fought hard to ensure got an upgrade. That is at Beams Road and Lacey Road, a very dangerous intersection which we, along with the local councillor, were able to lobby for to see recently upgraded. I note that we have a Carseldine resident here in the gallery today: Justin Shemish. It is great to see you here, Justin. I am sure that you will benefit when you drive through that intersection there at Carseldine. That is something that we were able to fight for and deliver locally.

There are sporting facilities down in Bracken Ridge sporting grounds. We have been able to upgrade the lighting capacity down there as young sportspeople go down there to play with Little Athletics and with cricket. That was a promise at the last election which is now up and running and fully funded.

Of course, the NBN has continued to roll out at a much more productive pace in the last couple of years. One of the first areas in my electorate is down in the Carseldine, Fitzgibbon and Aspley area, where the NBN is now connected at a very timely pace and people are able to jump onto that. The good news is that parts of Moreton Bay—70 per cent of my electorate is in Moreton Bay—will also have the NBN rolled out completely and delivered by the end of 2017. I have been particularly passionate about ensuring that the NBN is rolled out in North Lakes, Mango Hill and Griffin—in those really-fast-growing areas in my electorate just north of Brisbane. We have people moving in there every week, lots of housing developments and lots of businesses moving into that area, and to have stable communications is very important. I note that in the third quarter this year we have got another 5,000 homes being connected with better internet services in Mango Hill and North Lakes between July and September. That build will take about six months, and then those people will be onto it quickly as well. I want to thank the Prime Minister for working with me over the last couple of years in his role as Prime Minister but also as Minister for Communications and also thank the current communications minister, whom I spoke to yesterday about the importance of better NBN for North Lakes, Mango Hill and Griffin in particular.

The Moreton Bay Rail Link is a very important project. They have been waiting probably a hundred years for a large infrastructure project like that. Many different governments promised it. It was announced in 2010, but this federal coalition government funded half of that in the last two years. Some \$500 million is being spent on the Moreton Bay Rail Link in the federal seats of Petrie and Dickson. That is a very important step. I was at Kippa-Ring station just last week to inspect it, and I want to thank Queensland's Department of Transport and Main Roads for the significant work they have done in ensuring that the project is built in a timely manner under budget. They have spent taxpayers' money well in this project, and I want to thank TMR, the previous state government and the current state government as well as the council for what they have been able to do there.

The electrified trains have been tested and the handover for the rail will happen in the next few months, with an opening in June this year. It means that people in areas like Kippa-Ring, Rothwell, Mango Hill and Murrumba Downs will be able to jump on a train rather than battle traffic in a car. People in Kippa-Ring will be in Brisbane within 55 minutes—shorter for the stations a bit closer to the city. I am very proud of the fact that the \$500 million we have spent there in the last two years will be delivered, despite the previous federal member for Petrie saying that it would never happen. That is an important piece of infrastructure for my electorate.

I want to talk about the environment as well, because we have been able to deliver great things for the environment in the Petrie electorate. I was working closely with the environment groups and I want to thank them for what they have been able to achieve with the Green Army projects at Hays Inlet, the North Lakes reserves and also down at Osprey House in Griffin, which is just about to kick off. We have been able to do a lot of good things

for the environment, with native vegetation replanted, weeds removed and bird boxes and possum boxes put in place. A whole lot of things are happening there. Many of the young people that have worked on those Green Army projects have gone on to find full-time work.

The Safer Streets Program has rolled out, with CCTV through the Margate CBD on the peninsula as well as at Suttons Beach and the Police-Citizens Youth Club at Redcliffe, which has been great. There are more projects on the way. I have been working with the local police in Deception Bay, Carseldine, Sandgate and Bracken Ridge, and we hope to get those projects rolled out as well. The Dolphin Stadium has been kicked off, with a \$4 million contribution from the federal coalition government to help with local jobs and tourism. When the Dolphin Stadium is built later this year, it will combine perfectly with the Moreton Bay rail link, which will also open at that time. It will bring more people out to the games as well as provide tourism opportunities for conferences, along with the Murri rugby league carnival that is held each year. I know that Peninsula Power soccer is also looking to have their home games at the Dolphin Stadium.

The Deception Bay PCYC has been ignored by Labor for decades. At the last election we were able to get a \$450,000 commitment to upgrade their gym. I thank the federal member for Groom, Ian Macfarlane, who was able to help me with that project. It is now built and providing an income-producing asset for the Police-Citizens Youth Club at Deception Bay. Deception Bay is a great area, with people that are working hard—aspirational people that have goals, that want to achieve a better lot in life. I say to them: you can do that. If it is study you want to do, if you want to go to university or if you want to achieve a trade, you can do that. No matter what your circumstances are or what your upbringing, you can certainly achieve that in our great country.

The federal government has promised \$11 million to assist the state government with the roundabout at Rothwell. I continue to call upon the state government to get that funding sorted out and underway so that we can get that roundabout built quickly. There has been a massive gridlock at Boundary Road. We were able to achieve \$84 million to upgrade the bridge from four lanes to six lanes, which will also be starting this year.

So there has been a lot done over the last couple of years. But I would say to the people of Petrie: there is a lot more still to achieve. We know that jobs are important. We want to make sure that jobs continue to roll out across the country. One of the national achievements I did not touch on earlier was agriculture, with live cattle exports having just about tripled under our government after what happened under the previous government. Whilst there is no agriculture in my electorate, the fact that that happens at a national level provides jobs throughout the country that flow into the Petrie electorate. The Job Seeker Boot Camp was run at the end of last year, and there will be another one running soon. I say to the people of Petrie: we continue to want to see growth, and that will provide jobs for our young people.

I support the Moreton Bay Regional Council's plan for a university at the old Petrie paper mill, because I believe in the old saying 'out of sight, out of mind'. The closest university to my electorate is the Australian Catholic University down in Banyo, in the Lilley electorate, and then you have to go to QUT in the city. If we can get that university funded and up and running in the next few years, there will be more younger people who, when they leave year 12, will be able to say, 'Let's jump on the new rail link and travel out to Petrie to get an education.' Such an education is, of course, 60 per cent funded by the federal government and 40 per cent by HECS. So there is a bright future for young people in my electorate.

I thank the previous generation—the pensioners and the self-funded retirees—for what you have done for this nation and for what you have passed on to young people. I say to that generation that, as I have been out and about in the last couple of years presenting the Petrie Shield for academic excellence, sporting achievement and community service at some 36 schools, I have seen a lot of young people who are going to make a great contribution to this country. I thank the people of Petrie and I look forward to working hard over the next 12 months. *(Time expired)*

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (12:13): I am pleased to take the opportunity to speak in this cognate debate on the appropriation bills before the House today to give a brief context to the bills and then go to some specific issues relating to both my shadow portfolio and my local area. The appropriation bills before us seek to appropriate \$2.2 billion in the 2015-16 financial year and they of course reflect the changes that were a result of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook that was released by the government at the end of last year, on 15 December.

With the release of MYEFO at the end of last year—I know there has been a revolving door of personalities in the various positions, spruiking their economic credentials—it was claimed that we would see significant improvements in the budget and the economy, first under the Abbott government, with the Hockey treasurership, and then under the Turnbull government, with the Morrison treasurership. Yet we have not seen that. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. The 2015-16 MYEFO told us that the deficit is higher. There is a blow-out of \$26 billion over the forward estimates and a blow-out of \$120 million per day between the 2015-16 budget and the 2015-16

MYEFO statement. Net debt for 2016-17 is nearly \$100 billion higher than what was forecast in the 2013 PEFO—the statement of the fiscal situation at the time of the election. Gross debt is headed to \$550 billion by the end of the forward estimates, and economic growth has been slashed.

Far from there being any good news in the MYEFO, at the end of last year we saw a continuation of the failure of this government to deliver on the things it promised before the election, in terms of both budget responsibility and economic growth. This is on the back of figures that show that the economy has been deteriorating in some very important sectors under this government. Most significantly, living standards, as measured by disposable income per capita, have been falling for six consecutive quarters. The reality for people in each of our electorates across the country, and it is reflected in the sorts of comments you hear when you are out and about at street stalls, door knocking and at community functions, is that they are under financial pressure. This government has only been contributing to that.

I should also make the point that capital expenditure is falling, and despite what some might think that is not just in the mining sector. There is a significant issue there, because if capital expenditure slows it affects opportunities for job growth. Consumer and business confidence levels are far lower than they were when this government took office, promising to inject confidence back into the economy. It may well be the most exciting time to be an Australian, but that excitement is obviously based on anxiety and concern—not on optimism and confidence; we are not seeing any of that reflected in data that is coming out on economic performance. We should not be surprised about levels of confidence because confidence has a lot to do with the messages and signals people get from government. When you have the sort of chaos and change and uncertainty that has been going on for just on two years now, of course that contributes to a lack of confidence across the broader community and has an impact on the economy.

Now we have a Prime Minister who just floats thought bubbles and has conversations, without providing any sense of leadership direction to people about action he wants to take to improve the economy. It is not enough to say you are all about innovation and excitement. That does not deliver outcomes. It is not surprising that we have seen these sorts of results in confidence levels as well, because people would be very confused not only by who makes up the decision making frontbenchers—we see more turmoil today—but also by what it is they are actually about. What is their jobs plan, what is their economic plan, what is their taxation plan? Conversations do not deliver, so we need to see exactly what the Prime Minister is intending. It is important to allay people's fears, because people are clearly looking at their direct experience of what the government said before the election, the sorts of promises and commitments that they made, and their abject failure to deliver on those. No wonder people are very confused by this government in all its iterations.

I turn to the MYEFO statement itself. In my own shadow portfolio, it was concerning to see that we have more budget decisions that go directly to cutting funds for the skills sector. I have yet to see a decision made by this government that is about injecting and boosting support for the skills sector. Over two years they have cut \$2 billion out of the skills budget. The previous speaker, the member for Petrie, spoke about the importance of giving young people in his area an opportunity to get training and apprenticeships. Well, it takes more than talk and optimism—you actually have to invest. We have seen exactly the opposite to that. In MYEFO we saw a further cut in this sector of \$400 million, taking cuts to nearly \$2.5 billion since this government was elected.

In particular, there has been a cut of \$273.8 million over four years from the Industry Skills Fund. In government Labor had a National Workforce Development Fund that was directly targeted at supporting the upskilling of existing workers so that not only their own skills but also the capacity of the business they worked for could be increased so they could innovate and adapt to the demands of the future. It funded really important programs, in particular combining literacy and numeracy skills with vocationally related skills for the workplace. We have only very recently seen the Australian Industry Group again come out and say there are major issues with the literacy and numeracy skill levels of many workers. This government in their first budget abolished that program, and they claimed that their new version, the Industry Skills Fund, which had significantly less money, would be delivering on upskilling existing workers. We have not seen it well subscribed to, and in the MYEFO at the end of last year we saw a further cut to the program.

Additionally—this is shocking given how peak bodies like the Australian Industry Group have been talking about the need for literacy and numeracy amongst the adult workforce—the government also cut \$122.9 million from the Skills for Education and Employment program, the program that directly provided funding for literacy and numeracy. Again, that was cut in the MYEFO. This has had an enormous impact on the skills sector. We know this because in only the last month reports have come out about some key issues around skills problems and the need for investment from the industry sectors themselves.

But today I particularly want to highlight the \$1 billion in cuts that were made to funding programs for apprenticeships. The result, and I have highlighted this to the House before, has been that completions have

dropped from 63,000 in June 2013 to just 29,700 in June last year. It is shocking that, directly on this government's watch, the number of apprentices who complete their training has more than halved. There were in fact almost 100,000 fewer apprentices in training. That number had dropped from 407,000 in June 2013 to 308,000 in June 2015.

A significant number of programs that Labor put in place have been abolished. We put those in place because we are committed to trades training for apprentices, remembering that apprentices cover a wide variety of really important skills that are in demand in the economy. There were programs that were specifically designed to increase commencements, such as access programs for young people who might not have quite got their skills up to the point of being able to compete for an apprenticeship. Such programs enabled them to get the support that they needed to get their skills up to that level and then get the opportunity to access an apprenticeship. There were some fantastic programs being run across the country by people such as the Motor Trades Association, who were doing exactly that in very disadvantaged communities. This government just abolished that. There were also programs designed to support apprentices throughout their apprenticeships so that they improved their opportunities and their capacity to succeed and complete their apprenticeship, such as apprentice mentoring. The government abolished those as well.

Very significantly, recognising that apprentices are on training wages and so sometimes it is a real financial struggle for them, we had a payment system called the Tools For Your Trade program which provided progress payments to apprentices both as an encouragement to stick with the apprenticeship and complete it and in recognition of some of the financial pressures on them. I also draw the House's attention to the significant number of mature-age people now doing apprenticeships because they are looking to either upgrade their skills or transfer into a new job. It is tough if you are doing that on an apprentice wage, and so we had that program in place.

This government abolished the Tools For Your Trade program and offered a loan in the form of a HECS type loan, called a trade support loan, to apprentices. That has been massively undersubscribed because the last thing an apprentice worrying about their financial situation wants to do is take out a loan, particularly when, after completing their apprenticeship, many go on to set up their own small business and may look for financial assistance to do that, and so they do not want to start with a loan already on their back at the start of that process. So we saw that cut by the government as well.

Joint group training programs, which were really significant in terms of providing support through group training associations to small employers who otherwise might not be able to carry an apprentice by themselves, were abolished. I am very pleased to see that some of my state colleagues—for example, in Victoria—are reinvesting in that sort of activity, because cutting those programs was very, very short sighted.

In all of this, we have not heard from the government any mention of our fantastic public TAFE system. It is the backbone of our training sector. It provides the benchmark and the ballast for the system. But the vocational education sector has been in crisis and continues to be in crisis. Today, there are media reports about major private training providers collapsing. The only indication from this government that it has any interest in public providers is its decision to put out a discussion paper to the states, proposing a federal takeover of the entire system and complete deregulation of pricing. In effect, it is exactly a privatisation of the public TAFE system. No wonder the minister ran very quickly from that, when that document was exposed by Fairfax media—because regional and rural members in this place would know very well how valued TAFE is by their communities and how important opportunities for training are to all of their people. To see it directly under threat from the proposition being progressed by the federal government would cause enormous concern across the country.

Again we see through MYEFO and the bills before us the continued story of this government's failure to invest in the skill sector, failure to deliver on apprenticeships and failure to take seriously the real challenges of innovation and transformation in our economy and the need to invest in skills, training and education to deliver on that. In closing, I point out to the Prime Minister—and I acknowledge the Minister for Trade, who has entered the chamber—that, if you want innovation, you really have to understand that it is also about our trade and skill sectors and you have to stop cutting them to the bone.

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (12:28): I also rise to make remarks on the appropriation bills. However, I cannot do so without first acknowledging the presence of the Hon. Andrew Robb in the House. We were elected to the parliament in 2004. Andrew is a former federal director of the Liberal Party. I say on my own behalf and on behalf of constituents in La Trobe and right across Victoria—and, in particular, small business and large business—that what the minister has done for trade for this country is truly remarkable. The free trade agreements, particularly the agreement with China, will have a huge impact in helping Australian businesses export to China for many years to come. I wish Minister Robb all the very best for his future, because I have no doubt he will continue to assist and reward Australia in everything he does into the future.

I also must acknowledge the Hon. Warren Truss, the Deputy Prime Minister, who is in the chamber, and I also wish him all the best for the future.

Debate adjourned.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Valedictory

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (12:29): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a short statement.

Leave granted.

Mr TRUSS: Just a few moments ago I informed my Nationals colleagues that I intend to retire from federal parliament at the next election. I will stand down as Leader of the Nationals and Deputy Prime Minister at a convenient time for the government, probably within the next few days. The Nationals will be meeting this evening to choose a new leadership.

It has been a great pleasure and privilege to be a member of the federal parliament. Next month it will be 26 years since I was first elected to the parliament, and 40 years since I was first elected to public office, as a member of the Kingaroy Shire Council. In my early years, I was always talked about as the youngest national president of the Council of Rural Youth, the youngest councillor, the youngest mayor, but now that I am numbered amongst the oldest I think it is time to go.

I am grateful to the people of Wide Bay, who have through five redistributions elected me nine times to the House of Representatives. While my electorate still has many troubles, a lot has been achieved over that time: huge improvements in the road network and we have been able to help with some really significant projects in the area, like construction of the Brolga Theatre and the aquatic centre in Gympie. But for me the greatest pleasure has always come from being able to help somebody with a little problem—a problem with their pension or the need to provide some kind of assistance to find their way around the government bureaucracy et cetera. Those have always given me the greatest pleasure as a member of parliament. I can recall that for a while I was the member for Queensland's oldest town Gayndah, which is now in the electorate of the honourable member for Flynn. I was able to get some federal funding for a school building for St Joseph's school in Gayndah. The diocese had been threatening to close the school down. It was in financial difficulties and had only relatively small student numbers, but we were able to build a new classroom. It was the first new building at that school since 1942. That, I think, is the sort of special memory that people have from a period as a representative.

It has been a particular honour to be Leader of the Nationals over the last eight years. When I became leader in 2007 nobody wanted the job, including me. I am pleased to say that, now, things are different and everyone wants the job. I am particularly proud and pleased that whoever is elected as my successor and whoever becomes the new deputy leader, if there is to be a new deputy leader, I will be proud to serve under any of them. I guess that my objective when I became leader—a somewhat reluctant leader—was to rebuild a party that was at that stage at a pretty low ebb. We had lost the 2007 election, everybody was pretty dispirited and our numbers had declined. Indeed, the media were saying, yet again, that the Nationals were finished. Of course, we are used to that. They have been saying that for over 80 years now, and we seem to have managed to survive most of our critics. I am sure that the party will be in good and strong hands in the years ahead.

It has been a pleasure to serve with so many other wonderful colleagues in the parliament. I have had the privilege of being a minister for 12½ years, most of them in the cabinet, and each portfolio has for me some special memories. My first portfolio was as a junior minister in the industry portfolio. The first submission I took to cabinet was Australia's first country-of-origin labelling legislation. I notice it seems to be on the agenda yet again, although I do not think there was too much wrong with the original legislation, I have to say. I might be biased! I then also was involved in the rebuilding of the Customs service, which did not have very high public esteem at the time. Amanda Vanstone followed me, and she really put some verve into the revitalisation of the Customs service.

I was the first minister with special responsibility for Centrelink. When Centrelink was established it was not as well respected, I guess, as it is today. There were lots of critics, and people who had been taken from two former government departments and put into Centrelink resented it to some extent. It took a while to establish a service culture. The idea that a government department should be there to look after people might seem pretty elementary in this day and age, but it was a major challenge at the time.

I had six years as minister for agriculture. I have to say that it was a portfolio I never wanted. I had been in farm industry politics before I came into the parliament and I knew how farmers treated their agriculture ministers, particularly when they were Nationals. They expected all sorts of things from us that were simply

undeliverable. Somebody has said to me that it is a bit akin to Labor Party members who have to be industrial relations ministers—you simply cannot achieve what your constituency expects of you. But it was a very eventful time. It was the era when we had the foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks in the UK. The size of our quarantine service was doubled at that time, and it certainly became a very much more substantial operation. I was the minister during the establishment of the exceptional circumstances drought assistance, a very sad and difficult time for so much of Australia. The whole of the country was essentially racked by drought at that time. The assistance that was put in place was the most generous that governments had ever provided. I think it helped a lot of farmers through a situation they could not otherwise have managed. There were also adjustment packages, particularly in the sugar and dairy industries, which, again, caused quite some trouble, but I think it helped put those industries in a much better position.

I was trade minister for a while. That was my least fulfilling portfolio, I have to say. Particularly by comparison with the great successes of the current trade minister, my achievements were very small. They were still trying to breathe oxygen into the Doha round at that stage, and it was really a wasted period. I stand in awe of what Andrew Robb has achieved in his time as trade minister. It is truly a remarkable time in our history.

I have had two periods when I have been transport minister, and they perhaps have been the most exciting times because we have been building a lot of roads, a lot of railway lines and a lot of infrastructure, and I am very proud of what has been achieved in that regard. We will, by the end of this decade, for the first time have a four-lane highway between our three east coast capitals. Surely, in a country of our economic capabilities perhaps that is something we should have achieved a long time ago.

In my own area I have had a particular interest in the Bruce Highway and the need to upgrade it. It was the most dangerous road in Australia on our national highway list. Indeed, at its worst, we were averaging 53 deaths on the Bruce Highway every year. With the work that has been done by successive governments—and some of it is minor stuff, like wide centre lines et cetera—the death toll is now averaging just 17. Now, that is far too many, but it does demonstrate that investments in capital infrastructure not only have an economic impact but they have a huge social benefit as well. I am sorry that I will not be here to see the end of the upgrade of the Bruce Highway.

It is just like the many other projects that are underway. When you leave, there is a lot of unfinished business. That is certainly true when you have a \$50 billion infrastructure program. I would particularly love to have been here for the landing of the first aircraft at Badgerys Creek airport! But that would be another 20 years—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr TRUSS: Well, not quite that long! It will be 2025, and I hope I am still alive to see it land for the first time. That is a project that I have been very excited about and delighted to have been a part of bringing to fruition.

Can I thank the many people who I have worked with in the coalition with the Liberal Party? Sometimes it has been a bit rugged, but usually we have got on exceptionally well together. I acknowledge the leaders that I have had to work with and under, particularly John Howard, who was such a successful Prime Minister and led a very able and agile government, and the Liberal leaders: Brendan Nelson, Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull. I have admired them all and appreciated the privilege of working with them.

I suppose that especially Tony Abbott's commitment to infrastructure was one that I shared. And to have Joe Hockey as Treasurer, who was also prepared to find the money, made my time as transport minister really an exciting one. I certainly wish the government every success in fulfilling these objectives that have been set. Malcolm Turnbull, as leader now, has obviously revitalised our parties and put us in a good position for the future, and I certainly wish them well.

I would also like to acknowledge in my own party my deputies as leader—Nigel Scullion and Barnaby Joyce. They are both great people to work with. I would also particularly like to acknowledge the people within my National Party organisation. I was a member of the party for many years before I was a candidate, so I am a bit of a child of the organisation and still love and appreciate it. I acknowledge the presidents and ordinary branch people—the people who have helped in my campaigns over the years—but particularly those who have ensured that there is a strong base to keep our party strong so that it can contribute effectively to our nation.

I would also like to recognise the departmental people who I have had the privilege of working with. I would particularly like to acknowledge Mike Taylor and Mike Mrdak, who have been departmental directors for the longest time while I have been their minister. Both are outstanding public servants. Mike Mrdak in particular, who is the current director, served both sides of politics. He is an extraordinary individual, with an incredible knowledge of what happens in the department and how it all works.

In my 18 years as minister and shadow minister there were two shadows who were with me for most of that time—or against me, I suppose: Simon Crean and Anthony Albanese. Yes, again, we have had our disputes about issues but we have been able to work through most of the things that needed to be worked through. Whether I was

sitting on that side or this side of the House I think we have had the kind of working relationship that is necessary to achieve important things for our country.

I want to acknowledge my electorate staff. One of my electorate staff I inherited from my predecessor, and all of them have been with me for decades. I have only had two chiefs of staff in all the time that I have been a minister and, for that matter, a shadow minister: Cheryl Cartwright and David Whitrow. They have been wonderful leaders for my office and its organisation. All of those things have meant a great deal to me, to have these wonderful staff who help make our offices work and deliver the important things for our country.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my family, and particularly my wife, Lyn. We were married only a few months before I was elected to parliament, and she had worked for my predecessor. So in reality she knew more about the job than I did when we came here! But we have been very much a team and I could not have done it without her. She has just been absolutely marvellous for me and I love her dearly.

I came from a small farming district and went to a very small state school, and I have now had the privilege to become Deputy Prime Minister of our country. I wonder whether I will be the last person with a limited education and who comes from one of the poorest electorates in the country to become Deputy Prime Minister? I hope not, because I think we do need amongst the leadership of our country a breadth of experience and a breadth of skills.

I want to thank the people of Australia for the opportunity that they have given me to serve in this regard. I will take away many happy memories and I hope that people may be kind enough to recognise that I have made something of a contribution towards public life in this country. It has been an honour for me and a privilege to work with everyone in this room. Thank you.

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (12:45): by leave—I think, firstly, I would like to just acknowledge Warren Truss. In every organisation, in every government and in every opposition, you need some people who have got great experience and common sense and a keen sense of self, and I must say: they bring stability and a sense of perspective to so many deliberations on problems and events—the sorts of events that occur so often in this place. Warren, from my observation over a long time, has been one such person. As well, he is a man of very fine character. He is a role model for so many. He should be very proud of his contribution to our great country and the leadership that he has shown, and I do thank Warren for that.

Colleagues, I do appreciate this opportunity to confirm to the parliament my intention to not recontest the next election; my intention to stand down from federal politics—all politics, actually! I have got to say that I still have a few things to do on the trade front, over the next little while, and, hopefully, some important things to try and conclude. So I do hope to have another opportunity, albeit probably from the backbench, just to put on the record, before I depart this place, a more extended vote of thanks and some more considered reflections. I will seek your indulgence at some other stage closer to the election on that. But I do want to say a few words on this occasion because sometimes you do not get that much time at the dispatch box!

I feel it is the right time for me, for all sorts of reasons; I will not run through all of those, except to say that I have had a very eventful and fulfilling 12 years in this place. I suppose everyone says this but I think it has been an extraordinary period—not one that we all look on, necessarily, fondly, from either side, at different times. But it is politics, and it is the essence of this business that it does test the strength of character of people on both sides—the sorts of things we have all gone through—and to advance the country at the same time is, again, a test of our mettle.

I arrived a bit late, probably, at 53, and I feel, in some ways, I have been in a hurry ever since because I was conscious, even though I had had experience as a person in the backroom—the very private sector—in the parliamentary machine, that I had arrived a bit late, and I knew I had to go through the steps. Even though I had some experience in politics, you have still got to learn a lot—and there is a lot to learn in this place, to be effective and to learn how to influence decisions and to get them through. So I think I brought that running to it, even when I got into the last three years, and I have felt a sense of urgency.

We all come here to try and do some good things. There were many times in the last 12 years that I thought I might have miscalculated in coming into this place, because—I sympathise with those I am looking at—in opposition is a very difficult period. It is soul-destroying in many respects. It is a very important job, I feel. But I felt I might have spent most of my political life in opposition because when I was federal director—apart from the last year, which was very enjoyable because we had won the '96 election—the years before that were really tough, from 1989 through until '96. So I do have a keen sense of what it means to be in opposition. But, as I say, I still feel that, in the Westminster system, the opposition role is a very important one.

I am no spring chicken but, at the same time, I am 64 and in excellent health, and I am young enough to do other things. And there are other things that I want to do, especially in business and also, if I can, to try and assist the cause of mental health—the acceptance of and the progress in the mental health space.

I will leave politics in the comfort of knowing that the Turnbull government and the coalition, I feel, are in very good shape. If we were really in bad order, if we were in a trough, you would feel even more obligation to stay with it. And there is never really a right time to leave. But it is an opportune time, I think, for me to hand over the baton.

Also, I must say—and I mean this—that, in my 30 years in and around politics, I have never seen a party room with such depth and talent as we have got at the moment. That talent has to be nurtured and developed and has to experience different levels, and I think this is a chance—with me and Warren, and others, like Philip, retiring—to allow even more to come forward, and I have got enormous confidence in the team that we have got and the people that are coming through.

I have had some great opportunities to serve our country, under Tony Abbott—and, firstly, John Howard; I got some immediate or fairly quick opportunities when we went into opposition, as I have just said—in government, and Malcolm Turnbull, and I will be very grateful to both of them for the opportunities.

I just want to make reference, in particular, at this stage, to the problem I had—or the opportunity, as it turned out, to confront a mental health problem that I had had for 43 years. It came to a head during my time with Malcolm's first leadership opportunity. Malcolm could not have been more accommodating and sympathetic. He helped me to leave the shadow cabinet in a way which did not bring silly attention to the condition, allowed me to get some space and all the rest of it. Six months later, Tony was in the seat. Again, Tony had trust in me, once I had nailed the problem—and it took me six months to get to a point where I could manage it, and I am still managing it—to be shadow minister for finance. I cannot tell you how much that gave me a lift—just the fact that trust was placed in me after what had happened. This support helped me achieve my aim, which was to seek to get back to good health, to manage the problem and to be able to demonstrate to others in the community that, in fact, you can manage the problem. Something close to 85 per cent can be cured or can manage the problem to lead a normal life and not take a secondary role. You can go back and assume even greater responsibility.

It was the trust of not only Malcolm and Tony Abbott but of so many of my colleagues here and many on the opposition benches. I thank all of you. I thank the whole chamber for the support that I got and for the normality that you went on with. That is the most important thing: to not look at you as though you have three heads because you have declared that you have a problem. I have had a lot of support and friendship, not just on that occasion but throughout the 12 years. There are things that I will never forget. There are so many on my own side whom I am close to, but there are others on the other side. Certainly, I have great respect for anyone who is in this place, to be honest, but there are people like Gary Gray and others. Gary was my opponent as campaign director in 1996. I think we formed a great respect of one another and that has certainly never diminished in my mind; if anything, it has grown over the years.

It has been a unique privilege to serve my constituents. I do not think you ever really realise when you put your hand up and win preselection—some might if they have done a lot of local government work or whatever—and then you think, 'I've got 160,000 people I'm supposed to represent and I wonder whether I'll like all of the work that's associated with an electorate—the events, the weekends and all of that.' To my great relief, I found that I really enjoyed it. It has been one of the great pleasures. One of the very few regrets in the last 2½ years—the only one, I think—is that, being away for over 200 nights a year overseas and being here for 16 to 19 weeks, a lot of contact with my electorate has been compromised. They like to see things happening, I have had an opportunity to do a few things and they have been very supportive, nevertheless, as have all my party members. I will reflect on some of those later on.

I just want to finish at this stage by thanking certainly my staff at the moment because next time I get up and say a few things some of them might have moved on. I have basically had the same team for 2½ years. It is a very strong team. I think they are held in high regard for their professionalism and for their respect of colleagues. That not always happens in political offices. It is absolutely critical that every member—no matter which side of the parliament they are on—is respected by staff and looked after. I have some people with great experience. I am really proud of the reputation my office has in this place and in the circles that I have had to work as Minister for Trade and Investment. They have been a very big part of any of the achievements that we have been able to nail over the last 2½ years.

I thank in particular my wife of 42 years, Maureen. I can remember what my father said when I told my parents that, at the tender age of 23, Maureen and I had got engaged. My father is not one to give a lot of advice or anything, but he said to me, 'Son, you've chosen a very accomplished partner. You're going somewhere—I don't know where it is—but you've got an accomplished partner who will be able to travel with you.' How very true that has been. She is a woman of great consequence, in my view and I think in the view of others. She is an elegant person who has been a great support. I have done well over 7,000 domestic flights in my career and now a few international flights have been added to that list. She is quite an independent person who, more than anything,

brought up our kids and was a very good English teacher at the same time. My three children—we are a very close family—are very supportive and I am very proud of them. Their respective partners are three lovely people. I also thank my beloved parents.

For all of that, thank you very much. It has been a great privilege; it has been a great pleasure. Not too many people get the sorts of opportunities I have been given. I thank all of you for your part. All of you have had some part in that contribution. Thank you very much.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (12:59): on indulgence—These are two remarkable men who have made such a difference for Australia, who have played such an enormous part in creating the nation we are today. All of us are a little sad that they have announced that they are not going to run again. They have explained why. It is a factor that John Howard used to talk about—*anno Domini*—or, as Warren reminded us, there is a point at which you start in life as the youngest person in the room, wondering why all these grown-ups are listening to you, and then before you know it you are the oldest person in the room and it is time to give somebody else a go. This is a watershed.

Each of these men, Warren and Andrew, were farmers' sons. They grew up on the land with very deep roots in agriculture, understanding the most basic, fundamental human industry—growing food and fibre. Each of them has had long, strong marriages. They were able to do the things they did for Australia because of Warren's Lyn and Andrew's Maureen. As my predecessor, Tony Abbott, would often say—and he spoke so truly when he said it—'All of us are volunteers; it's our families that are conscripts.' It is so important that we acknowledge them as they have been acknowledged today.

Warren's passion is and has always been, as he said, infrastructure. Indeed, many ministers in his position have had a bridge named after them. Warren actually has thousands and thousands of bridges named after him! The 'Warren truss', which is a very standard form of steel structured bridge, designed in 1848 by James Warren, is seen all over the country. In fact, it is all over every country. The Warren truss bridge is everywhere! I have no doubt that as a minister he has opened many of them in his name, bearing that design.

Andrew has made a remarkable contribution to politics all his life. I first met Andrew over 30 years ago in the company of another great Australian—great in every respect—Kerry Francis Bullmore Packer, when Andrew came to see us when he was running the National Farmers' Federation. We have known each other all the years since. He has been a formidable advocate for rural industry—for the Cattlemen's Union originally and then for farmers and then as the Federal Director of the Liberal Party. And he has played a very powerful role in this House as a minister and a shadow minister.

But Andrew Robb has, without question, in his 2½ years as trade minister been the most successful trade minister in our history. He has put in place some of the most important building blocks for our future and he has brought to that work his extraordinary commercial experience—which spans politics, as I said, but also a long period working in the private sector—his negotiating skills and his understanding of every aspect of Australian industry, whether it is the digital industries that are benefiting so much from the Trans-Pacific Partnership or the primary industries, particularly agriculture, which have benefited so much from the free trade agreements in East Asia, particularly the China-Australia free trade agreement, the benefits of which in many parts of Australia are quite transformative.

Warren's leadership of the National Party has been a source of great wisdom—and I am sure the member for Warringah would agree—for the leaders of the Liberal Party, as well as a source of great stability and great generosity. He is absolutely committed, and has always been, to the strength of the coalition. He understands the importance of the National Party's distinct identity but also the reality that we are so much stronger when we are working closely together.

He has been a formidable advocate, as he said, for his local area and electorate. It is interesting that Andrew reflected on the same and made the same point about the real satisfaction that I think each and every one of us derives from sorting out simple and often basic problems for our local constituents. Ultimately, that is our primary obligation to the people who actually put the No. 1 against our name on the ballot paper—the citizens of our electorate.

The generosity of both men was shown in their warmth and their remarks, particularly to their counterparts on the other side. Andrew Robb spoke of Gary Gray, who has been his counterpart in the Labor Party for many years. Warren spoke fondly of Albo. They agreed on most things. Warren and Albo agreed on the value and the transformational impact of so many big elements of infrastructure in Australia. They just disagreed on who should get the credit for them! As for Gary and Andrew, they came to a landing on just about every element of electoral practice, electoral law and electoral reform. They just happened to have a final disagreement on who should win the election! But, beyond that, as professionals they were completely united.

The most important thing for all of us to say to these men is, 'Thank you.' They have made Australia different. They have made Australia better. They have shaped Australia. They have shaped our future, whether it be in trade, infrastructure or their example of clear, warm, humane patriotism and love of country. Warren said in his maiden speech in 1990:

It has often been said that Australia is the lucky country, but it has not been all luck. Australia became a great nation because there were people who were prepared to put in the effort and endure hardship whenever it was needed—the explorers who sought out the land, the pioneers who opened it up, the engineers who built our cities and bridges, the women who cared for their families and the soldiers who fought to protect it.

We are all proud to say that because of Warren's service and because of Andrew's service Australia has become a much luckier country, but they have helped make that luck more prosperous and more secure with greater opportunities for our children and grandchildren. Thank you, Warren and Andrew.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (13:07): on indulgence—It is said about parliament that it is hard to get here but even harder to leave here. I would like to add that if you can leave on your own terms, with the respect of your peers and the love of your family, that is the hardest accomplishment of all. So it is with the warm wishes of the entire opposition that I rise to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and the member for Goldstein for their service to this parliament and to the nation.

In preparing words about the Deputy Prime Minister, I found myself drawn back to the speech he gave in this place in October 2014 in tribute to the life of Gough Whitlam. It would have been easy for you, on a day when so many Labor people had so much to say in sadness, to perhaps be impersonal—to just recite the bare biographical facts. But you did not. On that day, you reflected on how Gough had inspired you to become involved in politics:

He did give me my first chance to be involved in political activities when he appointed me to the National Rural Advisory Council.

And:

He undoubtedly encouraged me—though he did not wish to do so—to be engaged in the political process. I joined a political party too, but it was not the Labor Party.

Instead you joined the mighty Country Party. You arranged bus loads of farmers to come from all over Australia to help educate Gough on the error of his ways. But the reason why that moment stayed with me is because it spoke for so much of what I identify as your personal qualities: you are warm, you are dry, you are often self-deprecating, you have a great sense of humour and you have an ability to craft a meaningful empathetic response.

The Prime Minister has spoken at length—and I am sure many of your colleagues will—about your policy and political achievements. We look forward with some great interest and no little trepidation to your likely successor's contributions. In particular, I would like to commend you for the dignified way that you have handled the ongoing unfolding sadness of MH370. I am sure that the families of the missing would echo those thanks.

In listening to your words today about your journey, I am reminded of that opening of Heather Ewert's documentary *A Country Road*. She said:

There's no other political party in the world quite like The Nationals. Its roots are on the land and in the blood.

You have served that unique tradition and you have fulfilled it with honour.

I think you also leave this place with a most unique distinction—being the only Australian politician to be mentioned on the US TV show *Lost*. There is a character named Sawyer. He is dragged before a detective with an extremely unconvincing Australian accent. He is told he is being charged with involvement in a bar fight, to which he protests that this is a badge of honour in Australia, at which point the detective leans in to tell him the bad news, 'You headbutted the honourable Warren Truss, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, one of the most important people,' Sawyer interrupts, 'He headbutted me!' For some reason, I am just not sold on the image of Warren Truss, bar room brawler. The man that we know and pay tribute to today is a kinder, gentler soul.

Warren, you have been a tireless servant of your constituency, a proud advocate for country people and a strong leader of the party that you have always loved. You have earned a fulfilling, peaceful and healthy retirement with your loving wife, Lyn. We wish you both well for what the future brings you.

Now I turn to the member for Goldstein. He leaves this place in the same quietly effective way that he has gone about his work. He has, as has been said, lived a rich and diverse life prior to entering this parliament. A proud holder of a diploma in Ag. from Dookie and an economics degree from La Trobe, he was a distinguished servant of the National Farmers' Federation and the Cattle Council—quite the union representative—and one of the principal architects of John Howard's 1996 election victory.

Not all of those who rise to such heights within their party behind the scenes feel compelled to stand on the national stage in the glare of the unforgiving spotlight of public life, but you did. You came to this place. You signed up to the fickle vagaries of electoral fortune because you believed that you had more to offer your party and, more importantly, your country. No-one in this place 12 years later can dispute that conclusion. I want to thank you for being willing to work constructively with Labor on important issues. That will be a skill set perhaps missed when you go.

I am sure that many others will also pay tribute to your courage that you showed in overcoming the cloud you fought most mornings. I would only add that—while managing any mental health issue is an act of resilience, resolve and strength—being prepared to discuss it with such a frank and forthright manner, as you did, as a person in elected office, is incredibly important. What you did—your example and your honesty—has helped break down some of the counterproductive and ill-informed stigma that afflicts many who suffer in silence. Because of you and your honesty, other people will have better lives. There is not much more that a member of this parliament can claim to do.

You have flown many miles in the service of your country—in particular in these past 2½ years. For a strong family man like you—someone who loves Maureen and your children Tom, Jo and Pip very much—I know that this time that you have spent overseas has not just been hard on you but on them. We sometimes talk about relationships with people across the political divide. Perhaps they are not as frequent as they should be, but nearly all of us will have experienced the odd glimpse of conversation—a moment of reflection when, in fact, we are not just trying to finish each other off but rather a shared reflection about family—moments, perhaps, when we search for a topic in common rather than a topic on which we disagree. I have had the opportunity to talk to you in those 'glimpses' here and overseas. My wife, Chloe, who has got to know you, sends you her absolute best.

I am not sure that families always hear about what their parent's say, but anyone who knows Andrew Robb knows how incredibly proud he is of his kids—and they deserve to hear that, because in every minute, I am sure, that you have been away, your love of your children and your wife has been one of the strongest features that has enabled you to be as distinguished as you are, and they should know how much you love them. On behalf of my party and my wife, Chloe, I wish you and your family every happiness in the years ahead.

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (13:15): on indulgence—It gives me great pleasure to rise and to also express my thanks predominantly to Warren as my boss but also to Andrew as my colleague. Most politicians note Shakespeare's advice:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Warren has taken the political voyage for which the benefit has not been so much for himself but for all of us. Lyn, his devoted wife, has been on this journey every step and for every iteration.

Warren has personified decency, self-control, attention to detail, leadership, strength and has carved a path for his constituency through the annals of our recent parliament. Warren has delivered by acumen more than brute force, and the people of South Burnett and Wide Bay in Queensland can call him a favoured son of their land, who has returned that favour with honourable public service.

From the turmoil of the demise of the halcyon days of the Joh Bjelke-Petersen era, Warren was instrumental in reconciliation and rebuilding, without compromising his political faith. Widely respected and to a greater degree by those who know him well and to a greater extent by those who work with him, he has managed to deal with the divergent forces which can often tear at the fabric of any coalition. But Warren also did not shy from the fights and the internal opprobrium that he had to absorb on issues such as the single desk, live exports and ensuring that foreign investment is in our national interest. He was responsible for one of the first major appropriations on the Inland Rail between Melbourne and Brisbane and the start of Badger's Creek. He has dealt with the trials and tribulations of MH370 and, in the past, issues such as the *Cormo Express*.

As part of the shadow cabinet in 1994—by far the longest serving minister in cabinet—he has the laurels of a person who has exceptional parliamentary talent and all that that requires. The question that is only fairly asked by the public—and they should know—is: what are these talents? For Warren I believe it is his Lutheran attitude to detail. It means that Warren does not 'wing it'. If he gets the file, he reads the file. He will read yours as well. He does not rise to the bait of the personal barb. Find me the person who says that he knows the time when Warren was not a gentleman in his words, his conduct and his actions and I will say that you are talking to someone who is making it up and obviously does not know Warren. This is an exceptional trait. As so many people fall off the dignified pedestal to become cranky and bitter, Warren has never, ever done this. Warren's capacity to hold a confidence is legendary. As we have said, there are probably three people who know what Warren is thinking on

sensitive issues: Warren, his wife and his God. Part of the National Party lexicon is that sometimes you wonder if he tells God!

The taciturn nature that comes from this man—a man who grew up on the land, making his way with his hands and dealing with the providence of the soil, building an agricultural lifestyle, with service to the district in his positions on the local council at Kingaroy and farming groups, being a strong member of his local church community—means that the formation of Warren Errol Truss is one of pragmatism, diligence, with strong and abiding core values and a commitment to family and this nation through many things, including public service. So, Warren and Lyn, Andrew and Maureen: the boy from Kumbia, the boy from a family of nine children in Epping in Victoria, have proven once more today that it is not so much how you ride the horse but how you dismount that is remembered in the political annals.

When I was over in the US with the member for Blaxland—before I came into politics—I asked whether Abraham Lincoln, from a log cabin in Hardin, Kentucky, would make it today in the United States. It was a salutary statement that they said: 'Probably not. The political dynamic has changed.' But we still should be proud, incredibly proud, in this nation that the Deputy Prime Minister came from Kumbia, that the Minister for Trade came from Epping—that this is the nation that we have. We are not owned by major political donors. We are not owned by major political forces. It is the greatest nation on earth that allows people to progress through the social stratification of our nation to hold one of the premier offices in our nation.

I said to the National Party just prior to coming here that Warren will quite obviously for our party be in the pantheon of the great leaders. We pride ourselves on stability. We pride ourselves on the fact that in 100 years we have had 12 leaders. Each one of those leaders and the ones that stand out are known for a special trait. For 'Black Jack' McEwen, it was obviously toughness. For Earle Page, it was his tenaciousness and cunning. For Anthony, it was his strength. But for Truss—and he certainly belongs there—it is not a mimic. It is not something that is put up blindly. Truss has something that is unique to everyone else. When they think of Truss, they will think of decency—a decent man, a gentle man, a good man. For Andrew Robb, I pity the next person who has to be compared to you in the trade portfolio.

To both: you have been an adornment to our nation. I wish you all the best and may you spend the rest of your years—and may there be many of them—in the company of your wife, your family, and always spare a thought for what further service you can deliver to us. All the best, and God bless.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science) (13:22): by leave—I move:

That standing order No. 43 Member's Statements be suspended for this sitting.

Question agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Valedictory

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (13:22): by leave—The Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development has given more than two decades of service to the Australian parliament and to the community that he represents. He has served under three prime ministers. In 2001 he was awarded the Centenary Medal for service as Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry. They are all fine achievements, but perhaps the most recent achievement that has moved us all, and was mentioned earlier, was the leadership he gave in the search for MH370. The sober and dignified way that he undertook this responsibility has been, I know, a great comfort to the families of the people involved and to the public that watched the events with such concern and such interest. He has a record that he can be rightly proud of.

People outside this place might be a little surprised as they might imagine that the Labor Party and the National Party are always at loggerheads because, of course, there are policy differences between us. What would surprise them, I think, is how often, instead of being at loggerheads, we actually agree. There is still a fine strain of agrarian socialism running through the National Party, an impulse that says it is important to look after people in the bush, to look after their health care, their education and the services that they receive. Our Deputy Prime Minister has been as the forefront of making that case, of defending the people in the bush that he feels so much a part of.

There is another thing that people outside this place would be surprised about, too. It is the soft spot that many of us in the Labor Party—and I am guilty of this myself—have for our friends in the National Party. I am not sure

if it is because so many of us have farming in our family backgrounds or if it is because we agree on so many of the services that we want to see for people living in rural and remote communities but it is expressed very often.

Most particularly I want to say a thank you to the Deputy Prime Minister for the generosity that he has shown to me such as in welcoming me, for example, to the farewell of Paul Neville, the former National whip. We had a great time that night. That is not the only time I have had a great time with my friends in the National Party, but the rest of that is secret.

There is something that comes with being from the bush and that is a strong spirit of self-reliance and also the determination to lend a helping hand when it is required. You have personally, Deputy Prime Minister, shown that again and again. There is something else, I think, that comes from coming from the bush and that is a determination to have a good time at every opportunity when you get together with your friends and colleagues. You have not only shown that but also welcomed many of us into that.

I am sure your wife and your family are listening today and I am sure they have mixed feelings too, having supported you and been so involved in your political mission over so many years. I am sure it is as much Lyn's success as your success, and you would see it that way, no doubt. We are not just farewelling you. In a way we are farewelling Lyn too. I am sure that she will be happy to have you at home a little bit more. Our personal wishes for you are that you enjoy these years of retirement. I am sure that it will not be retirement from politics more generally, but retirement from our parliament. We hope that you enjoy your time with your family and that we will see you around, no doubt.

I want to also make some comments, of course, on the retirement of Minister Robb. It was much more of a surprise to us as we have not had quite the amount of speculation as the Deputy Prime Minister's retirement. You are, many people would say and we would say, at the peak of your powers in the federal parliament. The 12 years has really gone by very quickly. I have been here longer than you and it seems to me that the time that you have been in the parliament has really flown by in a flash.

There is no doubt that your achievements as trade minister have been driven by and underpinned by an enormous amount of hard work. It is hard work that has taken you away from your family and away from your friends for many nights. I can understand the personal toll that that has taken on you and on your family. I thank you for the commitment that you have shown in pursuing Australia's interests.

We have had our arguments across the chamber about some of the areas in the agreements. Of course, today is not the day to talk about that. What there is no doubt of is the effort, the skill and the ambition that you have shown for our country, and we thank you for that. Trade agreements can take a very long time to come to fruition and you inherited a number of trade agreements when you took on the portfolio. I thank you also for the generosity that you have shown in acknowledging the work of your predecessors on these agreements. Not everyone does that in this place. You have been extremely generous in acknowledging that we are all part of a continuum. We pass the baton to one another. I thank you for the generosity that you have shown.

I want to say also to the minister that the candid and brave way that you have discussed your issues with depression have really been groundbreaking for the million or so Australians that suffer from depression each year. The bravery that you have shown and the example you have set—taking on complex, difficult work—while admitting that you have struggled with depression and continue to manage it, I know, is a constant battle for anyone who has experienced depression. There is the constant need to look forward and make sure that you are looking after yourself and looking after the condition that you have.

You have inspired countless people to know that, even if they are struggling with depression, they should not rule themselves out from a full, rich life, a contribution to their community, and relationships successfully maintained. So I want to really thank you for that as well. You say that you will continue to work in the area of raising awareness about depression. That is a marvellous contribution to continue to make to our community, and I thank you for that. I wish you, Maureen and your family all the very best. I suspect that Minister Robb will not be staying home quite as much. My guess would be that he is planning on some other steps in his career. If that is true, I wish you all the very best with the next steps you take in your career as well.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (13:30): on indulgence—There is a certain poignancy about today as we say farewell from this place to two very fine parliamentarians. We will be very sad to see them go, but it does give us an opportunity to reflect on the careers and the characters of Warren Truss and Andrew Robb. It has been my privilege to know Warren Truss, the Deputy Prime Minister, for a number of years now and an even greater privilege to consider him a friend. Warren has dedicated his life to the service of others—officially as early as 1973, when he became president of the Australian Council of Rural Youth. In 1976 he was elected to the Kingaroy Shire Council. He was mayor for seven years and then contested the seat of Wide Bay in 1990.

There are few people in Australian political history who have achieved the stellar parliamentary career heights of Deputy Prime Minister. Added to that, Warren's ministerial responsibilities and policy achievements are numerous. Personally, I particularly want to make mention of his role relating to the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370—his management of that disappearance and the recovery efforts that were underway. It is one of the great airline mysteries of our time. He was magnificent and is highly regarded around the world for his efforts.

However, this only tells part of the story. Warren Truss is a person of great integrity, decency and honour. He is admired for his wise advice and his contributions to policy debates. Time and time again he would reveal to us the formidable depth of his intellect, his thoughtfulness and his life experience. He has been a rock in the coalition—reliable, a steady influence for all of us.

It is not as well known—although colleagues here are certainly aware of it—that Warren has a razor-sharp wit, and his observations, which are invariably so droll, can often have us in fits of laughter. I have sat next to the Deputy Prime Minister in question time for a number of years now and he has had me in hysterics—but not noticeably, of course—on a number of occasions because of the dry observations he would make from time to time which would capture the essence of the absurdity of the situation. There is a great levity about Warren, and I do appreciate his wonderful sense of humour. I also note that Warren is a man of few words on Twitter. I have checked. He posts, on average, one tweet every seven days. That is consistent and reliable, but he is not overdoing it!

I recall travelling to Wide Bay on my first visit some years ago, and I was warmly hosted by Warren and his lovely wife, Lyn. It was clear to me how deeply regarded he is by so many of his local constituents. He has the great ability to make people feel welcome, appreciated and at ease. It is a humbling quality that accompanies his enthusiasm and genuine interest in his community and the members of his community.

I cannot speak more highly of the Deputy Prime Minister as a very fine Australian. His local government service before joining the federal parliament and his parliamentary positions exemplify his commitment to serving his electorate, his party and his country. Warren's leadership, especially over the last 2½ years as Deputy Prime Minister, has proven to be a critical part of this government's strength. I wish Warren and Lyn all the very best. You both have our enduring respect.

I am also sad but pleased to say a few words about a good friend and colleague in Andrew Robb. We worked together as ministers in the education and training portfolios in the Howard government. And now, as the two ministers responsible for foreign affairs and trade and investment, in our interconnected portfolios, we have shared the last 2½ years navigating the often turbulent waters of diplomacy and an embrace of what we call economic diplomacy at the heart of our foreign affairs and trade and investment policies. So, while Andrew would be rallying our region to break down protectionist barriers and selling Australia as the place to do business, I would be focusing on some of the geo-strategic issues—easing tensions in the region and supporting peace and stability—as precursors to the prosperity that Andrew was seeking to advance. We worked together as a team. As I would call for restraint in some of the tensions in the region, Andrew would call for our regional friends to recognise the interdependence of our respective economies and the opportunities that economic cooperation can offer us all.

Andrew has advanced the government's agenda in the most outstanding way, utilising our international assets to promote Australia's economic prosperity. And he has done it in the most sophisticated way in engaging with other countries. Andrew is one of the most effective trade ministers in the world today and one of the most effective in our political history. He has been a tireless advocate for Australian businesses abroad. He has enhanced our reputation as a place for investment here at home. He came to this role with a very serious trade agenda. We now thank him for concluding four of the most economically significant free trade agreements for the benefit of the Australian economy and the Australian people and for the foreseeable future.

I think the enormity of what he has achieved is reflected in the statistics. The three North Asia free trade agreements cover nearly 70 per cent of Asia's total GDP and represent a total customer base of 1½ billion people and are already the destination for more than half of Australia's exports to the world. The 12 Trans-Pacific Partnership countries represent around 40 per cent of the global economy and a quarter of world trade. Australia's export of goods and services to these countries was worth over \$109 billion last year, a third of Australia's total exports. So this is a huge legacy that Andrew Robb has bequeathed.

He was fierce in his determination to achieve these three free trade agreements. I am sure he is aware that his US counterpart, US trade representative Mike Froman, would confide from time to time that he was one of the toughest negotiators he had ever come across. I was always so proud to receive those, what I saw as, compliments on Andrew's behalf.

After decades of service to the Liberal Party, Andrew is known for his wisdom, his poise and his dedication to the causes that he holds dear. He has had personal struggles, which he has overcome with such dignity. I pay respect to both Andrew and Maureen for the service that they have provided to this country. Indeed, on a personal note I want to say how proud I am of both Warren and Andrew for leaving parliament on their own terms at the height of their political careers. Warren and Lyn and Andrew and Maureen, we salute you.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah) (13:39): on indulgence—It is an honour and a thrill to rise to acknowledge two great Australians who have announced that they are leaving this parliament at the next election. There are few members of parliament who leave at their peak, in their prime and at a time of their own choosing. It is very much to the credit of the Deputy Prime Minister, the member for Wide Bay, and the Minister for Trade and Investment, the member for Goldstein, that they are doing just that.

Warren Truss was a remarkably effective minister in the Howard government. He has been a peerless Leader of the National Party for almost a decade and he was an absolutely outstanding Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Thanks to the member for Wide Bay, the Deputy Prime Minister and infrastructure minister, Sydney's second airport is finally under way. Thanks to him Sydney's WestConnex is finally happening. Thanks to him the Bruce Highway is undergoing the biggest upgrade in its history, the north-south road corridor in Adelaide is finally being upgraded to expressway standard and Perth's road system is also being transformed. But for the obstinacy of the Victorian government, thanks to the Deputy Prime Minister and infrastructure minister Melbourne would be getting the East West Link too.

These are remarkable achievements. This is a historic legacy. This is someone who has quite literally transformed the face of our country. His legacy is a decade of coalition harmony and the steady growth of the National Party under his leadership. I often used to talk about grown-up, adult government and the instant I used that phrase I would look to Warren Truss to ensure that it was in fact provided. The foreign minister talked about the Deputy Prime Minister's dry and droll wit. I can remember, after listening to one of his colleagues in leadership, Warren said, 'That sounds a bit like a Treasury wet dream,' and then he said, 'No, Treasury only has dry dreams.'

As has been remarked, Warren, the member for Wide Bay, has been an undemonstrative, understated member of the government. He has also been an absolutely decent and honourable member of this place and member of a government. We need more people like that—we really do—and Warren's life and times prove that we can get them.

Andrew Robb, as we have heard, has been a successful and effective servant of the Liberal Party. He was a great frontbencher in opposition and, as the Prime Minister has observed, he is the best trade minister Australia has ever had. No ifs, no buts—the record is there to demonstrate that he is the best trade minister Australia has ever had.

After the 2013 election I gave him 12 months to finalise free trade agreements that had been languishing for the best part of the decade with Korea, with Japan and with China. I said, 'Don't let the best be the enemy of the good.' Almost to the day he finalised those free trade agreements, and our country is immeasurably the better for that work. He has set us up for decades to come.

As has been mentioned, this is a sad occasion and a happy occasion. We are sad that our friends and colleagues will not be with us beyond the next election but we are happy that we had them for so long and we are happy that our country has been the beneficiary of the most productive years of their lives. We are sad, but of course Lyn and Maureen, rightly, are happy to be able to have their spouses with them much more in the years to come.

In this parliament we are very good at saying the right thing. We are not always nearly so good at doing the right thing, but both the member for Wide Bay and the member for Goldstein have done the right thing in every way. Our country is better for their public life. I join with my other senior colleagues in saying to both of them: 'Well done, good and faithful servants.'

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (13:44): on indulgence—I am very pleased to be able to take the opportunity to pay tribute to Andrew Robb and Warren Truss on the day of their announcement that they will leave parliament at the next election. To Andrew Robb and to Maureen, I wish you all the best for your future and I, in particular, join with others in paying tribute to the courage that you showed with regard to the mental health issues which you confronted after such a long period of time. Importantly, the way that you dealt with them has made a practical difference to so many lives now and in the future. We need to have the courage to be able to talk about these issues, and your courage has helped others. I pay tribute to you.

I particularly want to say a little bit more about Warren Truss. Between us, in either capacity, we have shadowed each other for a very long time. One of the things that struck me about your contribution here that says so much about you as a person is the fact that you have had two chiefs of staff. That is remarkable. This is a place

of revolving doors, where people come in for a short period of time, there is a lot of pressure on in these jobs and people leave. I do not know your first chief of staff, but I certainly know David Whitrow very well. He has been loyal; he clearly loves you as a mate as well as his employer. What that says to me is a lot about your character under pressure. As Deputy Prime Minister and infrastructure minister, the two positions that I held before the last election, I know the pressures that are on. You have had that loyalty from your staff, and I know from the department that your dealings with them as well are professional, courteous, gracious and in the interests of the nation.

We might disagree with each other. We have on many things. The fact that you have continued most of the Labor projects that we began has meant that it has been easier for you to agree with the agenda that we had in place. You were the minister who finally determined—we did a lot of the lead-up work, but it was your decision—the site of the second airport at Badgerys Creek. That is one decision you can be very proud of. This is a tough issue. You cannot have a region with a population of above two million which does not have access to aviation services. It is not about Kingsford Smith. It is about Western Sydney, it is about jobs and it is about our national economy. You can be proud of the work you have done there and on the roads package around the Western Sydney Airport. We do need to do something about the rail, but the roads package is a very good package and one that I am sure you had to push through the cabinet processes.

In general, I think you are a loss to the parliament because—even though I disagree with your perspective, I have always respected it in the discussions that we have had—you are old-school National Party. That is, you have that sense of the national interest and that there is a role for government in protecting that national interest. In your first speech back in 1990, which I read earlier today, you referred to that in terms of the trade issues and the importance of buying Australian goods and products, whether it be from the farm or Australian manufacturing. That is critical as well.

Whilst people see the disagreement at question time, what they often do not see is the agreement that is there. A lot of the issues in the portfolio that you have held more recently—along with other portfolios that you had earlier—and in our dealings, issues of transport security, are not ones best dealt with in public. Some of these things are best done between adults, looking after the national interest. I thank you for what you did while I was the Infrastructure and Transport Minister. We had some really difficult issues to deal with: the incident on the flight in the United States and the issues over Europe with regard to cargo transport. On all of those issues, I was completely confident that there would be no politics played.

I hope that I have certainly returned that responsibility and acted in the same manner that you did when it comes to these security issues, because at the end of the day that is a big responsibility that we have. Issues like road safety—so many issues—are just beyond partisan politics and should remain so. In those, whenever I have asked for a briefing, I have received one. I think I have made constructive contributions in your office as well, with no-one to see, about the way that some things should be handled. You did the same with me.

I wish you and Lyn all the very best. You will have a quieter life with much more time for each other. That will be a good thing for you and your family.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (13:51): on indulgence—Much has been said and will be written about Warren Truss and the member for Goldstein in days ahead, but I just wanted to cut through to some of the funny sides of Warren Truss. When I was first ejected from this parliament, Warren made his way across the chamber and said to me, 'Your predecessor never was thrown out of parliament.' It was true. But then one day, on 16 February 2012, Warren Truss was thrown out of parliament, perhaps a little bit unfairly, and I led a walkout of the National Party. Warren was horrified. But it showed the solidarity of the National Party and it showed the unity of the National Party, and that is something that Warren instilled in National Party members. There are 12 great leaders on the wall of the National Party room, and I am sure that Warren is right up there with the very best of those people. I am sure that the member for New England, his likely successor, will also make his mark as a great National Party leader.

Last year, at the New South Wales conference of the National Party, Warren and I were sitting at the top table. Warren was going through his notes for the speech that he was about to deliver about regional jobs, infrastructure, the importance of water and all those things that Warren is so across—nobody is better across his brief than Warren—and without even looking at me he said to me, 'Your wife, Catherine, obviously didn't make it to conference.' I said, 'No, in fact, she didn't,' and he said, 'I can tell, because if she had you certainly wouldn't be dressed like that.' I had a green and white striped shirt. I had a blue, navy and red polka dot tie. That is the sort of cut-through that Warren can have. When he has a go at you, there is absolutely no comeback. He has, as Julie Bishop noted, a very dry sense of humour.

We have seen that sense of humour in Warren, but we have also seen the attention to detail. He is absolutely meticulous with detail. No minister has been better across his brief than Warren. He has done a fine job of unifying the National Party. He has done a fine job of restoring our stocks, which were at an all-time low in 2007 when he reluctantly took over. He has built the party up. We have regained a number of seats. He has left the party in very good hands. I wish him and his beautiful wife, Lyn, all the very best for the future.

I also wish that for the member for Goldstein, another who is very across his portfolio. The trade deals that he has been able to broker for our nation will stand us in good stead, particularly regional Australia, and I certainly wish Andrew and Maureen all the very best for their futures. Our great nation is better for having both Warren and Andrew serve it.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:54): on indulgence—I acknowledge both the statement from the Minister for Trade and Investment and his outstanding service to this parliament and elsewhere, but I will have a little more to say about him at a later date, when he is not so much the friendly combatant still sitting in the cabinet. I would like to begin my contribution by dealing with speculation that I was given the privilege of talking about the Deputy Prime Minister because on my side I understand best how members of the National Party think. I totally reject that! I totally deny that! Rather, I sought the opportunity to speak for a number of reasons—amongst them, four. The first is that I respect him. The second is that I like him. The third is that, as a rural member myself, we share a passion for rural and regional policy. The fourth is that I think I am in the minority now—I am one of those people that have been around here for a couple of decades, which means I have served for not all but for most of the time he has been here.

The party Warren Truss leads is just shy of 100 years old—I think that is correct—and any member of this place and, indeed, the broader community has to respect a party which has enjoyed such longevity. Therefore, by definition, we should respect anyone who has had the opportunity or, indeed, will have the opportunity to lead such a party. The next leader is yet to be tested, but we will see how that runs after about 8 pm tonight. In Warren Truss's case, it goes without saying that he has been respected across the political divide here not just because he has led a political party but because he has earned that respect across the dispatch box and across the parties more generally.

Warren Truss is a good man who has always tried his very best to put good public policy on equal ranking with, if not ahead of, good politics, and that is something that is increasingly important in this place. It is something that has caused him to build significant trust and respect across the chamber. I think it is a good time for the Deputy Prime Minister to move on. He has had a good innings. He leaves at a good age—still young enough to do fun things, I have no doubt—and I hope and trust he leaves with good health and, therefore, an opportunity to spend many good years with his wife, Lyn, and the rest of the family.

I believe very genuinely—and this is not designed to be a political point, and I hope people do not take it as such—that it is true that we live in a fast-changing world, indeed, a world of rapid change. As times change, politics will also change, both economically and socially. That is particularly true in rural and regional Australia, which in my view plays catch-up a little with our capital cities as they become more progressive. Expectations in rural and regional Australia are on the rise. They are expecting more from their politicians than transactional politics and the spin they too often hear, and that is a challenge not only for members of the National Party but for all of us who represent rural and regional seats. I am not saying for a moment that Warren Truss has not been capable of new and innovative thinking. He has. But this is certainly a challenging time when expectations are much higher and people are expecting a much higher standard of public debate. They want to see us working better together and thinking at a higher level, putting some of the transactional politics behind and developing good progressive policy and structural change—transformational politics rather than transactional politics.

Warren Truss did not lead the party of 'Black Jack' McEwen any more than the new leader will lead the party of Doug Anthony, Ian Sinclair, John Anderson or people of that era. The new leader will have to be a different leader. The new leader will have to be a more progressive leader. With respect to the Deputy Prime Minister, who led at a different time, the new leader will have to take a far more open and progressive approach to some of the big structural issues that confront rural and regional Australia. Again, the new leader will have to show some capacity to inspire people living in rural and regional Australia and show them that he or she understands that our society and our economy are changing and new responses are necessary.

So, in addition to wishing the Deputy Prime Minister well, I also wish well the person who will succeed him. He or she will have big challenges ahead of them—challenges which will be best met with new, higher level thinking and thinking that tackles the real structural changes we face in rural and regional Australia.

CONDOLENCES

Halverson, Hon. Robert George (Bob), OBE

The SPEAKER (14:00): It is my sad duty to inform the House of the death on Tuesday of this week of the Hon. Robert George 'Bob' Halverson, a member of this House for the division of Casey from 1984 until 1998 and Speaker from 1996 to 1998.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science) (14:00): I advise the House that, following discussions between the member for Murray, who is a member of the Halverson extended family, and the Halverson family, a condolence motion in respect of former Speaker Halverson will be formally moved when the House returns on Monday, 22 February. Members will then have an opportunity to speak to that motion. It will be referred to the Federation Chamber, and any other members who wish to speak will then be able to contribute in the Federation Chamber.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the House. As a mark of respect to the memory of Bob Halverson, I now invite all present to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Turnbull Government

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. The government has lost 11 ministers in the last six months, and there is another minister still sitting here who should go. Given that it has been one year and two days since the member for Warringah famously said, 'Good government starts today,' Prime Minister, when does good government start for you?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left and right! The Leader of the House! The minister for immigration is denying the Prime Minister the call.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:02): Today, we have had some really beautiful speeches, from Warren Truss and from Andrew Robb, and we have had a lot of very warm words said about the National Party. The member for Hunter was just talking about 'Black Jack' McEwen, and it reminded me of something that John McEwen said to my father-in-law, the Hon. Tom Hughes, when he came into this parliament in the early sixties. He said, 'You should treat every question, no matter how offensive, as a polite request for information.' And so I will treat the honourable member's question in precisely those terms. I can say to the honourable member—

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: that the government is transforming the Australian economy to one that will be driven by technology and by innovation, building the prosperity and the security of the 21st century. We have established now four massive free trade agreements. The Minister for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb, who spoke earlier today so well, has succeeded in putting those building blocks in place. Right around Australia, we are seeing an economy that had been perceived as being largely dominated by the mining-construction boom. Because of the diversity of the economy—because of its resilience, because of the opportunities this government is providing to Australian businesses and individuals right around the country—we are seeing confidence up, unemployment coming down and participation going up. We are seeing signs of strong growth.

And so I say to the honourable member, who always wants to cast everything in a bleak light—and obviously gets his questions from one of the more sarcastic newspaper columns—there are plenty of challenges, but the biggest news today is the resilience of the Australian economy and the leadership the government is giving, and the proof is to be found in jobs and investment right across Australia.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Petrie, a number of times during question time this week I have made the point that, if members have continually interjected and have been warned multiple times, they do not start with a clean slate. Those who have been warned multiple times I am not going to continue to warn. I am not going to go through the very long list of who they all are, but I certainly will not be allowing them to remain in the chamber—and I do not want there to be any confusion on that point.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I have also made the point that it is highly disorderly to interject when I am making a ruling, so the member for Moreton can leave under standing order 94(a).

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Economy

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister please update the House on the resilience of the Australian economy, despite recent volatility in global markets? How are the government's policies on jobs and growth contributing to confidence in our economic future?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:06): I thank the honourable member for his question. We have seen considerable volatility in global share markets over the last few months, concerns about growth in China and big swings in fortunes on all the major indexes, and that, obviously, is calculated to undermine confidence somewhat. But data released this week demonstrates that our economy remains, despite all of that, strong and resilient. The National Australia Bank business confidence index was unchanged in January. Given the volatility and uncertainty of which I just spoke, that is a remarkable result. Business confidence is highest in Queensland, followed by Tasmania and New South Wales in trend terms. The Westpac-Melbourne Institute consumer confidence index rose by 4.2 per cent in February, and the ANZ Roy-Morgan weekly consumer confidence measure picked up last week as well.

In terms of our business leaders, we have heard from Ian Narev, the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth Bank, and he said just yesterday:

... through the latter part of 2015, the Australian economy continued its steady transition from a resource-dependent economy to a more diversified one. ... the economy overall is starting to generate a broader base of jobs.

Inflation remains low, unemployment is down to 5.8 per cent—the lowest rate since April 2014. In trend terms, the ANZ job ads index has increased by 0.6 per cent in January to be 11.2 per cent higher than a year ago. More than 300,000 jobs were created in Australia last year, and 90 per cent of those jobs were in the private sector, which is the engine room of our economy. There are more women in full-time work than ever before. At around 77 per cent late last year, the participation rate for women aged 35 to 44 has never been higher.

The government is not complacent. We are not taking any of this for granted. We are continuing to drive that productivity and drive that growth. The national innovation statement has 24 separate measures to drive innovation, to drive the economy of the 21st century, to build on greater linkages between primary research and commercialisation and to ensure that it is easier for innovative companies to raise money.

We have a \$5.5 billion small business package, incentivising small businesses to employ and invest. And of course we have—regrettably opposed by the Labor Party—a \$3.2 billion new childcare subsidy that will see even more women able to go to work and participate in the economy.

Minister for Human Services

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Minister for Human Services' trip to China and the Prime Minister's previous answer. Isn't it the case that the Prime Minister has one choice: sack your minister or sack your own ministerial standards? Why does this Prime Minister owe so much to the Minister for Human Services that this is a difficult decision?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:09): I refer to my earlier answer to the Leader of the Opposition and just remind him that, as he knows, when this matter arose, the process set out in the code was put in train.

Mr Dreyfus: No, it wasn't—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned!

Mr TURNBULL: The Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is inquiring into the matter and, when he reports back to me with his advice, I will consider it, make a decision about it and then of course advise the House accordingly.

The Leader of the Opposition is smiling now, because he knows how completely captious and foolish this approach is. If he takes the ministerial standards seriously—I hope he does, and we certainly do—then we should ensure that the process for dealing with these matters is done properly. And that is exactly what I am undertaking, in accordance with the code, with the support and assistance of my secretary,.

Economy

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (14:10): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer advise the House of the importance of sound fiscal policy and strong economic management to our transitioning economy? How is the government backing hardworking Australians to promote growth and jobs?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:11): I thank the member for Capricornia for her question, because she is right: the Australian economy is transitioning, as the Prime Minister has just said, and that transition is being felt differently all across the country—whether it is in the regional areas of North Queensland, in Western Australia, in the suburbs of Sydney or Melbourne, or right across this country. The good news for the economy as a whole is that we are transitioning—positively transitioning—as the Prime Minister has just said. To ensure that this continues, we need to continue to back the Australians in who are making this transition occur each and every day. There are things that we need to do as a government and that we need to continue to do as a government. These are quite difficult times, and I know that it is cause for concern for those who have seen what has been happening in financial markets around the world, the volatility that has been occurring there and the low-growth environment globally that we are now facing.

It is important that we look past the dust of that volatility and look to what is happening in the real economy in Australia. In the real economy in Australia we are seeing growth. We are seeing growth in jobs and we are seeing growth in the economy, and we have got a government that is focused on growth and jobs. In these uncertain times, you need to have a very strong financial position, and that strong financial position needs a government that is not going to think that 'tax and spend' is a plan for growth—but that is what those opposite think. 'Tax and spend' is the approach of those opposite, and they think that is a plan for growth and jobs. We have a very different view, because we know the way to back in the transitioning economy. Economists like Paul Bloxham say that growth has been rebalancing, and the NAB group economist, Alan Oster, has said, 'The good domestic fundamentals are helping to offset what could potentially be a big drag on confidence from global markets.' The ANZ head of economics, Felicity Emmett, has said, 'The domestic economy, however, is currently not in bad shape, with the unemployment rate improving significantly over recent months,' and the confidence data that is coming through that the Prime Minister has referred to backs this up.

But you have got to back the confidence of Australians in by ensuring that the Australian government is doing the right thing by our budget, and that means ensuring we continue to get our expenditure under control. Expenditure is a share of the economy and it is falling from 25.9 per cent of the economy to 25.3 per cent under the savings proposals of this government. We have those savings proposals in place. They are outlined in the budget. That is our clear plan to consolidate the fiscal position of this government, but those opposite have a very different plan. They want to reverse \$30 billion worth of savings that this government has seen pass through the parliament. They want to continue to oppose some \$13 billion of other savings measures, including the \$9 billion in savings measures we announced in MYEFO alone. On top of that, they want to spend almost \$14 billion more. And to pay for this enormous \$57 billion they have come up with nothing more than higher taxes. (*Time expired*)

Minister for Human Services

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:14): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's previous answers about the Parkinson inquiry. Will the Prime Minister table the following documents in parliament: the minister's letter requesting leave, received in PMO on 28 July 2014; the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's advice about the leave request, document No. B14/2264 dated 29 July 2014 and signed by an assistant secretary of the department; and the response from the office of the Prime Minister approving the minister's leave dated 30 July 2014? (*Time expired*)

Mr Bowen interjecting—

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon and the Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:15): That was a polite inquiry for information, and I thank the honourable member for it. I can say to the honourable member: when the secretary has completed his advice to me, I will, obviously, advise the House, and I will consider his request and consider what material should be tabled in the context of reporting that decision. So I thank him for his suggestion.

Taxation

Ms MCGOWAN (Indi) (14:15): My question, about the backpacker tax, is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, overseas workers in Australia will be stung with a higher income tax bill from July 2016 under the government's new backpacker tax. This change will have major negative impacts on agriculture and tourism in Indi and around Australia, where producers, growers and tourism operators rely on overseas workers. Can you please tell the House what the government will do to answer the call from my colleagues in the National Party, the VFF and the NFF to stop this tax change?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:16): I thank the member for her question. It is important to have some context in the changes that have taken place in relation to this measure. Those in this chamber may be

familiar with the fact—though the shadow Treasurer may not be familiar with the fact—that they increased the tax-free threshold from \$6,000 to \$18,200, and what that meant was: those who were previously coming as backpackers and working in this country actually used to pay tax on their earnings, but those opposite decided that those who are coming on working holidays should be getting a tax holiday and they should be able to come and work and not pay tax. So what this government have done is—

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon!

Mr MORRISON: we have rectified the error of those opposite—

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon is warned.

Mr MORRISON: who sought to put in place a compensation mechanism for the carbon tax, and one of those they sought to compensate was actually foreign backpackers working in Australia so they would not have to pay tax. On top of that, where some tax is actually withheld for backpackers, they are able to claim that back when they go home, and so they get that money back when they go back and they spend it in their own country.

So what we are dealing with in this measure is to ensure that we rectify what may have been an unintended consequence—or maybe it was an intended consequence, that those opposite wanted to give working holidaymakers a tax holiday when they came to Australia; maybe that was their actual plan. But what we have done is to seek to rectify that anomaly to ensure that, when people come and work in Australia and they come and enjoy the best country in the world in which to have a holiday—and there are 160,000 of them here at any one point in time and over 200,000 will come over the course of the year, and that is a good thing for the Australian tourism industry; there is no doubt about that—they are coming here for a holiday, not a tax holiday. When they get the opportunity to come and work and spend their money here, that is fantastic. But people should pay their fair share of tax in Australia, whether they are a multinational, whether they are Australian or whether they are a foreign backpacker or anyone else. We should pay our fair share of tax.

We are cognisant of the challenges in regional areas in finding these workers. Just this week there was an expansion of the Seasonal Worker Program that was announced by the Minister for Employment and the minister for agriculture. So we are conscious of those needs. But, at the same time, we have to clean up the mess that those opposite left. When they went and put this in place, they went and gave foreign workers a tax holiday in Australia.

China

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (14:18): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on how her forthcoming visit to China will strengthen our economic relationship and help boost our domestic economy, leading to jobs and growth?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left will cease interjecting.

Ms Julie Bishop interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Foreign Affairs will resume her seat; I have not called her yet.

Mr Albanese: Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Grayndler, on a point of order, but if he is frivolous he can keep walking right out the door.

Mr Albanese: Yes, Mr Speaker. Standing order 100(d)(vi) clearly rules out irony, and, given today, that is an extraordinary question to ask.

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will leave under 94(a).

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:19): I thank the member for Banks for his question because it is a very serious question about the bilateral relationship between Australia and China, and the member for Banks knows the significance of this relationship, including through his Australian-Chinese community. I know that he recently celebrated Chinese New Year at Club Central with about 300 members of that community.

Next week I will visit Beijing as part of our overall comprehensive strategic partnership with China. I will attend the annual foreigners strategic dialogue with my counterpart minister, Wang Yi, and we will take forward our political, economic and strategic agenda, which benefits the national interests of both our countries.

Despite moderating growth, China remains our fastest-growing and largest trading partner. With \$80 billion in exports last year, most of it from the resources sector, it has certainly underpinned our economic growth.

The exciting opportunities that exist in the services sector—\$9 billion of exports from the services sector—have been highlighted time and time again by our magnificent Minister for Trade and Investment. Through the signing of a free trade agreement with China, we have left an economic legacy that will benefit this country for years to come, particularly in services and in the agricultural sector, as the minister for agriculture well knows.

I was told that, in January of this year, Geraldton Fishermen's Co-operative established the first live lobster holding warehouse in Guangzhou, and this reflects China's desire for high-quality Australian seafood. Likewise, Fresh Select is working with China's merchants to establish an online portal—it is very innovative—for selling Australian fresh produce in China.

In tourism, the story is quite extraordinary. With direct flights to Perth, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Cairns, over one million Chinese nationals visited Australia as tourists last year, contributing about \$7 billion to our tourism industry and, therefore, our economy. We are delighted that, just over Chinese New Year alone, over 200,000 Chinese nationals visited this country, injecting about \$500 million into our economy. So we are focused on strengthening and enhancing the bilateral relationship between China and Australia. It is in our economic interest and it is in our strategic interest to have a very close and enduring relationship with China. May I say to Chinese communities in Australia as they welcome in the Year of the Monkey, a year of innovation and optimism: *Xin Nian Kuai Le— (Time expired)*

Minister for Human Services

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:22): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Minister for Human Services' trip to China. The department of foreign affairs has confirmed at Senate estimates today that a Chinese government note taker would have been present at the meeting between the Minister for Human Services, the Chinese vice-minister for land and resources, and Nimrod Resources. Does that mean that the Chinese government has notes of the meeting and the Australian government does not? And has Dr Parkinson sought notes of that meeting from the Chinese government?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:23): I thank the honourable member for his question. The matter, as I have said earlier, is being investigated by Dr Parkinson in accordance with the code of ministerial standards. When he has completed that inquiry and advises me, I will then make a decision concerning the matters, subject to the advice, and advise the House accordingly. So the due process is underway. Any suggestions the Leader of the Opposition wants to make to me or to Dr Parkinson can be duly noted, but we are not going to deviate from due process. Proper accountability and transparency are very important and we are undertaking that.

The Leader of the Opposition is filled with indignation today. He is pumping himself up again with indignation almost to the level of the member for Isaacs. It is impossible to achieve, and he is the king of indignation in this chamber. We do have to remind the Leader of the Opposition that accountability and transparency are an important—

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is no preamble to the question. It goes to what records the Australian government holds for meetings attended by one of its own ministers.

The SPEAKER: No, the Prime Minister is in order. He is addressing the topic of the question.

Mr TURNBULL: The issue of records and accountability, of course, is very central in the trade union royal commission and none more so—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: I hear the honourable members opposite protesting.

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: I will ask the Manager of Opposition Business to resume his seat for a second. As the Manager of Opposition Business well knows, a point of order on relevance can only be raised once. Yes, I did not ask him to state that, given his position. Clearly his objection was based on that standing order. It was clear that was the objection. I have allowed a point of order. The Prime Minister has still quite a way to go in the answer. I am not going to hear another point of order on the same topic on a technicality.

Mr TURNBULL: These issues of accountability are very important and due process is very important, in accordance with the code. What the honourable member should consider, however, is the extraordinary circumstances of the industrial agreement with Cleanevent, where thousands—

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen will cease interjecting. The member for Sydney will cease interjecting.

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under standing order 68, the standing orders are clear—when a member has given a personal explanation to correct a misrepresentation—about your opportunity to be able to intervene. The Prime Minister is exactly now dealing with the issues that were subject to a statement of having been misrepresented in parliament the other day.

The SPEAKER: I will address this as briefly as I can because I do not want to detain members throughout question time. The former Speaker, as the Manager of Opposition Business knows, addressed this issue in some detail. It is a new standing order that has only operated in this parliament and it was invoked, I think, with respect to the member for Jagajaga at one point. What was made clear then, without me rereading through everything, is that it is not possible for me as Speaker to know the subject of every personal explanation. I do not carry that with me. Now that the member has raised that, I can be cognisant of it for the future, but I am not going to pause question time, look at what was said and make a ruling on it now. The Prime Minister has a minute to go on the question that has been asked. Just before I call him, I am allowing very robust questions. There are preambles in some questions and there are going to be preambles in answers. If the House itself wants to decide it does not want preambles in questions and answers, we can discuss that another day through the relevant procedure committee. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr TURNBULL: The case of the Cleanevent industrial agreement is a very relevant one. What that involved was one of Australia's largest and oldest unions, of which the Leader of the Opposition was the national secretary, entering into an industrial agreement with an employer which, in the course of that agreement, traded away conditions, penalty rates and so forth in the agreement, but which involved, unbeknownst to some of the most low-paid workers in Australia, a secret deal between the employer and the union to pay money to the union behind the backs of those employees. That was accepted, apparently, as standard practice. That was regarded as okay; perfectly reasonable. Honourable members opposite cannot imagine— *(Time expired)*

Tomato Imports

Dr STONE (Murray) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science. I remind the minister that SPC is an iconic business and employer in my electorate. It has long been injured by Italian tinned tomatoes being dumped in the Australian market. Minister, how are the government's reforms to the antidumping regime and today's decision to impose duties on Italian tinned tomatoes helping to ensure that Australian businesses can compete with imported goods on a level playing field?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science) (14:29): I thank the member for Murray for her question. Australia is one of the most pro free trade countries in the world. Free trade has served our economy very well as a trading nation and as an island nation. Part of our commitment to free trade and part of our commitment to the World Trade Organization is that that trade is fair as well as free. In order to maintain the integrity of the system and the public support for free trade it is important that, when those rules are breached, action is taken.

In the case of Italian tinned tomatoes, the announcement today by the Assistant Minister for Science means that every single can of tinned tomatoes coming into Australia from Italy will now have a duty attached to it. In April 2014 many of the Italian tins of tomatoes had a duty attached. Today, every Italian tin of tomatoes has a duty attached, which means that Australian businesses can compete on a fair basis with imports.

The rules of the WTO make it very clear that countries cannot injure domestic businesses through the importation of products. The Australian Anti-Dumping Commissioner has found that, in the case of tinned tomatoes from Italy, the dumping of those tomatoes has been injurious to Australian businesses, particularly SPC Ardmona in the member for Murray's electorate for whom the member for Murray has been a great advocate for her entire period in this House. So while I would not necessarily congratulate the ADC or the member for Murray, it is a fact that today the government is imposing duties on two businesses, Feger and La Doria, from Italy—8.4 per cent on Feger and 4½ per cent on La Doria. That is in order to remove that injury to Australian business. I think Australians will welcome this, because it shows that the Australian government and the Anti-Dumping Commission are not toothless tigers.

We introduced some reforms to the anti-dumping laws last year. They are starting to work their magic through our economy. It is not just Italian tinned tomatoes that we are now taking action over. Eighty per cent of the cases that are before the Anti-Dumping Commissioner—and I see him in the chamber today—are about the steel and aluminium industry in Australia. There has been concern in the steel industry about the potential for dumping of steel from overseas to be found. There are three cases right now before the Anti-Dumping Commission that I have asked them to expedite. I look forward to their findings in those cases on whether or not Australia has been injured. So I thank the member for Murray for her question. *(Time expired)*

Minister for Human Services

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. I refer to the minister's previous answers on the Parkinson inquiry. The *Defence Security Manual* states:

Defence personnel ... must not carry official information or classified material, including laptops and Portable Electronic Devices (PED), if not travelling on official business.

Has the minister informed the Parkinson inquiry whether he used a government issued laptop, portable electronic device or mobile phone during his private trip to China? Will he also provide this information to the parliament?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC) (14:33): I thank the member for his question, and I refer the member to my statements over the previous days.

National Security

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism. Will the minister update the House on what the government is doing to prevent Australians from joining terrorist groups at home and overseas?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism) (14:34): I thank the member for Robertson for that question. Members will have seen the report on the front page of *The Australian* today about Australian children being exposed to the horrors of ISIL. Regrettably, we know that extremist groups threaten the peace and cohesion of our society and they continue to actively target Australians, particularly young Australians, for recruitment. As the Director-General of Security reminded the Senate this week, the age of Australians fighting in Syria continues to get younger and younger.

In reality, if somebody chooses to fight alongside ISIL it means that they will be treated in a highly expendable way and they will occupy dangerous and low-level positions. If you as a young Australian go to fight with ISIL, your life will be nasty and it will probably be short. ISIL systematically target communities that refuse to join them—Christian, Yazidi, Shia and Sunni. They use sexual slavery against women and young girls as an instrument of terror, and they brutalise the populations under their control in the most medieval of ways.

The government's message is clear and emphatic: if you join the conflict in the Middle East then your life and the lives of others will be at risk. Supporting ISIL harms you. It harms your family. It harms your friends. Joining ISIL is not going to be the experience you think it might be. ISIL leaders—and this is a documented fact—view naive young Australians as cannon fodder. Any Australian who is identified as fighting alongside or supporting ISIL will be investigated by our agencies.

Since 2014 the government has invested an additional \$1.3 billion in support of those efforts. The government has also enacted a very broad range of laws designed to give our law enforcement and security agencies the tools that they need to combat terrorism. Significantly, those efforts have meant that six planned terror attacks since September 2014 have been thwarted in Australia.

It remains the case that ultimately our best defence against terrorism will be to stop people from becoming radicalised in the first place. We have invested \$40 million in our countering-violent-extremism efforts to make communities more resilient to radicalisation, to intervene and to deter people who might be going through a process of radicalisation and to make sure that, if you are searching for things on the internet, terrorist propaganda has been torn down and you receive better messaging.

At the COAG meeting in December 2015, all state and territory governments agreed with the Commonwealth to forward a range of initiatives that support families, schools, youth and communities who might be vulnerable to violent extremism. This government remains committed to stopping Australians from being radicalised, stopping Australians from joining or supporting ISIL, and doing everything in our power to keep Australia safe.

Minister for Human Services

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. I refer to the minister's trip to China and his answer that he would fully assist with the Parkinson inquiry. Has the minister provided to the secretary all emails, letters and invitations which caused him to be attending the meeting with the Chinese Vice Minister for Land and Resources and Nimrod Resources? Will he also provide those documents to the parliament? Is the minister aware that his previous statement does not answer this question?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC) (14:38): I thank the member for his question and I refer the member to my previous answer.

Taxation

Mr IRONS (Swan) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer. Will the minister update the House on the tough action the government has taken to prevent multinational companies dodging tax?

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for McMahon that he has been warned!

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer) (14:38): I would like to very much thank the member for Swan for his important question. The member for Swan understands that taxpayers need confidence that those people who should be paying tax in Australia are in fact paying tax in Australia, and this is particularly true of multinational companies. Those companies that operate here and make profit here must pay tax here. It is a matter of fairness. It is a matter of fairness for mums and dads who are paying tax, it is a matter of fairness for those companies who are paying tax but it is also a matter of fairness for those small businesses that are paying tax. It is equally a matter of integrity. If we do not collect every single dollar owed to the Australian people, that means less money for infrastructure, for hospitals, for schools and for our Defence Force. Those opposite had six years to fix the gaps. They had six years to close the loopholes. They had six years to strengthen the penalties. Yet—even though the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer had the levers at their disposal when they were in a position to act—they talked.

It has fallen to our government to act, and we have acted. Last year we passed the multinational anti-avoidance legislation, which has strengthened the powers of the Australian Taxation Office to levy tax on those companies who are shifting profits offshore in ways that are artificially structuring their arrangements. Also, we have doubled the penalties that apply to those people who are engaged in those activities. Even though we only passed this legislation last year—

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingsford Smith is warned!

Ms O'DWYER: it came into effect from 1 January this year and it applies to those structures that existed before this date. But did those opposite vote for it? I ask the question: did they vote for it? No, they did not. They did not vote for it. They sided with corporate tax cheats and they sided with tax dodgers.

The Commissioner of the Australian Taxation Office said yesterday in the Senate estimates: 'The ATO is well-resourced and better positioned globally to deal with tax avoidance. Australia's laws are stronger than ever, and we are determined to secure this revenue for the Australian community.' Those opposite did not act; we acted. We have strengthened the law, and the Australian Taxation Office is acting to collect the tax that is owed to the Australian people. More than 80 taxpayers have fallen within that purview as a result of our laws, 300 are being profiled and tax is being levied.

Minister for Human Services

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. I refer to the minister's previous answer on the Parkinson inquiry. Has the minister informed the Parkinson inquiry that when he wrote to the former Prime Minister applying for personal leave for his trip to China he did not inform him that he would attend a signing ceremony between Nimrod Resources and a Chinese state-owned corporation or that he would meet with the Chinese Vice Minister for Land and Resources accompanied by Nimrod Resources executives? Is the minister aware that his previous answer does not answer this question? (*Time expired*)

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Aston will cease interjecting. The member for Lyons will cease interjecting. I remind him that he was warned yesterday. It carries over.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC) (14:42): I thank the member for his question and I refer the member to my previous answer.

Drought

Mr PASIN (Barker) (14:42): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Minister, as you know, much of my electorate is currently experiencing a one-in-100-year drought, particularly in the mid and upper south-east and in the Mallee. What measures, Minister, is this government taking to assist our nation's drought affected farmers, including those in my electorate of Barker?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:43): I thank the honourable member for his question and note what is happening in his electorate, especially in the areas that have experienced a one-in-100-year drought. In his electorate, which has so much to add to the agricultural production of our nation, it is only proper that we do whatever is in our power at a federal level—in conjunction with the states—to try and make sure we play a small part in alleviating it.

We know that there have been good rains on the eastern side of our nation, but there are still sections of South Australia that have been doing it awfully tough. The mid to upper south-east of South Australia—particularly around the towns of Naracoorte, Bordertown and Wolseley—have now missed two seasons, and farmers who rely on cropping for more than 60 per cent of their income are doing it particularly tough. Parts of South Australia in the Barker electorate have experienced the lowest on record rainfall over the past two years. But what we are doing is making sure that we get cash to people who are doing it tough, so that at least they can pay for their groceries, they can pay their fuel bill and they can keep the dignity in their life. This is done through the Farm Household Allowance. Across Australia, we have now given out \$91.9 million—it has been paid out—and 5,740 claims have been granted. On average, the government is now paying out \$1.35 million a week in Farm Household Allowance.

Since coming to office, the coalition has made available \$80 million in concessional loans for South Australian farmers. We are making sure that across our nation there has been around \$400 million in drought concessional loans approved, supporting 768 farm businesses. As part of the white paper, the government will make a quarter of billion dollars available for concessional loans this year, which locks in \$2.5 billion in loans for the next 10 years. We have put \$25.8 million towards the control of pest, weeds and animals in drought affected areas, with \$15 million in projects funded this year, including \$1 million for South Australia to strengthen the north-east dog fence and also to deal with wild dogs, camels, feral pigs, feral horses and weeds control in South Australia's arid lands.

We have also put \$1.8 million in additional support for the Rural Financial Counselling Service, of which \$160,000 has gone to South Australian rural financial counselling services. We have also made sure that we have got \$20 million for delivery of enhanced social and community support, including drought coordinators. We have also brought in accelerated depreciation: 100 per cent for fencing, 100 per cent for water, and over three years for fodder storage for silos and sheds.

We recently increased farm management deposits from \$400,000 to \$800,000 to help self-management. We are making sure that we push banks for these to be offset. We are doing this and more, and we continue to work closely with the people of South Australia and across our nation in support of those in drought. (*Time expired*)

Minister for Human Services

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:46): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. I refer to the minister's previous answers on the Parkinson inquiry. Did the minister inform the Parkinson inquiry of how he travelled to China, including whether he took a private jet, who paid for his travel and whether it was properly declared on his register of members' interests? Will the minister now provide that information to the parliament? And is the minister aware that his previous answer does not answer this question?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Human Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC) (14:47): I thank the member for his question, and I refer the member to my previous answer.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members on my left will cease interjecting.

Small Business

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (14:47): My question is to the Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science. Minister, Omne Media is an innovative small business in my electorate of Ryan, which has beaten international competitors to develop a remarkable new piece of technology. Will you please advise the House what the government is doing to support this kind of small business to help them to develop and package their inventions into marketable products they can take to the rest of the world.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science) (14:47): I thank the member for Ryan for her question. I am very pleased to be able to tell her that the government is putting a great deal of effort in public policy into supporting businesses like Omni Media. As the member for Ryan would know, Omni Media is a digital advertising company, based in Taringa in her electorate. They have developed a unique smart advertising mirror that allows advertisers to remotely update their advertisements—and I think they

are doing very well. I am pleased the member for Ryan is highlighting their good work and their potential into the future.

They are exactly the kind of start-up business that the Australian government is supporting through our National Innovation and Science Agenda in a number of different ways. One of those ways I talked about earlier this week—I think it was Tuesday—was in terms of our changes to the tax system. Omni Media will be able to attract angel investors to their business, and those angel investors will get at least two kinds of tax incentive for doing so: a 20 per cent tax offset up to \$200,000 a year, which will encourage them to invest because their income tax will be reduced as a consequence; but also a 10-year capital gains tax exemption for assets that are held for at least three years. That will encourage the movement of capital, because it is a 10-year exemption after three years, and it will encourage Australians or anybody to invest in these kinds of start-ups. It gives us a competitive advantage over many of the other countries like the United Kingdom, the United States and Israel, which we are trying to emulate with our National Innovation and Science Agenda.

We are also doing a number of other things. When I was in Tel Aviv at the end of last year, we launched the first of the landing pads—a \$36 million investment from the government in five landing pads around the world. The first I launched in Tel Aviv. The second will be launched as part of the US-Australia Business Week by Minister Robb very soon at Silicon Valley. And then there will be three others chosen in the near future to encourage groups like Omni Media and others to take their inventions overseas and when they get there to have the contacts that they need to connect to the right people in those particular countries.

The member would be familiar with things like the Entrepreneurs' Program—a \$100 million program, which many members would be familiar with—that is responsible for the accelerated commercialisation grants. We have already allocated \$54 million for 102 grants in order to support smaller businesses to accelerate the commercialisation of their inventions. This is the government in action, creating jobs and growth in the economy in the innovation sector, which is the sector of the future. And I am very pleased that the member for Ryan is entirely across that issue.

Minister for Human Services

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:51): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Minister for Human Services' trip to China. Is it the position of the current Prime Minister that the former Prime Minister authorised the minister's breach of ministerial standards? And is the Prime Minister setting up an argument to blame his predecessor to protect his current minister?

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: that question assumes an outcome and makes an assertion which is not fact and therefore is out of order.

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, on the point of order: the entire wording of the question is on the basis that the outcome has not yet been resolved by a Prime Minister not making a decision yet, and we are asking whether this is the argument he is setting up.

Government members interjecting—

Mr Burke: It is a valid question, and there is more people over there asking it than there are over here.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Leader of the House.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, on the point of order: halfway through the question, the Leader of the Opposition made the statement that the Minister for Human Services had breached the ministerial guidelines. That has not been found.

Opposition members: Yes it has!

Mr Pyne: That is an assertion by the opposition. It has not been found by anyone; so, therefore, the question is out of order, unless it can be reworded, which is within the your discretion.

MOTIONS

Prime Minister

Attempted Censure

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:52): I seek leave to move a motion of censure against the Minister for Human Services and the Prime Minister.

Leave not granted.

Mr SHORTEN: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from moving the following motion forthwith—

That the House:

(1)notes—

(a)that the Minister for Human Services provided assistance to Nimrod Resources during a trip to China in August 2014;

(b)that the Minister for Human Services has already admitted to the House that he was travelling in a personal capacity when he assisted Nimrod Resources during his trip to China;

(c)therefore the minister's own actions were a direct breach of clause 2.20 of the Prime Minister's own statement of ministerial standards;

(d)the principal of Nimrod Resources has donated more than \$2 million to the Liberal Party in the past two financial years;

(e)the Prime Minister has a choice between getting rid of his minister or getting rid of his own ministerial standards and he has been unable to make that choice; and

(2)censures the Minister for Human Services for failing to resign for his clear breach of ministerial standards; and

(3)censures the Prime Minister for his inability to sack the Minister for Human Services for a clear breach of the Prime Minister's own statement of ministerial standards.

This Prime Minister set one standard for the minister for cities and he is setting a lower standard for his own backer, Stuart Robert. This is wrong that the Prime Minister is in any way deferring the issue. The Prime Minister stands here in a lofty manner, patronising the nation and says, 'Oh, we've got to go through the Parkinson process.' What is it that this Prime Minister does not understand about ministerial responsibility? It beggars belief that this minister, travelling to China in a personal capacity, accidentally turns up at a signing ceremony. What are the odds of that?

Then we have this hapless traveller, this Stuart Robert, wandering around—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr SHORTEN: We have the hapless Minister for Human Services wandering around in China. Not only does he fortuitously meet the donor, Paul Marks, which is fantastic, 'What a surprise meeting you here,' but then he happens to stumble across a signing ceremony in his personal capacity. Then, glory be, he has a meeting with the Vice Minister for Land and Resources. He should buy a TattsLotto ticket he is that lucky on his travels.

In fact it is a much more serious issue. The divisions of this government have been revealed for all to see. When the minister for cities had his particular difficulty, I have no doubt that this Prime Minister moved harshly and quickly. That is what he does to the people he does not like. But Mr Robert, the Minister for Human Services, is in a different category. He is one of the Treasurer's great allies. He is one of the great fund raisers of the Liberal Party. When we see the money talking we do not see Mr Robert walking.

It is now up to the Prime Minister to make a decision. We heard his argument about due process. We heard him talk about it. What is it that this Prime Minister does not understand about the prima facie breach? What is it? This person was not in an official capacity in China; he was in a personal capacity. What was his explanation to be standing alongside a \$2-million donor to the Liberal Party. In China they have a great respect for office, even respect for current Liberal government ministers no matter how misplaced that may be. The point about all this is, what is he doing, authorising, embracing, endorsing, attesting and attending a signing ceremony of a major deal? Did that Chinese minister think he was just having a chat to citizen Robert of Australia or was he under the misapprehension that this man was a minister in the government?

We have asked the Prime Minister to act. What he has done is contracted out his leadership to Martin Parkinson. Martin Parkinson must be so happy to be back working for the Liberal government. He got run out of town by one bunch in this government, now he has been brought back in to carry out the nightsoil for this current Prime Minister.

The real issue here is that we see the division in the government now.

Mr Fletcher interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects will cease interjecting.

Mr SHORTEN: No, mate, we have material right up to the election. Now we see the government clearing the way. They will either sack the minister or they will sack their ministerial standards. You cannot have both. The real issue happening here as well is that Prime Minister Turnbull always has an excuse. It is always someone else's fault. In this case my prediction is that, if Minister Robert does not go as he should, they are going to blame the member for Warringah. In this case, whilst I disagree with many of the things the former Prime Minister did in government, I do not believe he was told the full truth by the Minister for Human Services.

We know that a letter was written requesting leave on 28 July. Of course, when you are going to have a holiday in your personal capacity to Dubrovnik, to Israel, to China and you are going in August, most Australians take six months to get the special cheap airfares. Not this minister. He said he paid for it all on his own. He issued a leave

application on 28 July for a holiday travelling to three continents during the following two weeks, fortuitously. But did this minister put into his leave application what he was going to be doing in those countries?

If you are going waterskiing or just catching up with old buddies, I guess you do not have to. But, when you are a minister in a government, a defence minister in a government, and you are going to visit China and meet with Chinese leaders and help endorse some wannabe trade minister doing deals with major Liberal Party donors—did he tell the member for Warringah, or his office, who he was meeting with? I do not actually think that if the member for Warringah had had the full information in front of him he would have authorised this leave. But that is not good enough for Prime Minister Turnbull. Prime Minister Turnbull just wants this issue to go away. He would like to save one of his cash cows and his donors. He would like to save Minister Robert, because he did vote for him in the leadership ballot. But what he is doing is letting his loyalty to some people overwhelm his obligation to the nation. You got Tony Abbott once. We on this side are not going to let you get him again by blaming him for something which you know—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will refer to members by their correct title.

Mr SHORTEN: The member for Warringah, the former Prime Minister, Prime Minister Turnbull's predecessor—call him what you want—should not be hung out to dry because you will not act on Minister Robert because you need that hopeless Treasurer to keep backing up your machine. We know exactly what is going on.

Furthermore, when we look at this issue, why we should be censuring this minister and censuring this Prime Minister is because he has double standards: he says one thing and does another.

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen has been warned.

Mr SHORTEN: I have no doubt that, when he looks at this issue, he knows. Were there notes kept by the Chinese government? DFAT says that there were. Has he requested them? Has he bothered to investigate the Defence protocols that were outlined by the member for Isaacs in question time and not answered by the Minister for Human Services? You cannot, when you are a defence minister, even in your own time, frolic to foreign countries carrying particular technology and not even notify. What is going on in this Liberal government when you are having your ministers travel around the world, in their own capacity, doing their own deals?

The government of Australia and the ministers of Australia are not valets for donors to the Liberal Party, opening doors and closing doors. I mean, what was he doing there? Does he have the interesting hobby of watching big deals being signed and he just likes to turn up? Is it an affectation? And we do want to know who paid his airfare, how he travelled around and what equipment from the Australian government he took.

I cannot believe that this issue has gone on for the last number of days. Whilst the Prime Minister has a wry grin, most of his backbench cannot believe that he is still letting this issue drag on. I do not expect the Minister for Human Services to be here on the front bench when parliament resumes. The only thing stopping this Prime Minister now is his own arrogance. Because he is Prime Minister Turnbull, the smartest man in the room, no-one can tell him the truth in front of his nose because he does not like to hear it if it is not his own idea. Well, we have news for this Prime Minister: we are going to make sure we persist on this issue. This minister has been acting in a private capacity with a major Liberal Party donor, attending meetings with the Chinese government—signing ceremonies! Why on earth didn't he just do it as part of his job? I am sure some of you are asking that question. There is something far more distinctly unusual about this arrangement than even what we have got to the bottom of so far. This minister should go. He should go now.

This Prime Minister should stop contracting out to Dr Martin Parkinson, the highest ranking public servant in the land. He should just do his day job. This Prime Minister has been saying he is going to do this and that and move all the chess pieces around and be the master of it all. The truth of the matter is this: you could have dealt with this issue on the Thursday when this issue came up. The fiction of this Prime Minister acting decisively is this: he only asked Martin Parkinson to do an inquiry at 1.58, two minutes before question time. I can bet that, if you are a foe of Malcolm Turnbull's in the Liberal Party, when he saw that press story at 6.30 that morning he would have been on the phone saying, 'We must investigate this matter and we must deal with it.' It is not good enough. You need to do better. You know that your government is drifting on a range of policy areas and tax—
(*Time expired*)

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Whiteley interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Braddon is warned.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:04): I second the motion. It is not often you get something in this parliament that is as cut and dried as this.

Mr Sukkar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Deakin is warned.

Mr BURKE: There is a clear prohibition, a blanket ban, on ministers acting in any way to assist a private company for business. Section 2.20 of the code of conduct is absolutely clear on this. We had a situation at the beginning of this where the Prime Minister said he needed to investigate. The investigation was made clear the moment this minister came to the dispatch box for the first time, because what he provided was the confession. He said to the parliament, 'Yes, I was there in a personal capacity.' That is it. That is the breach. You do not need anything more than that. The only thing they could possibly be investigating is whether or not he lied to the parliament when he said that—in which case he should go for misleading the parliament. No matter which way you look at it, from the moment the Minister for Human Services came to the dispatch box and said he was there in a personal capacity the issue was over.

When he did so in opposition, he was not under the ministerial code of conduct. There will be backbenchers over there who will help different businesses in their electorate—and they are allowed to do it. But, when you are a minister, you are always representing Australia. As a minister in the Australian government, you do not have the right to say, 'This bit's just for the donor; I'll take the hat off,' and then go out to a foreign government and think, 'Maybe they won't notice I'm here as a private citizen.' Does he really think he is such a genius that the company wanted him there because of the glory of the private citizen named Stuart Robert? Or did they want to have a representative of the Australian government in the room because it would be to their advantage?

There will be many occasions when ministers quite properly assist companies. We paid tribute today to the Minister for Trade, who is regularly on trade delegations helping companies. He does so in an official capacity. He does so representing Australia. You cannot do it on the basis that you do not tell the Department of Foreign Affairs that you are helping a company. You cannot do it on the basis of, 'This business has been good to me, so maybe I'll get away with it.' When you take on a position as part of the executive, whether as a minister or a parliamentary secretary, you take on a responsibility and you do not just get to look after the donors to your campaigns. You have a responsibility that, whatever you do, you do on behalf of this nation. That is why 2.20 exists. That is why successive Prime Ministers have made sure that that clause goes into the code of conduct—because we cannot have a situation, particularly in Defence of all portfolios, where someone goes off to a foreign government and the foreign government knows that there is an Australian minister present but the Australian government does not, where the government of China comes out of the meeting with detailed notes and the department of foreign affairs in Australia has no idea that the meeting ever occurred. This is why we have a statement of ministerial responsibility. The entire reason for a code goes to these sorts of issues.

The Prime Minister has a really simple choice. One of two things has to go: either the code goes or that minister goes. There is no way of keeping both. The minister has responded by treating this parliament with absolute contempt. When he is given a question and is told, 'By the way, the answer to this was not in your statement,' he thinks it oh so clever to say, 'I refer you to my statement.' We know it is not there. He is simply treating the parliament with absolute contempt.

Prime Minister, if you remain indecisive, if you think this minister is going to keep hanging around, do not think the issue will go away. We have already seen Senator Sinodinos start to muse on the possibility that your predecessor, the previous Prime Minister, might have given the authority for this. Have no doubt, if you want to run the argument that you are going to keep the minister by throwing your predecessor under a bus, it will not just be people on this side who will be outraged, it will not be just people in the Australian public who will feel a level of contempt; people on your side, Prime Minister, know exactly that you are setting a different set of rules—*(Time expired)*

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science) (15:09): Standing orders should not be suspended because the government will not be lectured on standards by the Leader of the Opposition and the Australian Labor Party. We will not be lectured by the Leader of the Opposition and the Australian Labor Party on standards.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I remind all members that warnings carry over after question time.

Mr PYNE: It is a remarkable thing that, when looking in the mirror today practising his lines, the Leader of the Opposition did not realise that this is the party of Eddie Obeid and Joe Tripodi. This is the party of Craig Thomson and Clean Event. This is the party that seeks to come into this House and lecture this government about standards. We had six years of the most dysfunctional government in the history of Australia after the Whitlam government. In 40 years they managed to break every record for chaos and dysfunction. They were the most divided rabble we have ever seen. Some of them are still there seeking to get back onto the government benches. I

have heard a statistic that I find utterly remarkable. There were as many ministers in the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments, in less than six years, as in the entire period of the Howard government of 11½ years.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gellibrand and the member for Charlton are warned!

Mr PYNE: So for less than half of the time that they were in government they had exactly the same number of people who held executive office. They were an absolute disgrace. In six years they had two Prime Ministers, three Deputy Prime Ministers, five ministers responsible for regional development, six ministers for small business and nine ministers for education—I was the shadow to seven of them. They made 11 changes to ministerial arrangements, involving 20 parliamentary secretaries and 48 ministers—

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gorton is warned.

Mr PYNE: with over 100 different ministerial titles. They were an international laughing stock. In the first Rudd government Joel Fitzgibbon, who is still here, resigned. In the Gillard government, Kevin Rudd, Richard Marles, Chris Bowen, Martin Ferguson and Kim Carr all resigned. Simon Crean should have resigned, but he was sacked. In the second Rudd government—in that short interregnum, which was shorter than Napoleon's return to France—Wayne Swan resigned, Greg Combet resigned, Craig Emerson resigned, Peter Garrett resigned—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr PYNE: Stephen Conroy resigned and Joe Ludwig resigned. These are the people who come into this place and lecture us about ministerial standards. We all know what is happening here. The idea of being lectured by the Labor Party on standards is like Dean Martin lecturing people on alcohol abuse, and we are not going to take it. We all know what is going on here.

Labor are practising the old politics that they have always managed to get away with. They are quite good at old politics. They are practising old politics and this government is getting on with new politics. The Labor Party need to get back to their electorates and they need to talk to voters because what voters want is governments and opposition being constructive about creating jobs and growth in the economy. That is what they want. They are sick of the six years of Labor Party abuse of government. They are sick of the shouting, particularly the shouting over there, Mr Speaker—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will cease interjecting.

Mr PYNE: They are not too bright, Mr Speaker. They are very sick of the shouting from the Labor Party, practising old politics. Late last year Labor invested a tremendous amount of political capital in attacking the member for Fisher.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Gellibrand and Charlton will not interject again.

Mr PYNE: After that period of time their polling figures got worse: the Leader of the Opposition went backwards in the polls and their party's standing went backwards in the polls. You would have thought it would have been a message to the opposition that that strategy was not working.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PYNE: They are very shouty today, Mr Speaker. They know it is because the Leader of the Opposition is swinging in the breeze.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will leave under standing order 94(a).

Mr PYNE: We all know what is happening here. This is a desperate attempt to distract the Australian public from the fact that this government has the plan and the policies to create jobs and growth—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will leave immediately.

The member for Charlton then left the chamber.

Mr PYNE: not just in innovation, which I am responsible for—industry, innovation and science—

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen will not interject again if he wishes to remain in the chamber.

Mr PYNE: the National Innovation and Science Agenda—but in trade, as we heard with the outgoing minister for trade with the four trade agreements that he has settled that are opening up our economy, and in agriculture,

which is booming, not just because of the minister for agriculture but also because of the government getting out of the way of business and farmers and encouraging their businesses to grow.

We are, through the actions of the Treasurer and other ministers, helping the economy to transform and to transition from the construction phase of the mining boom to the creation phase of the mining boom. These are the actions that we are getting on with as a government, because we know they will create jobs and growth. The Australian public knows it too. That is why the Australian public rewards me when I return to my electorate of Sturt and they tell me that they like the fact that the government is getting on with the things that matter. They give a big tick to people who are helping us to do that.

It has been quite instructive how the Greens are doing so much better in the current political climate because they are practising new politics and they are working with the government to try to bring about things like multinational tax reform and the duties on the heavy vehicle fuel excise—things like that which we did late last year. These are the changes that the Greens know are changing the economy, and the public is grateful for their engagement with the government. It is certainly passing strange that the Greens have become—

Ms Ryan interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lalor is warned.

Mr PYNE: more economically credible than the Labor Party, but they have. They have become more economically credible than the Labor Party. All Bill Shorten, Leader of the Opposition, has now is another distraction from the real issues of the day: jobs and growth. His own side knows it. His own side knows there is a hole in the heart of the Leader of the Opposition's case, because his case all week has been that the member for Wentworth should sack the Minister for Human Services.

On the other hand, the member for Isaacs has spent the week demanding that the Minister for Human Services be investigated by the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and that the Minister for Human Services cooperate with that investigation. Both of those things cannot be true. They cannot both work. Either he should be investigated, there should be due process and the Prime Minister should receive a report to which he should respond, or apparently—in the world of the Leader of the Opposition—there should be a knee-jerk reaction to these stories and a minister should be instantaneously sacked.

There is no consistency in the Leader of the Opposition's approach. It is because the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition have not done the serious policy work needed to present as an alternative government at the coming election this year. They believed for months that they would be able to coast into government on the back of a GST, with a not-very-scary scare campaign. Yet again, they did nothing to do the policy work necessary to prepare for government and give the Australian public the confidence to support them. They did none of those things.

Yet again, they have been found wanting. There will not be a goods and services tax increase. Their not-very-scary scare campaign has fallen flat. Yet they have spent six months wasting their time supporting the Leader of the Opposition on a campaign against a tax that the government was never committed to and the government never mentioned. We tried to help them time and time again. Whether it was the member for Warringah, the member for Wentworth or the Treasurer, we said over and over again that there was no policy to introduce a goods and services tax increase but we were happy to have a national conversation. Labor spent six months wasting time talking about a tax increase that is not going to be introduced. As a consequence, we have this distraction today, we have had this distraction this week. We have had the same distractions with the member for Fisher. Labor is going backwards in the polls and the public does not support them.

The standing orders should not be suspended. The government will not be stopping our program for another political stunt.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

The House divided. [15:23]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes53
 Noes84
 Majority.....31

AYES

Albanese, AN
 Bird, SL
 Brodtmann, G
 Burke, AS
 Butler, TM

Bandt, AP
 Bowen, CE
 Burke, AE
 Butler, MC
 Byrne, AM

AYES

Chalmers, JE
 Clare, JD
 Collins, JM
 Dreyfus, MA
 Ellis, KM
 Ferguson, LDT
 Gray, G
 Hall, JG (teller)
 Husic, EN
 King, CF
 Macklin, JL
 Marles, RD
 O'Connor, BPJ
 Owens, J
 Perrett, GD
 Ripoll, BF
 Rowland, MA
 Shorten, WR
 Swan, WM
 Thomson, KJ
 Watts, TG
 Zappia, A

Champion, ND
 Claydon, SC
 Danby, M
 Elliot, MJ
 Feeney, D
 Fitzgibbon, JA
 Griffin, AP
 Hayes, CP
 Jones, SP
 Leigh, AK
 MacTiernan, AJGC
 Mitchell, RG
 O'Neil, CE
 Parke, M
 Plibersek, TJ
 Rishworth, AL
 Ryan, JC (teller)
 Snowdon, WE
 Thistlethwaite, MJ
 Vamvakinou, M
 Wilkie, AD

NOES

Abbott, AJ
 Andrews, KJ
 Baldwin, RC
 Bishop, BK
 Broad, AJ
 Brough, MT
 Chester, D
 Cobb, JK
 Coulton, M (teller)
 Entsch, WG
 Frydenberg, JA
 Gillespie, DA
 Griggs, NL
 Hastie, AW
 Henderson, SM
 Hogan, KJ
 Hutchinson, ER
 Jensen, DG
 Joyce, BT
 Kelly, C
 Landry, ML
 Ley, SP
 Marino, NB
 Matheson, RG
 McNamara, KJ
 Nikolic, AA
 O'Dwyer, KM
 Pitt, KJ
 Prentice, J
 Pyne, CM
 Robb, AJ
 Roy, WB
 Scott, BC
 Southcott, AJ
 Sudmalis, AE
 Taylor, AJ
 Truss, WE
 Turnbull, MB
 Varvaris, N
 Whiteley, BD (teller)
 Williams, MP
 Wood, JP

Alexander, JG
 Andrews, KL
 Billson, BF
 Briggs, JE
 Broadbent, RE
 Buchholz, S
 Christensen, GR
 Coleman, DB
 Dutton, PC
 Fletcher, PW
 Gambaro, T
 Goodenough, IR
 Hartsuyker, L
 Hawke, AG
 Hendy, PW
 Howarth, LR
 Irons, SJ
 Jones, ET
 Keenan, M
 Laming, A
 Laundry, C
 Macfarlane, IE
 Markus, LE
 McCormack, MF
 Morrison, SJ
 O'Dowd, KD
 Pasin, A
 Porter, CC
 Price, ML
 Ramsey, RE
 Robert, SR
 Ruddock, PM
 Scott, FM
 Stone, SN
 Sukkar, MS
 Tehan, DT
 Tudge, AE
 Van Manen, AJ
 Vasta, RX
 Wicks, LE
 Wilson, RJ
 Zimmerman, T

Question negatived.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (15:26): I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science) (15:26): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships

Presentation

The SPEAKER (15:27): For the information of honourable members, I present the annual statement by the Presiding Officers on the Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Taxation

The SPEAKER (15:27): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Fraser proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's failure on tax policy.

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

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

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (15:27): In 2005 Peter Costello said of the now Prime Minister:

Well, he didn't actually have a plan, he had 280.

Then he laughed and said:

So, you know, ... if you didn't like one, there were 279 that you could look at.

I do not think Peter Costello was much of a Treasurer, but even a stopped Rolex is right twice a day. What Peter Costello nailed the member for Wentworth on was his inability to stick to a solid plan.

The plan that was put forward by the then member for Wentworth included a central proposal. Under that central tax proposal, the member for Wentworth suggested that people earning \$1 million should get a tax break of over \$100,000 but that an average worker should get a tax break of just \$600. In Australia over the last 40 years or so, earnings for the top 10th have risen three times faster than for the bottom 10th. What was the member for Wentworth's answer to that? It was to give a \$100,000 tax cut to the top and a \$600 tax cut to the middle. He is a real nowhere man.

This economy requires some serious economic leadership. The member for Wentworth was right about that when he took the job of the member for Warringah. We now have unemployment going up, the deficit going up—it has doubled in just the last 12 months—and debt going up. We have confidence going down—consumer confidence is down eight per cent—disposable income is down two per cent, the share market is where it was a decade ago and capital expenditure is down 24 per cent. All the numbers that should be going down are going up and all the numbers that should be going up are coming down.

In that environment, we need economic leadership, but Australia is not getting it. This Liberal government has lost more ministers than it has had coherent tax policies—11 more, to be exact. The Liberals came to office in 2013 promising a tax white paper well within the first term. The member for Warringah said that that would lay out the plan for 'lower, simpler, fairer taxes for higher economic growth and better and more sustained services'.

Almost three years on, the government has certainly spent a lot of money on that tax white paper. More than \$1 million has been spent on consultants, advertising and market research to find out what people think about tax. Unfortunately, what we do not have is any idea of what this government will actually do about tax. Yesterday in Senate estimates, the Secretary to the Treasury confirmed he is still 'waiting for direction' from the government about whether the tax white paper will proceed at all and what its tax priorities are. The finance minister called it 'stationary'. It is not clear whether he means a bit of paper you might throw in the bin or something that has stopped—either way, it is pretty clear it is dead as the dodo. This is of concern not just to Australians, who are looking for economic leadership, but to the more than 800 community groups and business groups that spent thousands of hours putting their ideas forward to the government's tax discussion paper.

The government talk about cutting taxes, but they are now running the highest-taxing government since the Howard years. When Labor left office, tax was 21.4 per cent of GDP. By 2018, tax will be 23.4 per cent of GDP. The government talk about boosting growth, but, on their watch, growth has slowed to the lowest level since the global financial crisis. They talk about better services, but they have cut \$80 billion out of schools and hospitals funding for the states. Instead of working calmly and methodically through the challenges of the tax system, government ministers and backbenchers have floated thought bubble after thought bubble, running through them like little kids playing with a bubble machine, just watching them splatter on their faces. It might be entertaining for those of us who want to watch governments falling on their faces, but it is not the economic leadership that Australians were promised.

When it comes to multinational tax, we see one of the clearest divides of any area of policy. Labor's carefully costed plan was developed with guidance from the OECD and costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office. It closes legal loopholes that let companies use debt to shift their profits offshore. But the government do not want a bar of it. This is pretty consistent with what they did in opposition. When we brought forward a bill in 2012 that cracked down on companies overvaluing assets in offshore jurisdictions, the Liberals voted against it. When we introduced laws that plugged loopholes in Australia's transfer pricing rules and anti-avoidance rules in 2013, the Liberals voted against it. When we amended the Taxation Administration Act to bring in more tax transparency to make sure that giant companies are held accountable to their contribution to Australia, members opposite voted against it.

What is worse, on the final sitting day of last year, with the connivance of the Greens, the coalition rammed through this House a measure which gutted Australia's tax transparency laws, taking two in three private companies out of the transparency net. They did so after arguing that there was a kidnap risk to companies—an argument described by one tax expert as 'the stupidest argument for nondisclosure' he had ever heard. We had a Senate inquiry in which evidence was brought forward by a so-called astroturf organisation that turned out not to have any members. On winding back tax transparency, as Lenore Taylor put it, 'protecting tax transparency for the uber-rich is a strange thing to take a stand on'. It is the sort of idea that might have been dreamed up after the second cognac at the Melbourne Club. Thanks to Labor's tax transparency laws, we saw last year the information the Liberals did not want you to see. We saw that one in four public companies earning over \$100 million pay no tax. But, sadly, thanks to the Liberals and their partners the Greens, we will never know what the comparable figure is for private companies.

The Liberals had a multinational tax plan in the last budget. It was a bit of a strange plan because we normally expect to have numbers in the budget; they had asterisks instead. It was not exactly costed, but we said we would support it. All we argued was that we wanted transparency as well. We said Australians deserve tax transparency. We would back their laws and, by the way, they might want to back ours. But they were unwilling to back Labor's sensible proposals to add \$7 billion to the budget bottom line.

Yesterday in Senate estimates, there was some important evidence brought forward by the tax commissioner, Chris Jordan. He has made clear that he is going pretty hard on multinational tax avoiders. He said:

The excuses we hear from these companies are frankly over the top—how is it possible that companies known for their new-age technology and innovative products and services, fail to be able to furnish us with basic reports showing their business structures, their profits, how much tax they have paid and where? Their clear tactic is to delay and obstruct. They game the system.

He went on to say:

These companies have pushed the envelope on reasonableness—they play the game, they string us along, they believe we can be stooged. Enough is enough. No more.

I commend the tax commissioner on the hard work that he is doing, but let us be clear: his work is being hampered by the government's cuts to the tax office. He is fighting multinational firms with one hand tied behind his back, because the Abbott-Turnbull government have cut 4,700 jobs from the tax office, including around 1,000 jobs from the audit section. They are finally realising that sacking the staff who monitor tax compliance is no way of making sure that everyone pays their fair share.

Since March last year, Labor have laid out on the table clear, carefully costed plans, and all we have had from this government are thought bubbles. We have had the on again, off again GST game. On Sunday, we had the Prime Minister saying that he remained to be convinced. On Monday, we had the Treasurer saying, 'The government continues to consider all the matters that are before it on tax.' If Australians want to avoid a GST increase, there is only one way of doing it, and that is to vote Labor, because Labor will protect Australians against a 15 per cent GST. We know that a 15 per cent GST would see those on the lowest incomes pay 20 per cent of their take-home pay in tax, while those on the highest incomes would pay just eight per cent. If that money was offset through cuts to income taxes, NATSEM estimates that the poorest would be \$33 a week worse off and

the richest \$69 a week better off. When the economy is fragile and inequality is at 75-year highs is exactly the wrong time to be considering a GST increase, particularly when you take into account that Japan went into recession when it raised its GST from five per cent to eight per cent.

The Liberals have failed to put forward a credible tax proposal. Led by a Prime Minister who thinks it is okay to offer a \$100,000 tax cut for millionaires and \$600 tax cut for ordinary workers, they have all the credibility of a fake Rolex. They are a danger to the economy. In the words of Senator Heffernan earlier today— (*Time expired*)

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Assistant Minister to the Treasurer) (15:37): While I am sure that all of us in this House would love to hear the words of Senator Heffernan, I am not sure that unparliamentary language can be aired in this chamber in the words of Senator Heffernan.

If I were an aspiring Treasurer, shadow Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer—if I were a person who wanted to get into high office in the Treasury space in Australia today—I am not certain that I would start my contribution to a tax debate by attacking the record of Peter Costello. I have to say to the shadow Assistant Treasurer: I wouldn't go there. If I were thinking about building a bank of credibility on economic management, on tax, on the delivery into this economy, I would not start by trashing Peter Costello's record—when you are not Peter Costello's bootlaces, shadow Assistant Treasurer. He is the longest-serving Treasurer in our nation's history. He set up a Future Fund to fund the unfunded liabilities of the Commonwealth into the future—all of the Public Service liabilities, which you had no way of funding and no plan to ever fund. He left the Commonwealth with zero net debt. So I would say to the shadow Assistant Treasurer: don't go there. Don't attack this nation's best and longest-serving Treasurer, because you have no credibility to do so. You have no credibility when you look at the Labor Party's record on tax and no credibility when you look at the Labor Party's record on spending. To get a tax lecture from a shadow Assistant Treasurer trashing the record of the longest- and greatest-serving Treasurer in this nation's history is, I think, an appalling way to start. I think it is an appalling way to start your contribution by forgetting that this government, when elected to office, did some important things. It did what it said it was going to do. It abolished the biggest tax on ordinary Australians delivered by any government in Australian history, the carbon tax. It abolished the mining tax.

Here we have the shadow Assistant Treasurer bringing a matter of public importance today on tax design and structure, bemoaning white papers and green papers, telling this government that we have got a terrible record of axing taxes. Cast your mind back just two years ago. We abolished the carbon tax, we abolished the mining tax—perhaps the single greatest exercise in tax design stupidity in world history. We have got the former Treasurer here to agree with it. We have the former Treasurer here on the front bench, making his return to the front bench. I would say to the member for Swan: he should get up and make a personal explanation about what a great design it was to introduce a mining tax that brought in no revenue. Give us a personal explanation about it.

Not only did they bring in a tax that brought in no revenue; not only did they bring in a mining tax that was supposed to tax superprofits—the superprofitable mining sector—that brought in no revenue; they also had an expert on tax, Ken Henry, give them many, many recommendations about tax. Of course, we know the previous Labor government ignored every single one of Ken Henry's recommendations about our tax system, except for a mining tax which brought in no revenue. That is really a great start to your tax debate, I would say to the shadow Assistant Treasurer.

I would also say to the shadow Assistant Treasurer: it is not a tax plan simply to spend and spend more money, when every single day everybody here who is listening, everybody out there who is listening, everybody who understands the Commonwealth budget, understands that the government borrows money every single day to fund the ordinary services of government. It is not a plan to continue to spend and spend with no way to fund it. What do we know about the Labor Party's plans if they are elected to office in a few years time? What are their plans? Let us have a look at them right now. We know that so far they have promised to raise \$7.6 billion over the forward estimates—just in new taxes and charges. Of course, if you missed it, David Speers conducted an amazing interview with the shadow Assistant Treasurer just recently about the mix of taxes and spending that the Labor Party's plan comprises. We know that, whilst they are bringing in \$7.6 billion in new taxes, over the same period of the forward estimates they are planning to spend \$44 billion in new expenditure. So we have over \$7 billion in new taxes and charges and \$44 billion in new expenditure plans.

Dr Leigh: You're making it up.

Mr HAWKE: No, that does not add up; I concur with the shadow Assistant Treasurer.

Dr Leigh: Making it up.

Mr HAWKE: Oh, making it up. You are right. You are doing both. David Speers asked some important questions of the shadow Assistant Treasurer about the mix of your new taxes and spending cuts. He said:

... you won't go ahead with the emissions reduction fund, and the baby bonus element—but the lion's share, the bulk of what you're talking about here, is higher taxation.

The shadow Assistant Treasurer said:

We've got a mix of taxes and spending cuts. That's as it should be.

David Speers responded:

What's the mix? 80/20? The bulk of it is higher taxes.

The shadow Assistant Treasurer said:

You're right to say the majority comes from tax.

A majority, of course, is 50 per cent plus one, so we are already over 50. What is it? Of course, the interview went on, and the shadow Assistant Treasurer refused to answer what the tax mix was. That is because we know it is not just a majority; it is \$7 billion in new taxes on the Australian people, with \$44 billion of expenditure. It does not add up; it is not a tax plan when you are increasing expenditure at four times the rate that you are bringing it in, when we are already saddled with one of the strongest Commonwealth gross and net debts we have ever had and we have a deficit. It is not a tax plan to spend four times what you are bringing in over the forward estimates. It is not a tax plan. To bring this MPI to us today and say, 'Labor has a tax plan,' when it is a tax plan that relies on increased taxation of cigarettes at its core, really does not do it and will not provide for the budget. Let us have a little look at this, because the Labor Party is saying to the Australian people: 'Elect us to office and we will increase the taxation of cigarettes to fund our new promises.' Let us just see what a few people had to say about the taxation treatment of cigarettes. It really does not matter what side of the economic equation you fall on; economists all over the country universally came out to condemn the Labor Party's plan to increase the taxation of cigarettes to fund hugely increased amounts of education spending. Even economists such as Stephen Koukoulas, a former adviser to the former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard—

Mr Fletcher: The Kouk!

Mr HAWKE: @TheKouk, if you want to find him on Twitter—

Mr Fletcher: What did The Kouk say?

Mr HAWKE: 'What did The Kouk say?' I am asked. He said:

If the number of packets sold falls at a faster rate than the price increases, you won't quite get the revenue effect you were hoping for.

I think, being a fellow traveller of yours, that is very polite language for, 'Your plan won't work,' Shadow Assistant Treasurer. He is being very polite. He is mincing his words. He is watching his p's and q's. But he has got a very subtle message hidden in that: your plan to fund increased education expenditure simply will not work. It does not stack up.

It was not just The Kouk who had that to say about it. Of course we know: any single economist you look at, on whatever side of the fence they fall, says that. I will quote budget expert Stephen Anthony at Industry Super Australia. Let us go to Industry Super Australia. Industry Super even came out to condemn the shadow Treasurer's plans:

"We want to tax tobacco so heavily that its consumption in this country will fall," he said. "Therefore this revenue should not then be relied upon to fund longer-term spending commitments."

That is Industry Super.

Do not give us the mock outrage that this is a public health measure. This cannot be a revenue measure and a public health measure at the same time. If you want people to stop smoking, and they do and the revenue falls, you cannot rely on the revenue to fund future education expenditure. Everybody knows it. Every economist on every side of the fence knows it. So, as to the mock indignation over there, you have got a big problem with your plans. You cannot rely on a falling source of revenue to fund increasing expenditure. You cannot do it, I would say to the shadow assistant Treasurer.

It is of course this government that is having a conversation about tax with the Australian people. And we are having a good discussion about it and it is worth discussing. The government of course takes the view that there should be a lower tax burden on ordinary Australians, particularly those on average incomes paying more in income tax—it is a topic that the opposition has been completely and utterly silent about. They do not see it as a problem that average income earners are now in the second-highest tax bracket. We do. We see it as a critical concern—something that has to be addressed to ensure this nation's prosperity, and it is something we will address in the future.

I would say to the shadow assistant Treasurer: if you are going to come in here with a matter of public importance, you need to outline your plans. Do not start by attacking the longest-serving and greatest Treasurer this country has had; do not do it, because it really exposes the weakness of your plans and exposes your record on tax, which is a record of failure, and it exposes that you are simply out of touch with the ordinary concerns of Australians. Average income earners who are now in the second-highest tax bracket need tax relief; they need to be sure they have a government that understands that burden, and this is the government that will act on those challenges.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (15:47): It might be Thursday afternoon after a long sitting week, but the building is still very busy—particularly over in the ministerial wing, and particularly in your party, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott. When you go back to the office, you are going to have seven calls to return from the seven candidates for the deputy leadership of the National Party! So there is lots of activity going on over in the ministerial wing. But the problem is that the busiest people over there are the removalists. And the reason that they are so busy is that we have—only 145 days after the last reshuffle—four or maybe five or maybe six vacancies that need to be filled. It is not even 21 weeks since the last reshuffle, and the Prime Minister's ministry is a smoking ruin around him.

If the chaos and confusion was limited to personnel, if it was limited to ministers, that would be one thing. It would be bad, but that would be one thing. It would be probably quarantined to that ministerial wing. But the problem is that all of this chaos and all of this confusion is contaminating the policy process in this country as well.

As to those opposite, I have never seen a more confused and chaotic approach to policy in this country, and nowhere is that more true than when it comes to tax. We heard the pathetic defence from the Leader of the House in the censure motion before; he said, 'It's okay; there is all of this mess around the Minister for Human Services, but we have a plan.' Nothing could be further from the truth. Let me give you one example, and that is when it comes to tax.

My colleague the shadow assistant Treasurer mentioned the tax white paper. The promise made before the 2013 election was that there would be a tax white paper well within the first term of the Liberal government. We are now 2½ years in. We have more than \$1 million spent on consultants, spin doctors, polling and focus groups, but we do not have a white paper. And I think that, if there is one thing above everything else that describes the chaos in tax policy amongst those opposite, it is when the Treasury secretary fronted up to estimates upstairs earlier in the week and they asked him about the tax white paper, and the secretary of the Treasury—the main adviser to the government on tax policy—confirmed that he is still 'waiting for direction' from this government on whether the tax paper will proceed at all and what its tax priorities are. So after they have been 2½ years in government, the Treasury secretary fronts up to estimates and gets asked, 'Is there going to be a tax white paper as promised? And what will the priorities be?' And he says, 'I don't know.' I say to the Treasury secretary: don't feel bad about not having a clue about this government's tax policy—he is not alone. Nobody has a clue about where this government is headed when it comes to tax policy, including those opposite, including the Treasurer of this country and his Prime Minister—not a clue.

Everybody in this country is waiting for direction. They are waiting for the direction that the Prime Minister promised when he rolled the member for Warringah. Remarkably, 2½ years into their term—five minutes to midnight in this electoral term—we still do not know whether those opposite believe in a GST of 15 per cent or not. We do not know whether it is still on the table or whether it has splattered on the floor. That is the truth about the current state of the government's lack of direction when it comes to tax policy. As I have said, after 2½ years wasted, at five minutes to midnight, they still do not know.

Plan A was this GST of 15 per cent. That was plan A. That is what the Treasurer wanted and so many of the front bench wanted over on that side—a GST of 15 per cent. The only problem, in the Treasurer's own words, was: 'Then they wet the bed.' And when they 'wet the bed'—those were the Treasurer's own words, as he described his colleagues who did not want the GST of 15 per cent. The Treasurer called the member for Forde and others 'bedwetters'. The only problem for him and for his relationship with the Prime Minister is that the Prime Minister himself showed the tendencies of being a bedwetter. As we speak, they are changing the sheets at The Lodge! So that was plan A. Plan A is gone.

So, in a humiliating backdown from the Treasurer, we get to plan B. Plan B is to revisit all the things that he said he would never touch: negative gearing, superannuation concessions—all of those things that he said he would never touch. He stands up now and he says, 'No, I never said that we were against that. We are prepared to have a look at all that.' That was humiliation No. 2. He is now prepared to go down the path of all the things that he said he would never do.

If there is one thing that defines this government and this Prime Minister, it is that they say one thing and do another. They said they would deliver stability and they have delivered chaos. They talked about leadership and delivered confusion. They said they would deliver economic direction and there is more confusion than ever. While this Prime Minister dithers, while his economic credibility drains away and while his ministry self-destructs, the burden of policy development falls to this side of the House. We have shown that we are up to that task. We have policies on the table and there will be more to come. (*Time expired*)

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (15:52): I rise to obviously speak against this motion and follow on from the Assistant Minister to the Treasurer. I note, picking up on a theme that the Assistant Minister to the Treasurer went along with, that it has been a very ordinary two weeks for the shadow Assistant Treasurer. I watched David Speers completely tear him apart as he was unable to answer questions, but what the Assistant Minister to the Treasurer did not mention was his follow-up performance on the Peter Van Onselen's show, talking about 10 years of savings. But, when grilled repeatedly on how much of that was in the forward estimates, he could not answer the question. The shadow Assistant Treasurer is seriously standing here today raising an MPI that we have a failure on tax policy. He will present himself at the next election to the Australian people when he is quite clearly out of his depth and not on top of his brief. It was not just the fact that he rose to Churchillian heights and could not tell us what Bill Heffernan had said; it was that he was repeatedly asked, 'What over the next four years—the forward estimates—would you spend and would you save?'

As I was watching his inability to answer the question, my mind cast back to 2012 as a member of the public. I thought, 'I've heard this before.' The member for Lilley, whose right-hand man was the member for Rankin, I think, came up with the idea when things were spiralling out of control: 'Let's put things beyond the forward estimates so that we do not have to come up with the actual budget deficit, which, at the moment, is out of control.' They are trying to do the same thing again. They are seriously taking an approach they took to the last election and they were comprehensively thrown out on their backsides. They are trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the Australian people and the people of Reid. It was reported—I will not comment on the party room—that I termed the phrase 'verbal gymnastics'. What they are doing is fiscal gymnastics. There is one thing I can assure those opposite: the Australian people—in fact, the people of Reid—do not like being treated like fools. They do not like being told that you can do things in years 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 and not being able to answer the question of how you will pay for it.

I watched in awe yesterday Simon Banks on David Speers' afternoon show saying, right before the member for Batman came on after him, that the \$47 billion in tobacco excise over the next 10 years—and, by the way, we have had a \$700 million write-down under our guys—looks like it will be out of whack by \$7 billion to \$8 billion. There he is, one of the Labor Party's top strategists, admitting that there is an \$8 billion hole already and they have not even fired the starting gun. The member for Batman followed with Arthur Sinodinos and was torn apart because he could not answer the questions either about what was in the forward estimates and what was over the 10 years. But, on the \$7 billion to \$8 billion shortfall, the best he could come up with was, 'We've had this costed by the PBO,' yet they will not release any of it.

The people of Reid had enough of that lot over the last six-year period they were in charge. When things spiralled out of control, they looked to do things that were fiscally dodgy by putting them outside of the analysis reach of not only the Australian people but us, and left us with hand grenades. The NDIS will increase from \$23 billion to \$47 billion over the forward estimates. We have real challenges. We need a serious conversation on the nature and composition of our tax system. I unfortunately have operated in every jurisdiction of government in this country and paid truckloads of cash. I know the complexities of the system because I have spent my entire working life, prior to coming to this place, trying to navigate it. It is complex; it is complicated. In fact, I would argue it is set up to make small business people fail. Yet all you have from those opposite are plans to make it more complex and more burdensome. We need a serious conversation. We are an adult government. We are having it. The opposition opted out long ago. They can throw all the stones they want. They are big on rhetoric but short on facts. Every time the shadow Assistant Treasurer has stood in front of a camera recently has proved it.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (15:57): It has been a long and tough two weeks, especially for our friends opposite. At the end of those two weeks, we should have a bit of levity and start with a joke: Scott Morrison. Scott Morrison, as Treasurer, has been an abysmal failure in every respect other than one: I did not think it would be possible to make Joe Hockey look good; Scott Morrison has proved otherwise. Scott Morrison has proved that Joe Hockey did not do such a bad job. I never thought I would say that here. Now what do we have? We had a new Treasurer come in and he told everyone for ages that he would be way better than the former Treasurer, Joe Hockey. He had been eager for that job and wanted to come in and show us what he could do and wanted to be able to come in and make a big run for the GST. He thought he had it all sorted out—that the GST would come in through his superior advocacy—and what happened? Last week on *Insiders* it came to a shuddering halt, when even Malcolm

Turnbull, who promised economic leadership, went backwards. He put the gears into reverse and went backwards, and you saw the credibility of the new Treasurer go down the gurgler.

It has also been an insight to see the way in which they have framed their response to the economic challenges facing this country. Mind you, when Labor was in government we said that revenue would not be able to keep pace with what was happening in the slowdown in commodities and the way that things were cooling off with the resources boom. Those opposite refused to believe it. Yet, when confronted with the same thing, it appeared to them as a revelation. They said to the country, 'Guess what! The resources boom is slowing down and we're not getting as much money.' No. We knew that was coming. We knew there would be a challenge.

There are two competing responses in this country to the challenge of that slowdown that is confronting the nation and what it will do to the budget. We have a compelling vision. The vision on the other side is that the way to face that challenge is to hit low- and middle-income Australia on so many levels—increasing the GST, which will increase the cost of living, and then basically reducing the ability of low- and middle-income Australia to respond to that by, for example, having an argument about cutting penalty rates. At a time when the economy is slowing down, they are taking away people's ability to spend in the economy and then also hitting them on top of that with a greater GST. That has been their response. The tax plan of those opposite has been to make life harder for individuals and then also shrink their earning capacity. That has been their response.

The compelling vision is the vision that is being put forward by Labor, which is that we all have a part to play, that we all should have a way to be able to meet that challenge and that we should all benefit as a result of that. We should not just have one part of Australia—low- and middle-income Australia—carrying the load. That is why we have said, for example, that multinationals that game tax systems all over the world and have the ability to pay should pay. When we said that wealthy superannuants who were earning more than \$75,000 a year through superannuation should pay a little bit more, those opposite screamed that it was not right, that it was not fair and that we could not change superannuation policy. When we said, for example, that we should increase the excise on tobacco, those opposite suddenly discovered an interest in low- and middle-income Australia, saying, 'You can't tax low- and middle-income Australia.' Some of those people pay a heavy price through tobacco consumption as well. We said all along, 'We are happy to accept lower revenue if we see fewer people smoking. We have already factored that in.' We have a vision that is quite different to that of those opposite. We do not expect people on lower and middle incomes to wear the load that those opposite want them to carry. We think that people who have the capacity to pay should pay. That is the way it should be.

Now what is happening? Now that they have ditched the GST increase, what is happening? Those opposite are suddenly the big defenders of multinational tax reform. After telling us that they would not, they are now considering looking at superannuation change. They are also looking at negative gearing changes. All the things they spooked the country about and said should not happen, they are now looking to put on the table. It demonstrates that they do not have a tax plan other than taxing low- and middle-income Australia. (*Time expired*)

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (16:02): It is always terrific to stand in this place after a contribution from those opposite to see their collective amnesia. Six years of their lives have been completely wiped out, have disappeared and did not happen, apparently. It is actually this government that is spending its time repairing what happened in the six years that those opposite seem to have completely forgotten about. I would like to remind the member for Chifley that it was actually this side of the House that has already given the Australian people a genuine tax cut. That is because we abolished the carbon tax that those opposite introduced. They have waxed lyrical in the past about the fact that they increased the tax-free threshold to \$18,200 but they always forget the other side of that equation. I remind the Australian people that it was only compensation for the introduction of the carbon tax. It was actually this government that repealed the carbon tax and left the tax-free threshold in place so that is already a genuine tax cut to the Australian people. Those on lower to middle incomes are the ones who have benefited most from the repeal the carbon tax.

The member for Chifley touched on the amount of tax people pay. I will just remind the member for Chifley that in 2014 NATSEM showed that the top 10 per cent of Australian taxpayers pay about 50 per cent of income tax in this country. So I would like the member for Chifley to tell them how much more tax he wants them to pay. They are already paying their fair share of tax.

If you have a look at some work done by Adam Creighton, you will see that it shows that, for those in the lowest income threshold, for every dollar of tax they pay, by the time you take into account the social benefits and all the other things they receive, they receive a return of \$324. Our social security system and our support system that we provide to those on lower and middle incomes are world leading and should be maintained and looked after.

All we have heard from those opposite in their three contributions so far is talk about increasing taxes. There has been no recognition of the fact that if you keep increasing the tax burden it does nothing for the economic benefit of this country. It does nothing to assist growth. It does nothing to encourage jobs. All it does is take money out of people's pockets and redirect it elsewhere. It does nothing positive. It does nothing to help this country compete on the international stage.

This is typical of those opposite, because that is all they ever talk about. When they were in government we heard them talk about 'saves'. They loved to bandy that phrase about and say that they had saved this and saved that. In reality, all of those 'saves' were tax increases. They were not savings at all. Those opposite were increasing taxes and putting a greater and greater burden on the Australian people.

It is only this side of the House that we see making a genuine attempt to improve the tax system, to reduce the burden on the Australian people and to ensure that we leave more money in their pockets. Every dollar we can leave in an Australian person's pocket will be spent more wisely by them than any government. We know the record of those opposite when it comes to spending Australian taxpayers' money. We are seeing that those opposite are committed and addicted to continuing spending ever greater amounts of money.

The Leader of the Opposition was asked recently in an interview, 'Where does bracket creep fit into your priorities for tax reform?' The Leader of the Opposition said, 'Well, in terms of tax reform, we are proposing today a way to find revenue and resources.' All they ever talk about is increasing revenue and finding more ways to take money out of people's pockets.

It was the last coalition government, under Treasurer Peter Costello, that announced and delivered tax cuts in 1998, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Not only that, as the Assistant Minister to the Treasurer at the table alluded to in his contribution, he also set up the Future Fund and paid off enormous amounts of debt left by the previous Labor government. So it is this government that is doing genuine work on tax reform. (*Time expired*)

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (16:08): In the lead-up to and in the wake of the last election, the Liberal Party made one of their principle policy priorities reform of our tax system. Two and a half years later, we are still waiting. We are still waiting for this government to announce one tax reform policy for the nation. Prime Minister Abbott and Treasurer Hockey promised tax reform; we are still waiting. Prime Minister Turnbull and Treasurer Morrison have promised tax reform; we are still waiting. This is a 'say one thing, do another thing' government that promised tax reform and has actually delivered tax increases. That is right: the inescapable fact is that when Labor left office tax was 21.4 per cent of GDP. It has increased steadily since that time. By 2018, government will be taxing at 23.4 per cent of GDP. That is an inescapable fact which hurts those opposite. Despite all their rhetoric about reducing tax and reforming our tax system, what have they actually delivered? They have delivered tax increases as a proportion of GDP. They have also increased government debt. They have also increased the budget deficit. Under them, the terms of trade have worsened and growth projections have flatlined. This lot are quite the economic managers!

When you pick up a newspaper these days and look at the headlines in respect of tax reform and this government's policies, you will see these words quite a bit: 'considering', 'looking at', 'on the table'—could, would, should! Two words that you will not see in a headline about tax reform and this government are 'decided' and 'doing'. They are two words that are absent from the rhetoric when it comes to this government. Now it has decided to float the idea of the GST. Let us not forget that Prime Minister Abbott said before the last election he would never, ever increase the rate of the GST. So what does he do when he comes to government? He gets the Premier of New South Wales, Mike Baird, to float the idea of increasing the GST. What a cowardly way to do policy in Australia—to get the leader of the state Liberal Party to go out there and float policies on your behalf. Talk about a conviction politician!

Then, of course, Prime Minister Abbott was rolled by the new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, who, in his first media conference, made new economic leadership a principle objective of his new government. New economic leadership is what he promised for the Australian people. The Australian people are asking: where is this new economic leadership that was promised by the new Prime Minister? The Australian people are still waiting. Both Prime Minister Turnbull and Treasurer Morrison put the issue of the GST on the agenda. I think it is worth reminding people of that. It was not the members on this side of the parliament that put the GST on the agenda. It was those on that side, and it was people like Barry O'Farrell, Mike Baird, Gladys Berejiklian, Scott Morrison, the new Prime Minister and the old Prime Minister. They are the ones that put this issue on the agenda.

They actively advocated for increasing the GST. They started talking it up. They started talking about the additional revenue that could be raised and the cuts that we could have in income and company tax. They got all their state leaders to get on board and to get out there and talk up the increase of the GST or the broadening of the

base. They got the business community onside and asked them to go out and start talking about the GST, and then they dropped it—or we think they dropped it. Some say they have dropped it, but then again, maybe it is still on the table or in the mirror that they are looking into. We do not know, and that is the whole point of this government.

I thought it was quite insightful when Peter Hartcher wrote on the weekend:

What is the point of Malcolm Turnbull ...

What is the point of the change of leadership, when the new Prime Minister promised economic leadership but has delivered nothing? In contrast, Labor has a fully costed set of plans for Australia involving cracking down on multinational corporation tax-shifting, involving new taxes on superannuation earnings above \$75,000 and an increase in the tobacco excise, consulted, debated and decided—a clear plan for tax reform for Australia.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:13): It is great to hear that Labor have a fully costed plan, but it amazes me. I just cannot see that anyone on this side of the chamber—or anyone in Australia, as a matter of fact—would take that as a credible plan. We heard the member for Forde talk about the last six years and how they have conveniently forgotten the disaster that they imposed on the Australian public and the economy—

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order!

Mr IRONS: No, let them keep talking. They are having a fine chat over there. It is good to see that the member for Moreton is actually in the chamber for a change. He has spent more than 10 minutes here so it great to see him here.

The member for Forde mentioned the six years of the last Labor government. I know that the member for Moreton was in the chamber during that time and how much he cringed when he saw all those taxes being introduced. That was not tax reform; it was just a tax disaster. We heard about the four budget surpluses. They all cheered and stood up here and told the member for Lilley how great he was for providing four surpluses! They all put it in their newsletters and they sent it out to their electorates. The credibility factor we have heard about here today—

Dr Leigh interjecting—

Mr IRONS: Actually, I am impressed by the member for Fraser, who moved this MPI, because he is still in here. Most of the people from your side who move an MPI are straight out the door.

Dr Leigh: I wanted to listen to your words of wisdom.

Mr IRONS: I guess you wouldn't appreciate them, being an academic and not having actually worked in the real world where you have to get out there and dig ditches and earn a buck. You might learn something from someone who has had to do that—pay taxes and employ people.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr IRONS: Isn't it great how they are reacting? One thing they have not forgotten—the assistant minister and the member for Gorton will remember—is the incredible time under Keating and Hawke and how great Labor's economic credibility was in those times. They left us with a \$96 billion debt. When people like the member for Fraser come in here and start talking about tax reform, those on that side of the chamber should remember that they have no credibility on economic or tax reform or anything. I must admit that during the 25 years I spent in business, every time Labor came into power—bang!—businesses knew they were going to get smashed by tax reform. It was called 'tax reform' but it was just hitting the tax and spend ideology, which is still there. We see it today.

I want to touch on the tobacco tax, which has been talked about. As the chair of the health committee, one of the things that we have found with that tax is that it hurts the people of low SES, it hurts their children and it hurts the way they spend their money. They will continue to spend money on tobacco. The only people who will suffer from that are the children, who do not get proper food because people in those lower SES areas still continue to purchase tobacco.

All the contributions, one after the other, from the members of the opposition about tax reform got me thinking about the last time Labor tried to reform the tax system. It was not that long ago. You would think, Mr Deputy Speaker, that before submitting a public importance matter about tax policy the member for Fraser would have considered the recent record of his own party. I will take you back to 2008, when the Rudd government established Australia's Future Tax System Review. This became known as the Henry tax review on account of the then Secretary to the Treasury. It was billed as a root and branch review of the nation's tax system. If you can

remember, it was actually a recommendation of the Australia 2020 tax summit—and how good was that? Who remembers the 2020 tax summit? It would be interesting to review the outcome of that 2020 tax summit and see what has actually been achieved. I suspect the coalition called it right at the time on that one.

Labor undertook the Henry review to examine Australia's tax and transfer system, including state taxes, and make recommendations to position Australia to deal with the demographic, social, economic and environmental challenges of the 21st century. Sound familiar? It was two years from the time it was announced by Treasurer Swan on 13 May 2008 to the government releasing the final report on 2 May 2010. This was a very comprehensive report. There were 180 specific recommendations in this report compiled by Mr Henry. So you would say that there were quite a few opportunities there for the Labor Party to implement some tax policy reforms. Almost the entire report was ignored, except for one thing—the minerals resource rent tax, which was just a cash grab from Western Australia, attacking the Western Australian mining industry. I can tell you that, when the next election comes around, the Western Australian people will not forget that tax grab and will not give any favours to the Labor Party for their economic reforms.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:18): I notice that in a few weeks there will be a game of cricket between the politicians and the press gallery. I just mention that because every now and then in this chamber you get a slow full toss down the leg side, and that is exactly what the member for Swan sent down here.

Let's have a look at the economic record of those opposite and let's get a few facts out there. Cast your mind back to September 2013, when those opposite came to power. They are now five-sixths of the way through their term. Let's just cast our mind back to when they came to power: GDP was at 2.6 per cent and unemployment was at 5.7 per cent. At the time, the ASX was trading at a five-year high—look at it now. We have to go back 10 years to find the rate that it is trading at now. Government debt was \$273 billion. They came in on a ticket. I remember former Treasurer Joe Hockey saying that they were going to return to surplus in their first year. That is one of the promises he made. Remember that? He was going to return to surplus in their first year. Now government debt is up an extra \$133 billion, to \$410 billion.

Dr Leigh interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: Perhaps it is because they have made all these cuts they are a low taxing government. If they cut all these services, get rid of the CSIRO, get rid of the climate change scientists, perhaps they will have a lower tax grab. When they came to power, the tax to GDP ratio was 21.4 per cent under Labor. The tax to GDP ratio now is not lower; it is 23.4 per cent according to their budget.

Let's have a look at tax reform and what Labor can do and the realistic record of those opposite. Today when we have a chance to talk on a matter of public importance about tax reform, what do we hear? From the member for Mitchell, we heard this long, drawn out love song to Peter Costello, which was really, really horrible to listen to. He did not mention the nearly \$70 billion in assets sold by former Treasurer Peter Costello. He did not mention the fact that he was hit by a rainbow in the Treasury coffers from the minerals boom. He did not mention that—to paraphrase Paul Keating.

The reality is that those opposite are never prepared to do the heavy lifting when it comes to tax reform; it is a myth out there that they are. They sold off all of those Commonwealth assets. Admittedly, some of it started under Hawke and Keating. They took economic reform to the people; they had people talking about tax reform—an amazing thing to do under the Labor Party. What have those opposite done? Significantly? Really? The only thing that you could grab in the last 30 years would be the GST increase—a tax by those opposite that we saw here for five minutes until they ran out, scared. What is the problem with that tax? It attacks the poorest and the middle class first. I have been contacted in my office by pensioners who are already worried about the taxes they pay with the 10 per cent GST. If it were ramped up—a 50 per cent increase—to 15 per cent then that would be extra hardship for them. Let's have a look at it. Is it being proposed at a time when there is excessive wages growth in Australian society? Is that the situation? No. I think we have the lowest wages growth in real terms than we have had ever since they started keeping records—25 years or so. So it is not as if there is rampant inflation in wages growth.

The reality is that the economic leadership team opposite, the Barnaby-Malcolm team, is waiting in the wings to talk about tax reform. Remember the future Deputy Prime Minister is the guy that said that—let me get this right—Australia was about to default on our debts. Remember that? That was about five or six years ago. I think he even repeated that today. This is the guy who is going to be in charge of making decisions about the economic future of this country. The Barnaby-Malcolm team is waiting in the wings to take up from the Morrison-Turnbull team, making up for the Abbott-Hockey team. When Joe Hockey said that there was going to be a surplus in the first term, obviously he meant for him personally. He is on a good wicket with his government pension. He

whisked off to Washington on taxpayer funding. So the surplus is a personal surplus for Mr Hockey, not his promise in terms of economic leadership at all. (*Time expired*)

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (16:23): In summing up, the coalition government recognises that, in order for the Australian economy to prosper in response to increasing competition from emerging economies in our region, our nation needs the right tax system to generate economic growth yet provide an equitable system of services and welfare for those in our community who genuinely need it. Australians want a tax system that will enable them to achieve their full potential rather than hold them back.

Since being elected, the coalition government has repealed the carbon tax and the mining tax which were affecting industry. There are more than 125 different taxes in Australia. The top 10 taxes raise 90 per cent of the revenue whilst the remaining 115 taxes raise only 10 per cent yet it is difficult to abolish some of these taxes because they are designed to curtail activities which have detrimental consequences, such as smoking and alcohol consumption or have social equity implications such as taxes on luxury goods. The overall objective is to implement lower, simpler and fairer taxes.

Tax reform is linked to social policy. The Prime Minister has said that the objective of any tax reform is to ensure that Australia remains a high-wage, generous, social, safety-net economy that is creating jobs. Encouraging greater workforce participation and civic mindedness is at the core of delivering a lower tax burden on others. Hardworking Australians and small business owners must not be overburdened by taxation. The challenge is to generate growth and provide incentives to work, save and invest. Those on this side of the House want to create a better tax system, not a bigger tax burden.

The coalition government are adopting a methodical, consultative approach to taxation reform. We are not in the business of ruling individual tax measures in or out in isolation before proper consultation and debate can occur. The Prime Minister and Treasurer will seek a mandate for substantive tax reform at the next election. The government are involved in good-faith discussions with the states and territories on how we can improve our taxation system. In particular, in my home state of Western Australia, the allocation of a fairer share of the GST is a priority to support the provision of infrastructure over a vast area that services our export-earning mining, energy and agricultural industries. No decisions have been made to alter the GST.

The 2015 *Intergenerational report* indicates that, by 2055, the ratio of Australians of traditional working age to persons aged 65 and older will be less than three to one compared with the current ratio of 4.5 to one. This presents an emerging problem because Australia has a relatively high reliance on income taxes, higher than nearly all other developed countries as well as most of Australia's Asian competitors. Personal income tax accounts for 39 per cent of tax raised in Australia, while company taxes make up only 19 per cent of tax revenue. A dozen companies pay around one-third of Australia's company tax.

Many of Australia's international competitors and trading partners are reforming their tax systems to make them more competitive. The digital economy and globalisation present significant challenges for the effectiveness of the tax system. Capital is more mobile and highlights the need for a competitive corporate tax regime to encourage investment, promote higher economic growth, improve living standards and improve our international competitiveness. Comprehensive tax reform has the potential to lift Australia's gross domestic product more than any other government reform.

By contrast, Labor has little to offer the tax debate when it comes to trying to tighten the government's belt and actually cut taxes. Labor has, so far, promised taxes that will raise just \$7.6 billion over the forward estimates period and announced spending worth \$44.1 billion over the same period.

The SPEAKER: Order! The time allotted for this discussion has now expired.

BILLS

Aged Care Amendment (Red Tape Reduction in Places Management) Bill 2015

Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Amendment (Inter-State Voyages) Bill 2015

Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Exit Arrangements) Bill 2015

Assent

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

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2015-2016

Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2015-2016

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (16:28): Gong hey fat choi to all our Chinese friends in Australia and overseas. As you know, my wife was born in Hong Kong and we have a beautiful baby daughter called Jasmine. On New Year's Day they dressed up in beautiful red dresses and I actually had a brand new tie on. Can I make a special mention to all the Chinese community and wish them all the best today because today is the business day when they invite friends along who are involved in their business.

I want to pass a very special message to Jasmine's great-grandmother who is 100 years of age. Sadly, she had a fall recently and is in hospital with pneumonia, so all our thoughts and prayers are with her. All her 13 daughters' and sons' and her amazing number of grandchildren's thoughts and prayers are with her.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (16:30): I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Government Procurement

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:30): In recent times government expenditure has often been driven by job creation. Major projects have been brought forward and minimum local job content is being specified as a criterion for the awarding of contracts by all three levels of government. It was job creation that went to the heart of the Rudd government's economic stimulus package during the global financial crisis. The strategy is a clear admission that government procurement can be an effective economic lever in the same way that the 'Buy Australian' campaign is seen to be good for the Australian economy.

Whilst talking up local job creation, the federal government simultaneously signed up to more international agreements which restrict the government's own procurement flexibility. When the Victorian government stated that it would use Australian steel in construction projects, 'breach of international trade obligations' was immediately raised. Likewise, when new country-of-origin labelling laws were being considered by the federal government, compliance with international agreements became an obstacle. In the same vein, the USA was found to be in breach of WTO obligations over country-of-origin labelling it had brought in to protect its beef and pork industry. The WTO ruling in that matter—after two years—highlights just how complicated these agreements make issues and the ongoing uncertainty they create.

Australia has for years been a signatory to World Trade Organization agreements. In recent years it has signed several new free trade agreements and, more recently, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, all adding to the mounting procurement obligations Australia is bound by. Less widely known is the government's formal application on 16 September 2015 to join the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement, or GPA. Existing free trade agreements with the USA, Chile, Korea and Japan already contain procurement requirements, presumably consistent with the GPA. The GPA application, if successful, will give Australian entities access to government markets across 45 WTO members, including the EU and USA. In return, entities in those countries will have rights to Australian government contracts. On the surface it sounds fair. However, on close scrutiny the agreement may not be so attractive.

On these matters Australia takes its international obligations seriously. Regrettably, the same cannot always be said of all others, with behind-the-border barriers often created in order to control trade within countries or to block the entry of imports when they are not wanted. Furthermore, Australia already starts with a disadvantage. Australia's wages, adherence to international labour standards and compliance with industry standards are matched by few competitors. That being the case, Australia's ability to win contracts in other countries is unlikely to be enhanced by being admitted as a GPA member. The more serious concern will be that, by using exploited labour or non-complying materials, overseas competitors will be able to undercut Australian businesses bidding for work within Australia or elsewhere. The member for Gorton, who is in the chamber, would know very much about that because he has raised these matters within this parliament time and time again.

The use of cheap labour and non-complying building products has already proven to be a problem for Australia. Managing these issues is also difficult, costly and time consuming. The world is not a level playing field and Australia should not be so naïve as to believe that anything will soon change or that all other countries will be so open, particularly when their own economies are still struggling.

The bid by Australia to be a signatory to the GPA has to date attracted little attention. Perhaps it has been overshadowed by public interest in the TPP and the earlier China-Australia FTA. With federal, state and local government procurement worth around \$100 billion per annum this is an important issue. The government claims

it consulted widely in 2014 before lodging its application for GPA membership. Broader public engagement prior to signing of the agreement may shed more light on the pitfalls and benefits of being a signatory. With most international agreements, the community only learns about them after they have been signed. More agreements add more uncertainty, more regulation, more confusion and more red tape to government decision making—totally contrary to what this government claims to be doing. The only guaranteed winners will be the lawyers providing advice, interpreting agreements and appearing in WTO court cases.

O'Connor Electorate: Federal Funding

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (16:34): I rise today to highlight and celebrate some of the funding the federal government has delivered to the O'Connor electorate over the parliamentary break. I would then like to discuss some of the funding goals I still hope to see delivered for the electorate in the upcoming year. I congratulate the local communities across my electorate—from Norseman to Albany to Esperance to Pingelly—that have benefited from funding announcements in the last couple of months. This includes funding for airstrips, bridge upgrades, tourism projects, sporting projects, community grants, National Stronger Regions grants and national Landcare funding.

The most significant funding I would like to discuss is the \$1.5 million provided by the government for an upgrade of the Norseman airstrip. When Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss announced this funding I could not have been more elated. In the lead-up to this announcement we ran a social media campaign, collected 1,000 signatures for a petition and produced a video highlighting the importance of this airstrip. The upgrade to the Norseman airstrip will mean the Royal Flying Doctor Service and emergency services will be able to land safely and provide emergency medical care. This is an outstanding result for a very deserving committee. I was delighted to personally visit the shire in early December to meet with and congratulate Shire President Jacquie Best and Chief Executive Officer Doug Stead.

The shire of Laverton also received \$213,000 for its airstrip upgrade, and the Aboriginal community of Irkulka received \$50,000 for its airstrip. I also congratulate the shires of Pingelly, Broomehill/Tambellup and Cranbrook for receiving National Stronger Regions round 2 funding for sporting and community projects. This funding included \$3.9 million for the Pingelly Recreation and Cultural Centre project, \$825,000 for the Nyabing Community Hub and \$300,000 for the Cranbrook Shire Regional Community Hub.

In another funding win for the electorate, tourism projects in Albany, Denmark and Esperance were granted by the Minister for Tourism, Senator Richard Colbeck. Under the government's Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure program, \$250,000 was delivered towards the Albany Visitor Centre relocation, which was in addition to the nearly \$1 million announced under round 1 of the National Stronger Regions Fund. The federal government also contributed \$225,000 to the Southern Ports Authority in Esperance for construction of a permanent cruise ship tender jetty and pontoons. Also, the Denmark Wilderness Ocean Walk Ride Trail project will receive funding of \$250,000. I am looking forward to hosting Minister Colbeck in Albany and Denmark next week to inspect the progress of those projects.

More positive news was received in January when more than \$2.5 million was allocated for local bridge upgrades for the Boyup Brook and Pingelly shires. These upgrades will provide these local communities with safer, reliable road access and increase productivity for farmers in the district. National Landcare grants totalling \$117,000 were also provided in areas including Esperance, the Stirling Ranges and Kendenup. It is sometimes the small funding announcements that can make a huge difference in local communities. A recent example of this was a \$25,000 funding announcement for the Albany Men's Shed received under the Veteran and Community Grants program. The chairman of this Men's Shed, Michael Taylor, was very excited to receive the funding. He said it would make a much better amenity for the men in the community who use that shed. I would like to thank the responsible ministers and the community leaders from my electorate who have put in the hard yards to apply for funding and to ensure that these projects come to fruition.

While I am pleased with the goals we are kicking so far in O'Connor, there is still plenty more to do. Some of the projects that have been brought to my attention include: CCTV upgrades to improve safety for Kalgoorlie, Esperance and Albany under the Safer Streets Program—the other 43 local government authorities in my electorate will also be looking for some of that funding; a much-needed upgrade to the Goldfields drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre to increase patient capacity; a new Laverton Community Hub; a new tanker jetty in Esperance to boost tourism in the area and complement the waterfront development; funding for the Manjimup Wellness and Lifestyle Centre to allow elderly people to stay in their own community and retire gracefully; more funding to seal and upgrade the Outback Way from Laverton in my electorate to Winton in Queensland; funding to co-locate the Katanning Bowling Club and Katanning Country Club; and finance for a new accommodation building at the University of Western Australia campus in Albany. Any project that my community brings forward, I am happy to promote and champion in this place.

Petition: Mobile Phone Services**Newcastle Electorate: RAAF Base Williamtown**

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (16:39): I have received a petition from 1,407 residents and visitors from the suburbs of Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove. This petition has been found in order by the Standing Committee on Petitions, and I hereby present the petition to the House.

The petition read as follows—

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of residents and visitors of Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove near Newcastle in New South Wales draws to the attention of the House: the serious deficiencies in mobile telecommunications infrastructure in the area and the risk this poses to residents and visitors in case of emergency. Residents in these communities have little or no access to mobile phone coverage and telecommunications companies have failed to provide new infrastructure investments to address the poor service.

We therefore ask the House to: acknowledge the serious problems associated with the absence of mobile phone coverage in the area and to make available funds which would assist in the establishment of new mobile phone infrastructure to provide service to Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove.

from 1407 citizens

Petition received.

Ms CLAYDON: The petition relates to a serious mobile phone reception issue affecting residents and visitors of Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove in the north of my electorate. The terms of the petition draw the House's attention to the serious deficiencies in mobile telecommunications infrastructure in the area and the risk this poses to residents and visitors in case of emergency. Residents who are most at risk are mostly elderly and at great risk of health emergencies.

The petitioners have asked the government to make available funds that would assist in the establishment of new mobile phone infrastructure to service this community. I have on multiple occasions raised the issue of poor service in the area with the Minister for Communications, as have residents from the communities in question. In one response from the then communications minister, now Prime Minister, residents were told flatly that if they did not like the service they were getting they could just shop around for providers. Residents were rightly offended at the minister's advice and told me that shopping around does them absolutely no good—adequate service is not available from any provider.

I have also nominated the area in every round of the Mobile Black Spot Program, only to be told that Fern Bay is ineligible for the program as it is apparently located in the 'Newcastle urban area'. It turns out that Fern Bay is located just hundreds of metres from a so-called eligible area. It is my argument with the government that the allocation of funds under the program should in fact be linked to areas of greatest demonstrated need, not proximity to an arbitrary line on a map. I call on the government to address the needs of the Fern Bay community and either change the eligibility status of the Mobile Black Spot Program or make alternative funds available to improve mobile infrastructure in areas of greatest need.

I have also spoken many times in this House regarding the devastating impact of the soil and groundwater contamination on RAAF Base Williamtown and surrounding offsite areas in my electorate. On 4 September, the people of Newcastle woke to the headline 'Toxicity warning around air base'. This was shocking news to many in the community, including me. Last November, Labor moved to establish a Senate inquiry into the matter. A public hearing was held in late December and a report by the inquiring committee handed down last Thursday. The report recommended that the Commonwealth voluntarily acquire property that is no longer fit for purpose due to contamination. It also recommended that compensation be offered to commercial fishermen as well as the purchase of relevant fishing rights of those affected. If rights are purchased, it said an industry transition program must also be considered. Other recommendations included providing additional mental health support services, establishing a joint Commonwealth-New South Wales task force to coordinate the response of government, and funding a program of annual blood tests for residents. Rather than deliver a response to the report—a response that the community most definitely deserves—the Turnbull government has continued to defer and delay.

In Senate estimates this week, Defence Minister Payne revealed that she has not visited Williamtown in the five months since news of the contamination broke and had not met with residents, in Newcastle or here in Canberra. The minister also refused to confirm when the Turnbull government would be likely to respond to the report. The community and business owners affected by this crisis have been in a holding pattern since they were first told about the contamination in September 2015. I cannot overstate the level of financial distress and anxiety that those families and those men, women and affected businesses in my community are under. They are entitled to an immediate response from the Turnbull government. It is time for Minister Payne to show the leadership that the

Williamstown community deserve: she must hear their concerns firsthand, and deliver real action and outcomes for those who are doing it the toughest.

European Wasps

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (16:44): This weekend in Victoria, I very much look forward to going back into the beautiful Dandenong Ranges. I know, Mr Speaker, that you will too. It will be a great time to have barbecues, kick the football and enjoy time up in the Dandenong Ranges. But the problem we had last year in February and March is that the Dandenong Ranges, like so many places across Victoria, were swarmed by European wasps. They are attracted to barbecue meats and sweets. They are the perfect barbecue stopper—they literally stop a barbecue.

When you have children, the danger is that the European wasps are attracted to sugar. They go in the can and the young child can actually drink one. Obviously, the child would need hospital attention. The European wasps are right across Australia, including in South Australia and Victoria, and they have hit very hard in Tasmania, New South Wales and ACT. Western Australia did have some problems, but they are very keen to make sure they are definitely not established there permanently.

It is the responsibility of the states at this stage to eradicate European wasp nests on public land. It varies from state to state. The ACT has a very good program. It has a hotline where people ring up and report a nest. But the problem is that, on private land, it is the landowner's responsibility. The ACT, as I mentioned, in 2010 had 379 nests reported on public land. This figure would now be much higher in Victoria. It is really up to councils to go out and destroy them.

More concerning is that—this is where it does get concerning, and these are the only figures we have—between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2005, there were 379 admissions to hospital due to wasp stings. That greatly concerns me because, as everyone in Victoria would know, last year was a really bad year. The symptoms include swelling, redness, raised lumps and pain. European wasps can sting multiple times and they also emit a pheromone after stinging that basically lets all the other European wasps know to come along and attack.

I keep thinking about if you have a child in school who is eating a play lunch near a nest and is then stung. It can be a very scary time. I have spoken to a number of my schools in La Trobe. What happens at playtime when all the wasps are coming is that they have to leave the area. The wasp nests can get up to 100,000 wasps. So we are talking about something rather significant. Each wasp can travel up to 500 metres to source their food. Last year, they were absolutely in plague proportions.

Basically, the first batch of workers construct the nests for the queen, who just lays more eggs and more eggs. They are from Europe and each winter, because of the coldness in the European winters, most of them are actually killed off. This is not happening in Victoria and across Australia because it is a lot warmer.

I am putting a proposal forward. I have met with the CSIRO. They have informed me that potentially we could look at what is known as GM RNAi technology. The CSIRO proposes to extend the non-GM, orally delivered RNAi technology that has been developed for mosquitoes and fruit flies and apply it to the European wasps. I should explain that this term RNAi refers to RNA interference. RNA itself controls gene expressions or how genes behave.

I am working closely with my Victorian colleagues. A number of us have signed a letter to the Prime Minister. I have also spoken to Minister Christopher Pyne and Minister Greg Hunt about potential funding solutions. This is a serious issue, especially for those who are stung and have anaphylactic reactions to that.

Hammond, Mr Ben

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:49): I want to tell the House again of the appalling situation that has arisen because of our failure to provide a national compensation scheme for those who take one for the team and suffer a rare adverse effect from a vaccination. We are one of the few OECD countries not to do so. I have raised this with the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Health, and I hope that we can make some progress towards addressing this serious problem both for the specific family that I will talk about and for any family that suffers such an extreme reaction and permanent disability.

Ben Hammond, in 2012, received a booster of a whooping cough vaccine and had a rare adverse reaction. He now has a serious permanent disability. This is no-one's fault, but he cannot work and he and his family soon may lose their home. This family has been now labelled 'anti-vaxxer' as they seek to get some compensation, and they have been subject to some pretty awful trolling by the anti-anti-vaxxers and to some malicious reports to police.

On 19 January this year, a team of around 10 police officers from the Kalgoorlie Police Station mounted a dawn raid on their home. The search warrant was issued on the basis that there might have been drugs on the property. Following the raid, Tanya Hammond contacted me in distress. She described the raid. She, her husband

and their three children were dragged from their beds. Ben has difficulty walking but he was forced out of bed and made to lie on the floor. The officers drew their weapons to intimidate the family. In the process of the raid, the officers totally ransacked their home. One of the officers took a selfie during the raid with the family's pet dog and one of the participants in the raid, bizarrely, bears a very strong resemblance to a person who has a history of making adverse comments about Tanya Hammond and her family on social media.

During the raid, the Hammonds were told that they were suspected of manufacturing and selling crystal methamphetamine. No such drugs or implements were discovered, although two cannabis plants and a smoking implement were found, as Ben uses this to help with the nerve pain from his injuries. Apparently then one of the officers returned to the property shortly after the raid to apologise for their treatment and to disclose to Tanya that he thought they had been stitched up by members of the public. Within 20 minutes of the raid a journalist appeared at the house and said that they were aware that this family had been suspected of dealing in crystal meth and that they had been charged.

Subsequently, they were contacted by a senior sergeant at the police station who advised that he had been asked by the district office to do an investigation into the conduct of this raid. It is completely and utterly unacceptable that the officer in charge of the police station that was responsible for that raid should take charge of reporting on his own officers, so this week I have written to the Commissioner of Police, Karl O'Callaghan, to ask him to ensure that there is a proper, independent investigation of the behaviour of the police during this raid and, indeed, of the persecution of this family who, very simply, are trying to get some justice and some reasonable compensation for the very severe trauma and loss that they have suffered, not because anyone is at fault but because they participated, and participated willingly, in the vaccination program that was asked of them.

I am deeply concerned and have raised this matter on a couple of occasions now with the Minister for Social Services. I do hope that we, as a community, can see our way clear to ensure that families like this are not left out on a limb into the future.

Bennelong Electorate: Volunteering

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (16:53): I would like to talk about the incredible, dedicated volunteers who live and work in Bennelong. Volunteers, while often unseen, form a backbone of our society. They care for people who have been left behind or they give school students that little extra experience to equip them for the world. Everywhere we look, there are people giving their time to make the world that little bit better, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all.

I have already spoken this year about some of our great local volunteers who received awards in the Australia Day honours. Time prevented me from mentioning them all, but I can do so now. Chantal Marie Claudine Denis was awarded an OAM for her incredible record of volunteering with the Wayside Chapel. She is the longest-serving volunteer at this remarkable charity, having been helping out there for 32 years. By all accounts she is an incredible, tireless and selfless helper, and this award could not have gone to a more deserving person. Gregory Norman Hammond, a director at Opportunity International Australia, has also been awarded an OAM. Aside from the benevolent work he does professionally to provide aid and improve living standards around the world, Greg also generously gives his time to many other worthy causes, especially within the Anglican Church.

Bennelong is also home to dozens of inspirational groups who help improve our community and the livelihood of those within it. Rotary clubs, Lions, Leos, RSLs and countless others are tireless in their support for our local community and ensure that it remains a home with a heart and a soul. Their achievements are far too numerous to mention here, but they should all know that our local area stands in awe of their dedication and we thank them all.

I would particularly like to highlight two charities that are indispensable in their care for local residents. Christian Community Aid is an organisation based in Eastwood which cares for hundreds of people across our region. Celebrating a remarkable 50 years in 2015, they provide a huge range of services to help everyone across the community. Vitally, they also cater to the many ethnicities which we have in Bennelong, and in Eastwood especially. They provide English courses. But, perhaps more importantly, they provide a considerable amount of advice to people with limited English who have recently moved to Sydney and may be struggling to navigate its many systems. This service is vital. These groups are able to contribute to the whole community, which makes our corner of Sydney so diverse and exciting and makes it work just a little better. Heather Pinto and her team do incredible work for our area, and I thank them wholeheartedly.

The other charity I would like to mention is the North Ryde Community Aid and Information Centre. In particular, I would like to focus on their hamper appeal, a mammoth undertaking which I have been honoured to be part of every year since I became an MP. The indefatigable executive officer, Helen Crouch, and her fantastic team at North Ryde work tirelessly to ensure that no local family feels left out at Christmas time. Dozens of volunteers help pack and distribute the hampers across two days. This included many selfless volunteers from

local companies and organisations, including Optus, GSK, Boehringer Ingelheim, Gumnut Cottage and Downsizing With Ease. This was the 15th consecutive year that the North Ryde Community Aid and Information Centre has generously donated hampers, and in 2015 nearly 400 local residents were reached. They included the elderly, the infirm, the forgotten, the socially isolated and the financially disadvantaged.

Finally, I would be remiss not to thank the large body of volunteers who help get us to this place. Like most politicians, I am reliant on an army of local volunteers to help with my re-election and campaigning, and I think I have got the best team in the country. They might not think they have got the best representative. I held a barbecue last weekend to say thank you, and around 200 people showed up, all wonderfully committed to the Liberal cause for good government and ready to do their bit this year. I thank them all and look forward to the exciting months ahead. In particular, I would like to thank Mr Hugh Lee, who has been a good friend and supporter for many years, and I look forward to working with him well into the future.

To all the volunteers across Bennelong and the wider community, I would like to say thank you. You are incredible people, and the community would be less without your determination and selflessness.

Question agreed to.

House adjourned at 16:59

NOTICES

Mrs McNamara: to move:

That this House notes that:

- (1) there are more than 342,800 Australians living with dementia;
- (2) this number is expected to increase to 400,000 in less than ten years;
- (3) each week, there are more than 1,800 new cases of dementia in Australia—approximately one person is diagnosed every six minutes;
- (4) dementia is the single greatest cause of disability in older Australians (age 65 years or older) and the third leading cause of disability overall; and
- (5) the Government is providing an additional \$200 million for dementia research over the next five years, significantly boosting for funding for Australia's dementia research sector to over \$60 million per annum, and beginning to bring dementia research funding into line with other chronic diseases.

Thursday, 11 February 2016

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Southcott)** took the chair at 09:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Oakley, Mr Ben

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (09:30): I want to take the opportunity today to talk to the House about one of the most extraordinary and brave young men I know. His name is Ben Oakley, and he was in Canberra at Parliament House yesterday at the invitation of my colleague the member for Throsby, the shadow assistant minister for health, to talk about the serious impacts and the importance of medicinal cannabis and how it has changed his life, in recognition of the government's tabling of changes to the legalisation of the cultivation and production of medicinal cannabis. Ben and his mum and dad, Caroline and Michael, were with him. They wanted to indicate their support and to call for governments at all levels to continue to progress this matter.

Ben's dad has established a Facebook page called Roll On Ben Oakley—recommended if anyone is interested in following up on this after the few minutes I have to tell you about it. Ben's dad, Michael, said, 'This is my way of showing support to one of the bravest people I know.' Ben came to see me with his dad last year, in about May, to tell me of the terrible situation they were in. About three years ago Ben was struck down with a very debilitating illness, and I would like to use Ben's dad's own words to tell the House about it. He says:

Ben was a very normal, healthy, active young man until 3 years ago today. Out on a training ride (Ben remains a very keen cyclist, even if he can not get on a bike) when he felt a sharp pain in his back. Thinking at the time that it was a pulled muscle he pushed on and made it home, but only just! Ben collapsed when he got back and could not stand. After an uncomfortable evening Ben woke up feeling okay and went to school only to have the pain start again within a few short hours. Ben took himself to sickbay but didn't make it. He had to be half carried by 2 teachers and then was taken to hospital. 7 hours later and a lot of head scratching we took Ben home.

He goes on:

Slowly over the next few months I watched one of the most active people I have ever known slowly getting worse and we had no idea why! We were trying to find answers, was it a dislocated Rib? a Virus? Cancer?!

Sadly and I know full well that a lot of people will not understand this, Cancer would have been easier to deal with, not that I would wish that on anyone or take away from anyone who has battled Cancer but people at least understand it. With Cancer you fight it and if you are lucky you survive.

Ben has Stiff Person Syndrome, a 1 in a Million Neurological condition. Doctors can not give us answers ...

Ben tells the story, and he told it yesterday, that he can barely move. But since he has been taking medicinal cannabis he has had one attack in 10 months and it has transformed his life. He was very brave to join us all yesterday to share his personal story. I want to pay tribute to that and to his mum and dad in their ongoing efforts.

Maloney, Mr Arthur

Gibson, Mr Adrion

Betteridge, Ms Emily

Mr HOGAN (Page) (09:33): Last December, Arthur Maloney was recognised for his service to our community with the Premier's lifetime volunteer award for 55 years of community service. Arthur has been a boxing coach since he was 18 years of age, when he took over from his father. He has been a mentor for many young people in our community and helped them to develop a sense of self worth and self-confidence, and he has always tried to guide young people in the right direction.

As I said, he started coaching in Lismore at 18 years of age. He went on to coach in Casino for 10 years from 1967 to 1977, and then he returned to Lismore. Recently he was approached to start coaching at the Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre. Arthur is a life member of the Far North Coast Amateur Boxing Association. I would like to congratulate and thank Arthur on the great work he does for young people in our region. Just as an aside, Arthur used to do this for nothing; he now charges people \$2 a session for this. So thank you, Arthur.

I would like to congratulate 11-year-old Adrion Gibson, who, as a member of the Grafton Cub Scouts, has just earned the Cubs' highest award, the grey wolf. These awards are so hard to get that the regional commissioner had to travel from Kempsey to present Adrion with the grey wolf award. Adrion joined the Cubs two years ago, and is only the third member of the Grafton Cub Scouts to earn this prestigious award after much hard work. He had to earn four level 2 achievement badges and organise a hike for his troop, which included a risk assessment—not bad for a boy who was just 10 when he completed this task! Well done, Adrion.

I would like to thank one of Lismore's legendary Betteridge twins, 84-year-old Emily. She has just retired from fundraising for the Westpac rescue helicopter after more than 34 years. Emily and her sister Mary started

fundraising to get the lifesaving helicopter in Lismore before it was even established in 1982. Their first efforts raised \$74, and they have been undeterred ever since. Health issues have now forced Emily to give up her regular volunteering roles. She leaves the helicopter service in good hands; it now has about 480 volunteers across the northern rivers. Between them they have raised \$3 million, and the rescue helicopter has saved countless lives. At a special morning tea in Emily's honour this week, the chairman of Lismore heli-base, Warren Tozer OAM—and congratulations on that, Warren—said, 'We have always needed community support to make it happen, and it is people like Emily who understood that from the early stage.' Thank you, Emily; you have left an amazing legacy.

National Broadband Network

Medicare

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (09:36): Yesterday in the MPI I highlighted the problems with the NBN that have been experienced by constituents in the Shortland electorate. I highlighted the fact that the cost of the NBN had blown out from \$29.5 billion to \$56 billion. I also highlighted the problems that people in the Shortland electorate were having while connecting to the NBN. I highlighted the problem they were having with their speeds; I highlighted the fact that the constituents that I represent were going without having a telephone for up to two months. I have had constituents contact me who had no telephone, no internet access for two months simply because they decided to sign over to the NBN.

I can say without any hesitation that I have not had one good experience in relation to the NBN rollout given to me. There was only one person who has stated that they actually have got access to the internet, because there was a shortage of ports within the area, but many other people have had appointments cancelled, one after another. Director Gerry Wallace really highlighted it for me, as far as speed was concerned, when he said his old coverage with ADSL was better than what he is getting now. He paid for 50 megabits per second and he gets as low as three megabits per second. He has tried to go back to the ADSL, but has been unable to. So there is this real problem with the NBN, and even the boss of nbn has said, 'Yes, there are problems', but I do not believe they know the solutions.

The other issue I raised over the last sitting period has been the proposed closure of Belmont Medicare office by the government. I met with the minister, and he arrogantly disregarded the concerns of the people of the Shortland electorate—just as he has arrogantly disregarded the fact that people are contacting Centrelink, contacting Medicare and they are having to wait a very long time to get any response on the telephone. When they visit an office, they are met by somebody with an iPad—if they are lucky—and directed to a computer. Shortland electorate is a very, very old electorate, and my office has been inundated with people who have complaints about Centrelink and Medicare service. This is a government with a small government approach to government, and it has total disregard for delivering services to the people of Australia.

Lyons Electorate: National Stronger Regions Fund

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (09:39): I rise to congratulate the Southern Midlands Council, in my electorate of Lyons—in particular, general manager Tim Kirkwood, mayor Tony Bisdee, deputy mayor Alex Green and all of the council—on their successful application to the National Stronger Regions Fund. The project involves refurbishing the Oatlands Commissariat building, one of the oldest buildings in the historic town of Oatlands. Built in 1827, it is currently a derelict building in the middle of the main street of Oatlands. It was the storehouse for the convict settlement—as it was at that time.

The point I would like to make particularly is that the Southern Midlands Council applied to the first round of the Stronger Regions Fund and were unsuccessful. But, with constructive engagement with the department, identifying those areas in their application where they were deficient in what is a very, very competitive process, they had success in round 2. I sincerely congratulate them.

Three hundred and nine thousand dollars has been contributed to a total project cost of \$620,000, which I think was able to be achieved because of the changes that were made from round 1 to round 2 to have an amount of money quarantined there for projects under \$1 million. This has absolutely benefited small councils in regional areas of Australia such as my electorate of Lyons. The project will include an integrated skills hub which will have uses for the building that will include a trade training centre, a heritage consultancy branch, conference facilities, community offices, a shopfront selling products of the trade students who will be engaged in projects there, and a disadvantaged youth program.

Indeed, Tasmania as a state has more historic sites per capita than any other state in the country. Approximately 40 per cent of the registered sites in Australia are located within Tasmania. Oatlands itself is a town that has a very high proportion of Georgian built sandstone buildings. The construction will begin in May 2016 and is expected to be completed in stages by the beginning of 2018.

I would encourage other councils—and there were other projects in my electorate that applied to the second round that were unsuccessful—to take the lead of the Southern Midlands Council, engage with the department, look at where their applications were deficient—in what, as I say, is a very competitive process—and reapply in round 3.

Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (09:42): It has now been 670 days since the Abbott-Turnbull government was handed its review of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal, and we have still not seen the findings. Meanwhile a further review was undertaken and delivered to the Minister for Employment, Senator Michaelia Cash. Combined, the government has wasted over \$185,000 of taxpayers' money, and we have not even seen the findings of either report. This government has a track record of not being transparent or accountable to the Australian people.

In mid-2014 the former Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Jamie Briggs, told a conference of trucking employers that the coalition had 'always been very uncomfortable with this regulator'. He hinted at what the government planned to do. He said:

I think that you'll be comfortable with the approach that the Australian Government will take on this tribunal.

The Deputy Prime Minister last year told the House:

We do not have any plans to get rid of it. Even if we did, we would not get it through the parliament. So, the reality is that the organisation will continue to do its job.

The ongoing mishandling of the tribunal by this government is only causing uncertainty and a lack of engagement by industry. But we know exactly what this government wants to do with the tribunal: abolish it.

Even the Productivity Commission inquiry into workplace relations highlighted the ongoing uncertainty. The tribunal was evaluated in 2014, but the Australian government has not announced its response to the review, with one central issue being the continued existence of the tribunal. Despite the government's best efforts to diminish the important role of the tribunal, 2015 was a big year for it. The tribunal handed down a ruling late last year that will ensure long-distance drivers and those working in retail are paid the full cost of their work, easing pressure on an industry with the highest rate of work related fatalities. As the National Secretary of the Transport Workers Union, Tony Sheldon, said:

This is a huge victory in our fight to stop the carnage on our roads. It is an important step towards addressing the pressures on drivers that result in an unacceptable number of deaths and injuries ...

The ruling sets minimum rates that secure payment for time spent waiting and queuing at depots and distribution centres. It states that drivers must be paid for loading and unloading time and for the time it takes to clean, inspect, service and repair the trucks and trailers. The industry now has a binding, legally-enforceable decision that makes those at the top of the supply chain accountable for the practices throughout the supply chain. This is not some abstract theory. This affects people's lives.

I also want to point out that the safe rates campaign is not limited to Australia, which is why the Transport Workers Union has been taking safe rates global. Last year the International Labour Organization reaffirmed the global fight for safe rates. It is positive to see the safe rates campaign being embraced by the Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union, and I look forward to continuing the fight for many years to come for such rights to be extended in Korea.

Bonner Electorate: Community Safety Initiatives

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (09:45): Today I am pleased to update the chamber with fantastic news for residents in the Bonner suburb of Tingalpa. I am proud to announce that the new CCTV camera system at Minnippi Parklands is now fully operational. It is thanks to the hard work of local council and residents that these CCTV cameras have been installed. The cameras now record high-definition footage 24/7. The parklands are now safer for the many families and groups that use its facilities.

I want to single out my colleague councillor for Doboy Ryan Murphy for much deserved praise. Ryan has been 100 per cent committed to delivering CCTV cameras to Minnippi Parklands since they were first proposed. He has done a first-rate job seeing this project through. When reports first emerged of inappropriate activities taking place at the parklands, Councillor Murphy was at the forefront of Brisbane City Council planning to make the area safer. He helped organise numerous infrastructure upgrades. Thanks to Ryan, lighting in the vicinity was improved, and, with other safety improvements that were made, Ryan then led key stakeholder meetings between council and Tingalpa Model Aero Club, which is the primary leaseholder on the site.

I would like to thank the club for their close cooperation with council and for providing the site for the CCTV tower to be installed. Councillor Murphy and club members attended every meeting on the CCTV proposal. They fully capitalised on the coalition government's \$70,000 investment in the project—and, because of the tireless

commitment to neighbourhood safety, residents will be able to enjoy Minnippi Parklands without fear of antisocial and criminal behaviour.

I note that round 2 of the Safer Streets Program is now open until 17 February. I encourage eligible groups and organisations in my electorate to go online and apply now. I look forward to delivering more funding for community safety initiatives in my electorate of Bonner.

Petition: Mr Behnam Satah

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (09:47): We are six days from the second anniversary of the brutal murder of the young Iranian Kurdish man, Reza Barati, at Manus Island's regional processing centre on 17 February 2014. Fellow detainee Behnam Satah witnessed the murder of his roommate, Reza, and thereby became the principal witness in the murder trial. Mr Satah remains on Manus Island, and for the past year he has regularly received death threats for his role as a witness. I hereby present a petition calling for the immediate resettlement of Behnam Satah into the Australian community, which the Standing Committee on Petitions has certified as being in accordance with standing orders.

The petition read as follows—

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Diana Cousens draws to the attention of the House:

Behnam Satah (FRT009) - a Kurdish Iranian - was the principal witness in the trial of those accused of murdering Reza Barati in February 2014 in the Manus Island detention centre. Since his testimony he has been subject to death threats from the Manus Island guards. Additionally every day guards spend several hours each morning watching him through the window of his room in an attempt to intimidate him. He has genuine fears for his safety and, in spite of promises from the PNG court, is not being protected. As a result of the constant intimidation, threats and other incidents, he has developed a serious heart condition for which he has received no appropriate treatment. He is provided with Panadol. We ask that Behnam Satah be brought immediately to Australia and settled in the community. We believe that justice can only exist where witnesses are protected and that Behnam cannot be protected in PNG. His name and photo were published in the PNG newspapers and he will never be safe in PNG.

We therefore ask the House to:

Bring Behnam Satah from Papua New Guinea to be settled in the community in Australia
from 1 citizen

Petition received.

The in-order petition has only the signature of the principal petitioner, Diana Cousens, so I also seek leave to table the more than 18,000 electronic signatures that were not in order.

Leave granted.

It is alleged that, since October 2015, a systematic campaign of intimidation against Mr Satah has been carried out by supporters of the guards against whom he testified. He has been threatened directly by the accused. They have told him that it is very easy to kill him and that they could arrange for it at any time. Mr Satah has said:

No one can ever imagine how it feels to think every time that someone might kill you. Every second I have to be alert at night. When someone passes [by my room at night] I have to be prepared.

This experience has resulted in Mr Satah developing a serious heart condition and being diagnosed with PTSD, for which he has not been receiving appropriate medical treatment. Mr Satah's name and photo were published in the PNG newspapers, and therefore he cannot be safe in PNG.

Concerned Australians, including the principal petitioner in this case, have written to the government on this issue and have received responses from Australian Border Force on behalf of the minister for immigration. ABF stated that Mr Satah's safety is a matter for Papua New Guinea and 'Issues relating to the safety and security of transferees are matters for the PNG government to determine.' In fact the PNG government does not run the Manus camp; it is run by contractors hired and paid by Australia.

Australia cannot contract out of its international legal responsibilities towards those who have requested asylum in Australia. This trick of displacing people seeking asylum outside of Australia's jurisdiction in order to evade responsibility for their welfare is an abdication of our legal duty to protect those fleeing persecution. It does nothing constructive to assist with the global challenge of displaced persons. Australia's incarceration of asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru has merely wasted many billions of dollars and created lifelong health problems for these most vulnerable people.

Furthermore, the use of offshore processing as a punishment to deter those who have not yet sought asylum in Australia is a misuse by parliament and the executive of the principle of deterrence, which would normally be a function of the courts in the determination of sentencing for a criminal matter. Asylum seekers have committed no

crime. It is not illegal under international law to seek asylum. I stand with the more than 18,000 petitioners to urge the Australian government to resettle Behnam Satah in the Australian community as it is evident that his safety cannot be guaranteed in PNG. We cannot bring Reza Barati back to life but we can save the life of a witness to his murder. *(Time expired)*

Swan Electorate: Sport

Mr IRONS (Swan) (09:50): My electorate is named after the Swan River, and anyone who has been to Perth would know that the Swan is a very popular spot for kayaking, canoeing and many other water sports with its flat, shallow waters and accessible banks. The sport of kayaking and canoeing, which is an Olympic sport, is run by Canoeing Western Australia under the guidance of CEO Rosalie Evans. Rosalie has visionary and exciting plans for the sport in WA, and I met with her twice over the course of the Christmas break to lend my support for construction of a Perth whitewater centre, which is close to becoming a reality.

On 13 December I visited the preferred site on the banks of the Swan River in Burswood. The centre would include an Olympic-length slalom course, with facilities for whitewater canoeing, kayaking, rafting and surfing, similar to the renowned Cardiff International White Water park in Wales. The point of difference for Perth, though, is that this centre would be built right next to the Swan River, so you could imagine the great opportunities there would be for kayakers to train in both the slalom and distance forms of the sport from the one base. Another reason Burswood has become the preferred site is that the Burswood Peninsula is being transformed into the new Perth stadium precinct, with the new stadium to open in 2018. I again congratulate the Liberal state government for opening up the possibilities on the Burswood Peninsula by making the decision to build their new stadium there.

Canoeing WA have had a private investor that is committed to building the centre for some years now, and all that remains to make this a reality is an arrangement to be made with the WA government to purchase the land. I have been able to put Rosalie in touch with the member for South Perth, John McGrath, who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and who can provide her with some further advice on how to take this further. I think the private investor has seen a huge potential here. There is a large local market but also a big market for European athletes seeking opportunities to train in the warm climate during winter months. We also have the Avon Descent in Perth. It is an international 124-kilometre whitewater event held each year. I note that the plans for a Perth whitewater centre have been on the table since 1998, when the Harvey International Slalom Course was closed.

I remember our dear friend and the former member for Swan and Canning Don Randall tried to get a whitewater park up and running at Champion Lakes and secured a \$5 million commitment from the coalition at the 2010 election, although the coalition were not able to form a government after that election. I congratulate Rosalie on her vision and will do what I can to help progress this and continue the transformation of the Burswood Peninsula into a sporting precinct in my electorate of Swan.

Finally, I will briefly mention a campaign called Swim and Survive that I helped launch with the Royal Life Saving Society Australia and Rosalie on 20 January at the Ascot Kayak Club. The campaign is aimed at promoting water safety on Australia Day on the Swan River and in the lead-up to Australia Day as many people flock to the river to watch the Skyworks each year at 8 pm. The royal life saving is now doing some of their bronze course in the Swan River, and I congratulate them and all those associated with them.

Federal Circuit Court of Australia

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (09:54): The Federal Circuit Court of Australia was established to provide a simple and accessible form of justice as an alternative to the federal and other superior courts and the Family Court to provide speedier access to justice particularly for people who live outside the capital cities. It is staffed by hardworking men and women who deal with litigants sometimes in the worst crises of their lives. I make absolutely no criticism of the staff or the judges, but right now the system is failing in Wollongong.

The court has access to one judge who travels from Sydney to sit three out of every four weeks in Wollongong. He also hears matters in Sydney on the fourth week of his schedule. The Wollongong family law docket has in excess of 590 matters, not including divorce matters. It takes three to four years for a case to be resolved through the Wollongong registry of the Federal Circuit Court system. It is clearly unacceptable. At the end of December 2014, there were 467 matters on the docket. That is an increase of 20 per cent in 12 months alone, with no changes in resources being allocated. If somebody asks for an interim hearing in the Wollongong registry today, they will not get a slot until the final week of May, and there will not be any final hearings available until 2018. That is two years away.

Hundreds of local families are being let down by the Attorney-General and this government and his administration of the justice system in Wollongong. For two years, the Attorney-General has allowed the lists to grow and has failed to appoint new judges when vacancies occur. His intervention during Senate estimates

hearings a few days ago was nothing short of extraordinary. Instead of allocating additional resources, he bumbled into an announcement, only to be grilled by Labor senators. He said that additional resources would be allocated to the Wollongong registry, but we are still not clear about how. It was particularly surprising since only a few days earlier the member for Cunningham, the member for Gilmore and I had written to him asking for more resources to be allocated, and we had received a response saying that any such decision would not be made by him. Even during his comments during the Senate estimates hearing, the Attorney used weasel words to avoid being pinned down on the detail of when and how often additional judges will be available. He did confirm that there will not be a resident judge situated in Wollongong.

It is a sad fact that over 41 per cent of contested family law matters before the Federal Circuit Court involve domestic violence. Parents and children are waiting for three to four years before their settlements can be dealt with. That is three to four years living in limbo. The message to the government is: you are the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General for the entirety of Australia and not just part of it.

Eifler, Mr Richard

Next Step

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (09:57): Over the past few years I have had the pleasure to get to know Richard Eifler, who is the CEO and founder of Next Step. Next Step is a youth outreach program that provides innovative programs to support, empower and improve outcomes for young people, particularly those who are vulnerable and at risk in the local community. Having grown up in a disadvantaged area himself, Richard was determined from the age of 13 that he was going to be a youth worker. Even at 18 years old, Richard committed himself to helping disadvantaged young people through a youth services program. In his early 20s, Richard expanded his experience and pursued street outreach work, working with organisations such as Impact Youth Services, Youth Off The Streets and Life Without Barriers. But, even though he was working with such outstanding youth programs, Richard still had a dream to start his own youth outreach program, and in 2012 he founded Next Step.

His courage and tenacity in following his passion and achieving his goals are inspiring. He spent two to three years pursuing building and fostering relationships with people who would be able to help him get Next Step off the ground. As he recalls, he lost count of the number of doors that were closed in his face, but he did not give up. He kept an attitude of growth and openness. Richard has always been willing to learn and grow. As a result of his persistence, Next Step is now a well-established, functioning, youth outreach program that is going from strength to strength.

In 2013, Next Step established a Saturday night youth outreach program in Watanobbi, with three hours of activities for local youth and a free sausage sizzle, providing a safe and non-threatening environment, enabling Richard to engage with young people who might otherwise slip through the cracks. In 2014, Richard partnered with Lorraine Rogic, and Next Step was growing, taking on support cases such as a young father and son who were living in a car. Richard worked with the father in a mentoring and support capacity, helping him navigate Centrelink, source a home through Housing New South Wales and obtain a grant to help with basic whitegoods and financial counselling.

Throughout this time, all of Richard's work was unpaid. He would work two to three jobs at any given time, doing whatever he could and whatever was offered in order to support himself, as he was committed to seeing Next Step firmly established. His whatever-it-takes attitude is now beginning to bear fruit, as 2015 saw a fee-for-service model take shape. Through LeapFrog the door was open to provide his mentoring program in the foster care system. He was then approached by Samaritans to run his fee-for-service mentoring program. He was also successful in gaining a \$25,000 grant through Impact Youth Services to support three professional youth workers over the next 12 months. I wish Richard continued success with Next Step.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Southcott): If no member present objects, three-minute constituency statements may continue for a total of 60 minutes.

Age Pension

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (10:00): People who have worked hard all of their lives to make our country great deserve dignity and respect in their retirement. When this government was elected, I would never have dreamed in my wildest dreams that it would have been as consistently harsh as it has been towards pensioners and self-funded retirees. In just 2½ years, the Abbott-Turnbull government has attacked pensioners almost every week and certainly, substantially, through two budgets.

First of all, they tried to cut the age pension by \$80 a week over a decade. They attacked part-pensioners by changing the assets tests and cutting the incomes of 330,000 part-pensioners. Half of all new retirees will be affected over the next 10 years. They have slashed pensioner concessions by \$1.3 billion, and, of course, they

have announced their intention to lift the age pension age to 70. Just in this past week, they have passed legislation that cuts the period for which pensioners can travel overseas and receive their full pension from 26 weeks to just six weeks. This is a callous attack on pensioners by the Turnbull government. It will particularly hurt tens of thousands of migrant pensioners who have left family or fled conflicts. These people have spent years working hard and paying their taxes, and once again they are in the gun from the Abbott-Turnbull government.

But the most vicious attack on pensioners is still to come, because the government have not yet ruled out a GST, which will have a fundamental impact on people on low and fixed incomes—up to \$4,000 a year, on people who are the most vulnerable in our community. Pensioners deserve much, much better than this. Essentially, the government are quite happy to allow some of the largest and most respected companies in our country, multinational corporations, to easily evade their taxes, and then they turn around and say to pensioners and self-funded retirees, 'We'll make up the difference, because these people haven't paid their tax, by thumping you with a 15 per cent GST on everything you buy and consume.'

The GST is fundamentally regressive. Lying behind this whole approach is the intention of the Liberals to make our tax system much more regressive and much more unfair because they are not prepared to make the people pay who can afford it, because they believe in the survival-of-the-fittest mentality. We heard this just yesterday from the tax commissioner: the extent to which some of the largest companies are evading their responsibilities. And today the Business Council had the gall to say: 'Oh, look, don't look to our members to pay their fair share of tax. Why don't you just put a 15 per cent tax on self-funded retirees and pensioners to make up the difference?' (*Time expired*)

Broadband

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon—Government Whip) (10:03): Christmas might have been over six weeks ago, but Labor members of parliament all around the country are still parading as economically irresponsible Santa Clauses, talking about the NBN going to each and every seat across the country, telling everybody that they should have fibre to the premise, that fibre to the node is a complete waste of time, that the satellite will be no good and that the wireless tower technology is a waste of money. It is about time the Labor Party came clean across the country and certainly in my electorate of Braddon. They have intimated that their policy will be to restore fibre to the premise to every business, every home and every community service in the country, but they have not yet committed a formal policy. That is because the corporate plan of estimates says that to do that would cost somewhere between \$74 billion and \$84 billion.

Who is going to pay for this? The nbn co has already got \$30-odd billion of taxpayers' money. Does this mean the Labor Party wants to borrow—that is what we would have to do, because we are already in deficit by tens of billions of dollars—\$70 billion to \$80 billion, to put on the public tab, to pay for this rolled gold rollout of fibre to the premise?

My electorate, on the west coast, are being stirred up into a bit of a frenzy—a few of them—by the Labor Party, particularly, and they need to understand this: when we inherited the NBN plan there was no plan, no design, no money, no funding, no contract, no anything for any NBN to flow to the west coast of Tasmania. Yet they are rolling in there telling everyone they can have it. Satellite will be delivered to the west coast of Tasmania in the next few months. I say to the people of the west coast: that is a great opportunity. Sign up. Find out what it is like. And if it is still a problem let's talk about it. But I do not believe it will. There was no plan by the Labor Party to deliver fibre—in any way, shape or form—into the west coast. The people of the west coast need to understand that.

If they want to hold onto the hope the Labor Party pretends to put forward, we are looking at a potential eight-to 10-year delay in providing the sort of rolled gold system that the Labor Party is talking about. I say to the people of the West Coast: do not believe them. They stuff up everything they touch. They have put this country into immense debt that your children and grandchildren are going to have to pay for. You can wish all you like, but someone, somewhere, some day has to pay for it. The \$70 to \$80 billion across the country has to be paid for, but the Labor Party do not want to talk about that.

There is an opportunity, in the next few months, for the people of the west coast to sign up to a satellite service that will deliver speeds 10 times faster than those they have now, and it will be a great opportunity for that community.

Basslink

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (10:06): I rise today to talk about a very serious issue affecting Tasmania. It is the ongoing energy crisis that has been mismanaged—appalling—by the Liberal state government. Just before Christmas, Tasmanians found out—thanks to state Labor—that the Basslink interconnector cable was down. That is the cable that connects Tasmania to the national electricity market. Members in this place might know that

Tasmania produces more than 80 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources, from hydroelectricity, but we are connected to the national grid through this interconnector.

This interconnector has been down since 20 December. Tasmania's electricity is hydro. That means we need rain and water in our dams. We have also been going through, as the state government described, drought like conditions. So we have had our dams being run down. They are, as I understand as at two days ago, down to around 18 per cent, only, of their levels. We have a very serious issue in Tasmania. It is not raining, the dam levels continue to drop and the Basslink interconnector still has not been repaired. We also had a backup energy system of the Tamar Valley Power Station—a gas fired power station—that the state Liberal government mothballed. So here we are in Tasmania without Basslink, without the backup gas fired power station and with no water going into our dams. It is a very serious issue, indeed.

Will Hodgman, the state Premier, and the state government minister Matthew Groom, have been mismanaging this from the very beginning. They have kept Tasmanians in the dark. They have not been telling Tasmanians what has been going on. In January we had the minister come out and say 'It will all be okay. We are praying for rain. Everything will be all right. There will be no need to ration electricity. Everything is going along just fine. Nothing to see here.' But on 4 February we had Tasmania's largest electricity user, Bell Bay Aluminium, agree to reduce their power consumption by 10 per cent for four to five months. We also found out that Hydro Tasmania is in discussions with the other major industrials to reduce their electricity consumption in Tasmania during this period. I thank those companies, particularly the employees of those companies, for doing the right thing by Tasmanians.

This is a really serious issue in Tasmania. We still do not know when the Basslink cable will be fully repaired and up and running. We understand that the ship has found the area of the fault, and they are looking to repair it, but it is a very serious issue. Today, after many months of this, we found out that the state Liberal government is calling on the federal government to fund a second Basslink interconnector, a billion-dollar power cable, to go under the sea. If there is a plan to do such a thing, I call on the state Liberal government to brief both parties—in what is an election year—because this is too critical for Tasmania. *(Time expired)*

Banks Electorate: Clean Up Australia Day

Banks Electorate: Stronger Communities Program

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (10:09): On 6 March this year it will be Clean Up Australia Day. In my local community in Banks one of the most important gatherings will be at Yeramba Lagoon in Picnic Point. Starting at 9 o'clock at Yeramba Lagoon, people will gather to clean up the lagoon and the surrounding area.

It is a great opportunity for people to get together to help beautify the lagoon and to remove rubbish and other debris. I would encourage local residents to help out if they have some time. They can find out more information at the website of Clean Up Australia Day at cleanupaustriaday.org.au.

Elsewhere in my electorate there will be other Clean Up Australia Day activities. At Harvey Dixon Park in Peakhurst, at Jinna Reserve in Peakhurst as well, at Banksia Place in Lugarno and at the Oatley Pleasure Grounds. Riverwood Men's Shed will be conducting some activities down at Little Salt Pan Creek, where we have had a very successful Green Army project in Padstow, and there will be activities at Cutting Reserve in Padstow as well. So wherever people are across the Banks electorate I would certainly encourage them to get involved in Clean Up Australia Day.

One of the great activities of the government at present, of course, is the Stronger Communities Program. Recently, Canterbury council was successful in receiving \$20,000 in funding for a shadecloth in the playground down at Salt Pan Creek Reserve. It is exposed to the sun down there and it gets very hot. This provision of \$20,000 of funding, which we have been able to secure from the federal government, will go a long way towards helping local families to make more use of the reserve down there at Salt Pan Creek. I am very pleased that we were able to secure that funding.

One of the great sporting organisations of my electorate is the Oatley Rugby Club. It plays and trains down at Evatt Park in Lugarno. They field teams from under-sixes right through to under-21s and open-age teams. I attended their executive committee meeting on 18 January, where I met with Richard Rice and other members of that committee.

One of the issues at Evatt Park is that there is no lighting in the car park. This is a concern because, especially if you have young children participating in training and evening sessions, it is important that lighting is provided. I am calling on Hurstville council to act and to provide lighting. I would certainly assist the council in seeking funding through the Stronger Communities Program to do that.

Shipping

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (10:12): Last month I met with Wayne Doleman, a seafarer for 35 years and also a proud member of the Maritime Union of Australia. He was deeply concerned with the way security guards mounted a secret midnight raid to forcibly remove the crew of the Alcoa ship, *MV Portland*, on Wednesday 13 January 2016.

Wayne was extremely concerned that 40 Australian workers had lost their jobs and were replaced with a foreign crew using flag-of-convenience ships, which can result in exploitation of workers. But there is an issue that I want to look at in terms of national security. It concerns me on an ongoing basis about what is happening to Australian shipping here. Wayne was concerned that his fellow sailors would lose their jobs, in line with the recent trend of replacing Australian workers with foreign workers.

Unfortunately, Wayne's foresight proved correct. Last Friday, when working on the CSL *Melbourne*, his crew was removed via an armed escort in Newcastle. He was extremely angry—understandably—that he was forced off the ship and he injured his shoulder. He was also upset that the crew were not properly provided with food on the CSL *Melbourne* before being escorted off the ship and that his concerns about asbestos in the engine room of the ship were not addressed by CSL.

People may not like the union, but I welcome the members of the MUA who have set up a jobs embassy outside the Australian parliament. Let me say why I welcome what they are doing. Let me talk about the comparison with what we are doing with our shipping versus what the United States is doing. In the United States there has been a resurgence in auto manufacturing. Also, I want to draw the attention of the House to the Merchant Marine Act 1920—it is known as the 'Jones act'. It requires under cabotage deals that all goods transported by water between US ports must be carried by US-flagged ships and crewed by US citizens.

Under the Obama administration the United States is ensuring that that provision remains. One of the reasons why they are very concerned about foreign crews and foreign ships was 9-11. I have visited there very recently and seen the impact of that terrible event. They were very concerned that foreign ships were going to be used to mount an attack of some description on American shores. In fact, one plot that was uncovered was to launch a cruise missile from a ship. It was a plot that they were concerned about.

We commend the government for its national security architecture and the spending it is putting into national security. But at the very same time what we are doing with an essential conduit of goods, shipping and transport is effectively to take our eye off the ball by allowing foreign crews on foreign ships to be coming in. We just do not know: we can never guarantee security as we could with an Australian crew and an Australian ship. I believe, particularly given my interests, that this is an area that the federal government is falling down in and it really does need to address this, because our seas and port will become unsafe if this continues. (*Time expired*)

Macquarie Electorate: Mobile Black Spot Program

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (10:15): I rise to speak on the coalition government's \$385 million Mobile Black Spot Program, which is delivering improved mobile coverage for residents in the electorate of Macquarie—indeed, across the entire nation. Last year, four mobile black spot locations in the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains were announced as being successful under round 1 of the program: Colo Heights, Kurrajong, Mount Tomah and Webbs Creek. The total package for the electorate was \$3.45 million.

I am excited to announce that the first of these for mobile black spot towers, in Colo Heights, has been switched on and residents have already noticed a significant improvement in coverage. I received a phone call last week from Colo Heights resident Cathy Jones, who spoke about the benefits of the tower and thanked me for advocating for it. Ms Jones said that before the tower was switched on she would only receive one bar of service on her mobile phone and would often have to climb a steep hill. Now Ms Jones has four bars regardless of where she is in the house and has also noticed an improvement in her wireless internet coverage, for which she no longer needs an external antenna. That is great news. Ms Jones mentioned that she spoke with a resident on the same road who lives on 100 acres and now has improved coverage that extends well beyond a pine plantation on his property. While benefitting residents in their homes and on their properties, the mobile tower at Colo Heights will also play a huge role in providing coverage for motorists along both the Putty Road and Bells Line of Road, which are major transport routes. In previous years, lives have been lost as a result of there being no mobile communication, sadly. The second of the towers, at Kurrajong, is due to be switched on at the end of this year.

This government understands the importance of mobile coverage in regional and remote areas of Australia. The electorate of Macquarie is important in the history of the Mobile Black Spot Program, as it was here, along the Putty Road at Colo Heights during the 2013 federal election, that the commitment was announced. The Mobile Black Spot Program will improve mobile coverage along major transport routes in small communities in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as my community is. With the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains being

a disaster prone area with long stretches of road, the announcement of the program has been a welcome relief for many families and individuals.

I would also like to thank the community for working alongside me, particularly the Rural Fire Service in both the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains, Mount Wilson Progress Association, and of course I could not go without mentioning Clint Jones, a duck farmer who fought alongside me for this mobile coverage. I will continue to advocate further communication needs across the electorate. These towers will provide new, upgraded coverage to some 3,000 mobile black spots across Australia as nominated by the public. That of course was from round 1. *(Time expired)*

Moreton Electorate: Western Magpies Australian Football Club

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:18): Last weekend was huge for Aussie Rules in Queensland, and Moreton in particular. The Sherwood Australian Rules club had its annual sign-on day over the Saturday and Sunday and their Brisbane Lions family fun day, which I had the good fortune to attend, on Saturday, which included a very special guest appearance by the players from the mighty Brisbane Lions.

Chris Dennis, the president of the Sherwood AFL club know how to put on a good show, and I thank him most sincerely for the invitation and for the hard work and organisation done by that club. It was a big project to take on, but it went off without a hitch.

I did not get too close to the Lions players because there were huge line-ups of kids looking for autographs, so I thought I would play it cool. But I noticed that the captain, Tom Rockliff, and many other players were signing selflessly for hours on end. Thank you to them for doing that, particularly for the Moreton kids.

I did get to say hello to their friendly maroon-clad mascot lion, Roy, who was doing an incredible job. It was a very, very warm day, so not a great day for a mascot—

Mr Chester: He lost 10 kilos!

Mr PERRETT: Yes—he lost about 10 kilos! I will take that interjection from the member for Gippsland—a former Lions fan, I am sure, having spent some time in Queensland. Roy does not say much, but he is very popular with the kids and it was great to see a lion walking around on his two feet all day when it was so hot.

The day was bigger than Ben-Hur, with over 5,000 visitors coming from as far away as Toowoomba and the Sunshine Coast. It was great to see so many footy fans, young and old, enjoying the face painting, the gourmet food and the other activities while supporting a local club, seeing their heroes up close and having a yarn to them about the upcoming season. I know that the Lions are going to be in the final eight by the end of the year.

It was also great to see that the AFL really knows how to reach out to families. Apart from the Sherwood club my electorate has a couple of AFL clubs, including Yeronga Souths, which has been around for over a century. I am sure they are going to have a great season. I also will rope in a few that are just on the border or just over the border but which take many players from Moreton, including the Kenmore Bears, the Mount Gravatt Vultures and—right at the end of the road where I live—the Griffith-Moorooka Roosters, who also do some great stuff and, hopefully, will have a great season.

I hear that Auskick is very popular with many of the parents I catch up with. The AFL Auskick program makes learning to play AFL fun, safe and easy for boys and girls. Young players have weekly coaching sessions where they learn the skills of the quite complicated senior game, but do it in an exciting, social and safe environment. Perhaps some of the other codes could learn from what Auskick is doing in terms of reaching out to kids. The AFL Auskick program has centres that operate all over the country and it is taking the game to schools in Moreton very effectively—so watch out, some of those other codes! The Auskick program at Sherwood involves a great game with the under-sixes and their parents—even the parents end up getting on the field and having a go. Thank you again to Chris Dennis and the Sherwood AFL club, and all the best for the season. *(Time expired)*

Maranoa Electorate: Regional Online Heroes

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa—Deputy Speaker) (10:21): I rise today to put on public record some very exciting news and to congratulate two businesses in my electorate: Dingo Australia, located in Dalby in the eastern part of my electorate; and Tambo Teddies, located, obviously, in Tambo on the Landsborough Highway in Central Western Queensland. Last December these businesses were recognised for their outstanding use of digital technologies in the 2015 Regional Online Heroes initiative, which is run by the Regional Australia Institute and Google.

The Regional Online Heroes initiative recognises businesses that use the internet to grow, reach new customers and give back to the community. I am pleased to put on the public record today that Dingo Australia, located in Dalby, was selected as one of the 10 finalists in the 2015 national competition, and that the overall national

winner was Tambo Teddies. This is an extraordinary achievement. I know the owners and operators of these businesses and where they are located, and it truly is an extraordinary achievement for both of them.

Dingo Australia, for instance, manufactures mini-loaders and mini-diggers and is one of the few equipment manufacturers left in Australia. By using online platforms, including YouTube and Facebook, to promote their products, Dingo Australia was able to increase their inquiries fourfold whilst simultaneously halving their marketing budget.

Similarly, Tambo Teddies used the internet and social media platforms to promote and sell their products overseas. Tambo Teddies was set up in the middle of the drought and was struggling against the wool market crash way back in the 1990s. Three ladies who put their entrepreneurship and creativity to work decided to use discarded wool products to make teddy bears and, since then, Tambo Teddies has grown and is fast becoming an iconic international brand. Tambo Teddies have been gifted throughout Australia and around the world, including to His Royal Highness Prince George.

Finally, I would like to once again congratulate both of these businesses that have highlighted the growing power of social media, the importance of digital communications and the need for high-quality, high-speed internet in rural, regional and remote parts of Australia. These are quite clearly examples of the power of the internet and the opportunities available to small and medium businesses in my electorate to grow their businesses and, obviously, to keep businesses manufacturing in those regional, rural and remote townships.

Climate Change

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (10:24): The recent announcement of savage cuts to climate change research within the CSIRO demonstrates that, although the government may have changed its leader, the ill-informed policies of the former Prime Minister remain in place. Despite the rhetoric, there is no evidence that the Turnbull government gives any more weight to the importance of science than its predecessor and has just as little understanding of the importance of measurement, in particular of the changes in the physical processes that are driving climate change. Why else would the CSIRO have been ordered to abandon the measurement of the change in climate, and why else would the critical Cape Grim carbon dioxide observatory in Tasmania be at risk of closure?

Until the first decades of the 17th century the teaching of natural sciences was based upon Aristotle's *Physics*, a fourth century BC text that described natural phenomena according to so-called common-sense explanations. For example, Aristotle stated that heavier objects fall faster than lighter objects—a common-sense idea that was not overturned until 1589, when Galileo demonstrated by measurement that all objects fall at the same velocity regardless of their mass. Aristotle's ideas held sway in the Western world for almost 2,000 years. The fact is that measurement and mathematics often contradict seemingly common-sense ideas, such as the idea widely held in ancient times that the Earth was the centre of the universe. Mathematical analysis of measurements led, for example, to the prediction in 1865 of the existence of radio waves by James Clerk Maxwell and in 1905 to an understanding of the source of nuclear energy by Albert Einstein.

These days measurement and mathematics demonstrate that carbon dioxide emissions are driving up global temperatures and that carbon dioxide dissolving in sea water is acidifying the oceans, yet many members of the government reject these findings. According to the ABC, in September 2014 the then Prime Minister considered setting up a task force to investigate the credibility of the temperature measurements published by the Bureau of Meteorology that provided evidence for global warming. Apparently the Prime Minister was convinced that Aristotle's common-sense physics made more sense than modern science and, not content with wrecking the CSIRO, had the Bureau of Meteorology in his sights.

Following the intervention of the Minister for the Environment, the intention to conduct a due diligence review of the Bureau of Meteorology was abandoned. Instead, in 2015 a committee was set up to investigate the claims. The committee found that the Bureau of Meteorology had not been adjusting its measurements to fit a pattern of global warming and reported that there was a clear trend of increase in both the raw and homogenised temperature data and that temperature patterns exhibited in a variety of other datasets had a similar character. Climate change research remains important and this government should now come right out and support it.

Australia's Healthy Weight Week

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Assistant Minister for Defence) (10:27): On the eve of Australia's Healthy Weight Week, from February 15 to 21, I rise to update the House on priority health issues in the Gippsland electorate. One of my aims this year as the member for Gippsland will be to encourage local people to try and live healthier lifestyles. I know that most people aspire to live well, eat good food and exercise, but it is not always that easy for some sections of our community. Some demographics in particular suffer more severe chronic and acute health challenges across the Gippsland region.

We have, for example, a higher rate than average of type 2 diabetes. Smoking is still prevalent in some sections of my community and we also have an ageing population living with more complex health needs into the future. The cancer survival rates in Gippsland, like those in many other parts of regional Australia, are not as high as they are in metropolitan areas, despite the best efforts of many organisations in my electorate. On that note, I would like to highlight the great work done by Gippsland Rotary Centenary House in supporting people with cancer as they receive treatment at Gippsland Cancer Care Centre. It has been one of the great innovations in Gippsland over the past five or six years, where people are supported to have treatment in their own community.

We are lucky to have health professionals providing guidance and supporting people when they are ill and also with preventative health measures, right through from our general practitioners to the allied health providers—our nurses and counsellors. They are all working to make a difference on a daily basis across Gippsland. We are lucky to have such wonderful health services and health related programs in Gippsland that are supported by both state and Commonwealth governments.

It does not all have to be about hospitals and doctors. We have a strong network of men's sheds to improve mental health outcomes for men in regional communities. It has been one of the great success stories across regional Australia in recent years. Recently the Commonwealth announced funding to reduce Indigenous smoking rates in Gippsland, which has already shown some positive results as part of a pilot program.

The issue of health was again at the forefront this week with the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry report volume 3, which was tabled in the Victorian parliament. The board made several recommendations in this report and some of these related to Commonwealth government areas of responsibility. I take this opportunity to inform the House that I have written to the Minister for Health, the member for Farrer, to seek her feedback and advice on the recommendations that were made in the mine inquiry report.

I think there are some real opportunities for us not only to learn some lessons from the past in terms of the mine fire but also to take a very positive attitude as we move forward into the future to tackle some of these longer-term health challenges facing the Gippsland region, and specifically the Latrobe Valley community. This will, of course, involve the Victorian government. It has responsibilities in this area as well, but also works very closely with the Commonwealth government through its primary health networks. Instead of seeing these challenges as problems we should see them as opportunities for Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley to become a case study for improving health outcomes in a regional environment.

I am very keen to work with the state and federal health ministers in relation to long-term health outcomes for people in the Latrobe Valley and the broader Gippsland community. I thank the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House take note of the document.

Ms VAMVAKINO (Calwell) (10:31): Last Thursday, 4 February, trade ministers from Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam gathered in Auckland where the Trans-Pacific Partnership—otherwise known as the TPP agreement—was formally signed.

Australian trade minister, Andrew Robb, was among the 12 delegates who attended the signing ceremony. Before I go any further I would like to take this opportunity to wish the minister all the very best following the announcement of his retirement from this place. I am sure he will go on to bigger and better things. Certainly in my dealings with him while I have been up here as well, I have always found him to be very approachable and very courteous. His hard work and his drive in relation to securing free trade agreements will be legendary, I am sure. Despite the many valid and important concerns that were raised by both the opposition and other people and groups within the Australian community, I am certain that his principal driver and motivation was always to act in the national interest and to get the best deal possible for Australia.

The signing of the TPP deal in Auckland was the public relations exercise that kicks off the domestic ratification process. All 12 of the Asia-Pacific nations party to the TPP now have two years to ratify the agreement. The government this week tabled the TPP in the parliament and this begins our own ratification process, which will involve extensive public consultations where we will all get the opportunity to have a say on the merits or otherwise of the TPP.

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties will hold public hearings and will receive submissions from the public over the course of the next few months giving agencies, interest groups and the general public an opportunity to make submissions and to attend public hearings. I also want to acknowledge my parliamentary colleague, the member for Wills, who has had a longstanding association with that committee and who is also

retiring. He has been one of the best members I have ever met. Good on you, Kelvin, and thank you for the advice on the TPP.

A report to government will be prepared. I certainly encourage everyone who has a view on the TPP to come forward, to have their say and to express their concerns. I will be encouraging my electorate to come forward and have its say. Free trade agreements in general always raise concerns of the community largely around what their governments are trading or giving away in order perhaps to extract benefit and opportunity in the long term.

The TPP has so far been very controversial, not only here in Australia but also in the United States and in Canada. A similar trade pact in Europe is causing controversy there as well. Issues of secrecy and sovereignty are key things of this controversy.

I want to flag today some of the issues of concern that I have with the TPP, and that the people in my electorate see as having a potentially negative impact on the Australian people's national interest. Firstly, let me acknowledge that what the proponents of the TPP assert and believe is that it has the potential to bring great benefits to the Australian economy—especially in relation to the goods and services exports. Ratifying the TPP would see us part of an agreement that accounts for 40 per cent of global GDP, representing one-third of world trade. That, I agree, is a pretty good club to be in.

The TPP, however, is more than a bilateral food trade agreement; it creates a free trade region, meaning that there are opportunities for vast economic benefits to such an agreement. Of course, the Australian economy needs to pitch itself to the opportunities and challenges of the global and regional economy. This is vital for our economic prosperity. But opportunities for growth in jobs is also key to our prosperity. The Australian people expect us to take all steps necessary to create job opportunities for them so that they too can share in the prosperity that comes with the so-called free trade agreements. They do not want a free trade agreement that denies them job opportunities. They also do not want us to trade away our sovereignty and democratic processes. It is for this reason that the TPP has raised such controversy, and it will continue to do so.

The clauses in the TPP causing most angst and controversy are the investor-state dispute settlement processes, the abolition of labour-market testing for member countries and provisions that potentially impact on the affordability of medicines. The ISDS clause in the agreement allows companies to sue governments over domestic laws that may impact on their commercial interests. This is, indeed, a great threat to our sovereignty. Many people in the community see this for what it is and are opposed to it: it is a vehicle for enhancing corporate power ahead of government power, thus impacting on the democratic process.

Already, if you want an example, there is a challenge from Philip Morris Asia regarding our plain-packaging legislation. The arbitration proceedings brought against our government by Philip Morris could be a sign of things to come—where corporate interests can override the people's interest and the people's sovereignty. Any capacity, such as the ISDS provisions, in this TPP, that give companies from the 12-member countries the opportunity to bring arbitration proceedings against the Australian government, would not be acceptable to the Australian people.

It is precisely this threat to the government's right to legislate in the public interest—with our concerns of being challenged by corporations and their commercial interests—that is being rejected. The concern around the ISDS clause also centres around the fact that the international tribunals adjudicating ISDS actions are not equivalent to our own domestic courts. The arbitrators are not truly independent and there is no precedent for appeals; furthermore, if a company were to bring proceedings against Australia, such as the Philip Morris case, the Australian government would likely have to spend millions of public dollars defending its position.

Our second concern relates to the free movement of people, within the TPP countries signatory to the agreement, which seemingly allows for a working-visa regime that does not require labour-market testing at any level and in many categories is uncapped. In an environment where unemployment is very high and many Australians are struggling to get jobs—as high as 27 per cent of youth unemployment in parts of my electorate alone—I cannot understand why our government would allow the abolition of labour-market testing.

At the risk of being labelled a protectionist, even though I am for a bigger and more open Australia, I believe that Australian workers should always be entitled to first consideration in the Australian job market. Our young people are being trained and educated with the intention of getting jobs. We are constantly investing in their future so that they can take their place in the workforce. We cannot afford a TPP that undermines their prospects, especially the job prospects of people in my electorate.

Furthermore, in many cases, the labour-market provisions are not reciprocal, which means Australians are not afforded the same opportunities as other TPP countries. We cannot sign off on a deal that does not give Australian workers the same level playing field and I say this on behalf of the people in my electorate who have already lost jobs—especially in the car industry—as a result of previously lauded free trade agreements.

Our third concern relates to the inclusion of copyright and intellectual-property provisions for biologics. It is the first time such matters have been included in a free trade agreement. Biologics are incredibly important and are used to treat various cancers and other serious diseases that are prevalent in the Australian community. Any threat to the affordability of medicines in this Australian community will be resisted by the community. Last week there was a briefing in this parliament where the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network presented a letter signed by 59 community organisations that represent over two million Australians as well as a petition from GetUp! and SumOfUs, signed by 305,000 Australians, stating their strong concerns about workers rights and the cost of medicines in the TPP. The concerns and actions of this organisation should not be written off as the actions of the so-called 'usual suspects'. These are legitimate organisations representing legitimate concerns as expressed by legitimate Australians.

I agree with the many community groups, including the public health advocates and unions, who have asked the government to refer the TPP to the Productivity Commission for an independent assessment, because only after an independent assessment and a full and frank public consultation where legitimate concerns are raised and responded to can we truly understand the impact of the TPP and determine what provisions should be accepted and what provisions should be rejected or amended.

This is an important free trade agreement. I have acknowledged that in my speech here today. It does boast many benefits for Australia now and into the future but it also does raise serious concerns which if not heeded and dealt with appropriately may have ramifications for the Australian people now and into the future.

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (10:41): I welcome the support for the TPP from the member for Calwell and also would like to add to her comments wishing the member for Wills all the best in his future.

Today I rise to speak on the Trans-Pacific Partnership and to commend Minister Robb and his negotiating team for delivering yet another outstanding outcome for the nation in trade negotiations. The negotiation of the TPP commenced in 2008 and also includes Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam. These 12 countries represent about 40 per cent of the global economy and a quarter of world trade. Five of these countries are in the top 10 of Australia's export markets by value, and in 2014-15 they took over \$99 billion of Australian exports. This is an important outcome for many export industries right across Australia and, more specifically, in my electorate of O'Connor.

Many of the reforms under the TPP are in the form of removal and reduction of tariff barriers or non-tariff barriers such as quotas and regulatory compliance on business. The industries across O'Connor and the entrepreneurs and their employees who make them successful are heavily reliant on timely and reliable access to export markets. Some of the well-known industries in the electorate include aquaculture, forestry, agriculture and horticulture. With reduced tariff and non-tariff barriers to a number of key markets, I look forward to more prime lamb, beef and pork from the Great Southern finding its way into export markets. Cereals and oilseeds from the Wheatbelt and seafood from the south and south-east coast around Albany and Esperance will also benefit from improved market access. There are a number of exporters of fine wines from Mount Barker, Cranbrook and Denmark that will be able to take advantage of the improved access to overseas markets. The members of the Southern Forest Food Council, which is based in the south-west of my electorate around Northcliffe, Manjimup, Pemberton and Bridgetown produce a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, gourmet specialty foods and value-added dairy products. Many of them are focused on supplying domestic markets, but, as the Asian middle class continues to grow, export opportunities will emerge.

The mineral extraction industries in the Goldfields have been hugely important for O'Connor over many years, with gold and nickel featuring prominently. The remaining tariffs on Australian minerals, petroleum and LNG exports to signatory countries will be eliminated under the TPP. The energy and resources sector will see significant new opportunities for oil and gas exploration and the export of associated technology. Increasingly we see that mining and resources technology and associated software and equipment that is developed in the electorate by mining companies and mining contractors is being exported. Harlsan Industries Australia, based in Kalgoorlie, exports specialised drilling equipment around the world. They work with their clients to select and supply the right equipment and technical support for the task, drawing on the expertise they have developed from years of supporting the domestic drilling industry in Australia. Hahn Electrical Contracting commenced operations in Kalgoorlie in 1990, providing services to the mining sector. It has subsequently grown to become one of Australia's largest providers of electrical products and services to the mining and industrial markets.

I expect there will be opportunities for companies such as Harlsan Industries under the TPP with a reduction of tariffs on manufactured goods. Hahn Electrical Contracting already operates overseas. They and other service companies may take advantage of the new investment opportunities under the TPP that will provide a more predictable and transparent regulatory environment for investment. There are also reforms to the regulation of transport services and Australian freight, and logistics companies stand to benefit. As a farmer I know how

important an efficient logistics chain is to deliver our products to the world at competitive prices. I welcome any improvements to the regulatory regime that will cut the costs of logistics chains for our exporters.

I want to address some of the concerns that constituents have raised and to assure them that there are a number of safeguards around the implementation of the TPP. A coalition government would never be foolhardy about the important matters that we have been entrusted with. A common misperception is that the signing of the TPP means that the agreement immediately comes into effect in Australia. That is not correct, as any required changes must be codified into Australian law, and that requires scrutiny by the Australian parliament. Before any binding treaty action is effected in Australian law, the TPP text and a national interest analysis will be tabled in the parliament for 20 joint sitting days. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties will conduct an inquiry into the TPP and report back to the parliament. The parliament must consider any legislation or amendments to existing legislation that may be necessary to implement the agreement.

A number of constituents who have contacted my office were under the impression that the TPP was somehow being negotiated in private. That is not correct. The 12 countries involved in negotiating the TPP agreed to keep the treaty text confidential, as well as other relevant documents exchanged during the negotiation process. This was to facilitate a candid and productive negotiation. This, however, did not impede the Australian government or prevent it from consulting widely with relevant stakeholders. State and territory governments were consulted, as were peak industry bodies, individual companies, unions, consumer groups and other non-government organisations.

A common claim has been that medicines and other medical supplies will somehow be subject to the whims of big business and consumers will face hefty price hikes for prescription medicines. That is simply not true. The TPP requires no changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The coalition would not agree to such a provision, and it is time for whoever is responsible for this scaremongering to stop peddling such misinformation.

Food standards and biosecurity regulations will not be changed under the TPP. Australia will maintain control over the standards we have set to prevent the possible incursion of pests or diseases across our borders.

Another false claim that has been propagated is that foreign companies will in some form be granted legal capacity to sue the Australian government if their business interests are somehow impinged on. That is a crude misrepresentation of what is known as investor-state dispute settlement, or ISDS. The ISDS is a mechanism that is included in all free trade agreements or other investment agreements. It provides foreign investors with the right to seek redress from an international tribunal if they believe action taken by a host government breaches investment obligations. In other words, it is a mechanism that provides an opportunity for investors, including Australian companies, to protect their investments overseas. For example, if an investor believes that a government in another country is applying domestic law in a discriminatory manner, the investor can have their claim determined by an independent tribunal. ISDS cases are usually decided by three arbitrators who are independent of both government and the investor.

Australian companies have previously used ISDS to protect their investments in foreign jurisdictions. It is nonsensical to argue that such a provision should not be included as part of the TPP. Perhaps critics of the agreement would have Australian companies taking a chance in investing overseas with no such protection.

The signing of the TPP follows on from the good work done by Andrew Robb in negotiating the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement and the Japan-Australia Free Trade Agreement. These high-quality trade agreements will deliver billions of dollars of additional export income to Australia in the years ahead.

I will continue to communicate as widely as possible across my electorate the importance of Australia continuing to pursue trade liberalisation and the benefits that flow to the Australian community and our citizens. I commend the agreement and I acknowledge the work done by the negotiating team and Minister Robb, as well as Minister Robb's predecessors in the role of trade minister.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:49): The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a trade agreement between 12 countries around the Asia-Pacific rim. It accounts for approximately 40 per cent of global GDP. In addition to Australia, the TPP covers Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.

On our side, we are pleased to have joined the TPP negotiations, which we did in March 2010. The negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership concluded last October, with the agreement formally being signed by ministerial signatories in New Zealand at that point. It is fair to say we recognise the benefits, or at least the potential benefits, that will flow to Australia from a trade agreement such as the TPP, including increased market access for our goods and services. I believe the TPP will improve access to our markets, firstly, by eliminating 90 per cent of

all tariffs applied to Australian exported goods to TPP member countries and, secondly, to liberalise access to Australian services and industries in the TPP market itself.

Increased market share for Australian goods and services is a good thing, particularly around those areas covered by the Asian rim. We think it will be an opportunity to boost business opportunity and export earnings. There are a couple of issues I would like to come to, but I think the Trans-Pacific Partnership can be seen as a stepping stone for closer economic ties as well as general engagement amongst the Asia-Pacific neighbours. Some of the concerns that we have had have been subject to assurances given by the minister responsible for the final negotiation in the concluding of the agreement, such as assurances that the agreement will not impact adversely on Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. No matter what the TPP achieves, it should not impact on the price and availability of medicines made available in this country.

Labor has always led the way in the argument against investor-state dispute settlement provisions. I know something has already been mentioned about that, but in relation to this it should be said that we oppose the ISDS in respect of Korea and also the China free trade agreement. The truth is the China free trade agreement would have been concluded long before should we have been in a position to agree to the investor-state dispute settlement provisions. We are putting a lot of stock in that, in the tribunals that exist or will exist in those countries that we are dealing with. We have all confidence in our courts, which we are now conceding and giving jurisdiction to foreign bodies to be able to use to act in determining trade issues involving TPP countries. That is an issue for us.

One area that has not been covered so far, but that I think is pretty significant, is that the Trans-Pacific Partnership has a number of things involved in trade and is also designed to enhance pro-labour principles in eliminating the discriminative practices in respect to employment, amongst other things. It is right that we use trade agreements such as the TPP to leverage against those agreements to achieve proper and positive outcomes, particularly in the human rights space. For instance, Australia supports Vietnam's inclusion in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and as a consequence of enhancing their trade position, I think it is appropriate that we do take a greater interest in matters affecting human rights in Vietnam. While Vietnam is being welcomed and treated as a valued trading partner under the terms of the TPP, regrettably it continues to imprison human rights and labour rights activists at an alarming rate. Vietnam is party to a number of human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment—just to name a few. However, despite Vietnam's human rights obligations under domestic and international law, many people are still being detained and imprisoned for exercising their civil and political rights and defending the rights of others. They continue to face this harassment, intimidation, persecution and imprisonment. We concede, in a regime like that, our dispute-settlement procedures. That should flag some concern for all.

Concerning the issue of labour rights, the TPP signatories have agreed to advance the pro-labour principles and specific legal reforms. According to the agreement, the TPP parties will agree to protect the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of force and compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. Moreover, the TPP parties will have to pass laws or regulations about minimum wages, work hours, and occupational health and safety. Further, the TPP signatories are supposed to ensure access to impartial and independent tribunals that will guarantee the labour laws.

These labour changes are probably designed in respect of countries trying to address the abysmal labour-rights records of Vietnam and Malaysia. I have an extract from *The New York Times* of 5 November 2015 that says:

Vietnam is still run by a repressive, one-party communist regime, and the "unions" that currently exist there are heavily managed by or affiliated with the government. So its agreement to allow independent unions—and to enact many more specific reforms laid out in a side deal with the US—

This is referring to the TPP side agreement with the US—

—certainly looks very significant.

Many of us who care about human rights are looking to the regulations underpinning the TPP as being a once-in-a-generation opportunity, particularly for the people of Vietnam.

We on our side will continue to scrutinise the Trans-Pacific Partnership to ensure it delivers economic benefits without undermining Australian public policies in areas of affordability, medicines, environment protections and balanced intellectual property laws. We will also maintain our position on the investor-state settlement provisions and ask that they be closely monitored.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (10:58): It is a great pleasure to rise on the TPP today and a particular pleasure as the chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. I want to open with an acknowledgement of the enormous

contribution to Australia's growth in international trade we have seen from Minister Andrew Robb as well as from the current Deputy Prime Minister and former Howard government trade minister Warren Truss. Both of them have, today, confirmed their plans to retire from parliament. Their contribution to trade is something we should celebrate, because it has been very significant, particularly in the last couple of years. It sets Australia up for many years of openness and prosperity that has been so fundamental not just to our history but will be to our future.

Australians have an innate understanding of the contribution of openness to our prosperity. We only have to look at our relatively short European history to understand how that openness has contributed to prosperity—since that first bale of wool. That first bale of wool left John Macarthur's shearing shed, went to the port and was delivered to England. That was on the back of our first genuine trade agreement. It was not in the form of our modern trade agreements, but there was a very clear understanding between us and England that our wool would go into their market freely, without any serious inhibition. That was the beginning of an extraordinary history of trade in this country.

We saw, as we progressed through the 19th century, a shift from exports in wool to exports that included gold and meat. Then, by the time we got to the 20th century, we saw an extraordinary opening up of trade in coal, particularly with Japan, in the 1950s and sixties. This was soon after the Second World War, but there was an openness and understanding from Australians of how important these markets and free trade were to our prosperity.

More recently—and I see that the member for O'Connor is sitting next to me, and, as a Western Australian, he will understand this well—there was the opening up of the iron ore trade, which is an extraordinary story in its own right. We worked with the Japanese to open up that iron ore market, which ultimately moved from Japan to China. It has been an absolute backbone of our economy in recent years, particularly the Western Australian economy. But it has also made an enormous contribution to Australia more generally.

As we move into the postmining boom, growth in trade is now broadening—from that very strong focus on resources to, in recent years, rapid growth in agricultural trade, higher value agricultural products, as well as our more staple commodities. We are seeing that trade growth extending very rapidly into services. We are seeing extraordinary growth in tourism and financial services—and we have no doubt that that will broaden more in years to come. This is instinctive for Australians. This is at our core. We absolutely understand that openness, trade, these fast-growing countries to our north are fundamental to our prosperity in the future, just as trade was fundamental to our prosperity in the past.

Open trade has its critics. Those critics are not new. We have seen some argue that the economic benefits are small. When we look at the TPP, we see modelling that some claim as justification for trying to shut our borders to trade. As someone who has been heavily involved in economic modelling over many years, let me say to those people: those models rarely represent the reality.

When the New Zealanders entered their free trade agreement with China, no-one could have foreseen the scale and depth of benefit that would be delivered by that free trade agreement. The reason is very simple: when countries trade more, they specialise more. The modelling never captures the full extent of this. This is Adam Smith's pin factory, as each country specialises in the part of the pin manufacturer that they are really good at. Our fundamental competitive advantage is leveraged—used—when we open up trade and do what we are best at.

In a modern world prosperity comes from being best in the world—and let me tell you: Australian are the best in the world at producing resources. We are the best agricultural producers in the world, and we are well on the way to being absolute leaders in tourism, education, financial services, health services. I have no doubt that opening up these trade agreements will lead to that specialisation and focus on excellence, which is what Australians have always done and will continue to do for many years to come. So the critics, who rely on some static and, I would even argue, lacklustre economic modelling, should look a little more broadly, get out into the real world and, particularly, look at some of those very successful trade agreements that we have seen in our region in recent years.

Before I entered politics I had the opportunity to co-author a report in 2012 into the extraordinary opportunities for commodity exports in fast-growing Asian markets. I saw how enormous that growth potential was. It is why the recently signed bilateral agreements with Japan, Korea and China have been of the highest priority for this government. Just a couple of months ago, I tabled in this place, as Chair of JSCOT, the committee's report into ChAFTA, the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. I said in tabling that report:

China is currently Australia's largest trading partner, with two-way trade worth \$160 billion ... One hundred and seven billion dollars of this ... is exports, and that number is going up fast. Our exporters stand to gain greatly from reduced export costs from this agreement, just as we expect businesses and households to pay less for our \$52 billion of imports. Together—

these trade agreements—

... will open up the major Asian markets to Australia's consumers and industry.

Turning to the TPP: this is an agreement of absolutely unprecedented scope. It will establish more seamless trade across 12 countries by setting commonly agreed rules and promoting transparency of law and regulations. It will provide greater certainty for businesses, reduce costs and red tape and facilitate participation in regional supply chains. It will also address contemporary trade challenges in ways that have not been addressed in Australian FTAs. It will stand as a model for future agreements.

The agreement will include state-of-the-art e-commerce provisions. For agriculture, it will eliminate tariffs on more than \$4.3 billion of Australia's dutiable exports of agricultural goods. A further \$2.1 billion of exports will receive preferential access through new quotas and tariff reductions. We will see new access for beef, dairy, sugar, rice, grains and wine. Of course, they are all important markets for my electorate of Hume.

I am also very excited about the opportunities for the Australian services sector. I have mentioned some of those services, but one in particular that we should be very focused on is financial services, as we see very rapid growth of Asian capital markets as they move from sending their capital into the US bond market. Instead of doing that, they will be investing it directly in their own capital markets, and they will need enormous amounts of support and expertise to develop those capital markets in years to come. I have no doubt Australia will play a significant role in exactly that, aided by the TPP.

The process from here will include an inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. This will be important in looking at these all-important issues: the investor-state-dispute mechanism, labour conditions and treatment of intellectual property. I am confident that those issues have been given due consideration in the formulation of this agreement, but it will be important for JSCOT to fully scrutinise those issues in its upcoming inquiry.

The day we stop preaching the benefits of openness is the day our economy starts to focus inwards and starts to go backwards. The 12 countries that negotiated the TPP make up almost 40 per cent of the world's GDP. This is a platform for Australia's future prosperity.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11:08): Let me say from the outset that I am not a critic of open trade; indeed, I support it. However, I also do not want to see Australian trade regulated in a way that actually constrains free trade as opposed to liberalising it. The TPP is a document of 16,000 pages. I have not read the 16,000 pages, and it is unlikely that I will. However, that is 16,000 pages of more rules, regulations and compliance that will be required for the parties that wish to trade between one another. What I will do is rely on the expertise of others who have experience in both interpreting international agreements and deciphering how agreements interact with other agreements that Australia is already a signatory to. I will also look with interest at any comments made by the parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties after that committee has reported to parliament on the treaty. I find it regrettable, however, that neither the opposition nor the parliament nor the treaties committee had access to the agreement until after it was signed.

I am not convinced, nor have I seen any rational explanation, as to why the TPP and other similar agreements are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny and parliamentary ratification before they are signed by the government of the day. In my view it is a serious flaw in our democracy that should be addressed. No law can be made without being approved by parliament and then assented to by the Governor-General here in Australia, yet the government of the day can currently sign agreements that bind Australia to international laws over which Australia has no control or power to change. Parliament's ability to reject enacting legislation is not sufficient. Furthermore, scrutiny by the parliament prior to signing most likely would result in a better agreement, just as it results in better laws. I also believe that such agreements should be subject to an independent national interest test being provided to the parliament—an analysis which we have some confidence in—prior to the signing of the agreement, but that is not the case at the moment.

What we know about the TPP is what has been reported about it by the minister through leaks and by comments made about it in other countries. The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a trade agreement between 12 Asia-Pacific countries, which account for approximately 40 per cent of global GDP. It covers Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA and Vietnam. Notably, it does not include China and Taiwan—therefore I do not know how compatible the agreement is going to be with the recently-signed China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, as one example. What I do know is that the agreement has drawn much criticism from within signatory countries and from within Australia. That criticism cannot simply be dismissed as misinformed fearmongering. As we have seen with other agreements, clauses within them can be used to challenge government decisions or alleged trade breaches, even if the purpose of those challenges is simply to delay a trade transaction.

The 600-plus Investor-State Dispute Settlement clause cases are very real. The statistics over the cases that have been settled to date speak for themselves. The winners of those cases are mostly the multinationals. Indeed, my understanding is that of the cases that have been settled, about one-third have been ruled in favour of governments and two-thirds have been either settled out of court or won by the multinationals concerned. Assurances given by the government that Australia has written in ISDS protections are yet to be tested in the courts. There are also questions about labour movement, pharmaceutical patents and copyright, which I have little doubt will also lead to more protracted and expensive court cases.

While talking about expense: the Philip Morris case, whereby Australia's plain-packaging tobacco laws were challenged, cost around \$50 million. Indeed, some will argue that, in time, the cost of those court cases could well outweigh any benefits that may have flowed back to Australia as a result of being a signatory to the TPP and other agreements.

Concern about trade agreements has come from many quarters: the Productivity Commission; the Chief Justice of the High Court, Justice Robert French; industry leaders; the trade union movement, academics; and numerous community groups have all raised concerns about these agreements. From my observation none of these groups have any personal vested interest in the matter, and therefore I see no reason why they would raise their concerns other than for genuine reasons about problems that they foresee with the agreements. The flip side of that is that most of the agreements seem to be driven by multinationals, and for them there is a lot of money at stake. It seems that they are the ones who are driving these agreements, so I ask the question of those who criticise any critics of these agreements: what is in it for the critics? What is in it for those people who raise the concerns? I think very little, other than the best interests that they have for the broader community.

The TPP has also been the subject of considerable political division in other signatory countries, including in the USA, New Zealand, Vietnam, Japan and, I believe, in Malaysia; so every other country has also had its own internal concerns about it. Indeed, with respect to the USA, I understand that it has now become a presidential election issue.

A more serious concern is a recent report by the World Bank that the TPP would grow Australian GDP by only 0.7 per cent by the year 2030 and that the main winners would be the developing countries. Those figures are obviously based on extrapolation. Nevertheless, they point to a very real concern in the report put together by the World Bank with respect to the TPP.

Advocates of these agreements point to an increase in trade between Australia and its trade partners in recent years—as the member for Hume did when he spoke only a few moments ago. What they fail to say is that most of the increase in trade took place before the signing of any agreements; it was occurring without agreements being signed. They also fail to acknowledge the effect that the fall in the value of the Australian dollar has had and is having on trade. Indeed, the lower Australian dollar would significantly overshadow the promised reductions in tariffs that are tied to these agreements.

Claims about the benefits of trade agreements are not supported by the monthly trade figures either. Australia has now recorded 21 consecutive monthly trade deficits, with the value of exports during December 2015 falling by \$3.5 billion, below the cost of imports, according to ABS figures. Australia's export earnings slumped by five per cent during December, led by a 9.3 per cent decline in the value of rural goods exported. I repeat that: the value of rural goods also dropped. Australia's cumulative trade deficit for 2015 has now blown out to \$32.7 billion. That is more than double the 2014 deficit. That happened after we signed several trade agreements, but members on the government benches keep telling us just how good those agreements have been for the country. The figures simply do not stack up—and these are not my figures; these are figures from the ABS. Again, they speak for themselves.

Multinationals appear to be the winners from the TPP. Time will tell just who will benefit from it. Anyone who tries to predict what might or might not happen is purely speculating at this point in time. But there is good reason to have concerns about this agreement based on the agreements we have already signed and the actions that have arisen from those agreements.

The last point I would make about trade more broadly is this, to go to the very comment I opened with: I support free trade. But I see these agreements as creating more regulations and more barriers for the people that want to trade with each other across the world. The multinationals of the world know very well how to manage their affairs at the global level; they have proven that time and again. It seems to me that the demand for exports and imports will be driven by community demand and by the price of the goods that are being offered—more so than by any free trade agreement.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Closing the Gap

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House take note of the document.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (11:18): It is a privilege to speak on the *Closing the gap* report that was tabled yesterday in the parliament by the Prime Minister and addressed by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of this part of Australia, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. I also acknowledge traditional owners of other Aboriginal lands right across this country, and their elders past and present. Perhaps just contemplate for a moment the struggles they have endured since white settlement, or what many would term the invasion of this country by whitefellas.

The closing the gap statement provides us all with an opportunity to reflect on these matters, and as someone who has been here for quite some time and seen governments come and go and policies change I think I am in a pretty good position, particularly given the nature of my electorate, to make some reasonable observations about our performance on closing the gap.

I have to say that whilst the Close The Gap targets themselves provide some disappointment it is also true to say that there are many good things happening. We need to applaud those good things but we need to learn from our own mistakes. When I talk about mistakes I am not talking about Aboriginal people making the wrong decisions or poor choices. I am talking about this parliament making the wrong decisions and poor choices. We have made a number of them over the years but we have an opportunity to do something different. I would say that, looking forward, we need to go back to putting at the centre of our discussions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves; understand that they need to be the ones we are talking to, not talking about, as they have demanded; and acknowledge, put in place, that we support the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, in a way to make it the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around this country. Sadly, that is not yet the case.

Yesterday during their contributions, both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke about Closing the Gap targets in education and the importance of addressing anomalies in the education system. The Prime Minister in particular talked at one point about acknowledging as policy priorities:

... the transformative power of education, the fulfilment that comes from employment, the right of all people to be safe and free from family and domestic violence, especially women and children. While delivering on these priorities we must be innovative in creating effective solutions, in partnership with the community, to address those challenges.

I could not agree more. I would say to the Prime Minister that if he were to take as his Bible, or at least as the framework for any decision making, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, he would see that it provides a framework for addressing the issues he has described. I was responsible for it as the minister at the time, and I acknowledge the current government for picking up the plan. It has some really fundamental elements to it. I will read the vision statement, if I may. It is very short. It says:

The Australian health system is free of racism and inequality and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to health services that are effective, high quality, appropriate and affordable. Together with strategies to address social inequalities and determinants of health, this provides the necessary platform to realise health equality by 2031.

These other areas—the social determinants—are of course health, education and employment, the justice targets the Leader of the Opposition has spoken about.

I want to talk particularly about the initiative from the Leader of the Opposition to support the Stars program for girls in schools, which was re-announced yesterday. Many in this place are aware of the work which is being done by the Clontarf Foundation around Australia, the very important work which they have done in schools with young boys and the meaningful outcomes they have achieved in getting kids to stay at school. But we should not be deluded into believing that if we help the boys we fix the problem, because we don't. We will only fix the problem if we help the young women of the community, because young women are going to be the next generation of mothers, those responsible for nurturing young children into a healthy life.

It is sad, but the current government, despite all the goodwill that it expresses, has failed to support the Stars program, which now operates in seven schools in the Northern Territory. Why is that important? It is important because this program was tendered by the Northern Territory government, to its credit. The Stars Foundation won the tender and now provides services in seven schools in the Northern Territory where there are Clontarf programs running. The dichotomy is that the Clontarf program is funded equally by the Northern Territory government, private enterprise and philanthropy, and the Commonwealth. Roughly one-third, one-third, one-third is the formula that is currently used. In this particular case, as a matter of genuine gender equity, this government has failed to provide one dollar to the Stars program. Why is that? Despite what the Prime Minister said in his speech

yesterday, why is it that the government feels that it can be discriminatory in the way in which it funds school programs like Stars and Clontarf?

Put them together.

The Stars Foundation runs a very, very good program, currently with 420 young women in the Northern Territory—20 staff, seven schools. It is a very important program and a program which has very positive outcomes for the Northern Territory community and will continue to do so when it is rolled out in other jurisdictions. Queensland particularly is keen to have it. But they need buy-in from the Commonwealth government, the way the government has bought in historically to the Clontarf program. That means that this government and Minister Scullion in particular need to examine the decisions he has made and to ensure that this program is funded, because it must be sustainable. To be sustainable, it needs the support of the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments, as well as the philanthropic and private sectors.

It is a very popular program. I saw a figure the other day. The number of students currently participating is significantly higher than the Northern Territory government first planned for. That is because of its support within the school community. It provides an opportunity for young women to get a better and sounder education, to stay at school and be supported by really strong mentors.

The other thing I want to talk about very briefly is the announcements which we made in the health space around trachoma and eye health funding. This morning I had a discussion with a very eminent ophthalmologist who was able to inform me about why this money which was announced by the Leader of the Opposition is so important. He pointed me to the Katherine region in the Northern Territory. He says it is the worst part of Australia for chronic eye disease and he says that we are going backwards at a great rate of knots. For half a million dollars a year, he believes they could address the problem.

There are currently 2,132 people in Katherine and the Katherine region on waiting lists for eye health. That is for cataract surgery, diabetes and other diseases which cause blindness. It is very, very important that we understand the import of this to these communities, to the individuals involved, and appreciate that the announcements made by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday are targeted interventions to overcome this problem. It is just not conceivable that we should have 33 people determined to be category 1, who need eye care or eye surgery within 30 days, yet there is no capacity for them to be provided this service.

We have a responsibility in this place. We can see the importance of closing the gap. We understand the importance of targets, but collectively we have to come together and create an opportunity to get the right outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We have the capacity and the resources to do it, but we cannot do it without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being at the centre of all decision making, being involved in every decision we make—as partners, not as subjects of the decisions. We do not want to do things to people; we want to do things with them.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Assistant Minister for Defence) (11:28): It is with great pleasure that I join the debate in relation to the 2016 Closing the Gap report. In doing so, I would like to acknowledge the largely bipartisan manner in which members have made contributions to the issue of closing the gap, not only this year but in previous years. I would like to commend the Prime Minister and also the Leader of the Opposition on their contributions to the House in that regard.

The Australian government—like the opposition, I am sure—is committed to closing the gap. This Closing the Gap report for 2016 shows that some progress has been made on targets, but progress has been mixed. There have been some significant gains in recent decades in some regards but other areas where there is still a lot more work to be done.

This year the report showcases examples of significant success for the Australian government and the Indigenous community in relation to health, education, employment and economic development for people right across the nation. It demonstrates, as the Prime Minister indicated yesterday, that partnerships between government, business, individuals and communities right across Australia are essential to yielding positive results for Indigenous people. For its part, the Australian government will continue to focus on the key areas of health, education, employment, economic development and community safety and will seek to work very closely with our state and territory governments, our local governments and our broader communities on achieving progress in relation to closing the gap.

I would like to go through some of the key targets and report on some of the progress in relation to the Closing the Gap initiatives. The target of halving the gap in Indigenous child mortality by 2018 is on track, which is positive news. The Indigenous infant mortality rate has more than halved over the past 16 years. The actions we are going to see from the government into the future will assist in continuing to achieve that target. We know the best start in life comes from effective prenatal and postnatal care, parent and family programs and support for

vulnerable children. The government has invested \$94 million over three years from 2015-16 on the Better Start to Life approach, which increases access to child and maternal health services.

Deputy Speaker Irons, as you would know coming from the great state of Western Australia, providing for a healthy start in life is the very first step on the journey to a good education for our young Indigenous people and young Indigenous families. Without a health start in life young people, young Indigenous people in particular, will turn up to our early child care, our early child education or our primary schools unprepared for the education journey. From my own perspective, my wife works as a teachers aid at a primary school in Lakes Entrance where we have many young Indigenous children come to our school. She is constantly working with those children to ensure they are in a position to take full advantage of the education experience which is available to them. Early health education—making sure that children are avoiding ear infections and are treated when required and that any eyesight issues are treated as required—ensures that these young children are in a position to learn when they reach our school classrooms.

The other target I want to mention briefly is the target of 95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds being enrolled in early childhood education by 2025. Since 2008 more than \$2.8 billion has been made available to state and territory governments to increase participation in early childhood education programs. Over the next four years the government will invest around \$40 billion on childcare support through the Jobs for Families Child Care Package. Obviously, our Indigenous children will share in the benefits of that program.

The closing the gap school attendance target set for 2018 is not on track. That is alarming and should alarm all members of this place. Progress will need to be made to accelerate our efforts in this regard for the target to be met. In my home town the local secondary college has been very creative and innovative in the way it has endeavoured to make sure its secondary school curriculum is relevant and attractive to young Indigenous students. One of the challenges we face is that, for many of our young Indigenous children in the Gippsland region, their own parents' experience of education has not been an enjoyable one. So these young Indigenous children may not necessarily value education themselves, as their parents are not necessarily passing down to their own children any great joy for the education system, and that is a challenge for us. We need to reinvigorate enthusiasm amongst our young Indigenous students—particularly in those early years of secondary college—and make sure that they understand there is a pathway for them through education into further training and into the workforce in the future. While there is a sizable gap remaining in school attendance, there is an enormous challenge for the state and federal governments to continue to work in partnership to reduce that gap.

The target of halving the gap in year 12 attainment by 2020 is actually on track, which is positive news. Over the long term there have been improvements in apparent retention rates to year 12 for Indigenous students, up from 32 per cent in the late 1990s to 60 per cent in 2014, and that is important. We know in the 21st century that young people need to do well at school. They need to get as far as they can with their education, whether it is through the VCAL or the VCE programs in the Victorian education system. As I said earlier, setting them on their education journey begins with getting them ready for preschool and the early years of primary school; supporting not only the young individuals themselves but also their families; and giving them a pathway or a vision of what the future may hold for them—giving them hope that, at the end of this education journey, there is the opportunity for economic independence, and that economic independence comes with the prospect of a job at the end of their education or training. When we talk about employment, the simple fact is that we are not getting enough Indigenous young people into either casual, part-time or full-time employment. The target is not on track.

I would like to talk briefly about the role the Australian Defence Force is playing in helping young Indigenous people achieve employment within the ADF. Indigenous people have a long and proud history of contributing to the defence of Australia. Although often an ignored part of our culture in the past, there are remedies at play at the moment to make sure that the involvement of Indigenous members in the Australian Defence Force is well recognised in all of the events of the Centenary of Anzac and the centenary of World War I. It is such an important part of those commemoratives events.

The Australian Defence Force has made some headway in regard to ADF Indigenous employment. Our numbers are currently 1.5 per cent—up from 1.3 per cent in August 2013. Within the Australian Public Service, Indigenous employment is moving well. It is up from 0.8 per cent in August 2013 to 1.4 per cent.

Defence is working towards an Indigenous workforce employment target of 2.7 per cent, which is higher than that recommended by the Australian Public Service Commission of 2.5 per cent. I have had meetings with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary Alan Tudge, who are both very keen to see how the Australian Defence Force can play a significant role in helping with Indigenous employment issues.

One of the challenges is making sure that young Indigenous people are ready when they turn up to apply to join the Defence Force. I would like to acknowledge the work done by the ADF with its pre-employment courses in

making sure Indigenous Australians have a capacity to meet the entry standards of the ADF. The Australian Defence Force cannot lower their standards if someone has a lower education than necessary, but they can work with the young Indigenous person to increase their capacity to meet the ADF standards. These courses focus on some of the key fundamentals, as you would expect, like language, literacy and numeracy skills, fitness, life skills, military skills and both Indigenous and military culture.

There is a very positive story to be told by the Australian Defence Force, and I intend to tell it more often in the future—about the way the ADF is working with Indigenous communities to try and make sure that young Indigenous people have the opportunity to take that first step within the ADF, whether it is in the Army, Navy or Air Force, but then also progress through the ranks and have that opportunity to reach higher ranks and excel in their chosen field.

I would like to congratulate the department's staff and the ADF personnel who are working in this regard and their efforts to support Defence's targets in relation to Indigenous employment with genuine practical activity to achieve the steady growth that is required. There are a number of different programs that have been deployed through the Australian Defence Force, and they will continue to be deployed in the years ahead. I congratulate everyone involved in those programs.

Finally, in my community of Gippsland we are working well in a range of fields to try and close the gap in health, education and employment—and we continue to make progress. But, as I have said before, we in this place need to commit ourselves to always doing better in the future. We need to do better as a parliament, as a nation and as local communities.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (11:38): I represent the land of the Bidjigal and Gadigal people in the south-east of Sydney. I recognise and respect that the land and water around Botany Bay and the beautiful coastline of Sydney's south-east has been their home for tens of thousands of years. The Aboriginal people of our community have had, and continue to have, an enormous influence on our area and community. Their love of, and connection to, that land and sea and the fact that they have cared for and nurtured that environment for tens of thousands of years is really important in our community.

Many of the placenames in our community—beaches like Coogee—derive their name from Aboriginal language. Coogee derives from 'koojah', which in Bidjigal means 'the place of seaweed drying'—a reference to the seaweed that regularly washes up on Coogee Beach even to this day. Maroubra, the famous surfing beach in our area, derives its name from 'Moroberra', the name of an elder who lived in the sand hills around that beach at the time of European colonisation. Botany Bay is also known as Kamay in the area and the surrounding area is known in Bidjigal as Curiwal. This language still is present in the placenames and areas that many in our community love so much.

The Aboriginal people of the community I represent, the Bidjigal and Gadigal people, around Botany Bay were the first Aborigines in Australia to have contact with European settlers—the first to see Captain Cook's vessel the *Endeavour* sail into Botany Bay; the first to see Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet sail into Botany Bay. I think it is fair to say that, ever since that time, Aboriginal people in our community and no doubt throughout the rest of Australia have had a diminution in their happiness, and have felt a disadvantage that has continued to this day. That disadvantage, that reduction in happiness, manifests itself in the quality of life statistics when we compare Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The statistics are quite alarming. When it comes to life expectancy, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is 10 years. It is a huge chasm that, unfortunately, is not getting any better. When it comes to rates of completion of high school there is still a big gap between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians. The most shocking of all the statistics, I believe, is in rates of incarceration of Aboriginal men. If you are an Aboriginal man in Australia you are 15 times more likely to go to jail than a non-Aboriginal Australian. In fact, a young Aboriginal man is much more likely to go to jail than to go to university—a shocking statistic in itself that completely explains the disadvantage that Aboriginal people face in Australia.

Each year during NADOC Week I visit Long Bay jail in our community. I can tell you that Aboriginal young men are way over represented in Long Bay jail and every other jail throughout Australia. I see and talk to these Aboriginal men who have been incarcerated and you see this lack of hope in their eyes, this lack of any hope in their lives into the future. It is as if two centuries of discrimination and disadvantage is being carried around on each and every one of their shoulders and it manifests itself in this lack of hope.

This view that they do not fit within our society, despite the fact that this group of people and their ancestors have been here longer than any Europeans, and their ancestors have cared for and nurtured this place for tens of thousands of years and have established a culture and a history that is longer than any other anywhere in the

world—is something that we have to change. We have to tackle the shocking rates of incarceration of Aboriginal men in Australia.

I was really proud of Bill Shorten, as the Leader of the Labor Party, for putting this issue on the agenda in his response to the *Closing the gap* report in the parliament yesterday, for committing to working to campaign and to develop policies to deal with the shocking rates of incarceration and, most importantly, for pointing out that cuts in funding, particularly to Aboriginal legal services do have a dramatic effect on the rates of incarceration of Aboriginal young men in Australia. So full credit to the Leader of the Labor Party, Bill Shorten, for putting this issue on the agenda and saying that we do need to have a target for reducing rates of incarceration of young Aboriginal men as part of the Closing the Gap targets.

The issue is: how do we reduce these gaps in incarceration, in life expectancy, in rates of education, in rates of preventable disease? In my view, it begins with respect: respect for the Aboriginal people and their history and heritage here in Australia; respect for their connection with the land; respect for their culture and the Dreamtime; and respect for our fellow Australians, respect for them as our fellow Australians. And then using that respect, harnessing that respect, to overcome prejudice and to break down some of the barriers of divisions that still do exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Using that respect to work with Aboriginal people to overcome some of the disadvantages they face, to close the gap that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in this country.

It can be done. It has been proven and shown that it can be done. In a number of the Closing the Gap target areas we are making some progress. In terms of halving the gap in child mortality by 2018, we are on track: Indigenous child mortality rates have fallen by six per cent since 2008, and the gap has narrowed by 34 per cent since 1998. In terms of the target to halve the gap for Aboriginal Australians aged 20 to 24 in year 12 attainment or equivalent by 2020, we are on track: the rates of year 12 attainment for Indigenous students is up from 32 per cent in the 1990s to 60 per cent in 2014. We are making progress in those two areas.

Unfortunately, in other areas we are not on track. In terms of closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids in school attendance, we are not on track. We are not on track when it comes to halving the gap of employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018. We are not on track when it comes to closing the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation. And we have had mixed progress in halving the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy achievement by 2018. So there is clearly more work to be done, and we do need to add that issue of incarceration to those Closing the Gap targets, because the rates of incarceration of young Indigenous men are simply too horrifying for us as a country to ignore any more.

In conclusion, I pay my respects to the Bidjigal and Gadigal people of our area. I respect you for the contribution you have made, for the nurturing you have given to the land for tens of thousands of years. If we are going to make progress on closing the gap, we need to ensure that we respect the Aboriginal people of Australia and their contribution to our nation, and that we harness that respect to break down prejudice, break down disadvantage and get on with genuinely closing the gap here in Australia.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (11:48): Let me start off by, firstly, congratulating the Prime Minister on his remarks yesterday in his Closing the Gap statement. Secondly, I thank opposition leader, Bill Shorten, for his words as well. At this time it is also important to recognise the previous Prime Minister's contribution. Tony Abbott has had a long commitment to advancing the causes of Indigenous Australia.

The Grey electorate covers all the remote Indigenous populations in South Australia, places like the APY Lands, the Ceduna and Flinders communities. There are high populations of Aboriginals in places like Port Augusta, Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Ceduna and even near Maitland on Yorke Peninsula. We have, in total, an Indigenous population of about eight per cent. No doubt, while there are great success stories we celebrate very loudly, on average Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders suffer an inherent disadvantage. Since the sixties, governments—of all political persuasions, it must be said—have tried but failed pretty dismally in most cases. But they have tried to make a difference.

Sometimes I get complaints from various constituents about the assistance given to Indigenous peoples. It might be complaints about the better consideration they get around schooling or around health access or transport—all kinds of issues. Some are completely untrue, it must be said, and some are based on fact. I say to these people, 'For all these advantages that you see Aboriginal people getting, for all these advantages you say they have over the wider population, would you like your children to be black just so they could access those advantages?' I have never had one respond in the positive. The point I am trying to make here is that, until we get to that point, there remains a disadvantage in Australia. It is an underlying fact that unless you would choose to be

Aboriginal for the opportunities it would give your family then there is no advantage at all, despite what Commonwealth governments and other governments might be doing to assist Indigenous peoples.

There is no doubt there is a huge amount of money spent on Indigenous Australia. I do not begrudge a cent of it, but I do say I am quite despondent about the results we get in many cases and what I see as wastage of money. Perhaps they are bad programs. It just seems that they are not giving us the result we need, but we need to continue to make the effort.

Take the case of the APY Lands, for instance. There are more than 100 organisations up there at any given time—some from not-for-profit enterprises; some from governments at two levels, state and federal—most not knowing what the others are doing. Many compete for customers but are convinced of their program's worth. When I get around this country and speak to the people who are working on the programs, most are convinced of the real difference they are making. If I sit in a reasonable conversation with them, I too am convinced. I think: 'That's a good idea. That really seems to be working. That seems to be making a great difference.' But I challenge them. I say: 'You tell me you're making a great difference. The people I met with half an hour ago tell me they're making a great difference. The people I'm going to meet with tomorrow are making a great difference. How come there is not a great difference? How come we are not making advancement? How come things are not so much better than they are?' Most of them have no answers, and perhaps that is how challenging it has been for all of us and for governments.

It is clear from reading the Closing the Gap statement that we are not getting enough children enrolled in preschool activities, and that failure is actually worse in our bigger urban centres. At 67 per cent, this is far short of the desired target of 95 per cent, even though the report does not actually specify what the Australian average is for all populations. But enrolment is one thing; attendance is another, particularly when we get to the school-age years. It is of particular concern to me that this is despite considerable effort, particularly by this government, with the school attendance program.

I have seen it in action, and it can work very, very well. I have seen it in communities at Mimili and Indulkana, where the school attendance program seems to be hitting all the right buttons, but I have also seen places where it is not making a difference at all. We really need to identify why that is, because the program can work, but in some places it is not working. I know that in some cases the school community, led always by the principal, is much more welcoming and much more engaged in working with the school attendance program than others I have seen. And you can be sure that, if there is a divide between the school leadership and the school attendance program, it is not going to work.

That is something that we need to have out with the state governments and their state departments of education. There just cannot be that kind of resistance to what is essentially a good program, because we have seen it work so well where we get that cooperation. We can see from the figures that while urban areas have a way to go, with about a 10-point deficit on school attendance against the non-Indigenous population, it is the remote and very remote regions where the results not only drag down the nationwide average but also present human tragedy for the individuals. A 67 per cent school attendance rate is just nowhere near good enough. In fact, in very remote Australia only 20 per cent of students attend 90 per cent of the time. Despite all this, there is progress in the area of literacy and numeracy skills, and that is encouraging. But, once again, the results away from urban centres are appalling.

Interesting to me is the impact that direct instruction methods are having on Cape York communities. I had the privilege to visit Aurukun and Hopevale in 2012. Coming face-to-face with direct instruction is a bit of a challenge, I must say. It feels like you have wound the clock back 80 years. But I could see the difference, not only in the demand the teachers made of the students for full attention but in the restoration of the type of competition in the classroom where promotion is based on achievement and not on age.

I was given to reflect on this to my wife after my last visit to the APY Lands a few months ago, as we were travelling south and decoding or deciphering what it was we had learnt on that particular trip. When I was a student, we referred to year 5 as grade 5. Somewhere through that period—whether it was the 1970s or 1980s, I do not know—it became year 5. I said to my wife, 'There is an absolute difference in the two descriptors.' One says the student has achieved a level of education; the other one says they have been at school for five years. They are not the same.

Unfortunately, that has gone right through our education system. Now, in broader education platforms, students are promoted based on age. 'You can't deny the fact I've been at school for four years, so I'm in year 4,' and then, 'I've been at school for five years—I'm in year 5.' So they travel with their peer group, if you like. In the direct instruction schools, that is not happening anymore. They must achieve the level.

The feedback we had from the teachers at the time was that when the students identified the fact that they were the biggest kid in the classroom, and their ability to learn was higher than those of the younger students, then they kicked into gear because they wanted to catch up with their peer group. I can reflect on my youth and think of those really big kids who were in our classroom and it was not perfect. But, on the other hand, we see the net results of what we have done since and I think perhaps it is more imperfect. So that was one of the things that really impressed me about direct instruction.

I have a number of other issues I would love to talk about, but I realise we are coming very close to the end of my time. The employment figures are very disappointing but explicitly demonstrate the value of education. It is reported that employment outcomes for highly educated individuals are virtually equal to the national average. If a student reaches the age of 15 and their education level is at the national average, they will have the same kinds of educational outcomes as the broader community. We need to keep concentrating on these factors.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (11:58): I would like to begin by acknowledging the First Australians as the traditional custodians of this land and paying my respect to their elders, past and present. As Bill Shorten so eloquently said yesterday, this is and always will be Aboriginal land. I would also like to particularly acknowledge the Woiworung, the Wathaurong and the Boonwurrung people, the traditional owners of the land that encompasses our community in Lalor. Our community has a rich Indigenous history. The iconic Werribee River was once a meeting place for Indigenous elders and a border between the estates of Aboriginal clans. The name Werribee is derived from the word 'wirribi', which means 'backbone' and refers to the Werribee River winding its way through the landscape.

Change is often painfully incremental; however, the progress we have made has been diminished by this government's cuts and its lack of genuine engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities when it comes to closing the gap. Just two of the seven targets are on track to be met.

I would like to spend a moment to talk about the importance of closing the gap and having those aspirational targets—having them front of mind as a parliament and as a nation, and then reflecting on where we are in terms of those targets. It is only through setting aspirational targets and monitoring our performance that we will increase that slow incremental pace.

There have been long-term gains made, but the report shows that progress in closing the gap in a number of key areas, including employment, life expectancy, reading and numeracy, has stagnated. There is just one target that Australians can be confident is on track to be met, with progress being made in reducing infant mortality rates by more than 33 per cent. We should pause and acknowledge this. Part of setting targets is establishing a culture where we use and collect the information and reflect. Most importantly, in a process where we are setting targets, it provides us moments to celebrate—to mark improvement. It is important that we mark that most impressive improvement in infant mortality rates. They have been reduced by 33 per cent.

But more needs to be done. The report is a clear warning to this government that continuing on a path of massive cuts and lack of genuine engagement and partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will put at risk the gains we have made in closing the gap. The government must reverse some of its shameful cuts.

As a former teacher I know that education is critical to improving the lives of all Australians. We must change the narrative in schools surrounding our Indigenous students. Labor's 'Your Child. Our Future' will do more to close the gap than any policy or decision in two generations, if it is implemented in full. We must ensure that every child is given the best education opportunities to succeed in later life, and that is why Labor is committed to fairer, needs-based funding for schools, with extra support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Aboriginal students in education is a really important area. Targets around numeracy, literacy and school retention are critical. What many do not understand—and the research bears this out—is that parents' experience of school is the key driver in their attitude to the schooling of their children. The levels they attained at school and their experiences at school colour their interactions with school.

In Victoria we implemented what was called the Wannik strategy, and it had enormous success. This strategy required that every Aboriginal child in a Victorian school had an individual learning plan—not as a stick to hit a family with, but as an engagement tool to get parents through the doors of our schools for a positive conversation about what their child's levels were and what the schools were going to do in partnership with parents to move that forward. It changed the way many parents perceived school. It set schools up as welcoming places focused on the education of every child, including Aboriginal children. It focused the conversations around the child's capacities and needs.

It was a circuit breaker. If your school experience had always been that your parents were called to the school when you were in trouble, and the only conversations that were had with you and your parents were when you

were in strife, then every time the phone rang and it was the school on the other end you immediately assumed that there was a problem. This strategy spun that on its head and had families consciously, actively engaged with the school across the year—setting targets for their child's learning, setting targets for attendance. It formed partnerships and it changed lives. I want that on the record in any conversation we have about education and meeting the literacy and numeracy targets.

Another thing that I have seen done very successfully in schools has been introducing cultural programs that make it more welcoming to claim Aboriginal and Torres Strait heritage. I have seen this on the ground and the improvement in those children's self-esteem and their connection with their heritage. It has worked to assist the school in appearing as a welcoming place for them and their families.

There is another thing that I think setting targets does: it shines a light on some of the success stories. When I think about school retention, I can think about Victoria. I have young teacher who has worked in my electorate who is now working in remote Australia—a girl with Indigenous heritage who is now working in a remote school. She comes home back to Lalor for holidays and shares stories with us. The best story I have heard her share is one where she said that the last time she returned to Alice Springs after being home in Melbourne for a break, she found her entire class of students sitting outside her front fence the day before school started, waiting to say hello. The retention in her classroom is high. The attendance is high. She has engaged those students and they are enjoying their learning. So I think it is important that we stop and mark those breakthroughs.

In November last year I attended the address of Bill Shorten, the Leader of the Opposition, to the University of Melbourne detailing Labor's plans to close the justice gap in the Indigenous community. Nowhere is the story of unfairness more conspicuous than in the justice gap between Indigenous Australians and the rest of us. The appalling rate of incarceration among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people demands that we create justice targets. A Shorten Labor government will set justice targets to help close the gap on incarceration rates in Australia. We will work closely with state and local governments and through law enforcement agencies, corrections and community services to establish these targets and work to close the gap. We will work with community leaders, elders and Aboriginal representative organisations.

Through COAG will work with the states to create a national coordinating body for collecting data and measuring progress. Importantly, we will learn from those communities who are already doing this work. Where we find success we should try and grow that success, and that is what a Labor government is committed to. There would be transparency and accountability around those targets and around both monitoring of our progress and also recording and learning from those that have had positive outcomes.

We are a long way down this road. It was in 1992 when Prime Minister Keating made the Redfern speech. There have been many moves towards symbolic recognition. Closing the gap is a very important part of that, because it is not symbolic. It is about practical outcomes on the ground. It is about holding the parliament of Australia to account for how we are progressing against those targets. We talk in the macro in Canberra, but on the ground, with the right attention, we will change individual lives.

Ms PRICE (Durack) (12:09): I am very pleased to speak on the 2016 Closing the Gap report and pay my respects to all Indigenous Australians, past and present. I firstly would like to commend the contributions of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition yesterday regarding this report. I take this opportunity to place on record that while I applaud the inroads that we made in the last 12 months—and there have been some—of course more still needs to be done.

Pleasingly, the Prime Minister said yesterday that this government will honour the commitment of not delivering to Indigenous Australians but, rather, working with Indigenous Australians and their communities across Australia. My electorate of Durack has the third highest number of Indigenous Australians per electorate in the country, with at least 28,870 Indigenous Australians calling Durack home, making up over 16 per cent of my electorate, according to the 2011 census. Health, education, employment and economic development are often the four most significant areas for any individual, and I am pleased to say that the report outlines improved outcomes in those areas in the last 12 months. This illustrates that partnerships created and sustained by the Turnbull government with businesses and individuals are starting to pay dividends, but progress is too slow. Success in these areas also illustrates effective engagement with Indigenous Australians, but we all know that we can do better.

One of the targets I am most pleased about is that we are on track to halve the gap in Indigenous child mortality by 2018. This year's report has found that Indigenous infant mortality has more than halved in the last 16 years. This is positive news, but, as I said at the outset, more still needs to be done. The fact that Indigenous child mortality has more than halved in the last 16 years is something that we and previous governments, together with Aboriginal leaders, should be proud of.

Today more Indigenous children are immunised by the age of five than non-Indigenous children, with 92.8 per cent of Indigenous children being immunised, some 1.1 per cent higher than the figure for non-Indigenous children. We know the best start in life comes from quality prenatal and postnatal care, parent and family programs and support for vulnerable children. I am pleased to say that this government has invested some \$94 million over three years from 2015-16 in the Better Start to Life approach, which increases access to child and maternal health activities. This funding is particularly important in the rural and remote electorate of Durack, which boasts over 300 towns and communities, where availability of these services has improved.

This year's report also found that halving the gap in year 12 attainment by 2020 is on track. As members of both sides of this chamber will know, I am a fierce advocate for improved education, but particularly in the bush. As Nelson Mandela famously said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.' Retention rates for Indigenous students to year 12 are at 60 per cent, up from 32 per cent in the late 1990s, so it is an improvement, but we must work harder to ensure that all Aboriginal youth complete their education—it is critical. The Indigenous Advancement Strategy Children and Schooling Program is supporting a number of projects, including mentoring activities, intensive school based activities, scholarships and mobility projects.

We are not on track to halve the gap in employment by 2018. There has been a long-term improvement in this area, with Indigenous employment up by a paltry 10 per cent from 1994 to 2012-13. I think this highlights once again how critical education is for young Indigenous people. However, there is some good news beneath the surface that is not reflected in the *Closing the Gap* report, and I am pleased to say that almost 50 jobs a day are being created for Indigenous people through our employment programs. Additionally, this government has committed real action in this area, having awarded contracts to Indigenous businesses worth around \$40 million so far this financial year alone—some six times the value of only a couple of years ago.

I am particularly pleased to see the life expectancy gap close more than any other target. I believe the government's allocation of \$3.3 billion to the Indigenous Australians' Health Program for the next four years will contribute to improving the life expectancy gap, as will the implementation of the *National Aboriginal And Torres Strait Health Plan 2013-2023*, which is underpinned by collaboration across governments, health sectors and Indigenous Australians. Good eyesight, good hearing, improving diabetes: these are just some of the health issues we must focus on.

I am glad to say that locally in Durack I have some fantastic programs and initiatives which are playing their role in closing the gap. Aiming to support, educate and empower young people with the life skills and tools to ensure their future is in their hands, the organisation called SHINE plays a vital role in retaining students—non-Indigenous girls as well—at secondary school in my largest city, Geraldton. SHINE runs its program in an innovative hairdressing salon environment. SHINE was established at John Willcock College in Geraldton in 2010, and over 200 students have been through the program, led by the very enthusiastic, excitable, dedicated, inspirational founder, Mandy Jolley. The program retains and engages students who might not otherwise have continued their schooling education. I just want to make the point that this is a program for young girls, and this is why it is so innovative. Of course, we have heard about other wonderful programs around Australia, but it is certainly something I am focused on in the seat of Durack. This is a fabulous initiative which ensures more Indigenous young girls continue through high school and provides them with practical pathways to continue their education. Very pleasingly, with Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding from the federal government, SHINE has been able to expand its program to Geraldton Senior College for the oldest female students. I managed to get a sneak preview yesterday of what the new salon environment looks like, and it is very impressive.

Also aiding to support improved health for Indigenous people is the work by mental health worker Glen Fleeton. Mr Fleeton has done a sterling job looking after the rural towns in the Mid West through his very effective programs—I might say with minimal financial assistance. This includes organising sport in rural towns like Mount Magnet, Yalgoo, Mingenew, Morawa and Perenjori. He also tailors programs for farmers, getting them to take their mind off their troubles for the day by playing sport amongst other town locals. These are just a few activities that Mr Fleeton runs which go a long way to bridging the gap for Indigenous Australians but, more importantly, bringing Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together. Well done, Glen Fleeton. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you can see, people in Durack are highly innovative and using their creative and bright minds to create headway in my electorate of Durack.

I would now like to conclude my comments here today, and I just wanted to finish off where I started, and that is that there has been some success in closing the gap; however, more needs to be done, and I think there would not be one member in parliament who would not agree with that statement. But only the Turnbull government can truly deliver a better way forward for Indigenous Australians. But I must say that only by working with Indigenous Australians will we actually achieve closing the gap.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (12:17): Thank you. I rise to speak on the *Closing the gap* report and in so doing acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and the continent we share, and thank the elders past, present and future for their continuing stewardship. The place that I call home always was, is now and always will be Aboriginal land, and I acknowledge the keepers of the world's oldest cultures and traditions generally, but I specifically wanted to mention two of my friends that I caught up with out in St George in January: Peter Brown and Wayne Long. I had not caught up with Wayne Long for a while, about 10 years. He took me on a car trip that I think took about 10 years off my life, but I do say a special hello to Wayne and Peter.

Obviously, the *Closing the gap* report is a very important event for this parliament, as is the work done by many other committees in trying to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians. I just wanted to mention two of the reports I have been involved with on committees. One report was by the Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee, which I chaired, looking into foetal alcohol spectrum disorder—the report called *FASD: the hidden harm*. The other report was by a committee chaired by Shayne Neumann, the member for Blair. It was called *Doing time—time for doing* and looked at Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system. The reports of those inquiries, along with the current inquiry of the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, which is looking into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational opportunities, are very informative.

I started this speech by acknowledging the traditional owners, but I particularly wanted to do that as we come to the 10th anniversary of the Closing the Gap initiative, as that initiative changed the situation from being one of fine words to practical deeds. There has been an enormous amount of work done over the past 10 years to help eliminate Indigenous disadvantage. I acknowledge the work of communities, the private sector and non-government organisations in this endeavour—and both sides of the political spectrum.

The *Closing the gap* report 2016 was delivered to the parliament by the Prime Minister this week. I particularly note that he delivered his opening remarks in a local Indigenous language. That was a fine choice. Unfortunately, after that, the words he delivered were confronting for Australia. We sadly found out that only two of the seven targets to close the gap are on track. However, focusing on the good news, child mortality declined by 33 per cent between 1998 and 2014. The target is for child mortality to halve by 2018, and we are on our way to achieving that. Obviously, I would like to see us go beyond that target in reducing child mortality of Indigenous Australians.

The target to halve the gap in the attainment of a Year 12 or equivalent education standard in Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 24 years is still on track. However, there is no updated data from the last report, so it is hoped that progress is still continuing on this target. Sadly, with the other five targets, the news is not so good. The target to enrol Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities in early childhood education has not been met by its expiration, and the new target is to enrol 95 per cent of four-year-olds in early childhood education by 2025. We know as parents how important early childhood education is. This is a very important target, because it will set communities up for years beyond its attainment. I hope these figures improve quickly.

Still on education—something I am passionate about, having been an English teacher for 11 years—an improvement of less than one per cent was recorded in the target for school attendance of Indigenous children. Sadly, this does not come close to meeting the target of closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years. So more needs to be done there.

The gap in the reading and numeracy achievements of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was to be halved by 2018. There has been mixed progress with this target. NAPLAN reports show that students are on track in only four of the eight areas measured. As a former teacher who is particularly passionate about English and reading, I am slightly biased, but I consider that education is the key to future success for all students, so let us hope that we see better results next year.

The next target may be a direct reflection of the slow progress being made in education—that is, the target to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018. I am sorry to report that there has been a decline in employment outcomes since the 2008 baseline.

Finally, there is the horrible statistic with regard to life expectancy. The target to close the gap in life expectancy within a generation is not on track. There has been some longer term progress, but that has been limited.

These are all very important issues for Indigenous Australians. Everyone in the parliament cares about these issues and wants to see an improvement. It is good to see support broadly on both sides of the aisle, though I did note that two-thirds of government members were not able to stay in the chamber for Bill Shorten's speech, in which he put forward some great policy initiatives.

Labor has already announced our new education policy 'Your Child. Our Future' which will guarantee individual attention and targeted programs for all students, particularly Indigenous students, so that they can do their best at school. If rolled out, our education policy will do much to close the gap in education between

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. It will give every child, in every school, every opportunity they need to succeed.

There is no greater gap in our community than between the incarceration rate of Indigenous men and non-Indigenous men. If you are Indigenous, you are 15 times more likely to be imprisoned than if you are non-Indigenous.

As I mentioned, the report *Doing Time—Time For Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system* came out of the inquiry into the high level of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system held by the House Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, chaired by the member for Blair. The inquiry involved going to prisons and interviewing stakeholders. It was quite a moving experience.

For Indigenous women, who now make up 15 per cent of our female prison population, there has been a 74 per cent increase in incarcerations in the past 15 years. They are staggering statistics of the lives that are changed forever, and the effects linger for years and years. The re-imprisonment rate for Indigenous young people is higher than the school retention rate. This is a disgrace and it reflects badly on this parliament and Commonwealth representatives. Labor has committed to set new targets to close the justice gap at the first COAG meeting under a Labor government. These targets will tackle these disgraceful incarceration rates, preventing crime, reducing violence and victimisation and boosting community safety. I want to particularly acknowledge the Queensland Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath, who has taken the initiative of reinstating some of the intervention strategies rather than only relying on incarceration for Indigenous Queenslanders.

It is hard to believe that Indigenous Australians are six times more likely to suffer from blindness than non-Indigenous Australians, but this is the sad truth. This is even more shocking when Australia leads the world in eye health. The amazing works of Fred Hollows and Vision 2020 in our country is noted, but we still have Indigenous people who are suffering from preventable or treatable eye conditions and going blind. Trachoma is an infectious and wholly preventable eye disease which only exists among our Indigenous population effectively. It is present in two-thirds of remote communities here in Australia—not overseas but here in Australia. We are the only developed nation in the world where trachoma still exists. That is embarrassing and certainly something we need to do more about. In a nation that prides itself on the health care delivered and universal healthcare access, we need to do more to eliminate trachoma.

To address this issue, Labor has committed to an additional \$9 million to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vision loss. When people are able to have productive jobs and, rather than having to care for someone, people are able to return to school or be involved in schools, the economic benefits flow easily through communities. This money committed to by Labor leader Bill Shorten will be invested in optometry and ophthalmology services and prevention activities to close the gap in eye health and eliminate trachoma once and for all in this country.

To completely close the gap we also need to recognise our first Australians in our Constitution. They need to have their names on what is effectively our birthing document. Labor is committed to a referendum on Indigenous recognition within the first year of taking office.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (12:28): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Greyhound Exports

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (12:28): Animals Australia investigations revealed last year that greyhound industry participants have been exporting unwanted dogs to appalling conditions in South-East Asia. I wrote to Prime Minister Turnbull seeking his intervention and action on this matter because the minister responsible, Minister Joyce, has been unwilling to tackle this problem despite the fact the industry's leadership shares community concern about the welfare of the dogs languishing in shocking conditions. Minister Joyce has refused to meet with the industry to discuss better welfare outcomes for greyhounds.

The reply from the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister was not good enough. The government refuses to act by claiming that under international law it cannot dictate animal welfare standards adopted in other countries. But the government can certainly do something domestically, preventing these greyhounds from ever leaving Australia when the welfare standards in the recipient nations are inadequate. It could introduce an amendment to the Export Control (Animals Order) 2004 that would make it mandatory for a 'passport' to be obtained from industry regulators before any greyhound could be exported. This would prevent the export of greyhounds to

countries that do not meet suitable welfare standards. It would also be in line with federal government policy regarding all livestock exports.

Minister Joyce claims that, if a 'passport' requirement were introduced, once the greyhound arrived at its destination country the government would have no control over the animal or ability to prevent export to a third country. This misses the point. The intention and outcome of rolling out mandatory passports under the export control order is to prevent the export, in the first place, of greyhounds to countries where their welfare will be compromised. There is currently an industry suspension in place to Macau and China due to serious welfare concerns. However, as the passport system is not legally enforceable, dogs continue to flow into these countries, in breach of the industry's rules and expectations. Greyhound owners have been selling their dogs for export, with new shipments of dogs arriving in Macau most months.

Animals Australia investigators captured world-first vision of the living conditions for dogs at Macau's notorious Canidrome, where some 700 Australian greyhounds live onsite:

In effect, 700 Australian dogs live on death row in the Canidrome. Every dog there will be dead within 3 years. Whilst alive, their lives are miserable. Minimal exercise, minimal social interaction and a tiny barren cell to live in.

An industry report estimates that up to 40 per cent of dogs are killed each year as a result of injuries sustained on the hard track. At a wild animal tourist park in Shanghai, Australian dogs are kept in concrete cells in 'solitary confinement'. They race on a track where other animals including cougars, ostriches and camels are also forced to compete in front of crowds. The track is totally inappropriate for dog racing, so the injury rate is high. Animals Australia has revealed:

The footage out of Shanghai is terribly sad. The dogs are obviously in great distress, you can see them biting bars, barking constantly. It is a completely unacceptable environment for an animal bred to crave human companionship.

No less than 72 Australian greyhound owners and trainers have been implicated in exporting greyhounds to Macau and China, in blatant defiance of industry rules. It is an Australian government responsibility to oversee the export process. Minister Joyce cannot balk at this by saying further reform to pre-export controls must be supported by associated regulation at a state and territory level. Pre-export controls, and in fact the entire export process, is a Commonwealth jurisdiction. In the current export process, all of the paperwork, health checks et cetera are facilitated through the relevant Commonwealth government department and it is an Australian government approved vet that is required to carry out the health checks and sign-offs under the process. ESCAS is a prime example of an amendment made to the Export Control (Animals) Order 2004 as a result of the Indonesian live cattle scandal in 2011, which rolled out an entire supply chain traceability system above and beyond issuing permits and health certificates. If the major amendments to the order for ESCAS were possible, then amending the order to require an additional document—a passport—to be lodged in order to acquire a permit is achievable.

It is high time the government cracked down on rogue operators. It is incumbent on the agriculture minister, Mr Joyce, to support regulatory amendments that will prevent greyhounds being exported to countries with inappropriate welfare standards—a call echoed by the industry's own peak body, Greyhounds Australasia. The idea kicking around today that the National Party might make Minister Joyce, who has displayed a cavalier, nonchalant, studied indifference to animal welfare, their next leader will be very distressing to many ordinary Australians who cannot stomach that he might profit politically from his indifference.

Superannuation

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (12:33): I wish to draw the attention of the House to an important issue, namely superannuation reform. A policy called 'Super for HELP' has been put to me by Ernst and Young economist John Adams. This superannuation reform plan proposes that individuals have voluntary access to their super to contribute to their HELP debt. This scheme would allow individuals to pay off this debt and increase their disposable income at significant moments in their lives. It is no secret that many Australians, particularly families within my electorate, are struggling with the cost of living. It is particularly difficult for individuals who are at an age when major life events are occurring—events like buying a first home, getting married and/or starting a family.

I would like to put on record my unequivocal support for this proposal. It benefits families by providing more disposable income. It benefits the government by allowing government debts to be repaid at an earlier time. This in turn helps and strengthens small businesses within my electorate. Many Australians have taken on personal debt in the face of rising living costs. According to the RBA, household debt as a proportion of disposable income is now exceeding 180 per cent. The level of debt currently contained in non-government sectors poses a real risk to both Australians and the broader economy.

Super for HELP is about allowing individuals with a HELP debt to draw on their existing super to pay off their HELP loan amount. The amount paid off can be specified by the individual. Senator Back and John Adams sought

costings from the PBO to ensure understanding of this scheme. The PBO provided several rounds of analysis, examining various aspects of the policy, including design schemes. The policy design scheme which is most viable is where an individual will be required to repay their withdrawn super, including the forgone earnings, with after-tax income from the point of withdrawal up until preservation age. This means that, at preservation age, there would substantially be no difference between the superannuation of those who did participate and that of those who did not. This scheme will benefit the Australian people and the federal government while also providing public and private benefit. Individuals will have their disposable income boosted, and the government will have a greater ability to repay the hideous amount of debt and deficit left over by the previous Labor government. I must stress that this scheme is distinctly different from the previously proposed super for housing scheme. They are completely different policies and should both be judged on their own merits.

The Labor Party have shown that they do not care, but we cannot and must not ignore that the cost of living is the No. 1 issue faced by Australians. Thanks to the mess we inherited from Labor, we are now trying to resolve the deterioration of the government's financial position. We cannot afford to lose our AAA rating. We cannot afford to increase spending. We cannot afford to increase debt. This policy will strengthen Australia's current fiscal position. As stated by JFK, the time to fix the roof is when the sun is shining.

Even at a low uptake rate, the PBO has indicated that this scheme will provide significant revenue for the government. A suggested implementation proposal has been put forward as part of this proposal, which would be administered by the Australian Taxation Office. This proposal will allow families to pay off their debts with their money. This is a strong and sensible measure that will provide families with more disposable income to work, save and invest.

Cunningham Electorate: Family Court

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (12:38): I am taking the opportunity in the House today to put on the public record some real concerns in my local area about the support and staffing for our Family Court in Wollongong. It is a matter that has been in the public debate in our local area for about a year now, and I have met with local solicitors, in particular, who are very concerned about the pressures being put on their clients. The problem we have, of course, is that the Attorney-General had not replaced some retiring judges. There was a shortage of judges and we were seeing a massive backlog of cases. My understanding is that at the last count there were something like 600 cases in backlog.

As members here would know very well, the Family Court is dealing with some of the most stressful and difficult circumstances that people enter into. They are seeking resolution, in particular, to issues around their children and settling arrangements for their long-term future. When you are waiting two or three years for a hearing date, that just exacerbates all the stress within families that goes on as a result of a break-up anyway. We heard one story only recently of a local family who were told that, if they wanted to get the matter resolved any quicker, their only option was to go from Wollongong to a Brisbane court to get a decision. That is just absolutely unacceptable, and so the member for Throsby and I have been working with our local solicitors and our local constituents to try and get this matter addressed with some urgency.

The reason that I am seeking to put it on the record of this House today is that, given all of these pressures, it was very frustrating in estimates this week that the Attorney-General indicated to the committee that he had only received one representation on the issue from another senator—senator Fierravanti-Wells. In actual fact, the Attorney-General received a letter from the member for Throsby and I in December last year highlighting to him the problems that we were having and the concerns that we had for our local constituents. Indeed, his Chief of Staff wrote back to us in January this year, not offering any resolution but acknowledging the concerns that we had raised in our letter. The Attorney-General was particularly inaccurate when he said that he had not had representations.

As a result of the reply by the Chief of Staff, the member for Throsby and I decided to write again to say that we were very concerned that our local family court had a permanent judge who was there to provide services to our local people, and, if you know the geography of our area, many people accessing that court are coming from quite a long way south—a couple of hours drive south of Wollongong—to access the Wollongong courts, so being sent to Sydney is even more problematic for them. Recognising that, we invited the member for Gilmore to join us in writing to the Attorney-General so that all three members covering the drawing area of the court would have, with one voice, said to the Attorney-General that we want this matter urgently resolved and we want a permanent presence in our local family court. To her great credit, the member for Gilmore co-signed the letter to the Attorney-General. Not only had the Attorney-General had a letter from the two Labor representatives in our area, he had also subsequently received a letter from all three elected federal members in the area, including his own colleague the member for Gilmore. It was particularly frustrating to us, again, that the Attorney-General indicated in estimates that he had not received any representations.

So that it cannot be missed and it cannot be misrepresented, I am putting it on the record in the House today. There is a bipartisan view in the Illawarra and South Coast that our families need a full-time family court judge presence in Wollongong. We need this in the best interests of the most vulnerable—the children—but also for the men and women who are caught up in this process. We need to take the pressure off them, get them a resolution and not add to the difficulties that everyone is going through at these sorts of times. Attorney-General, it is on the record. There is no running from it, so get it solved.

Calwell Electorate

Ms VAMVAKINO (Calwell) (12:43): I gladly take this unplanned opportunity to make some contributions to the adjournment debate. I will start by wishing my wishing my son a very happy birthday today. I have missed Stavvie's birthday every year since I have been up in this parliament. He is 23 today, and I hope that he is now old enough to understand and forgive my absences. I look forward to seeing him this evening.

I am going to take the opportunity to speak about some of the events that I will be involved in in my electorate next week—events that, no doubt, I will come back to this parliament and report on. I will just mention that next week I will be having a meeting with our state member for Sunbury, and I will also be meeting with the government liaison people of the Melbourne airport. I often get briefs from the Melbourne airport about the state of affairs there. Both meetings will cover the same issues. Next week I hope to be raising issues that many of my constituents have raised with me over the course of the last couple of years as we have been in a consultation process with the community in regard to the third runway at the Melbourne airport. These are matters that are ongoing discussions with the airport and with all three levels of government. Insofar as my involvement is concerned, I am obviously very keen to be available to my constituents, who wish to raise their concerns with me. The Melbourne Airport is a central feature of the federal seat of Calwell. It is a major employer in our electorate. It employs some 12,000 people. It is poised for development and has certainly experienced huge developments in the time that I have been the member. The third runway is an issue for some members of the community, so I look forward to having further discussions with them, with the airport and with our state colleagues.

I also look forward to meeting next week with a young doctor in Melbourne who is doing some incredibly good work and research in dementia. He has a plan to raise dementia awareness and to bring it to the attention of the Australian parliament by organising a cycling tour to Canberra. I am very excited about meeting with him and having discussions about his planned cycling to Canberra, and certainly I will be reporting more to the House about this particular event as it comes to fruition.

I am also going to be attending, quite happily, Penola Catholic College next Friday. They will be doing the blessings of the opening of a trades training centre. This is a very important facility in my electorate, and I look forward to sharing the opening of this wonderful new building with my constituents.

Very importantly, I am also going to be meeting next week with some 21 constituents in Melbourne who will have, I anticipate, some very disturbing things to pass on to me as their federal member in regard to their experiences at a local training college. Although I do not want to say very much at this point in time, one of our local registered training organisations has come into the spotlight in recent times in relation to some of the experiences that some of my local constituents have had. Obviously, I will be speaking with them and intend to bring their stories to this parliament, because I think we all are aware that there are some serious problems. We hear about them.

Today's media talks about the collapse of four registered training colleges leaving thousands of students in the lurch and probably thousands of students with accrued debts. This is a serious issue that has become known to us through various media reports for some time. I am very keen to see what I can do to assist in helping not just the government but the policymakers in general to deal with an issue that I believe is pretty much out of control. It is not providing a service to people; it is actually landing them in a lot of trouble, leaving them in the lurch. As I said, after I have spoken to my constituents I intend to come back to this House and report on their circumstances.

Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (12:48): The 26th of January signifies a special day in any Australian's diary. We love our country and our culture, and so many of us become citizens on this special day. Around Gilmore there are always plans: barbecues, Rotary clubs and Lions clubs involved in amazing celebrations. It is a day when you feel immense pride as you look at our flag and hear the stories of the new citizens and our community heroes. But this year I was in a place where I was especially proud. The Australian parliament has a Defence program where politicians have an opportunity to visit bases here in Australia or the international locations where Australian men and women are working so hard to gain peaceful resolutions, assist with aid or develop a national ethos in an emerging nation.

On Tuesday, 19 January I caught a train to Sydney, arrived at the airport and lugged my army dive bag with its makeshift wheels to check in. My family was not even able to know where I was going. This is the same situation for any of our serving personnel—their families are told merely that the destination is the Middle East. We travelled over with the new deployment of personnel—security, logistics, mechanics, front line, admin, communications—all completely expert in their respective fields.

There was no time to rest up after the flight. It was straight into training, alongside all these amazing men and women—from an overall security briefing to safety issues and ensuring our SIM cards were removed, then learning the skills of blast injury first aid. Yes, the politicians learned to use the special tourniquets and were instructed to use pressure bandages on mock shattered limbs. Following this, we were given a briefing on the formidable array of locally-made trigger mechanisms for blast devices. It is a very great shame that the extraordinary ingenuity, which is scary in its pure destructiveness, cannot be channelled for the betterment of this war-torn community. We participated in mock IED blasts—improvised explosive devices. We ducked for cover after 'incoming' was yelled. There were flares, explosions, smoke and dust, as well as the injured mannequins to rescue—thank goodness, they were only mannequins! Amongst this, we were carrying around at least 17 kilos of battle armour, which was extraordinary. I am just so glad we have redesigned it to make it a little more functional for our current men and women.

We were briefed on every form of intelligence gathering. Australia has an amazing aircraft for intelligence missions. The officers are increasing their skills and applications, devising better and more accurate techniques. Every member of the deployment team, already trained in pistol and rifle use, has to reach a required proficiency, and it is tested in the Middle East. On our third day after arrival, we also participated in this activity.

We became well acquainted with refuelling aircraft which play an integral role assisting the coalition forces on the long-haul flights to the strike zone. These strike zones are assessed over a period of months to ensure accuracy and timing for the least casualty impact. We were involved in bomb construction and all associated activities.

But by far, the briefings in Afghanistan were the most significant. We were shown every aspect of the important role of our servicemen and women. The most poignant moment of all occurred when the commanding officer explained—as we stood on the hills of Kabul, with the snow-capped mountains behind—'Ladies and gentlemen, you are looking over the valley which is the crossroads of emperors. This has been a battleground for centuries.'

One critical step to begin the reduction of conflict is to train the Afghan army to be self-reliant. Most importantly, this is our contribution to 'Duntroon in the dust', as they affectionately refer to the impressive establishment for training the Afghanistan army. The top graduate last year was a woman, who will be returning to inspire and train other Afghan women—what a transformational step that has been and will be.

The emerging nationalism and the care and loyalty for their own country is clear to see when you watch the training platoons. Our professional mentorship and our significant humanitarian and security aid is a major factor in the stabilisation of this region. Our service is essential here; it certainly will not be a short-term solution. The world really needs to help this region to find its own peace and security.

In Afghanistan we needed to travel between venues either by Black Hawk or Chinook helicopters as road travel is still considered way too dangerous. The awe I felt as I stood in the cockpit of the C-130 Hercules as we flew over the border of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan was only dwarfed by my Australian pride as I sat amongst our servicemen and women who were playing cricket and sand volleyball, and singing Australian songs in the middle of the base in the Middle East on Australia Day this year.

We truly are a most amazing community and we have the best service personnel. We will be balancing our security and our humanitarian aid in this area for as long as possible because they have asked for it, they require it, and the people of Afghanistan absolutely need it.

Phleros, Mr Paul

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (12:53): Yesterday, we said goodbye to Paul Phleros, renowned Australian architect, who died on 2 February 2016 after a short battle with illness. He was a pioneering figure in the interaction between housing and health and he made a very significant contribution to our understanding of the health improvements that can be made through quality housing. He used these lessons to improve the lives of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and in later years took his model of 'housing for health' to less-developed countries around the world.

His biggest contribution was to form Healthhabitat in 1998 with a mate, Dr Paul Torzillo, and Stephan Rainow from Alice Springs. The three directors first met in 1985 in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands in South Australia. They were thrown together by Yami Lester, at the time Director of Nganampa Health Council. Yami saw that despite the Anangu control of the health service in the region and the improved treatment of illness, health just

simply had not improved. He proposed that medical services and a healthy living environment were both required to achieve health gains.

In 1994, after years of trialling ways to improve housing and Indigenous health, the report *Housing for health: towards a health living environment for Aboriginal Australia* was published by Healthabitat. This report codified much of the thinking and the results of trial and error conducted over the previous decade. It quickly became the benchmark for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. The work received the Royal Australian Institute of Architects President's Award. It has since sold over 5,000 copies, many overseas, and provides the most concise statement of Healthabitat's aims and methods for improving health by improving the immediate living environment. Healthabitat found that the main reasons for housing failure were simply a lack of routine maintenance and poor initial construction, with nine per cent of damage being due to vandalism or to misuse or overuse by tenants. That is quite a small proportion. This flies in the face of the common misconceptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. Those misconceptions need to be addressed.

From 1999 to 2006, under this process, over 4,500 houses were surveyed and improved in most areas of Australia. There have now been 132 projects in five states and the Northern Territory. Ten years later, the figure has grown to 7,500 houses across Australia since 1999.

All housing was repaired or built after extensive consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in which the housing was located. The model was then extended to less developed countries. I am reminded by this of an article by Vicki Laurie in the Australian of 4 February. It says:

He took Healthabitat's principles to Nepal, Bangladesh and Soweto in South Africa; at the invitation of the New York housing authorities, he helped ghetto dwellers get actively involved in fixing their homes.

It is a very important thing this man has done and led. When he extended the model to less developed countries, that included Nepal, where a project in Kathmandu Valley helped to build 59 toilets to improve the health and sanitation of a community of 450 people.

In 2010, Healthabitat was invited to New York by Common Ground to trial a Housing for Health project in Brooklyn. In 2008, the work of Healthabitat won the International Union of Architects Vassilis Sgoutas Prize for the alleviation of poverty. Paul Pholeros collected the award in Turin, Italy, on behalf of the national Healthabitat team. He was selected to serve on the National Policy Commission on Indigenous Housing in 2009.

Housing and homelessness advocacy body NT Shelter said Paul Pholeros's work:

... he had become the 'standard for best practice' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing. 'His fine work has contributed to improving the livelihoods of people not just across NT and Australia, but also in other disadvantaged communities throughout the world.'

That was Tammy White, the CEO of NT Shelter. Fred Hollows Foundation CEO Brian Doolan—and a mate—said:

In recent years Paul and Healthabitat have also been working with The Fred Hollows Foundation to develop, design and construct a prototype solution to deliver water in remote communities in Ethiopia to help eliminate the eye disease trachoma.

They are looking at ways to increase the water available for face washing and a toilet system and method of construction to remove human waste safely and reduce flies. This is a significant component of preventing the spread of trachoma and ending avoidable blindness

His colleague Paul Torzillo said:

Paul had an incredible mind and dynamism that he used consistently over 30 years to improve the living standards of people living in poverty.

Through the sheer force of his personality he was able to inspire a generation of people to work to improve the living environment of disadvantaged communities. He was able to generate real momentum in the international community—

to build quality housing for those most in need. May he rest in peace.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 12:59.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING**Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development: Rail Safety****(Question No 1750)**

Ms McGowan asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 9 November 2015:

- (1) By what processes does he receive information from the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) regarding incidents, near misses and other potential breaches of passenger rail safety.
- (2) What level of detail is the ONRSR required to provide to the Government regarding potential or actual safety breaches.
- (3) What independent oversights, if any, are applied to the development of safety management systems by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).
- (4) What factors would the ARTC take into account when developing speed restrictions as part of implementing its safety management systems.
- (5) During the first week of October 2015 when temperatures soared to above 33 degrees Celsius, how many (a) locations along the north-east rail line were known to have serious ballast deficiencies, and (b) ballast deficiencies existed where no shoulder ballast was present either on one or both sides of the track.
- (6) Have there been any cases where a ballast was specifically removed for mud bleeding purposes; if so, (a) how many, and (b) what are the details.
- (7) What speed restrictions or additional safety measures would the ONRSR require the ARTC to impose on rail customers around known locations of serious ballast deficiency.
- (8) What temperature or other conditions would trigger the ARTC or the ONRSR to impose speed restrictions or apply additional safety measures.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) I receive information from the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) through:

- an Annual Safety Report that summarises jurisdictional rail safety performance where there is ONRSR oversight, and
- an annual report as part of ONRSR's statutory reporting requirements.

In addition to ONRSR's information, I receive timely updates from the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) on any significant events and incidents in addition to its regular quarterly reports.

(2) Under the *Rail Safety National Law (South Australia) Act 2012*, the ONRSR's annual report must include:

- details of all rail safety issues brought to the attention of ONRSR during the relevant financial year and the action (if any) taken in relation to each such issue; and
- any outstanding rail safety issues previously brought to the attention of ONRSR, including details of the action (if any) taken in respect of each issue.

The ONRSR's Annual Safety Report also includes safety statistics concerning rail safety occurrences notified to ONRSR, information on key regulatory focus areas for ONRSR and, relevant information gathered through regulatory activities.

(3) ARTC's Safety Management System is approved by ONRSR as part of an accreditation process. The ONRSR requires ARTC to review its Safety Management System once a year and the ONRSR undertakes periodic audits of elements of the Safety Management System. ARTC must notify ONRSR if it is proposing to make changes to the Safety Management System including when it proposes to change maintenance standards or inspection frequencies. Under the Safety Management System, ARTC is required to develop Track Stability Management Plans.

(4) ARTC's Safety Management System specifies the required speed based on an assessment of the infrastructure condition, as well as the conditions under which speed restrictions must be applied.

(5) ARTC advises that 33 degrees is a trigger temperature for heat related speed restrictions for timber-sleepered track in Victoria. It is not relevant to the ARTC network in Victoria, which is concrete-sleepered track.

(a) Nil.

(b) In October 2015 there were 239 locations in the Somerton to Benalla section, where shoulder ballast had been removed as an active prevention measure to contain mud holes.

(6) Yes.

(a) There were 239 locations in the Somerton to Benalla section, where shoulder ballast was removed in October 2015 as an active prevention measure to contain mud holes.

(b) These 239 sites cover a track area of approximately 936 meters. ARTC advises that the length of removed shoulder for each location is short (i.e. less than 6 metres) and does not affect the stability of track. The removal of the ballast shoulder is a prevention measure to contain mud holes and it is normally undertaken ahead of major maintenance activities.

(7) The ONRSR does not publicly comment on individual operators. All accredited operators are required to identify their risks and to manage these "So Far As Is Reasonably Practicable" (SFAIRP) in accordance with the Rail Safety National Law.

If a ballast deficiency could cause a reduction in safety then the ONRSR would expect to see appropriate controls put in place to manage that risk - with speed restrictions being a typical control many operators choose to implement.

If the ONRSR was not satisfied that a risk (including ballast deficiency) was being managed SFAIRP there are a number of options available to ONRSR as outlined in its Compliance and Enforcement Policy, which is available at the following web page: http://www.onrsr.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/1906/C-and-E-Policy-v3-for-CE-approval-4-Dec-2014.pdf. These range from issuing improvement notices and prohibition notices through to cancellation or suspension of an operator's accreditation, or prosecution.

(8) Under ARTC's Track Stability Management Plans, track managers can impose temporary speed restrictions at any time based on local factors which may impact on the stability of the track. Track stability will be influenced by a number of conditions, which includes rail stress, sleepers, fastenings and ballast. Temperature alone is not a trigger for ARTC to impose speed restrictions on concrete-sleepered track.

Department of Finance: Staff Contracts

(Question No 2125)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance, in writing, on 02 December 2015:

As a result of changes to the Ministry announced on 21 September 2015, how many Ministerial staff had their employment terminated, and of those

- (a) what was the
 - (i) date of termination for each employee, and
 - (ii) total cost of separation payments (as a lump sum), and
- (b) how many were subsequently re-employed.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Finance, as the senior portfolio Minister, has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

There were 114 Ministerial staff that had their employment terminated.

- (a) (i) The date of termination of the employees are:

2 October 2015 – 1

9 October 2015 – 1

13 October 2015 – 1

14 October 2015 – 3

16 October 2015 – 1

23 October 2015 – 2

27 October 2015 – 36

2 November 2015 – 68

14 December 2015 – 1

- (ii) The total cost of separation payments as at 20 January 2016 was \$3,348,124.41.
- (b) 5 employees have been re-employed as Ministerial Staff.