



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# House of Representatives

## Hansard

**MONDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2015**

### **CORRECTIONS**

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**Monday, 2 March 2015**

<b>Facsimile:</b> Senate	(02) 6277 2977
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BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

# **PROOF**

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**SITTING DAYS—2015**

Month	Date
February	9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26
March	2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23,24,25,26
May	12, 13, 14, 25, 26, 27, 28
June	1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25
August	10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20
September	7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17
October	12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22
November	9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30
December	1, 2, 3

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

**Governor-General**

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

**House of Representatives Office holders**

*Speaker*—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP

*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,  
Mr Alexander George Hawke MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP,

Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP, Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP,

Mr Stephen James Irons MP, Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP,

Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP, Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Mr Donald James Randall MP,

Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whiteley MP, 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. Anthony John Abbott MP

*Deputy Leader*—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP

*Chief Government Whip*—Mr Scott Buchholz MP

*Government Whips*—Mr Andrew Alexander Nikolic, AM, CSC and  
Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino 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, The Hon. Anthony John	Warringah, NSW	LP
Albanese, The Hon. Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Alexander, Mr John Gilbert OAM	Bennelong, NSW	LP
Andrews, Mrs Karen Lesley	McPherson, QLD	LP
Andrews, The Hon. Kevin James	Menzies, VIC	LP
Baldwin, The Hon. Robert Charles	Paterson, NSW	LP
Bandt, Mr Adam Paul	Melbourne, VIC	AG
Billson, The Hon. Bruce Fredrick	Dunkley, VIC	LP
Bird, The Hon. Sharon Leah	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Bishop, The Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen	Mackellar, NSW	LP
Bishop, The Hon. Julie Isabel	Curtin, WA	LP
Bowen, The Hon. Chris Eyles	McMahon, NSW	ALP
Briggs, The 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, The Hon. Malcolm Thomas	Fisher, QLD	LP
Buchholz, Mr Scott	Wright, QLD	LP
Burke, Ms Anna Elizabeth	Chisholm, VIC	ALP
Burke, The Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Butler, The Hon. Mark Christopher	Port Adelaide, SA	ALP
Butler, Ms Terri Megan	Griffith, QLD	ALP
Byrne, The Hon. Anthony Michael	Holt, VIC	ALP
Chalmers, Dr James Edward	Rankin, QLD	ALP
Champion, Mr Nicholas David	Wakefield, SA	ALP
Chester, The Hon. Darren	Gippsland, VIC	NATS
Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie	Bendigo, VIC	ALP
Christensen, Mr George Robert	Dawson, QLD	NATS
Ciobo, The Hon. Steven Michele	Moncrieff, QLD	LP
Clare, The Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Cobb, The Hon. John Kenneth	Calare, NSW	NATS
Coleman, Mr David Bernard	Banks, NSW	LP
Collins, The Hon. Julie Maree	Franklin, TAS	ALP
Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin	Charlton, NSW	ALP
Coulton, Mr Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	NATS
Danby, The Hon. Michael	Melbourne Ports, VIC	ALP
Dreyfus, The Hon. Mark Alfred QC	Isaacs, VIC	ALP
Dutton, The Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, QLD	LP
Elliot, The Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Ellis, The Hon. Katherine Margaret	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Entsch, The Hon. Warren George	Leichhardt, QLD	LP
Feeney, The Hon. David	Batman, VIC	ALP
Ferguson, Mr Laurie Donald Thomas	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Fitzgibbon, The Hon. Joel Andrew	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Fletcher, The Hon. Paul William	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Frydenberg, The Hon. Joshua Anthony	Kooyong, VIC	LP
Gambaro, The 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, The Hon. Gary AO	Brand, WA	ALP
Griffin, The Hon. Alan Peter	Bruce, VIC	ALP
Griggs, Mrs Natasha Louise	Solomon, NT	CLP
Hall, Ms Jill Griffiths	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Hartsuyker, The Hon. Luke	Cowper, NSW	NATS
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
Hockey, The Hon. Joseph Benedict	North Sydney, NSW	LP
Hogan, Mr Kevin John	Page, NSW	NATS
Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald	Petrie, QLD	LP
Hunt, The Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, VIC	LP
Husic, The 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, The Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard	New England, NSW	NATS
Katter, The Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, QLD	AUS
Keenan, The Hon. Michael	Stirling, WA	LP
Kelly, Mr Craig	Hughes, NSW	LP
King, The 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, The Hon. Dr Andrew Keith	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Ley, The Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Macfarlane, The Hon. Ian Elgin	Groom, QLD	LP
Macklin, The Hon. Jennifer Louise	Jagajaga, VIC	ALP
MacTiernan, The Hon. Alannah Joan Geraldine Cecilia	Perth, WA	ALP
Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Markus, Mrs Louise Elizabeth	Macquarie, NSW	LP
Marles, The Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, VIC	ALP
Matheson, Mr Russell Glenn	Macarthur, NSW	LP
McCormack, The 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, The Hon. Scott John	Cook, NSW	LP
Neumann, The Hon. Shayne Kenneth	Blair, QLD	ALP
Nikolic, Mr Andrew Alexander AM, CSC	Bass, TAS	LP
O'Connor, The 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, The Hon. Ms Kelly Megan	Higgins, VIC	LP
O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen	Hotham, VIC	ALP
Owens, Ms Julie	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Palmer, Mr Clive Federick	Fairfax QLD	PUP
Parke, The 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, The Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Porter, The Hon. Charles Christian	Pearce, WA	LP
Prentice, Mrs Jane	Ryan, QLD	LP
Price, Ms Melissa Lee	Durack, WA	LP
Pyne, The Hon. Christopher Maurice	Sturt, SA	LP
Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Randall, Mr Don James	Canning, WA	LP
Ripoll, The Hon. Bernardo Fernando	Oxley, QLD	ALP
Rishworth, The Hon. Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Robb, The Hon. Andrew John AO	Goldstein, VIC	LP
Robert, The Hon. Stuart Rowland	Fadden, QLD	LP
Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Roy, Mr Wyatt	Longman, QLD	LP
Ruddock, The Hon. Philip Maxwell	Berowra, NSW	LP
Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine	Lalor, VIC	ALP
Scott, The Hon. Bruce Craig	Maranoa, QLD	NATS
Scott, Ms Fiona Meryl	Lindsay, NSW	LP
Shorten, The Hon. William Richard	Maribyrnong, VIC	ALP
Simpkins, Mr Luke Xavier Linton	Cowan, WA	LP
Smith, The Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn	Casey, VIC	LP
Snowdon, The Hon. Warren Edward	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Southcott, Dr Andrew John	Boothby, SA	LP
Stone, The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy	Murray, VIC	LP
Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth	Gilmore, NSW	LP
Sukkar, Mr Michael	Deakin, VIC	LP
Swan, The Hon. Wayne Maxwell	Lilley, QLD	ALP
Taylor, Mr Angus James	Hume, NSW	LP
Tehan, Mr Daniel Thomas (Dan)	Wannon, VIC	LP
Thistlethwaite, Mr Matthew James	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Thomson, The Hon. Kelvin John	Wills, VIC	ALP
Truss, The Hon. Warren Errol	Wide Bay, QLD	NATS
Tudge, The Hon. Alan Edward	Aston, VIC	LP
Turnbull, The 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	
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

### **Members of the House of Representatives**

Members	Division	Party
Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien	Denison, TAS	IND.
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

#### **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—Katters 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—C Mills  
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen

## ABBOTT MINISTRY

Title	Minister
<b>Prime Minister</b>	The Hon. Tony Abbott MP
<b>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</b>	Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</i>
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</i>
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>The Hon. Charles Porter MP</i>
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</i>
<b>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</b> (Deputy Prime Minister)	The Hon. Warren Truss MP
Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development	The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP
<b>Minister for Foreign Affairs</b>	The Hon. Julie Bishop MP
<b>Minister for Trade and Investment</b>	The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</i>
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade and Investment</i>	<i>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</i>
<b>Minister for Employment</b> (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz
Assistant Minister for Employment (Deputy Leader of the House)	The Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP
<b>Attorney-General</b>	Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC
<b>Minister for the Arts</b> (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC
Minister for Justice	The Hon. Michael Keenan MP
<b>Treasurer</b>	The Hon. Joe Hockey MP
<b>Minister for Small Business</b>	The Hon. Bruce Billson MP
Assistant Treasurer	The Hon. Joshua Frydenberg MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</i>	<i>The Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer</i>
<b>Minister for Agriculture</b>	The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</i>
<b>Minister for Education and Training</b> (Leader of the House)	The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Assistant Minister for Education and Training	Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan</i>
<b>Minister for Social Services</b>	The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Assistant Minister for Social Services (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield
Minister for Human Services	Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</i>
<b>Minister for Industry and Science</b>	The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science</i>	<i>The Hon. Karen Andrews MP</i>
<b>Minister for Defence</b>	The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</i>

Title	Minister
<i>ANZAC</i>	
Assistant Minister for Defence	The Hon. Stuart Robert MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</i>	<i>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</i>
<b>Minister for Communications</b>	The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</i>	<i>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</i>
<b>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</b>	The Hon. Peter Dutton MP
Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection	Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash
<b>Minister for the Environment</b>	The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</i>	<i>The Hon. Robert Baldwin MP</i>
<b>Minister for Finance</b>	Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann
Special Minister of State	Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</i>	<i>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</i>
<b>Minister for Health</b>	The Hon. Sussan Ley MP
<b>Minister for Sport</b>	The Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Assistant Minister for Health	Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash

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.

## SHADOW MINISTRY

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
<b>Leader of the Opposition</b>	Hon Bill Shorten MP
<b>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</b>	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
<b>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</b>	Hon Bernie Ripoll MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</i>	<i>Julie Owens MP</i>
<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>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</i>
<b>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</b>	Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</b>	
Shadow Minister for Women	Senator Claire Moore
Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)	
Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC	Hon David Feeney MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<b>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</b>	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
<b>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</b>	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</i>	<i>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</i>
<b>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</b>	Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy
<b>Shadow Minister for Defence</b>	
Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence	Hon David Feeney MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Hon David Feeney MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</i>	<i>Gai Brodtmann MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</b>	Hon Anthony Albanese MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Cities</b>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Tourism</b>	
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 External Territories</i>	<i>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<b>Shadow Treasurer</b>	Hon Chris Bowen MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP
Shadow Minister for Competition	
Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation	Hon Bernie Ripoll MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</i>	<i>Hon Ed Husic MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Finance</b>	Hon Tony Burke MP
Manager of Opposition Business (House)	
<b>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</b>	Hon Mark Butler MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Water</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry</b>	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Shadow Minister for Vocational Education	Hon Sharon Bird MP
Shadow Assistant Minister for Higher Education	Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</i>	<i>Tony Zappia MP</i>

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
<b>Shadow Minister for Communications</b>	Hon Jason Clare MP
Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications	Michelle Rowland MP
<b>Shadow Attorney General</b>	Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP
<b>Shadow Minister for the Arts</b>	
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (House)	
Shadow Minister for Justice	Hon David Feeney MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney General</i>	<i>Graham Perrett MP</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</i>	<i>Hon Michael Danby MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Education</b>	Hon Kate Ellis MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</b>	
Shadow Assistant Minister for Education	Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</i>	<i>Julie Owens MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Agriculture</b>	Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Rural Affairs</b>	
<b>Shadow Minister for Resources</b>	Hon Gary Gray AO MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</b>	
Shadow Special Minister of State	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</i>	<i>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Health</b>	Hon Catherine King MP
Shadow Assistant Minister for Health	Stephen Jones MP
Shadow Minister for Mental Health	Senator Hon Jan McLucas
Shadow Minister for Sport	Hon Bernie Ripoll MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</i>	<i>Nick Champion MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</b>	Hon Jenny Macklin MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</b>	
Shadow Minister for Human Services	Senator the Hon Doug Cameron
Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness	Senator the Hon Jan McLucas
Shadow Minister for Carers	Senator Claire Moore
Shadow Minister for Communities	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</i>	<i>Senator Carol Brown</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</b>	Hon Richard Marles MP
Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism	Michelle Rowland MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</i>	<i>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</b>	Hon Shayne Neumann MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Ageing</b>	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</i>	<i>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</i>	<i>Senator Helen Polley</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</b>	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP
Shadow Minister for Employment Services	Hon Julie Collins MP

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MONDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2015

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*Monday, 23 February 2015*

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

### **PETITIONS**

**Dr JENSEN (Tangney)** (10:01): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

#### **Falun Gong**

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners in China have been subjected to the most brutal and relentless persecution by the Chinese Communist regime since July 1999, causing thousands to lose their lives from illegal detention and systematic torture. Such conduct stands in blatant violation of all international human rights charters that the Chinese government has itself ratified. According to investigative reports published by human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific; David Kilgour, tens of thousands of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to forced organ harvesting for China's transplant market and lost their lives ( [www.organharvestinvestigation.net](http://www.organharvestinvestigation.net) ).

We therefore ask the House to request the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to openly and forthrightly call for an immediate end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

from 18,318 citizens

#### **Asylum Seekers: Children**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Christian Australian residents, draws to the attention of the House:

It is a well-attested fact that children held in detention for long periods suffer disproportionately from mental illness and high degrees of anxiety. Furthermore, the longer detention lasts, the greater is the proportion of those who develop these symptoms.

We therefore request the House to:

Remove, as a matter of urgency, all children, together with their accompanying parents, from off-shore detention facilities, and that they be re-settled in the Australian community while their claims are being processed. We commend the Government for recent decisions regarding children in on-shore detention, and request that equal treatment be afforded to those on Christmas Island, Manus Island and Nauru.

from 146 citizens

#### **Treatment of Asylum Seekers**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Australian Catholics committed to ending policies relating to asylum and migration that conflict with the Church's Social Teaching draws to the attention of the House:

The statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference of May 2014 which declares that the human dignity and basic human rights of asylum seekers in Australia today are being 'seriously violated' and that current asylum seeker policies amount to 'institutionalised cruelty'.

We therefore ask the House to:

develop asylum seeker policy and Legislation which is consistent with the principles and values of Catholic Social Teaching, specifically:

- ending offshore detention;
- completely ending the mandatory detention of children;
- facilitating the right of asylum seekers to be part of our community, especially in allowing their right to work in Australia;
- favouring the integration of people seeking asylum into our community by finding a place where they can live in peace and safety;
- respecting the human dignity and human rights of asylum seekers, regardless of their citizenship, visa status or mode of arrival; and
- fast-tracking the processing time of asylum seekers' protection claims.

from 2,732 citizens

#### **Temporary Protection Visas**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: the use of Temporary Protection Visas in relation to asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat

We therefore ask the House to: ensure Protection Visas replace Temporary Protection Visas in respect of all asylum seekers irrespective of the method by which the asylum seeker has arrived.

from 310 citizens

### **Islam in Australia**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of certain citizens of Australia; draws the attention of the House that Islam contradicts, opposes and divides the Australian constitution ,citizenship and allegiance. Islam complies to the meaning of sect, by surviving beneath the umbrella of political law, by being undemocratic, secular, intolerant with fanatical, somewhat unGodly beliefs and specific untruths. All islamics, by nature Oppose democracy.

We therefore ask the House to, through legislation or referendum ban the sect Islam from Australia [as Japan And China has done.]

from 1 citizens

### **Treatment of Asylum Seekers**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of people concerned about the treatment of refugees draws to the attention of the house: the inhumane treatment of refugees in offshore detention, their return to places where they may be subjected to inhumane treatment and their re-settlement in unsuitable places.

We therefore ask the house to:

1. End mandatory detention of asylum seekers and allow them to work in the community thus contributing to our society;
2. Instead of spending money on detention centres, to utilise that money for humanitarian purposes;
3. To cease turning back the boats on which refugees have sailed from other countries.
4. To not engage in re-settling refugees in countries that are unsuited to that purpose.

from 9 citizens

### **Animal Factory Farms**

This petition of students and staff at the University of Western Australia, draws the attention of the House:

'Ag-gag' laws are laws designed to deter activists and journalists from documenting the suffering of animals on factory farms. 'Ag-gag' laws permit and condone a culture of secrecy by punishing whistle-blowers rather than the perpetrators of animal cruelty. The laws are unfair on consumers, whose understanding of where their food comes from is obscured by 'ag-gag' laws. Surveillance creates transparency and promotes public awareness and thus should not be curtailed. We, the undersigned, do not support the introduction of 'ag-gag' laws.

We therefore ask the House:

Please do not enact 'ag-gag' laws in Australia.

from 259 citizens

### **Halal Certification**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of students and staff at the University of Western Australia, draws the attention of the House:

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: a legislative issue concerning the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 and the right to freedom from and of religion.

Halal certification has been imposed on Australia's food production and supply industry. Companies pay thousands of dollars in fees, abattoirs pay up to \$27,000 per month. The money goes to promote Islam and costs are passed to consumers.

Big brands such as Vegemite, Kellogg's, Nestle, Bulla and Cadbury are Halal certified or use Halal-certified ingredients. Almost all abattoirs now use less humane Halal slaughter methods.

Consumers struggle to find Halal-free food for purchase. This is a restrictive trade practice in the food supply chain. Many Halal products are not labelled which is misleading and deceptive conduct.

We demand freedom from forced religious donations and the right to make an informed choice.

We ask the House to adopt a user-pays principle. Amend the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 to:

Prevent any entity from collecting religious certification fees in Australia. Certification services must be provided free by the religious entity with funds raised from its own members.

Ensure separation of production for Halal and Halal-free products. Animal products offered for Halal-free consumption must be sourced from Halal-free slaughter and not contain any waste from Halal slaughter.

Ensure any extra costs associated with Halal production are segregated to the Halal product only. Ensure all Halal-containing products for sale in Australia are clearly labelled.

from 961 citizens

### **Halal Certification**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: a legislative issue concerning the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 and the right to freedom from and of religion.

Halal certification has been imposed on Australia's food production and supply industry. Companies pay thousands of dollars in fees, abattoirs pay up to \$27,000 per month. The money goes to promote Islam and costs are passed to consumers.

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Consumers struggle to find Halal-free food for purchase. This is a restrictive trade practice in the food supply chain. Many Halal products are not labelled which is misleading and deceptive conduct.

We demand freedom from forced religious donations and the right to make an informed choice.

We ask the House to adopt a user-pays principle. Amend the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 to:

Prevent any entity from collecting religious certification fees from the food industry in Australia. Certification services must be provided free by the religious entity.

Ensure separation of production for Halal and non-Halal products. Animal products offered for non-Halal consumption must be sourced from non-Halal slaughter and not contain any waste from Halal slaughter.

Ensure any extra costs associated with Halal production are segregated to the Halal product only. Amend the Act to ensure all Halal-containing products for sale in Australia are clearly labelled.

from 21 citizens

### **Longwarry: Pharmacy Services**

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of the Longwarry community draws attention of the House the disadvantage that the rural community of Longwarry faces by not having a Chemist in the doctors clinic.

As a small town in a rural area we have recently had a significant growth of both businesses and residence. The Longwarry community has a growth rate of approximately 21% between 2006 and 2011 according to the Census. According to the postal service, the postal deliveries have doubled since July 2009. The township now supports a resident Doctor who is developing a new clinic to support more services to the town. It would be a great benefit to the town to have a Chemist within the doctors clinic at 7 Flinders Road, Longwarry; so that all residents can access the best medical care available.

We therefore ask the House to do all in its power to:

Review the guidelines regarding chemists in rural communities.

Address the need for the Longwarry community to have a chemist in the Doctors clinic

Allow the Longwarry community to have the best health care that other towns currently have.

from 360 citizens

### **Responses**

**Dr JENSEN** (Tangney) (10:02): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

### **Telecommunications**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter dated 1 September 2014 concerning a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding mobile phone coverage in the Araluen Valley (940/1408).

The Australian Government recognises the importance of reliable mobile coverage. While mobile phone carriers claim to provide coverage to 99 per cent of Australia's population, there are still some areas that have no coverage, particularly in regional and remote locations.

Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic and social benefits, as well as public safety benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas.

The Government is investing \$100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in some regional and remote communities which do not currently have reliable coverage. The Government's investment is expected to generate at least matching funding from local and state governments, communities and industry.

The Mobile Black Spot Programme will improve coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as well as addressing unique mobile coverage problems.

The Government accepted nominations for mobile black spot locations between December 2013 and 1 August 2014. The reported locations, including Araluen Valley, have been included in a database that will be shared with mobile network operators and infrastructure providers to assist them in preparing funding proposals for the programme. The rules of the programme will require the mobile network operators to specify locations drawn from this database, at which they would propose to build or upgrade base stations.

The mobile black spot database is available:

([www.communications.gov.au/mobile\\_services/mobile\\_black\\_spot\\_programme](http://www.communications.gov.au/mobile_services/mobile_black_spot_programme)) as an online interactive map.

The Government intends to commence a competitive selection process shortly, with a view to announcing the locations which have been selected for funding in the first half of 2015.

Thank you for bringing the petition to my attention. I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the **Minister for Communications, Mr Turnbull**

### **Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letters of 1 September 2014 and 20 October 2014 about two petitions submitted by the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council (WBACC). The first petition asks for regulations to be enacted under the Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act (Land Grant Act) to empower WBACC to enforce its by-laws by way of penalties. The second petition asks that vacant crown land in the Jervis Bay Territory be granted to WBACC as Aboriginal land.

Your letters seek my response to these petitions, as the Minister responsible for administering the Land Grant Act.

I met with WBACC in March this year to discuss a number of matters, including the Council's request for a further grant of vacant Crown land and a review of the Land Grant Act. At this meeting WBACC agreed to provide me with a list of its concerns and proposed changes to the Land Grant Act. While I offered WBACC financial support to complete this work, no information has yet been provided. I have therefore asked my Department to consult with WBACC on its suggestions for reforming the Land Grant Act, with a view to pursuing possible amendments. I have also asked the Department to consult with relevant Commonwealth agencies regarding the potential for a further grant of land under section 9 of the Land Grant Act.

I will consider the matters raised by WBACC's petitions once the Department's consultations with the Wreck Bay Community have concluded and further advice is received on options for responding to the land grant request.

I have written to advise WBACC of my intentions for dealing with the two matters it has brought to the attention of your committee. I look forward to working further with the Wreck Bay community, to help ensure the full potential of the Aboriginal land in the Jervis Bay Territory is realised.

from the **Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mr Scullion**

### **NBN Co Limited**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the petition presented by the Member for Leichhardt, the Hon Warren Entsch MP, concerning mobile phone services and broadband access in the Kuranda region of Far North Queensland.

I appreciate you bringing this petition to my attention and I am pleased to see that the residents of Kuranda and the broader region have an interest in improving the telecommunication services they receive.

Regarding mobile services in the Kuranda region, the Australian Government recognises the importance of reliable mobile coverage. As raised by the residents of Kuranda, the Government is investing \$100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in some outer metropolitan, regional and remote communities which do not currently have reliable coverage. The Government's investment is expected to generate at least matching funding from local and state governments, communities and industry.

The Mobile Black Spot Programme will improve coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as well as addressing unique mobile coverage problems. The Government intends to commence a competitive selection process in the second half of 2014, with a view to announcing the locations which have been selected for funding in the first half of 2015.

Kuranda and Kuranda State Forest have been reported to the Department of Communications as having poor mobile coverage. This information will be provided to potential applicants to assist them in preparation of their funding under the programme.

In regard to broadband services, the Government is committed to completing the construction of the National Broadband Network (NBN) ensuring that all Australians have access to fast affordable broadband as soon as possible.

The NBN Co's national rollout plan released earlier this month shows that one in three Australian live or work in areas where the NBN will be accessible or under construction by June 2016. Around 379,000 homes and businesses across more than 80 cities, suburbs and towns in Queensland are set to receive the National Broadband Network (NBN), including some 69,000 premises in Far North Queensland.

The new rollout plan also reveals that by June 2016:

- An additional 1.79 million premises in the fixed line footprint will have access or work underway.
- An additional 128,000 premises in the fixed wireless footprint will have access or work underway.

This is in addition to the Long Term Satellite Service, which will see two satellites launched in 2016 that will serve the most remote and inaccessible premises in the country.

The National Rollout Plan shows the commitment to rural and regional Australia. Of the areas receiving fixed-line rollout over 800,000 are outside of major urban areas. The 128,000 premises in the fixed wireless rollout are generally in rural and regional Australia and these premises are almost universally poorly served.

The release of the plan is an important milestone as the company works to provide the industry and consumers reliable and credible information about the progress of the network, so they are able to plan and invest for the future. More information about the NBN rollout in the Kuranda region will be published by NBN Co on its website [www.nbnco.com.au](http://www.nbnco.com.au).

I note that some residents in the region are currently using the Interim Satellite Service (ISS) provided by NBN Co. On 3 April 2014, I announced that NBN Co will spend more than \$34 million to improve and expand provisional satellite broadband services in regional and rural Australia.

This expenditure includes new monitoring tools to enable NBN Co to better manage existing ISS capacity. This will help prevent high end users unfairly slowing the service levels of all other users. Additionally, the NBN Co Satellite Support Scheme (NSS Scheme) is a new subsidy scheme designed to help up to 9000 premises, including homes, farms and small businesses, to purchase commercial satellite services. I encourage the residents of Kuranda to check eligibility for the NSS at [www.nbnco.com.au/satellite](http://www.nbnco.com.au/satellite) or by calling the NBN Co's Contact Centre on 1800 687 626.

Thank you for bringing this petition and the concerns of the residents of the Kuranda region to my attention. I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the **Minister for Communications, Mr Turnbull**

### **Iraq and Syria**

Dear Dr Jensen

The Australian Government is deeply concerned about the violence in Iraq and Syria and the impact it has had on so many people across the Middle East. The Government and people of Iraq face a deadly threat from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and cannot be left to face it alone. Australia has joined with international partners to assist the Iraqi Government in combating ISIL.

Australian defence force personnel have commenced air operations over Iraq, including striking ISIL targets. We are also deploying Special Forces to advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces. This is in addition to our deliveries of military stores and humanitarian air drops to assist civilians besieged by ISIL in Amerli and on Mount Sinjar. A \$15 million package announced recently in October will provide shelter, food and medical assistance to displaced people in Iraq and Syria through partners such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme. This funding announcement brings Australia's total assistance for Iraq to \$17 million since June this year and for Syria to \$135.8 million since the conflict began in 2011. This includes a \$2 million package of assistance announced in September this year that will specifically support vulnerable women and girls in Iraq.

Australia's assistance is also focused on lending a hand to those in most desperate need. I announced on 17 August 2014 that the Government would be setting aside at least 4,400 places in this year's Humanitarian Programme for the resettlement of Iraqis and Syrians who have fled their home countries due to conflict in that region. There will be 2,200 places for Iraqis and 2,200 places for Syrians within the 11,000 places for the offshore component of the 2014-15 Programme.

People resettled will include refugees referred to Australia by UNHCR and people proposed by their close family members in Australia through the Special Humanitarian Programme. I anticipate that this will include Christians and other minorities who have fled Mosul, as well as other areas of Iraq affected by the crisis.

This commitment builds on Australia's strong history of resettling Iraqi refugees under the offshore Humanitarian Programme. In the last 10 years, around 22,000 Iraqis who have fled violence and unrest in Iraq have started a new life in Australia. The majority of Iraqis resettled in Australia are from minority ethnic and religious communities, including many Christians.

from the **Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Mr Morrison**

### **Medicare**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your correspondence of 27 October 2014 regarding a petition from certain residents of the Federal Division of Hotham and surrounding areas regarding the Budget measure to strengthen Medicare. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I note the issues raised in the petition and trust that the following information will be of assistance.

The Government is determined to strengthen Medicare and to make our health system sustainable. This is particularly important given the ageing of our population, the costs of listing new medicines and public hospital funding at record levels. In 2004, we were spending \$8 billion on Medicare. Today the figure is \$19 billion and, without policy change, it is projected to climb to \$34 billion by 2023-24. That is an 80 per cent increase.

The Government tasked the National Commission of Audit (the Commission) to undertake an across-the-board examination of government spending and to make recommendations to ensure appropriate targeting of government programmes. The Government is carefully considering all recommendations of the Commission's report.

The Commission looked closely at the current Medicare arrangements and reached some conclusions about what would need to be done in order to preserve Australians access to affordable, high quality health care. Expenditure under Medicare has grown rapidly over the last decade, increasing 124 per cent in the last ten years. Further, in 2013-14, 275 million services were provided free to patients in a population of only 23 million.

The Government has moved in the 2014-15 Budget to put health expenditure on a more sustainable footing, to ensure that Australia can continue to afford a strong Medicare system. From 1 July 2015, all patients will be asked to directly contribute to their own health care costs. While the Government will continue to subsidise a majority of the costs of Medicare services, the rebate for most GP and out-of-hospital pathology and diagnostic imaging services will be reduced by \$5.00.

Previously bulk-billed patients can expect to make a contribution of at least \$7.00 to the cost of most visits to the GP and for out-of-hospital pathology and diagnostic imaging services. Doctors will be paid a low gap incentive - equivalent to the current bulk-billing incentive - to encourage them to charge Commonwealth Concession Card holders and children under 16 years the \$7.00 contribution for ten visits in a calendar year. After the patient contribution has been paid ten times, the Medicare rebate is increased by \$5.00 and the doctor will be paid an incentive if they provide the service to the concessional patient at no charge to the patient.

Bulk-billing will still be available to doctors to apply at their discretion (as is the case today) to patients who cannot afford the \$7.00 co-payment.

The Budget measure will not apply to all services provided by GPs. Health assessments and chronic disease management (CDM) services will not be affected, and there will be no need to change current administrative arrangements for these types of service. Also, many services provided by GPs during a consultation are exempt from the measure, including simple routine pathology tests conducted in a GP surgery and other services such as removal of skin cancers. Where one of these services is provided, there are no changes to the current Medicare Benefit Schedule fees or bulk billing arrangements.

From 1 January 2016, the thresholds for the new Medicare Safety Net will be \$400 for concessional singles (this includes people receiving disability support pension) and concessional families, \$700 for non-concessional FTB(A) families and singles, and \$1,000 for non-concessional families who do not receive FTB(A). These thresholds will mean more people will qualify for safety net benefits. It is important to note that the \$7.00 patient contribution will not accumulate towards the safety net threshold.

With regard to prescriptions, over the past decade, the cost of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) has gone up a staggering 80 per cent. Further, demand for the PBS will continue to grow as the Government works to provide access to new and innovative medicines more quickly. Over the longer term, growth in PBS spending is expected to average between four and five per cent per year.

To put the PBS on a more sustainable footing, the Government is asking Australians to take more personal responsibility for their health, through modest additional contributions to the costs of their care. By asking consumers to share in the cost, the Government can build a sustainable PBS that can continue to subsidise these new, innovative and potentially lifesaving medicines, making otherwise prohibitively expensive treatments affordable for all Australians.

From 1 January 2015, concessional patients, including pensioners and veterans, can expect to pay 80 cents more per prescription for PBS listed medicines, in addition to the usual Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment (expected to be ten cents for concessional patients in 2015). General patients will contribute \$5.00 more per prescription for PBS listed medicines, in addition to the usual CPI adjustment.

The safety net will still be there to protect high users of medicines, but it will also be adjusted. For general patients, the safety net will increase by ten per cent above CPI in each year for every four years commencing in 2015. For concessional patients, it will increase by two prescriptions in each of these years, from the present 60 prescriptions to 62 in 2015 and up to 68 in 2018.

Savings from the patient contribution Budget measure will be directed to the Medical Research Future Fund to ensure Australia can continue to advance world leading medical research projects, attract and retain first class researchers and ultimately deliver improved health outcomes for all Australians.

Thank you for bringing the concerns of certain residents of the Federal Division of Hotham and surrounding areas to my attention.

from the **Minister for Health, Mr Dutton**

### **Environment**

Dear Dr Jensen

I refer to your letter of 23 October 2014 with reference to a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding the use of biofuels.

The Australian Government believes that an efficient and competitive fuel market ensures that a wide range of fuels, including biofuels, are available to consumers at the lowest possible price. Rather than providing funding directly to state governments to encourage research and development in biofuels, the Government relies on market forces to drive investment

in Australian fuel production, refining and downstream distribution industries and believes that the biofuels industry is best placed to make decisions on investment.

The Government has provided over a billion dollars, and more than a decade of support for the biofuels industry in the form of the Ethanol Production Grants programme and the Cleaner Fuels (Energy Grants Scheme). Furthermore, through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), the Government has also supported different aspects of advanced biofuels research, development and demonstration.

The Government will continue to support the biofuels industry by applying a significantly lower fuel excise rate than applied to conventional fuels. This combined support provides a substantial and ongoing commitment to the local industry by the Government.

The Government has also released an Energy Green Paper setting out our goals on how to achieve a competitive, innovative and productive energy sector.

Thank you for bringing the concerns referenced in the petition to my attention.

from the **Minister for Industry, Mr Macfarlane**

### Statements

**Dr JENSEN** (Tangney) (10:03): In my last statement as chair of the Petitions Committee, I spoke about the role members play in bringing petitions to the attention of the House. Today I will discuss the effects that petitioning can have. Whether a petition is on a matter affecting a small area, like mobile phone blackspots, or the entire country, like asylum seeker policy, it is important that Australians have a mechanism for bringing these matters to the attention of the House. Further, when petitioners engage their local member in the process, it helps to keep the member informed of the issues that are important to their constituents. In this way, petitions serve the purpose of making both the House and its members better informed.

After a petition has been presented in the House, it is referred to the responsible minister for a response. This, in turn, draws the attention of the relevant decision makers to the matters raised in petitions and is another key aspect of the importance of petitions. When ministers respond to petitions, and these responses are published, the Australian community becomes better informed about the government's position on issues that are important to them.

Outside the parliamentary context, petitions serve a variety of important functions. Time and again at public hearings with petitioners the committee hears about the positive effects that petitioning can have within communities. The people organising petitions and gathering submissions often do so by sitting long hours in public with their petitions, talking to other Australians about issues on which they feel strongly. Sometimes the people they engage with had no idea the issue even existed. In other cases, petitioners can have robust discussions with others about the petition and its topic. In all cases, this sort of activity helps to advance the public discussion on these issues. This helps to keep average Australians more informed on the issues that are relevant in their communities, whether it be their local area, region, state or Australia as a whole.

Another aspect which is often emphasised at public hearings is the unifying effect that petitions can have within a community. Petitioners often tell us that they are buoyed by the level of community support their petitions receive and that communities are brought closer together by this activity. When considering petitions, the committee often sees how this can work in practice. Whether it is a local sporting club, a church group or a national non-government organisation, the communities that engage in petitioning activities are strengthened by the sense of common purpose their shared goal gives them.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend all Australians who engage in petitioning activities and members of this House who assist them. Even though ministers are often unable to grant requests made in petitions, this does not in any way detract from the value of petitions. I encourage my fellow Australians to maintain their passion and continue to petition the House.

## COMMITTEES

### Standing Committee on the Environment

#### Report

**Mr HAWKE** (Mitchell) (10:07): On behalf of the Standing Committee on the Environment, I present the committee's report, incorporating a dissenting report, entitled *Streamlining environmental legislation: inquiry into streamlining environmental regulation, 'green tape' and one stop shops*, together with the minutes of the proceedings.

In carrying out this inquiry into streamlining environmental regulation, 'green tape' and one-stop shops, the committee has been keen to identify efficiencies in Australia's environmental assessment and approval framework.

Importantly, it has undertaken to do so without any reduction in appropriate protections for Australia's unique and invaluable environment.

The committee adopted this inquiry in February last year and spent several months gathering evidence. The inquiry received 83 submissions, 13 supplementary submissions and 29 exhibits. The committee held six public hearings, both here in Canberra and also in Sydney and Melbourne. We heard from industry representatives, community groups, government departments, environmental practitioners and advocates, legal experts and interested members of the public. We are grateful to all those witnesses for taking the time to send us written submissions or to meet with us and express their views at public hearings.

The inherent value of preserving our environment is something we can all agree on, and that is on top of the economic and social benefits that our environment brings. However, throughout this inquiry, the committee was presented with numerous examples of environmental regulation that is duplicative, ineffective, confusing, impractical, contradictory or otherwise inefficient. We saw that some environmental laws were creating delays and significant compliance costs for business without actually delivering any environmental benefit at all. I would recommend to members examining some of that evidence the specific examples where business was unable to have any environmental benefit despite great cost or regulatory burden.

For example, according to the Department of the Environment's annual report, in the last financial year alone, 304 separate actions were referred to the Commonwealth for assessment and approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The majority of these referrals involved activities such as commercial and residential development, mining and exploration, natural resource management, and transport—activities vital to the strength and the resilience of our economy. Significantly, the vast majority of the activities referred to the Commonwealth would have already been assessed by the relevant state or territory's authorities, who also have responsibility for assessing and mitigating the environmental impact of developments—highlighting the duplication in this sense that existed in the past in Australia.

Through the inquiry, I was therefore pleased to hear about the government's one-stop-shops initiative—and the progress that is being made by the government in the one-stop shops—which is seeking to reduce the duplication of these processes by accrediting relevant state and territory processes. This will ensure that the Commonwealth's environmental obligations are fulfilled without requiring industry and community groups to jump through the same set of hoops twice, reducing cost and burden on industry and society. I am pleased with the progress that has been made to date, and I look forward to the government finalising bilateral agreements with states and territories in due course.

Following on from evidence from stakeholders, the committee identified opportunities to enhance the one-stop-shop system and has made two recommendations for bilateral agreements with states and territories going forward to enhance those arrangements. Those recommendations relate to statutory time frames and risk based terms of reference for environmental impact statements, a common theme of proponents being risk based assessments.

The inquiry also received a great deal of evidence about environmental regulation beyond just the EPBC Act and the one-stop-shop proposal. The evidence related to energy efficiency and renewable energy programs, areas for harmonising legislation between jurisdictions, and the Department of the Environment's communication with regulated communities.

The committee examined some of the energy related programs and regulations, including the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act, the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Scheme, the renewable energy target, and the Commercial Building Disclosure Program under the Building Energy Efficiency Disclosure Act. I am pleased to note that some of these programs have either been discontinued or were in the process of being reviewed during the committee's inquiring and reporting process. Where matters remain outstanding, the committee has made recommendations for change and looks forward to receiving the government's response.

Some of the other areas in which this report has offered very practical, sensible recommendations for change include a national approach to the listing of endangered and threatened species, and better sharing of environmental data between jurisdictions, including environmental data gathered by project proponents in the course of preparing environmental impact statements.

This has been a timely inquiry. Following on from the Productivity Commission's work in 2013 on major project approvals processes, and in the context of the government's effort to reduce the regulatory burden on business and the community, I am confident that the committee's findings and recommendations can help pave the way for further reforms. The recommendations made by the committee are practical and will help reduce duplication and make for more efficient administration of environmental regulations.

Australia's precious environment must be protected. But where regulations are inefficient, unnecessary, and produce no environmental benefit, they must be reconsidered.

Once again, I thank organisations and individuals. I thank the committee secretariat, including Peggy Danae. I thank the member for Makin, the deputy chair, and I thank all my colleagues on the committee for their contributions to the inquiry and the report in general.

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (10:13): Firstly, I thank the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Environment, the member for Mitchell. I also appreciate his remarks with respect to the report *Streamlining environmental legislation: inquiry into streamlining environmental regulation, 'green tape' and one stop shops*. Can I also thank the committee secretariat for their work and also all of those people who either made submissions or appeared before the committee in the course of the inquiry.

The Labor Party members of the committee prepared a dissenting report. I should highlight that, in doing so, there is indeed much that we agree on, albeit there are some matters that we disagree on. Indeed, on most of the 13 recommendations, we have very few points of difference. In presenting our dissenting report, Labor members of the committee do not believe that the committee report fairly reflects the divergent submissions presented in the course of the inquiry. Nor are several of the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report supported by the evidence presented to the inquiry.

The report makes positive mention of the balance between environmental and regulatory concerns but evidences no consideration of potential benefits arising from delaying projects to allow for proper and thorough consideration of applications that may cause permanent harm to matters of national environmental significance. Any changes to environmental regulations that simplify assessment processes, reduce time and costs and create uniformity across all jurisdictions should always be balanced against the importance of maintaining sound environmental protections. In our view, the report does not address the social and economic values of the natural environment and how these values are indeed measured.

Labor members note the position of the UN's World Heritage Committee in June 2014, which held that the delegation of approval powers on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area to the Queensland government was premature. Labor members agree that opportunities for streamlining state and federal assessment processes should be pursued but only in a way that ensures that existing standards will be retained or strengthened. While Labor continues to support streamlining environmental assessment processes for major projects, final approval on matters of national environmental significance should remain with the national government. In particular I refer to World Heritage Properties, National Heritage places, wetlands of international importance, listed threatened species and ecological communities, migratory species, nuclear actions, Commonwealth marine areas, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and a water resource in relation to coal seam gas development or large coalmining development. Labor members note that, should the report's recommendations be applied, the approval of World Heritage sites, nuclear activities such as uranium mining and species protected under international treaties will be put into the hands of state governments.

In respect of delegation of powers to state governments Labor members note that the Abbott government is also attempting to allow state governments to accredit local governments to approve developments that have an effect on matters of national environmental significance. This would further delegate environmental protection powers, meaning that the environmental matters which are the subject of international treaties could be considered by local government.

Labor members reject paragraph 4.70 on page 49 of the committee report. This is the paragraph that refers to the one-stop shop policy. Labor does not support the one-stop shop policy of the government. Labor members also note that the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014 has not passed the Senate, leaving bilateral agreements with states and territories in limbo. Labor does not believe that the evidence provided to the committee supports the view that the one-stop shop approach will lead to greater consistency or efficiency across jurisdictions. Finally, in respect of the recommendations, Labor members believe that under recommendation 2 the term 'risk based terms of reference' should also be defined.

In summary, Labor does not believe that the case has been made to support the one-stop shop proposal, nor do we believe that there has been an adequate amount of evidence or weight put on the value of our environment to the benefit of the whole community. Nevertheless, there are 13 recommendations in that report, many of which we agree with; and, if there are ways of simplifying processes, Labor is always welcome and supportive of doing that.

**The SPEAKER:** The allotted time for statements on this report has expired. Does the honourable member for Mitchell wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a later occasion?

**Mr HAWKE** (Mitchell) (10:18): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### Reference to Federation Chamber

**Mr HAWKE** (Mitchell) (10:18): I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Child Care

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (10:19): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) Family Day Care (FDC) is a flexible, quality early education program in Australia that:

- (i) provides flexible programs that cater to the needs of thousands of working parents;
- (ii) operates under the National Quality Framework; and
- (iii) currently has the capacity to care and educate children in their own homes; and

(b) the Government:

(i) is cutting \$157 million and implementing changes to the Community Support Program (CSP) that will remove the funding of over 80 per cent of FDC services around Australia; and

(ii) informed the FDC sector that the program changes would only impact new applicants, then introduced a budget proposal to apply the new guidelines to all services; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) genuinely consult with FDC providers about what sensible rule changes are needed, if any; and
- (b) re-instate CSP funding for all FDC services currently funded under the program.

The benefits of family day care cannot be understated. Family day care provides flexible, quality education programs in Australia and is already utilised by 94,000 families and over 130,000 children. It is delivered by 14,000 educators, 99 per cent of whom are women. In Australia, most family day care operates as small businesses run by women who support other women returning to work or education. These family day care services are monitored and supervised by family day care coordination services around the country. Family day care educators provide access to affordable programs that cater to the needs of thousands of working families, including families who have non-standard work hours and rely on the flexibility family day care.

Family day care services are particularly important to regional communities such as the many small towns in my electorate of Bendigo. This is because in these centres there is less available long day care. In many regional towns, particularly the smaller ones, they may not have long day care services. Hence the reason that family day care is a good alternative. In my electorate of Bendigo family day care provides services to families living in small towns such as Newstead and Taradale, as well as the area of Harcourt and other small towns like Heathcote. These families would not otherwise have access to the limited childcare services available in larger towns just up the road. Family day care services provide a cost-effective option to people who are working part-time and who may not be able to afford or need long day care services. As stipulated by the national quality framework, family day care provides the low staff-to-child ratios that are required, in a homelike environment which is critical to supporting children and nurturing them at their youngest ages. The benefits of supporting high-quality childcare has now been well-established not just by experts in the field but also by economists and by our education system. What we need as a country is our government's support for a wide range of services to support our youngest Australians.

We need a well-funded, well resourced family day care network to underpin a strong early childhood education sector. It provides an alternative for those who cannot access long day care services. The implications of the cuts proposed by the government cannot be underestimated. As I said, there are about 130,000 children currently in the care of around 14,000 family day care workers, and the cuts of \$150 million proposed in the budget will remove 80 per cent of the services that help coordinate and ensure the quality of care that is required. This means that educators will either have to close their small business or seek to develop a relationship with the remaining schemes that are in operation under scarce resources. To ensure quality within the family day care system, we need these networks to exist.

I am sure that speakers from the government side will outline problems that have occurred. I understand those problems but, rather than axing the whole system, we need to support these services and ensure the quality that

remains. The cuts proposed in the budget will deny access to a diverse range of childcare options. It will mean that vulnerable children will have less opportunity to attend formal, organised family day care early childhood education. Cutting funding is another example of how this Liberal government is totally out of touch with the needs of families and with the needs of women, particularly those in regional areas like mine. The implications of these cuts on workers and families cannot be underestimated, and that is why I call on the government to reinstate the funding, to consult broadly with the sector and to put forward real reforms that will only strengthen the family day care sector.

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

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

**Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (10:24):** I am a strong advocate and supporter of family day care in my electorate of Dobell and the Central Coast. With over 38,000 commuters daily leaving the region for work, I understand the need for reputable and reliable childcare services, and family day care makes up part of this important service. I know firsthand the value of childcare providers, especially family day care, better than most, as a working mother of two boys. My sons attended day care from six months right until they finished school. I greatly admire and appreciate the dedication, the patience and the enthusiasm of childcare staff. Their genuine love of their chosen profession meant that I knew that my children were in safe hands.

I regularly meet with Child and Family Services Wyong Shire Inc., an FDC in Dobell who have discussed with me the impacts of changes in this federal funding on their organisation. This is an organisation that provides a critical service to my electorate of Dobell. This organisation is well supported, diligently run and proactive in ensuring its financial sustainability. To ensure they can remain sustainable in the future following the implementation of changes to the Community Support Program funding, they have been responsible and assertive in making hard choices and changes to their organisation to ensure their continued success, and for that I commend them. In my role as their elected representative, I aim to do as much as I can to support them with these changes, to be a voice for them when needed and to provide practical solutions for the way forward.

I feel that, in my role not only as a politician but as a supporter and previous user of childcare services, it is my responsibility to address incorrect and irresponsible statements suggested in this motion. This issue is not about cutting funding to family day care; it is about being fiscally responsible and sustainable while providing help and services to those people that make our community what it is.

The intent of the Community Support Program funding is to provide operational support to organisations to assist them to establish or maintain services in areas where the needs of the community are unable to be met. It was not designed to be used as an income stream to prop up unsustainable services. These changes mean that equity and fairness for all providers are experienced across Australia.

A 2012 audit showed that 71 per cent of Community Support Program funding was going to FDC services, despite them caring for only 10 per cent of the children in approved care. This is inequitable, especially since the intention for the funding was for operators in regional and remote areas, and now the majority of family day care services are in metropolitan regions and not in regional areas such as Dobell. New FDC services in metropolitan areas have grown 74 per cent since 2011, with FDC services in regional areas decreasing.

This change in funding does not impact a service operator's ability to open or expand an FDC service, nor does it impact on the ability for a service to provide care for families. This funding is not received by the educators or the parents but by the operators of the service. Funding remains available; however, it is now capped to ensure fairness. It also aligns the family day care sector with other service types, such as long day care and outside-school-hours care, who are required to adhere to more stringent and rigid regulations. It is essential that we have a strong, robust family day care sector if we are to successfully deliver a childcare system that is flexible, accessible and affordable.

The change to this funding was not considered lightly. A business development package was developed with peak bodies in the family day care sector, and there are procedures in place to make this transition as smooth as possible. As a result of growth in the family day care sector, the Community Support Program budget has been exceeded, and it is as simple as that. It is about balancing the budget and making sure that the operators who are doing the right thing are recognised and supported and that those doing the wrong thing are made accountable. It is not about cutting funding.

Consultation and the provision of an open and transparent dialogue have been a large component of these changes. This engagement with family day care providers has not changed. Neither has the fact that the Community Support Program funding is unsustainable in its current format and has, unfortunately, been subjected to robbing by a few, to the detriment of operators who do the right thing. Family day care is an essential service that I will continue to support, especially for my electorate of Dobell.

**Ms HALL** (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (10:30): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Bendigo, and I congratulate her on raising this because it is a really important issue. Unlike the member for Dobell, I acknowledge that there has been \$157 million cut from the program. No matter how you say it, \$157 million ripped out a family day care is a cut. Family day care is a grass roots childcare service. It is the most affordable child care and the easiest to access. At a time when the government is focusing on child care, it is important to acknowledge the impact that a \$157 million cut will have on child care. I also call on the government to reverse that cut when it is considering its childcare package. Family day care availability will be impacted on and the costs of childcare bills will increase. That is important to me and my electorate, as it is to all other members and their electorates, and it will have the greatest impact on regional areas.

I would like to run through the new facts and figures in relation to how this cut will impact on the Shortland electorate. It is one of the more disadvantaged electorates within Australia. These figures are approved by the ABS. This grassroots service of family day care provides 165,000 children across Australia with child care. On the Central Coast of New South Wales in Lake Macquarie it provides child care to 900 children. Many of those children receive their family day care from these organisations which support 98,000 families in Australia and 719 families in Lake Macquarie. This support enables the parents of those children to receive family day care for their children so that they can go to work or undertake study, just as this government is calling on.

This cut is really mean-spirited. I think that those on the other side need to acknowledge that and reverse this decision to cut funding through the Family Support Program, a program that is designed to address disadvantage. The areas of the greatest disadvantage are those that depend on family day care the most. These are also areas where there are high levels of domestic violence, single-parent families and unemployment. These are all issues that impact on my electorate.

Lake Macquarie City Council, which is the provider in the Lake Macquarie part of my electorate, will lose \$300,000 from the Community Support Program from 30 June this year when the Department of Education will stop all community support contracts for family day care providers. Then they must reapply for funding. Family day care in Lake Macquarie is provided by Lake Macquarie council and currently operates with an average of 261 places. This is equivalent to 6.5 childcare centres. This is something that we cannot afford to lose. It is cost-neutral, and the council relies on approximately \$300,000 to deliver this program.

It was interesting to hear the member for Dobell speak before me on Wyong Shire. I have spoken to Child and Family Services, and they are not happy about this cut. The member for Dobell talked about hard choices. Well, these are hard choices that are impacting on the ability of this service to provide child care to children across the area. Over 600 families in this area rely on family day care, and it is an area of great disadvantage.

I call on this Abbott government to reverse this decision. The government is looking at child care. Let's make it affordable, let's make it accessible and let's reverse this decision. *(Time expired)*

**Mr LAMING** (Bowman) (10:35): Talk about yesterday's debate! The Community Support Program argument has been around for 12 months. Just last week, we actually had a Productivity Commission report deliver one of the most extensive analyses of the childcare sector in Australia, and it is absolutely absent from the debate today. Why would we detain this place for half an hour to debate the topic of child care and ignore the obvious—that this is a coalition government prepared to look after Australian families and access to child care? We get a motion from an opposition member—whom I do regard—about last year's issue, the Community Support Program.

This has been around for 12 months. It could have been debated, litigated and relitigated on any day of the parliamentary session, but we get it immediately after the Productivity Commission report is dropped. It is clearly a smokescreen. These are an opposition with no idea about the future of child care. They have no idea about the affordability issues created by their own reforms, no idea about the variable access to childcare services that exists in this country between inner metro expensive childcare provision and outer metro, with, in many cases, oversupply and a glut of places, and then regional areas, where often setting up child care is not even viable.

They are the big questions that we commissioned the Productivity Commission to consider, and that is what we were hoping we could have a national debate on: this very complex area where we effectively now recognise that child care is the first part of education. The problem is that we invented government departments before we realised just how important child care is. Well, we know that now, and we have an education department struggling to support child care, a federal government unsure of what more it can do apart from paying rebates and benefits, and then ultimately a realisation that you cannot raise the quality of childcare interventions without increasing wages. There is not an easy way to pay parents a rebate and guarantee that high-quality child care is adequately remunerated.

So the challenge here for the Productivity Commission—not an easy one; let us be honest—was to look at these four areas of access, affordability, quality and of course wages and remuneration for young childcare educators

and to get all of that right. It will not be easy, but dabbling in the community support package—the one area that, frankly, was being misused and abused—is not the way to look at this challenge. What we had were family day care centres doing what was obvious: applying for this money because they could, applying because there was a Labor government unable to make a tough decision on community support, and basically getting twice as much as was fair. Let us remember that they are already paid \$5.47 per hour per place compared to \$4.10 in a long-day-care centre. Then they are applying for an extra 70c to \$1.42 on top of that. So clearly we are not addressing the issues of lack of access; we are not necessarily addressing the issues of flexibility; we are not seeing any new centres being set up where they are not viable; and we are seeing nearly 70 per cent of the Community Support Program taken by just 10 per cent of the providers! How is that fair?

I say to the opposition: tell me about all the childcare operators that set up in regional and remote Australia under your government thanks to intelligent use of this package? A big zero! They cannot point to that evidence at all. The Community Support Program just became a cross-subsidisation mechanism because it was available to family day care centres even though there was another one around the corner. These were tough decisions that a Labor government would never make. This was the seepage of money away from where it is meant to be spent, for the families who most need it, to whoever filled out the form successfully. That is not going to lead to a better childcare system.

I am grateful that we have gone to the Productivity Commission and said, 'Give us a platform to start the debate.' It is not the government's model; it is the Productivity Commission's report. It is just a starting point. But what is obvious today is that these are a federal opposition unable to engage in that debate in any sort of meaningful or constructive way, when they come here and simply relitigate last year's issue about a Community Support Program, which they are unhappy with because they knocked on a couple of doors and found that someone or some body complained that they were not getting enough cross-subsidisation anymore. Well, I tell you what: the sector is way more important than that. To have a federal opposition trying to stand up for the continued support of family day care in areas where it is not utterly essential—regional, remote or where otherwise the service is not viable—simply shows a Labor Party that is not interested in the complex needs of Australian families.

Australian families want to know, first, that the most disadvantaged families in Australia can get access to child care and, second, that many of those poor parents who otherwise would not be getting those children ready for school will have a chance for their children to have some sort of formal preschool education. Third, if you are working shiftwork or long hours, you want to know that there is a service in that remote area, but the misuse of this Community Support Program ensured that there was not. That is what the Labor Party let down in government. They have continued to oppose it from their position in opposition.

**Ms OWENS** (Parramatta) (10:40): It is good to hear the member for Bowman say that the government now know, 18 months into their term, about the importance of child care, because for the last 18 months they have been ripping the guts out of it. In fact, they have cut child care by \$1 billion over the last 18 months. That equates to \$1,287 for every family that uses care. I say to the member for Bowman: this is not last year's issue. The parliament might have dealt with it last year. The parliament might have dealt with cutting a billion dollars out of child care in MYEFO and the budget. It might be in the past for them. But, for families that go to work today and put their children into child care, it is today's issue and tomorrow's issue and next week's issue and the week after's issue: \$1 billion cut from child care over the last 18 months.

The Prime Minister claimed a couple of weeks ago that 'good government starts today'—on day 521 of the government's term. Well, for child care, it still has not started. The Prime Minister also said at the same time that their focus would be on families, that they had discovered how important families are and the reality for families. Well, as far as families are concerned, the focus is still not on them, and it will not be on them until these cuts are well and truly reversed.

With the government, the old saying, 'It's not what they say; it's what they do,' is as true as it could ever be. There probably has not been a government in the history of Australia where it is more true that you cannot pay attention to what they say at all, you cannot pay attention to the rhetoric; you have to look at what they do. And let us look at what they have done for child care: a \$450 million cut to outside-school-hours care in MYEFO, a \$235 million cut to the targeted childcare benefit that helps low- and middle-income families, a \$105 million cut to the childcare rebate, cancellation of federal funding for all Indigenous child and family centres—all Indigenous child and family centres. These are not something that belongs in the past but something that affects those families today. They have cut programs to increase childcare places, including the accessibility fund. The HECS-HELP benefit which includes subsidies for early childhood education degrees has been cut by \$87 million, and federal funding for preschool is uncertain from next year, so that \$1 billion does not include the cuts that may be coming there. These total \$1 billion in cuts to child care over the last year and a half.

The Productivity Commission report is a good thing. I understand that the draft came in in October last year, so we have been waiting a good year and a half since the election for the Productivity Commission report, and it is a good thing that it has been done. On this side of the House, we are well and truly looking forward to going through that report very, very carefully and working cooperatively with the government to improve services for families.

But I do say that, whenever you look at the rhetoric of the government, you have to look at what they have done. It is not just the cuts they have made; it is the incompetence that they have displayed in implementing those changes. In the family day care sector, for example, they originally said before the election that the changes would not affect any family day care providers that were already in existence. And then, when they did it, they did include those family day care centres. In fact, in Western Sydney, Family Day Care Australia says that all family day care services currently in existence in Western Sydney which look after individual educators will lose their funding—all of them, every single one, in Western Sydney. In spite of the words of the government, what they said, which was that their funding would be exempted from the cuts they were making, was not true. What they did was announce cuts to those family day care providers. Every single one in Western Sydney will lose its funding—every single one.

Then they found out, as governments do, that a small number of people in that sector were rorting the system. So they introduced new rules that prevented a family day care educator from claiming funding for their own children. Then, the day before that was due to be implemented, they realised that mistake and reversed that decision—leaving small businesses and families scrambling to figure out what they would do, only to have that appalling decision reversed the day before. The level of incompetence matches the savageness of the cuts, and I urge the government to reverse the decision.

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (10:45): I rise to support the member for Bendigo's motion. I agree with the member for Bendigo that family day care forms a vital part of Australia's diverse childcare mix. Over the past year, I have visited several family day care services in my electorate. Without fail, the educators are dedicated and enthusiastic, their premises are well-set up and professional and the children benefit from personalised attention in a home environment. That is why it is disappointing that we are in the situation we are today, as a result of Labor totally dropping the ball.

The Community Support Program, or CSP, is an operational payment paid direct to family day care services. Its original intent was to help childcare services get established in areas where they might otherwise be unviable, such as disadvantaged, regional and remote communities—many of which of course are in my area of Leichhardt throughout the Cape York region. Labor, over a three-year period, allowed the CSP allocated budget to blow out by almost \$200 million—a sign, I guess, of standard Labor budgetary initiatives—and, of course, took no action whatsoever to address it. Even worse, they ignored an audit which showed that family day care was receiving 71 per cent of the total CSP budget. This was driven very much by a union organisation called United Voice, which seemed to get the overwhelming majority of the funding even though they only had about 10 per cent of the kids in their care—and, of course, others who were not affiliated with them missed out very, very badly. How could they possibly, under any circumstances, think this was sustainable?

Yet again, we are left to clean up Labor's mess. Yes, we are changing eligibility criteria for family day care services for CSP funding from 1 July this year. Support will be targeted to services in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities to ensure funding is better targeted to where it is most needed. I am not pretending that these changes are not significant. In my electorate of Leichhardt, two regional FDC services in Weipa and Cooktown were to have been very adversely affected as the guidelines did not take into account the fact that they are 650 kilometres apart on a predominantly unsealed road. Fortunately, the then Assistant Minister for Education, Sussan Ley, came with me to visit to both these services, and she recognised that it was impossible for parents to only access one of these valuable services. We were able to ask the Department to work with both the services, helping them to put in place a business plan that would result in their long term sustainability. In November, Weipa Family Day Care announced that it would not be closing its doors, which is great news for that community. I understand that Cooktown are still working through the process and I am hopeful that they will be able to resolve their financial challenges.

There is no doubt that there are many dedicated people working in family day care. Unfortunately, it is also true that much of the overspend has been driven by noncompliance by FDC services. Here, however, I would like to caution that we do not 'throw the baby out with the bathwater'. In Cairns, Kara Preston from Kara Kingfisher Creek Family Day Care wrote to me, as her situation illustrates how important it is to have some flexibility. Kara's husband is a full-time serving defence member in our region. They have two girls, aged six and nine, and occasionally Kara needs to find care for them so she can attend compulsory personal development training of a minimum of 10 hours a year. During these times, she accesses another family day care educator. Kara says that, in

a bid to crack down on what is known as 'child-swapping', the government is penalising those who genuinely, on occasion, need to get care for their own kids. She says:

While I understand that the government has to crack down on fraud within the sector I don't understand why they are labelling all of us fraudsters.

Why doesn't the government close down the offending FDC Schemes and deregister the offending educators?

I was pleased to hear from Minister Morrison that the introduction of these changes has been postponed, and I welcome further consideration with the FDC sector to avoid any unintended consequences for legitimate operators and families who depend on them. I have also written to the minister and offered to host a roundtable for the FDC educators such as Kara Preston in Cairns. At the end of the day, we need a childcare system that is more affordable and targeted and will benefit all Australian families. Taxpayer resources must be spent in the best way to enable families to stay at work, get back to work and give their children the best possible start in life.

**Mr CONROY** (Charlton) (10:50): I rise proudly in support of the member for Bendigo's excellent motion around supporting family day care. What we have seen on the other side has been a litany of misrepresentation and untruths; a desperate and sad attack on the workforce of these centres; union bashing at its extreme; and an attack on a government, the previous government, that has been out of power for 18 months. This government seriously thinks that it can skate by by attacking a government that is well and truly in the past, instead of taking responsibility for its own actions. It says a lot about a group of people that they are attacking some of the lowest paid and most devoted professionals in our workforce—that is, our childcare workers—because that is what you do when you attack the union that represents them.

The truth is that the debate around family day care is embedded in the broader debate about what this government's agenda is on child care, and this government's agenda is to cut over \$1 billion from it. We heard a previous speaker talking about the Productivity Commission's review and the important contribution that will make. That is absolutely fine, but why cut \$1 billion before you receive that report? That shows this government's lack of commitment to the sector, and it is a cut that is in clear contravention of a promise given before the last election, when the then opposition leader, now the current Prime Minister—for this week at least—wrote to the childcare centres and said, 'I am determined to help make child care more accessible and affordable for parents,' in black and white—in writing. We are supposed to believe what he writes rather than what he says. It is a clear broken promise when you look at last year's budget.

The tragedy is that this will have a massive impact on families around this country. Ninety-eight thousand families use family day care—that is 165,000 children—and it employs 25,000 workers. The \$157 million cut we are talking about represents a \$1,500 increase in childcare costs for the average family in this system—a \$1,500 increase. That is a massive and outrageous impost when the Prime Minister made a clear promise before the last election.

We are talking about regional areas. Well, I am proud to represent a regional area, and the impact will be felt very keenly in my area. Lake Macquarie City Council oversees a system of family day care centres that will suffer; 719 families with 900 kids in family day care will suffer; 260 staff in those centres will suffer; and 90 small businesses will suffer. The 'party of small business' over there is attacking small business as we speak.

The truth is that the government just does not get it. We have heard the new minister, Minister Morrison, talking about child care and have seen him being all cuddly and having his feet in the ocean at Cronulla, trying to reshape his image. He is very keen to talk about the workforce participation benefits of child care, and that is absolutely right. But I have not heard him once talk about the early childhood education aspect of child care. Study after study has shown that the first five years of a child's life are the most important in giving them a start in life—in giving them education. This government just does not address that issue.

We have also heard attacks on the roting. Well, their changes will not end the rorts. What they will do is assist the fly-by-nighters. They will result in a race to the bottom for family day care, and it will be the centres doing the right thing that will suffer the most.

We have also heard slippery weasel words that this is a change in criteria. That is all it is—a change in criteria! The truth is that their own federal Department of Education has estimated that 80 per cent of family day care centres currently receiving support through this program will be denied assistance—80 per cent. That is a cut in anyone's language. Eighty per cent of family day care centres will lose out because of this \$157 million cut, part of the broader \$1 billion cut to child care represented by this government.

So, yes, the Productivity Commission report was very important, and I am keenly looking forward to seeing the government's response, but they are starting a long way behind. They are starting \$1 billion behind. They are starting behind with an attack on regional families, on regional kids, stopping kids in my area getting the best start in life. I am proud to stand up for those communities. I will fight long and hard to support child care in my region

of extreme childcare shortage. We are not the inner city; we are a regional area where people work long hours and need this childcare assistance. So I will fight for my region, I will fight for my families and I will fight for my kids getting the best possible assistance. All those on the other side care about is cutting funding from this, bashing the workforce and bashing previous governments. They are all excuses and no answers.

**Mr BROUGH** (Fisher) (10:55): Anyone sitting in the gallery or listening to this broadcast today must wonder, as the ball gets batted from one side of the chamber to the other, this one blaming and putting figures up, what this is all about. Of course, it should be about the education of children. It should be about participation. It should be about ensuring the taxpayer dollar is actually well used. In other words, when you put \$1 of taxpayers' money in on behalf of the Australian community, you have an expectation that it will be used in an efficient, effective and honest way. We heard the member for Charlton and others this morning almost wave away that fraud is somehow—I will not say forgivable—just one of those consequences that occurs with Commonwealth funding. I used to be the minister and introduced a range of fraud detection because every dollar we spend in this area, like in every other aspect of government, should be used as productively as we possibly can.

The motion refers to consultation, and I want to thank April and the early childhood educators on the Sunshine Coast who met with me before Christmas. We sat down in the backyard with the kids there and chatted about the issues. They were as disturbed as I was to learn the extent of some of the fraud that is being perpetrated in this area, because every dollar that goes in an inappropriate manner means that there is a child, a parent and a family that need those resources, all of which are limited because Commonwealth taxes are actually limited. There is no money tree. The money has to come out of one Australian's pocket to go to another, and that includes for things such as early childhood education and child care. Those parents and I sat down and worked through. The undertaking was that we would take back to government their suggestions about how this could be done better. In other words, to ensure the safeguards are in place for children to be cared for.

I come at this not only as an MP and former minister but also as a parent who over the years has used family day care and long daycare centres, who has seen the argument between the families who claim that, if you are a for-profit centre, that somehow is a lesser value than those that are not for profit. My experience is that the overwhelming majority of people in this sector do it because they love the job, they love the children they work with and they want to make a difference.

Yes, there are a lot of small businesses in this sector. The family daycare sector is one that is actually meeting the market because it has the flexibility which is now replicated in our workforce. No longer do we all work nine to five Monday to Friday. These families that have other families' children in their homes do so and provide the flexibility that those parents need. It gives them the chance to connect with the labour force. It gives the children the chance to have the education that the member for Charlton spoke of. All of those things are possible but cannot be done without the right checks and balances in place and cannot be done without ensuring that quality of service is maintained.

I will speak briefly on a couple of the points that were raised here today. A lot has been said by those opposite of the \$157 million. \$157 million is a lot of money—it is more than most of us can ever dream of—but in political terms it seems to be just chicken feed. But the reality is that buys a lot of child care, and in this particular case the \$157 million was a Labor commitment that was not ongoing, so that these centres and businesses could plan for the future, but a sugar hit of three years. What Minister Morrison is about to undertake after the Productivity Commission is the hard work that is required in this area.

It is simply not good enough for either side of this chamber to stand in here and say, 'We spent more taxpayers' money than the other side.' What we ask is: what are the gains and improvements? For all of the extra increases in CCB and rebate that the Labor Party introduced there was no increase to the productivity of the workforce participation rate as a result of that. So why do we do it?

Let us ensure that the taxpayers' money we will spend in this place goes towards ensuring that we have the most productive workforce, the highest quality education, money not wasted and that we work together to ensure families have the flexibility and options they need. It is about choice: the choice to stay at home and look after your own children, and the choice to use the services of a family day-care early-childhood educator or a long-day-care centre. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms O'NEIL** (Hotham) (11:00): I am very proud to be standing in the House today defending family day care from the savage cuts that have been implemented by this government. I want to start by saying how angry I am on behalf of my community, and the families who live in Hotham, for the \$1 billion we are seeing cut from child-care supports in this country and, specifically, the \$157 million going right to the heart of the family day-care provision.

For those in the community or watching at home who do not know, family day care is the provision of day care in the setting of someone's family home. It is usually a mum whose own children have started school. The mum takes in kids, using her vast experience in child care and early childhood education, and looks after other people's children from that community.

You can imagine, from what I have described, that two of the most fantastic things about family day care are the flexibility that mums can provide, when they have just a family home and a small number of kids to look after, and the affordability of it, which is important to so many families around the country.

What this cut being implemented by the coalition means is that a family with a child in family day care will see costs rise from somewhere around \$1,200 to \$1,800 a year. This is a serious amount of money. It is the sum of money that will drive a lot of families accessing family day care to cheaper alternatives.

I am particularly passionate about family day care because we have used family day care in my family. I work odd hours as a member of parliament. My partner, at the time, was working shift work and we had a little baby. We used family day care because of the benefits that made it such a great care option for so many families. We needed someone who would be able to look after our child, a little bit, out of hours. Our son at the time was very young, and we really loved the idea of him being looked after by one carer in someone's family home.

It is for these reasons that there are thousands of families right across the country who are relying on family day care to fit in with their needs. What we are seeing today is that flexibility and affordability being cut and under attack by the cuts being executed here. It is pretty concerning, because we are getting mixed messages from this government. It is not, though, the first time we have seen it.

We saw the minister on television yesterday talking in very soothing tones about what he is planning to do on child care. At the same time, we see cuts. The minister talks about the need for flexibility and affordability, yet he makes a cut of \$157 million to the most flexible and affordable type of child care in our system.

Family day care is good for families. Gone are the days when people had one person in the household working from nine till five and the other person staying at stay home looking after the kids. Families do not look like that very much anymore. What we see is people working very unusual hours. With the increasing casualisation of the workforce in Australia, lots of families are having to deal with situations where parents work on the weekends or after what would be normal working hours. We also know that the majority of Australian families now see both parents doing some level of work. This is why we see a growing need in the community for flexible and affordable child care. Yet what are the government doing? They are making cuts to the very type of child care that people have a growing need for.

Family day care is great for Australian women. We know that there are lots of mums who want to go back to work once they have had their children and we should be trying to help them do that, if that is what they want to do. We know that under today's child-care settings a mum who goes back to work on the minimum wage full-time will earn somewhere around \$3.50 to \$5 for every hour she works. At the very same time, this cut is seeing the cost associated with going back to work increase—effectively, we are making it harder for mums to go back to work when they want to do that. This is absolutely moving in the wrong direction, and that is why we oppose it.

We hear rhetoric on the other side of the House that these people care about families, but what do we see in their actions? We see them cut the school kids bonus, out-of-hours care, child-care rebate and family tax benefit—and try to put a new tax on going to the GP. Now there is \$1 billion of cuts in child care. They have lost the trust of the Australian community. We do not trust them on these child-care cuts.

**Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (11:06):** I would imagine every parent in Australia would agree that quality child care is best when they have to work or study. It is critically important. The only care available while studying for my degree, with no extended family around, was family day care.

There is an absolute necessity for government support to continue family day-care services well into the future. At the moment, that could be a risk. It is so typical of Labor to shout out their throwaway lines about funding cuts. Just where do they think the money is coming from? Is it well targeted? Does it meet the criteria of community need for remote and regional child care?

The purpose of the Community Support Program is to assist with operational expenses for eligible child-care services and improve access in areas where it is difficult to meet the needs of that community—not as family day-care financial income. Family day-care funding has not been available for parents' own children for many years. This is not new, and Labor is spreading falsehoods that the current changes have introduced this. This program can set up assistance for new family day care, ongoing support for day-to-day expenses, and grants to help the coordinators support the educators and actually achieve the outcomes of better care. This, of course, is an investment in the future of our children and must be done in a thorough, ethical and businesslike manner. After all, it is taxpayers' dollars that are being spent.

In 2012 the Australian National Audit Office recommended that the CSP be targeted because family day care accounted for 71 per cent of the total expenditure but only 10 per cent of the children in approved care. This is a red-flag statistic and should have alerted the previous government that there was a problem. Labor say the problems in this sector are for the current government. Have they no idea about legacy debt? It just shows their lack of financial understanding. Childcare costs increased by more than 50 per cent under the last government, and this did not translate into more parents in the workforce or in study. Something is seriously wrong, and it must be addressed, especially as the current figures show a still increasing demand yet not increasing work participation.

Yes, the eligibility criteria for family day care will be tighter, and this is aimed towards better assistance availability for regional and remote areas and areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, where this service may not otherwise be viable. That is the aim of the program. This is the most logical solution, and it will truly assist parents in affected areas like Gilmore to return to study or find work. That is the aim—assisting parents in areas where child care is difficult to get. It should also be noted that family day care providers already receiving the sustainability assistance will not be affected by the proposed changes due to the different payment and calculation methods for this funding.

The Australian government is determined to have a sustainable system of child care that is flexible to help shift-workers or people with unusual study patterns; affordable so parents really feel it is an economic choice to return to work; and accessible, particularly in regional areas where there is not a day care centre just around the corner. We must make sure our child care operates in a system that is sustainable, and it is reassuring to see the recommendations of the Productivity Commission and how they too may add to the formula to assist families and children in our community. The cap in funding will at least give free-of-charge coordinators a fixed budget. Their planning can be more directed and they can provide the care that is so essential to communities just like those in Gilmore.

The business development package is an essential part of this application of eligibility assessment. While I know the family day care service in the Shoalhaven is one that could be used as an example of a well-run community service business, there are others without that systemised approach, and the development package should be a tremendous asset for their ongoing future. We have a model of educator excellence, and this can be repeated in many other areas. It is essential that this funding is specifically directed to families and children in regional areas rather than in urban areas. Family day care is an essential part of the Community Support Program. We on this side absolutely recognise the importance of it. We want it to go forward to the future. We want it to be affordable. We want it to be available. At the current levels it is actually sucking dollars out of the budget. In a couple of years it will be gone and that particular program will not be available to parents.

Debate adjourned.

### **Greste, Mr Peter**

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (11:11): I move:

That this House:

- (1) celebrates the release of Mr Peter Greste by the Egyptian Government;
- (2) commends the Greste family on its courage, resilience and grace for more than 400 days;
- (3) congratulates the Australian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister on their unrelenting pursuit of Mr Greste's cause;
- (4) commends the efforts of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Egypt under the direction of Mr Justin Brown and Ambassador Dr Ralph King;
- (5) thanks the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry for their role in Mr Greste's release;
- (6) calls for the immediate release of Mr Greste's colleagues, Mr Baher Mohamed and Mr Mohamed Fadel Fahmy;
- (7) recognises the many thousands of ordinary Australians and others around the world that showed their support to the Greste family during the past year; and
- (8) notes that 'Telling the truth is not terrorism and Journalism is not a crime'.

How wonderful it is that we can debate this motion today. It is a celebration—a celebration of the release and safe return of an Australian citizen, Peter Greste, held prisoner for more than 400 days for doing his job. It is a celebration of an event that draws together the fundamentals of what is good and right and just about our nation. And, importantly, it is a celebration of family—that one underpinning rock of Australian society.

Peter's work as a foreign correspondent was a role with risk always attendant. However, it is journalists who educate and inform us about our world. Peter's arrest and extraordinary trial were so contrary to justice as we know it that they built a groundswell of opinion across Australia and the world, and across political lines. When I

received that first, typically modest email from Juris and Lois, it was hard to comprehend what was happening. Peter had been imprisoned and was in trouble, they said, but just how much trouble we were soon to discover. In the weeks and months that followed, the phone calls and the emails had their highs and lows but never ended in any suggestion of defeat.

By now the basic details of Peter's arrest, incarceration and trial are well known; his first moments of confusion when strangers burst into the hotel room on 29 December; his disbelief at being taken to prison; the months in fearful legal wrangling; followed by what Peter describes as equating to being punched by Mike Tyson, when he was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, and surely it takes a worldwide community of like-minded brothers and sisters to free a man who was doing his job, reporting what was happening in a country in crisis.

Peter's arrest triggered immediate action within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, from the minister and from the Australian Ambassador to Egypt, Dr Ralph King—action that required careful and adroit diplomacy. The challenges were significant. Regional Middle East politics were involved. The political situation in Egypt was charged by its recent history. Developing countries generally do not have the strong and robust institutions of justice that we take for granted. Egypt is no exception. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and her department were at their best. It was a carefully planned and constructed response that produced the best result we could have hoped for. I congratulate the minister for her remarkable work. Her handling of this event ensured Peter's release sooner rather than later. She is an outstanding foreign minister, of whom all Australians can be proud.

Presidents and prime ministers also spoke out. Hundreds of journalists around the world covered their mouths with tape and uploaded their photos to social media sites. Thousands of ordinary citizens of the world blogged and tweeted and emailed. And President el-Sisi and the foreign minister of Egypt thankfully kept their minds and their phone lines open to the entreaties of our government.

Importantly, in this place this was a bipartisan issue. I want to pay tribute not just to the minister and members on this side of the House—all of whom did so much—but also to the opposition for their measured and careful role. There is so much about our own nation and our own challenges that demand political debate with a generosity of spirit, absent of barefaced politics and spin. Importantly, we saw this during this difficult time. It should happen more often.

Finally, let me talk about family because with Peter, Lois, Juris, Mike and Andrew we have a remarkable family who came to Peter's aid and did not waver until he was home. Australians watched with enormous admiration as a family fought for him. Lois and Juris, you can be rightfully proud. Together you are a magnificent team. You made us proud to be Australian. In their initial email to me, Juris and Lois said:

We believe this matter is not only about the unjust detention of an Australian citizen but an assault on the free functioning of the press. If we are to uphold Australia's commitment to the notion of a free press being the backbone of a healthy democracy, we should also support that concept throughout the world as a fundamental human rights principle.

Telling the truth is not terrorism. Journalism is not a crime. I commend this motion to House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent):** Is there a seconder to the motion?

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

**Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (09:55):** I am pleased to speak in support of this great motion, which congratulates all those concerned with the release of Peter Greste. Peter Greste went to al-Jazeera's Cairo bureau in December 2013 to cover for a colleague. He expected to be there for a couple of weeks. The result was a horror 400 days in an Egyptian jail—an unjust, demoralising ordeal for someone who was simply doing his job. Peter Greste is an award-winning international correspondent. He has worked in Kabul, Belgrade, London, Mexico, Santiago, the Middle East and Africa.

On 29 December 2013, he and his colleagues Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and Baher Mohamed were arrested by Egyptian police and accused of reporting views which were 'damaging to national security in Egypt'. The reality is that Peter Greste and his al-Jazeera colleagues were pawns in a political dispute concerning Middle Eastern politics. At his trial, there was a clear lack of evidence to substantiate the charges that were brought against Greste and his colleagues. We saw the farcical incidents of the prosecutor presenting video evidence of alleged contraventions of Egyptian law, when the videos were clearly filmed in countries other than Egypt. Nevertheless, despite the inconsistencies with the evidence, despite the misgivings of the trial, Greste and his colleagues were convicted and sentenced on 23 June 2014. Greste and Fahmy received seven-year sentences and Mohamed a 10-year sentence.

In the wake of the sentences there was justified international condemnation, and the international campaign under the banner of 'Journalism is not a crime' thankfully began throughout the world. The campaign received wonderful support internationally through social media and through human rights groups; through the work of

journalists supporting their colleagues whom they saw as being unjustly targeted and jailed; through the work of international organisations, in particular the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights; and through the work of many, many colleagues of the parliament and the bipartisan support for the release and the overturning of the convictions.

I want to pay tribute in particular to the very dedicated and professional staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Egypt and Australia who, we all know, worked around the clock and provided invaluable advice not only to the minister but also to Peter's family and to those working to secure their release. You deserve the praise and thanks of all Australians. I thank all of our parliamentary colleagues who joined the campaign, from all sides of politics, to work to secure Peter's release. I pay tribute to Peter's family for their unstinting loyalty and their hard work and dedication to their son and brother.

We also do not forget Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed. Although they have been released on bail, their retrial begins today. As we have said from the beginning, being a journalist is not a crime. Journalists should not be put on trial or locked up for doing their job. We continue to campaign and urge the Egyptian government to release Peter Greste's two colleagues, Baher Mohamed and Mohamed Fahmy. Our thoughts also go to the hundreds of journalists around the world who remain imprisoned. So long as their freedom is diminished, so too is our own.

**Mr CRAIG KELLY** (Hughes) (11:21): It gives me great pleasure to join in speaking on this motion to celebrate the release of Peter Greste from prison in Egypt. Peter Greste's courage, determination and strength of character have shone through this. To retain his dignity through this experience is something we commend him for. I read that, during this most difficult period of his life, he said he spent time meditating to help him get through what was undoubtedly a harrowing experience.

While we in this country stand here and talk about the importance of freedom of speech and freedom of the media, we have to admit that still remaining on our statutes today are laws that can see a journalist dragged before the Australian courts for merely making a statement or a comment that offends or insults. We are in no position to lecture other countries about freedom of speech and freedom of the media while we still have those laws on our statutes. As the previous speaker, the member for Kingsford Smith noted, 'Journalists should not be put on trial for doing their job.' Unfortunately, we have had journalists here in Australia who have been taken before the courts simply for doing their job.

In speaking on this motion, we should use this opportunity to congratulate the regime of el-Sisi, the new Egyptian President, and try and have some understanding of the problems and difficulties that he currently faces. Egypt is a country where something like 26 per cent of the population over 10 years of age are illiterate, they are running a substantial budget deficit and they have high unemployment. All the countries around them have enormous political instability, which feeds into and affects Egypt. If you go through all the challenges that Egypt has, we can only congratulate President el-Sisi; he deserves our support. Australia and the rest of the world should be getting behind the Egyptian nation, giving them the support that they need to get through these difficult times.

We have seen in the Middle East, over recent years, a great naivety about democracy. There seems to be a misguided understanding that you can simply implant democracy in a country and that the country will go overnight from being almost a totalitarian dictatorship to a full democracy while maintaining the rights and liberties of minorities. This is a greatly naive idea. We see today the complete chaos in Syria, in Libya and in Iraq. These countries need time to develop their democracy, to allow their institutions to develop roots. It is not something you can just force on these countries and expect them to provide full democratic rights for their whole population—not when they face all these internal problems. You cannot expect that to happen overnight.

In speaking about Egypt and the problems that they have currently and will have for many years, last week we saw the appalling beheading of 21 Egyptian citizens, 21 Coptic Christians, in Libya. I do not think that many of us have ever seen such depravity or unspeakable evil. In thinking of Peter Greste, the difficulties that Egypt has and the issue of free speech, we should also send our condolences to the families and friends of those Egyptian citizens who were killed in such brutal and horrific circumstances.

I commend this motion to the House. Freedom of speech is an important concept. Democracy is an important concept. But we must work with Egypt, the largest nation in the Middle East, to help them develop that democracy and establish those institutional roots.

**Ms PARKE** (Fremantle) (11:26): I thank the member for Ryan for moving this motion regarding the release of Peter Greste from imprisonment in Egypt after 400 days. I commend the member for Ryan, as well as the member for Moreton—in whose electorate Peter Greste's parents, Lois and Juris, reside—for their endeavours in campaigning for Peter Greste's release.

As I noted in this place on 9 February, it has been inspirational to watch the Grete family, Lois and Juris and Peter's brothers, Michael and Andrew, campaigning with such grace and tenacity to see Peter freed, and to see their joy at their reunion with Peter on Australian soil. Peter, too, has set an incredible example of how to retain one's dignity in a situation of great strain by maintaining one's physical, mental and spiritual health—in Peter's case, through running, studying and meditation while in Tora prison.

Peter has indicated his determination to continue the campaign for justice for his al-Jazeera colleagues Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed, as well as for his colleagues convicted in absentia, who must go through life with this injustice hanging over their heads until it is remedied. I note that Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed have recently been released on bail, pending a retrial; however, it is hard to be confident that a second trial will be any better than the first one, which represented a major miscarriage of justice, given the lack of any evidence and the appalling unfair process.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, or CPJ, Egypt remains one of the leading jailers of journalists. For instance, photographer Mahmoud Abou Zeid has been in prison for more than 500 days for covering protests. Peter Grete has publicly said he now feels a duty to campaign for media freedom more generally—no easy task when 221 journalists were imprisoned last year, the second worst year since records have been kept. The CPJ has listed China as the worst offender, followed by Iran. Saudi Arabia, when not beheading people for offences including sorcery, has sentenced Raif Badawi, editor of a secularist website, to 10 years imprisonment, a fine of \$300,000 and 1,000 lashes administered at the rate of 20 each Friday for insulting Islam. Ethiopia is also repressing journalists and bloggers amid a broader crackdown on dissenting voices ahead of the May 2015 election, while Azerbaijan is imprisoning journalists and Turkey is attempting to stifle internet freedom, including Twitter, which CPJ notes is ironic, given the country is set to host the UN's Internet Governance Forum in September.

Unfortunately, as I noted in my speeches on 9 February and last year on 4 September, such attacks on media freedom are not only coming from terrorists and undemocratic governments; here in Australia, our government is becoming increasingly less transparent and accountable. The motion before us includes that the House 'notes that telling the truth is not terrorism and journalism is not a crime'. However, we now have anti-terror laws that include potential jail terms of 10 years for journalists who reveal details of special intelligence operations and the proposed data retention regime would ensure that police and intelligence agencies would have a large source of information with which to hunt down whistleblowers and the journalists to whom they have provided public interest information.

Attorney-General George Brandis approved an ASIO raid designed to intimidate the whistleblower who revealed Australia's spying on East Timor and to seize his passport to prevent him giving evidence in an international court. The lawyer representing him has been threatened with prosecution.

Freedom-of-information laws are being wound back and funding has been removed from the Office of the Information Commissioner in anticipation of it being abolished. The Information Commissioner is currently forced to work from home until the legislation is debated. Under the bill, merits reviews would be returned to the AAT with an \$800 fee as a threshold requirement.

Community organisations engaging in advocacy on matters of public interest have been defunded. We have seen a civilian immigration department dealing with humanitarian issues almost transformed into a branch of Defence, with the adoption of military personnel, language and secrecy around 'on-water operations' and the increasing contracting out of former government work such as immigration detention centres, with details of such arrangements being kept from the public as 'commercial in confidence'.

The government is engaging in secret bilateral and multilateral negotiations with other governments on agreements such as the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement and the Trans Pacific Partnership that could have long-lasting repercussions for our sovereignty, our freedoms and our economy, yet the media and the community are locked out.

These changes make it harder for people to be informed about government and public service processes and they make it easier for government to carry on in secret, whether that is intercepting, detaining and redirecting people on the high seas; acquiring and holding metadata; criminalising journalism and whistleblowing in the public interest; or signing away Australia's rights to make laws for its own good governance.

In such a constrained global and national environment, an independent and strong media is more vital than ever. Again, I say to Peter Grete: welcome home; there is, unfortunately, much for you to do.

**Mr RUDDOCK** (Berowra) (11:31): My introductory remarks have had to be recast a little. I was about to say that this is one of the finest moments of the parliament, when we can come together in agreement to support a very important motion. I must say that I commend my colleague and friend the member for Ryan for proposing it.

And I commend my colleague the member for Fremantle's initial remarks supporting the member for Ryan, because I think that is when the parliament is at its very best. I do not think that everything the member for Fremantle said was appropriate. In fact, if I had been a little mischievous I might have taken a point of order that the member was not speaking to the motion.

Aside from that, let me just make the point that this resolution is about celebrating the release of Peter Greste; it is to commend his family on their courage, resilience and grace for the more than 400 days in which he was held; it is to commend our consular officials—Justin Brown and Ambassador Ralph King—for their work; it is to thank the Egyptian president for his role; and it is to seek the release of his colleagues. This is a very important motion and one in which I think it is our parliament at its very best, when we can agree on a motion in this form.

I was delighted when it was announced that his appeal had been successful and that then, because of the president's intervention, he was able to be returned to Australia. I was particularly impressed with the way in which his family—his parents, Juris and Lois, and his brothers, Mike and Andrew—supported him as he was detained for so long.

But I think it is important to acknowledge what the government was able to do. It has to be understood in context, because all too often we have consular issues raised with us where Australians abroad find themselves in difficulties—and we want to help our Australians. If you are in a country where the law is not as you understand it here, you can sometimes find yourself inveigled into legal proceedings which are difficult to resolve and where we cannot interfere because foreign legal processes are independent. We would not entertain foreign governments interfering in our processes and it is very difficult for us to do so in theirs.

But the government did conduct a campaign of targeted advocacy. The representations included approaches by the Prime Minister, the foreign minister, the Attorney-General, the Australian Ambassador to Egypt and other senior DFAT officials. The foreign minister made numerous representations. She spoke several times to her counterpart and she also wrote to him. She had been in touch with his predecessor and she raised the case with the Egyptian ambassador here in Australia—as, I might say, did many of us, because we had the opportunity from time to time in some of our structured arrangements to be able to make representation. The Prime Minister made personal approaches to the president as well as to his predecessor during the trial and after the initial conviction. The Attorney-General spoke to his counterpart, the Egyptian Minister for Justice. So I think it is important to recognise that there was a very positive role played within the limits that do exist as to how far you can go when it involves a foreign government.

I have always been particularly impressed with the way in which Australian officials work. I have a case involving a difficulty at the moment in Kenya and I know that the high commission is taking a very considerable interest in it and pressing to try to have the matter resolved. It was important that we recognise that our officials raised this case persistently and constantly, and did so in a way which maintained our capacity to have an ongoing dialogue. I am delighted that his release has been obtained. I thank all of those who were able to achieve it. And, as I said, when the parliament agrees on the terms of a resolution like this and supports it fully then the parliament is at its best.

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (11:37): Before I start, I would like to thank the member for Ryan for moving this motion and for her sustained interest and advocacy on this issue. I also want to commend the member for Berowra for his speech, particularly in commending the officials that he has dealt with over so many years. As Father of the Parliament, he has dealt with a number of government officials over more than four decades, so I thank him very much for his commendation of their work and for his acknowledgement of their work.

Last time I spoke about Australian journalist Peter Greste was more than six months ago, and at that time it was a plea for help. By contrast, today we are standing here celebrating his release. In celebrating I would like to commend the Greste family for the strength and resilience that they have shown. I say to them: you took us with you on your quest to bring Peter home, and we were hoping and praying with you every step of the way.

I would also like to congratulate the government—particularly the minister, for her work lobbying the Egyptian government. As the former speaker said, the number of representations that have been made on this, not just from government ministers but also from the opposition, frontbenchers and backbenchers, is significant. I commend everyone and thank everyone for those official representations and for those personal representations.

I would like to come back to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the diplomats and officials who worked tirelessly and quietly on this issue. As the former speaker said: they worked persistently; they worked constantly; they made endless representations; always quietly, always tirelessly, always constantly, always persistently. I congratulate and commend those Foreign Affairs and Trade officials for their great work both here in Australia and overseas for the advocacy work they did on this.

Peter Greste and his two colleagues—Cairo bureau chief and Canadian-Egyptian Mohamed Fahmy, and producer Baher Mohamed—were detained by Egyptian authorities in December 2013, charged with airing misleading news about Egypt's political situation. What followed was more than 400 days of imprisonment and a worldwide campaign for their release. That campaign was extraordinary, particularly on social media. They were repeatedly denied bail, with their case being repeatedly adjourned. In a letter describing the conditions of Cairo's Tora prison, Greste said 'the authorities routinely violate legally enshrined prisoners' rights, denying visits from lawyers, keeping cells locked for 20 hours a day, 24 hours a day on public holidays.' His prison cell, which he shared with up to three other people, measured three metres by four metres.

Following many long months of lobbying and campaigning by the government, by government officials and by groups like Amnesty International, Peter was deported earlier this month with his conviction overturned. But the fight is not over. The world now looks to Peter's two colleagues, who face a retrial today following their release on bail after they too spent more than a year behind bars. We are all hoping and praying for a similar outcome so the pair can head home to their families and friends—particularly Mohamed, who has a very young child, I understand.

The case of Peter Greste and his al-Jazeera colleagues has reminded us of the importance of press freedom and how lucky we are here in Australia to have a genuine freedom of press. But it is not enough for us to have freedom of press at home. We cannot rest until journalists are free to report from any corner of the globe without fear of harassment or imprisonment. Peter Greste's life and the lives of his colleagues will never be the same. Greste wants to put his experience to use by becoming an advocate for freedom of expression, and I commend him for that.

The trio is now identified with freedom of the press and freedom of speech, and it is vital that this campaign does not stop with their release. We must fight until the last Egyptian journalist is freed from jail. More broadly, we must fight until journalists around the world are free from jail—free from being incarcerated for basically getting out there and telling the truth.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, more than 221 journalists were jailed last year. So, while we celebrate the fact that Peter Greste is back on Australian soil with his loved ones, we must remind the world that telling the truth is not terrorism and being a journalist is not a crime.

**Mr HOGAN (Page) (11:42):** I commend the member for Canberra for speaking to this motion. I too would like to commend and congratulate both sides of parliament for the work that has been done on this issue. Obviously the minister has been mentioned many times, but indeed the whole leadership team on both sides of politics should be congratulated. The language used—and more importantly the language that was not used—and the diplomatic approach that was taken to this effort was very bipartisan and showed just what a wonderful result we can get. Also, as has been previously mentioned, departmental officials put a lot of work into this ongoing effort to get this result. So I commend everyone involved in that process.

I had the pleasure of meeting Peter's brother Andrew two or three months ago. I had a wide-ranging conversation with Andrew about the circumstances of what happened to Peter, about how it happened, and about the emotional rollercoaster ride. Andrew and his family—Peter, his mother and father, and the whole extended Greste family—experienced a bit of a rollercoaster ride for the period that this happened; the 400 days that Peter spent in detention. So it is a wonderful result for the family and a good result for the diplomacy of the government.

Obviously Peter's situation, in the sense that he was 400 days in detention, proved interesting to look at—the reasons it happened, and I think there are lessons to be learned here. For the vast majority of Australians the detention of a journalist for doing simply what they perceive to be their job is at odds with our core values of freedom of expression. We have pillars in our community; the separation of church, state and judiciary, and the press is an important part of that separation as well.

The situation in Egypt in the past four years has been characterised by enormous political and social upheaval and grave national security challenges, and I think Peter's case needs to be seen through that rather than being seen in any way as a hostile action directed against our country. I think Peter would admit as well it was almost being in the wrong place at the wrong time. His arrival in Egypt coincided with the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, which was branded a terrorist organization. Al-Jazeera, Peter's employer, was seen by the Egyptian government as a key part of the problem. As one of the employees of al-Jazeera English, Peter was unfortunate to be caught in what was a wide sweep by Egyptian security authorities of all groups considered to be sympathetic to the Brotherhood.

Peter was detained in December 2013. He was extended all appropriate consular assistance by officers of the Australian Embassy in Cairo. This was critically important in ensuring his family were reassured that he was safe.

His family used to have a catch up with him once every three to four weeks. They were not long meetings but it was very reassuring to the family that every few weeks a member of the family was sitting down with Peter and eyeballing him—seeing that he was alive and well and that he was keeping himself in good spirits.

Peter and his colleagues were, as we know, charged with colluding with the Brotherhood. His trial commenced on 20 February 2014. There were a total of twelve court sessions, culminating in the delivery of the verdict on 23 June 2014 when he was convicted and received a seven-year prison term. Lawyers for Peter announced in August that they had lodged an appeal, which was heard by Egypt's highest appeal court, the Court of Cassation, on 1 January 2015. The appeal was successful. As we know, Peter was subsequently released and has since returned to Australia. His parents, Juris and Lois, and his brothers Mike and Andrew were pillars of strength. They travelled regularly to see him. They are obviously a very tight and loving family because they maintained a public campaign to make sure that Peter's situation was not forgotten by anyone in this chamber, our media or the wider Australian public, which was an important part of this process.

**Ms ROWLAND** (Greenway) (11:47): For 400 days, Peter Greste found himself languishing in senseless confinement—400 days marked by missed birthdays, holidays and the precious moments with family and friends which we all take for granted. But while Peter was gone he was never forgotten. His parents, Juris and Lois, tirelessly led the campaign for their son's freedom, as did his siblings, Mike and Andrew, who took turns flying to Cairo and back to ensure their older brother always had kin nearby. I had the privilege of meeting Lois in passing late last year and, whilst I could see how busy she was, the one thing that struck me was her determination, how focussed she was on getting her son home.

Peter was also not forgotten by his journalistic fraternity, who showed their solidarity with poignant images of their mouths gagged with tape. And he was not forgotten by his fellow Australian citizens, or indeed all global citizens, who rallied against an incarceration recognised as an attack on the principles of justice, liberty and the dignity of all human beings.

We all share in the joy that the Grestes feel. Each of us has truly been inspired by their courage and determination. And we pause to thank everyone involved in securing Peter's release and that of his colleagues. And yet, whilst we rightly rejoice in Peter's liberation, it would be wrong of us to overlook the message he so resolutely conveyed from behind prison walls. Dwindling with his colleagues in a small scorching cell, it would have been logical for Peter to be overcome by a sense of bitterness and despair. Instead he found solace in the words of Nietzsche who once said, 'He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.' 'It is such a beautifully succinct way', Peter wrote, 'of saying that it is possible to bear almost any hardship, as long as we have a reason for doing so'. And so there in his cell, under the long shadow of imprisonment, Peter found powerful meaning to his ordeal, transforming his confinement into a campaign for, to use his own words, 'that most basic of rights: the right to know'.

As we speak here today, nearly seventy years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed the right of every person 'to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers', that right remains unmet in far too many parts of the world. As a nation long blessed with a free, pluralistic and independent media, we have a responsibility to stand with all those who are striving to uphold the values we cherish. As members of parliament, we recognise that only when journalists are free to scrutinise and criticise policies and actions can good governance exist. We therefore have a moral imperative to speak up for freedom and transparency and to speak out against repression, so that every journalist can do their job without risk or restraint and every citizen is empowered to be actively engaged in their public and political discourse.

'The freedom of the press will not come without loud sustained pressure,' Peter wrote inside his jail cell. Today I, and I believe all speakers in this motion, lend our voices to this noble cause. We cannot remain silent when global press freedom has fallen to its lowest level in over a decade and only one in seven people live in a country with what can be described as a 'free' press.' We cannot remain silent when during this past year 66 journalists were reportedly murdered, 119 were kidnapped and 853 were arrested for simply safeguarding what Peter Greste correctly affirmed is 'a fundamental pillar of democracy' and 'an indivisible part of a free society'. And we cannot remain silent when Peter's colleagues, Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed are yet to be freed.

Peter's campaign and eventual release teaches us that whilst the barriers of oppression may seemingly be unyielding, we should never underestimate how influential people power can be each time we collectively stand up for an ideal, or act to strike out injustice. 'Global support, will be what ultimately saves us', Peter wrote while confined. And every last letter, petition, email, tweet, essay and article the world penned on his behalf not only provided him with comfort during the darkest hours of his incarceration, but it demonstrated that no matter how unjust the circumstances may be, no matter how long the night, justice will always prevail. It highlights that, collectively, we can indeed bring the change we seek. The freeing of Peter Greste therefore represents a moment

of hope. Whilst we have rightly come together to celebrate this, let us also come together in renewed dedication and renewed vigour.

Let us vow to stand up and give voice to the millions around the world who are reaching out for the same freedom, opportunities and progress from which we as a nation derive great satisfaction and much strength.

**Ms GAMBARO** (Brisbane) (11:52): I want to thank the member for Ryan for this motion today. I would like to speak on this motion. On Sunday, 1 February this year, the imprisonment of Australian journalist Peter Greste came to an end. To the Greste family, I would like to say this: you have been a source of admiration. Your persistent stoicism, support and love for Peter is a credit to you as a family and makes me feel humbled and proud to acknowledge you as fellow Australians. In circumstances where at times it must have seemed as though all was lost, you never gave up hope and the dignity with which you continued to campaign for Peter's release has been a shining example for the world.

To Peter's parents, Juris and Lois, and as a parent myself, I cannot imagine what you endured for 13 months in not knowing whether you would ever see your son again. To Peter's brothers, Michael and Andrew, you are both a credit to your family in the way you supported your parents and your brother through all your efforts in travelling to Cairo to visit him and, when back in Australia, maintaining a public campaign to ensure his plight was never forgotten. I want to take the time to specifically mention Peter's brother Andrew, who I had the great pleasure of meeting late last year. I want to highlight my admiration at the calm and respectful manner in which Andrew took up his brother's cause at a time when he and the rest of his family must have been frantic and emotionally distraught as to his brother's welfare. Juris and Lois, all your boys have done you proud.

While Peter's release from prison in Egypt, after more than 400 days in detention, was a source of enormous relief to his family and to the wider Australian community, it highlights for us that all the freedoms we enjoy in this country are freedoms that we can never and should never take for granted. For the vast majority of Australians, the detention of a journalist for simply doing his job was at odds with our core values of freedom of expression and an independent media. What we need to be mindful of though is that the situation in Egypt in the past four years has been characterised by enormous political and social upheaval and grave national security challenges.

Peter Greste was in the wrong place at the wrong time. His arrival in Egypt coincided with the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and it being branded a terrorist organisation. Al-Jazeera was seen by the Egyptian government as key part of that problem and, as one of the employees of al-Jazeera English, Peter and his colleagues were unfortunate to be caught in what was a wide sweep by Egyptian security authorities of all groups considered to be sympathetic to the brotherhood. Peter's case needs to be seen through this prism rather than being seen in any way as a hostile action directed against Australia.

In this spirit, I want to show my gratitude to Egyptian President el-Sisi for his intervention. I want to thank Egypt's Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Dr Hassan El-Laithy, who appeared on this matter before this Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade. In the time allocated, I will not be able to mention everyone else who worked to secure Peter's release, but I do want to make specific reference to the personal representations made by the Prime Minister; the Attorney-General, Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC; Australia's Ambassador to Egypt, Dr Ralph King; and Egypt's Foreign Minister Shoukry among many, many others.

I also cannot speak highly enough of the work done by Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop. Her tireless efforts in mobilising the world's diplomatic community in support of Peter's release was nothing short of masterful. At a time when it appears that nuanced subtlety, respect and courtesy is disappearing from our world, Minister Bishop has shown diplomacy to be an art that transcends the blunt instrument of sabre rattling. As a result, Australia's relationship with Egypt has emerged from this incident deeper and more respectful and, I hope, with a greater understanding and a level of trust that will enable us to progress together with even greater security into the future.

**Mr GILES** (Scullin) (11:56): I join previous speakers in thanking the member for Ryan for bringing this important matter of private member's business before the House. I think it is critical at this time that the House comes together in a bipartisan way to make clear our view that journalism is not and cannot be a crime.

I acknowledge also the wonderful work of Jane Prentice, the member for Ryan, in her capacity as a co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Amnesty—a capacity I share with her, the member for Denison and Senator Wright—for the work that she has done and the work that she has led in bringing together parliamentarians on all sides of this House and the other place to stand up for Peter Greste and his colleagues and to stand up for their human rights and the human rights of others in similar positions. I acknowledge also her work in dealing with the family of Peter Greste and playing a critical role in building a bridge between their concerns and wider advocacy.

I know that it will give her some enormous comfort and, no doubt, some satisfaction that we are here on a note that carries with it a tone of celebration, although I think we do need to qualify that celebration for reasons that I will go on to explore shortly.

It is very pleasing to be part of the debate that is characterised by an absence of rancour. I would like to think that this absence of rancour relates in no small part to the example set by Peter Grete. Through the more than 400 day he spent confined, he showed an extraordinary example of stoicism. He maintained the courage of his convictions and the satisfaction that he was imprisoned for something that was not only a crime that he did not commit but also not a crime. He showed his ongoing faith in the supporters he had here and in the work that he and his colleagues were doing and its importance. I think that is an example that we should continue to uphold once this debate is concluded.

It is also important to acknowledge the support for Peter Grete and his colleagues that existed in the Australian community beyond this place. I pay particular tribute to the extraordinary role his family, his parents and his brothers, played and the example they set. I stand here in awe of their example. I cannot think of the anxieties and fears that would have governed their lives over the past year and a bit. What is extraordinary to note is the hope that never left them and the hope that they gave to so many others. No doubt it was this hope that inspired thousands of Australians to join them, and to join us in this place, in standing up for Peter Grete, for his colleagues, and for the practice of journalism.

In the very limited amount of time available to me, I think it is important to make two wider reflections as we conclude this debate. The role of journalism is more important now than ever, particularly when we think about the extraordinary events that have been taking place in the Middle East, the place Peter Grete was reporting on. If we are to navigate the world in which we live today, standing up for press freedom is more important than ever. It was inspirational to hear the words spoken earlier today in this regard by my colleague, the member for Greenway. She set the moral standard that we should try to live up to. I conclude by saying: as we celebrate the circumstance of Peter Grete, and indeed the progress that has been made for his colleagues, let us also recall the uncertainty that bedevils his colleagues. Let us also recall those dozens of journalists who have been killed in the past year for doing their job; the 12 journalists who are still in jail in Egypt; and the 221 who are in jail today. Let us think about them and let us think about what we can do to advance their human rights, and the human rights of those who depend on them to tell their stories, to enable them to speak truth to power and to live in greater freedom and under real democracy.

Let us also reflect on Australia's role as an exemplar of human rights. In many respects, this debate is an easy one for members in this place to come together on and speak with one powerful voice. There are many questions of human rights, however, that raise greater challenges within this place. I hope that we—not only in this parliament but also across the Australian community—can be consistent in standing up for human rights in Australia and abroad, recognising that they are not divisible.

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

## COMMITTEES

### Public Works Committee

#### Report

**Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (12:01):** On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, I present the committee's first report of 2015, addressing referrals made in October 2014. *Report 1/2015: referrals made October 2014* considers two referrals received in October by the committee from the Department of Defence. The total estimated cost of these referrals is \$865 million excluding GST.

The first referral was for the proposed Project AIR7000 Phase 2B—Maritime Patrol Aircraft Replacement Project, something I know the member for Batman is very interested in. The estimated cost of the project is \$707.9 million. The Department of Defence sought approval from the committee to provide facilities, infrastructure and airfield work for the introduction of new Boeing P8A Poseidon aircraft. Replacing the ageing AP3C Orion fleet with P8A Poseidon aircraft will enhance the range and endurance of Australia's maritime surveillance. It will also provide an effective anti-submarine and anti-surface-warfare capability, very important when Australia has responsibility for 11 per cent of the earth's surface. The works would be undertaken at RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia, and designated forward-operating bases will be at RAAF Bases Darwin, Pearce and Townsville, in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland respectively. Minor works will also be undertaken at HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia. New maintenance hangars at RAAF Bases Edinburgh and Darwin are required to operate and maintain these new aircraft. Additionally, the P8A aircraft is wider and heavier than the AP3C Orion and will be more demanding and potentially damaging on aircraft

pavements. Upgrades including strengthening of existing pavements and runway lengthening to a number of RAAF and joint-user airfields are required. The committee held a briefing and inspection at RAAF Base Edinburgh, before conducting both public and confidential hearings in Adelaide. The committee heard that the proposed works will assist in protecting Australia's national interest in terms of security. During the hearing, the committee noted that some existing buildings may have high heritage ratings. Defence assured the committee that these buildings are not located on the same footprint as the proposed facilities and that, as such, the projects can be delivered irrespective of the outcomes of further heritage assessments. Subject to parliamentary approval of the project, construction is expected to commence in October 2015 at RAAF Base Edinburgh and HMAS *Stirling*. Works at the forward-operating bases are planned to commence in 2018, but may be delivered earlier if funding is available. All works are expected to be completed by the end of 2020. The committee is satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost, and recommends that the project proceed.

The second referral was for the proposed Project AIR9000 Phase 7—Helicopter Aircrew Training System (HATS) Facilities Project. The estimated cost of this project is \$157.1 million, excluding GST. The Department of Defence sought approval from the committee to provide facilities, at HMAS *Albatross* in New South Wales and Jervis Bay Airfield in the ACT, which can deliver helicopter training in a safe and modern environment. Defence informed the committee that the government is acquiring advanced, new-generation naval combat and battlefield helicopters. Consequently, an upgrade to the introductory helicopter training system is required to ensure aircrew are adequately trained to operate these helicopters. This training will use a combination of live and synthetic training experiences on both modern twin-engine helicopters and flight simulators. The committee conducted an inspection of HMAS *Albatross* in Nowra, New South Wales, where we observed the very outdated training systems firsthand. Following this, the committee held both public and confidential hearings. The committee heard that the project will generate short-term local employment, predominantly in the building, construction and unskilled labour markets. Defence advised that there would be minimal disruption to the local community, and that there are no known heritage issues associated with the project. Subject to parliamentary approval of the project, the chosen sites will have the synthetic training facility completed by late 2016, with installation of the full flight simulators beginning in August 2016. The committee is satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost, and recommends that the project proceed.

Before concluding, I would also like to thank the staff at RAAF Base Edinburgh particularly, for taking me on a slight detour when we were there to look at the memorial marking the death of Flight Lieutenant Glenn Kemshall Donovan, 14 March 1958 to 12 March 1990, who was killed in an ARDU Nomad aircraft crash near Mallala in South Australia. While I did not know Glenn Donovan, he was a very good friend of my wife's. When I was there, I was able to collect some seeds from the tree that he had nurtured, and that was planted by his parents, a *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* 'rosea', which I have taken and planted in my own yard.

In concluding today, I would remark that the committee looks forward to another productive year ahead, and I commend the report to the House.

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

## BILLS

### Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013

#### Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with an amendment.

Ordered that the amendment be considered immediately.

*Senate's amendment—*

(1) Schedule 1, page 3 (lines 1 to 26), omit the Schedule.

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (12:07): I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

In addressing the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 and the returns from the Senate, I am delighted to commend these amendments to the House. What they do, in short, is allow the long-held goal of ensuring there are increased penalties—indeed, a tripling of penalties—for killing, injuring, taking, trading, keeping or moving a turtle or a dugong in a Commonwealth marine area and for taking or injuring turtles or dugongs within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

This is dugong and turtle protection legislation. It comes about because there have been those willing to abuse the good name, the good faith, the good history and the cultural intent of traditional owners. It is the traditional owners who have spoken with myself and Warren Entsch, and with Colin Riddell and Rupert Imhoff, and sought this additional protection. It responds to their approaches; it responds to their stewardship; it responds to the fact

that they themselves are the great custodians of the marine resources of the Great Barrier Reef and northern Australia.

Many traditional owners have spoken to me of people who have poached in their name and they have sought additional support. That support comes in the form of strong, tough legislation to protect these majestic marine creatures. It also comes in the form of a \$5.3 million dugong and turtle protection plan, of which \$2 million is going to the Australian Crime Commission. They are currently conducting an investigation into illegal fishing in the form it may take here but also with regard to broader criminal activities. In particular, there is a focus on anything which may be illegal foreign fishing within our waters, because it is certainly the case that there have been examples cited. I will leave the commission to produce its own report and its own decisions. We are also providing \$2 million for Indigenous ranger programs and I am very pleased and proud of those. This is about Indigenous communities being empowered to assume control and train young people within their own areas. They are taking a tremendous lead. They should be commended and they should be supported.

That, in turn, is aided by another \$700,000 for protection against marine debris—in particular, the swirling death caused by ghost nets: nets that have been cut and cast adrift within the waters north of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the waters of the Torres Strait which flow into the Gulf of Carpentaria and the marine park. Another \$600,000 all up, including \$300,000 in new money, will assist with the work of the Cairns turtle hospital led by Jenny Gilbert and her team, many of whom are wonderful humane volunteers.

Against that background, I am delighted to thank all the parties who have supported this. I acknowledge the work of the shadow minister for the environment, who has been of assistance. I acknowledge the work of Senator Waters for the Greens. I particularly want to acknowledge he whom I would call the father of this legislation, Warren Entsch, within the House—and his 'partner in crime', Colin Riddell. Colin has been a campaigner on a mission and he has led us to this point. It has been one of the great joys of my work that we have been able to achieve this—but it will only matter if it is followed up with further action to ensure there is a real reduction in the take of dugong and turtle; that there is prosecution of those who breach the laws; and that there is agreement with traditional people so that we can ensure there is adequate protection in green zones.

These are important steps forward. I want to thank all the parties involved and I am delighted to commend this legislation, which can be colloquially referred to as the dugong and turtle protection act, to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly):** The question is that the Senate's amendment to the Environmental Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

### **Acts and Instruments (Framework Reform) Bill 2014** **Consideration of Senate Message**

Bill returned from the Senate with an amendment.

Ordered that the amendment be considered immediately.

*Senate's amendment—*

(1) Schedule 1, item 83, page 60 (lines 30 and 31), omit the item, substitute:

**83 Section 59**

Repeal the section, substitute:

**59 Review of operation of this Act**

(1) During the 3 months starting on the fifth anniversary of the commencement (the *framework reform commencement*) of Schedule 1 to the *Acts and Instruments (Framework Reform) Act 2015*, the Attorney-General must appoint persons to a body to review the operation of this Act.

(2) A person appointed to the body may resign from it by giving the Attorney-General a signed notice of resignation.

(3) The body must review all aspects of the operation of this Act and any related matters that the Attorney-General specifies.

(4) The body must give the Attorney-General a written report on the review within 15 months after the fifth anniversary of the framework reform commencement.

(5) The Attorney-General must cause the report to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 6 sitting days of the House after the Attorney-General receives the report.

**Mr KEENAN** (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (12:12): I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly):** The question is that the Senate amendment to the Acts and Instruments (Framework Reform) Bill 2014 be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

## **Crimes Legislation Amendment (Psychoactive Substances and Other Measures) Bill 2014**

### **Consideration of Senate Message**

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

*Senate's amendments—*

(1) Schedule 2, item 14, page 16 (lines 17 to 24), omit the item.

(2) Schedule 2, item 18, page 21 (lines 13 to 18), omit section 361.5.

**Mr KEENAN** (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (12:12): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

I move these amendments to the bill following amendment in the Senate. I move these amendments to remove the introduction of mandatory minimum sentences for firearms trafficking in schedule (2) of the bill. The government agrees to these amendments today to ensure that other important measures contained within the bill are able to be enacted into law without further delay. We do so very reluctantly, and I want to make it clear that we are not abandoning our commitment to introduce minimum mandatory sentences of five years imprisonment for the trafficking of firearms and firearm parts and for illegally moving firearms or their parts across borders in Australia. So, while I move these amendments, I do so with a commitment to reintroduce these tough new measures at the next available opportunity.

The coalition went to the polls with a very clear objective: to detect and disrupt organised crime and criminal gangs and to do everything we can to undermine their business model. The Australian Crime Commission has estimated that the criminal economy in Australia is worth at least \$15 billion. This money is often derived from the illicit drug trade, from money laundering and also from the trafficking of firearms. The Crime Commission further conservatively estimates that there are over 250,000 arms and 10,000 handguns in the illicit market. That is a quarter of a million long arms and 10,000 handguns within the illicit gun market in Australia.

We know that trafficking these firearms is a deadly crime, and even a small number of illegal firearms coming into Australia presents a very serious threat to Australian communities and the safety of our communities. That is why we made this commitment to the Australian people to implement tougher penalties for gun related crime. Mandatory minimum sentences send a strong message that gun related crime and violence is a serious threat to the safety of all Australians.

I am sorry to say, though, that Labor have chosen to oppose sending this strong message, and they have been very hypocritical in their arguments for doing so. The member for Bat Man, who is sitting at the table—or Batman, I should say; we do not want to see that guy in a black rubber suit—moved these amendments in the House. His rationale for doing so was that it:

... is laid out in the Australian Labor Party's national platform that it is the strongly-held view of my party that mandatory minimum sentencing is often discriminatory in practice ... so we oppose mandatory sentencing ...

Yet the history of the Labor Party in office shows that that is just not the case. Indeed, we have managed to unearth one of their election documents from 2010, where they brag about the effects of mandatory sentencing on people smuggling—although clearly they were slightly too early in lauding the effect of those measures, because of course that was in the midst of the most serious people smuggling crisis that this country has ever seen. Indeed, in their May 2010 policy, they actually talked about federal Labor introducing tough new people smuggling offences that included penalties of up to 20 years imprisonment and mandatory minimum terms of up to eight years. So the Labor Party say that they will not support mandatory minimum terms because it is apparently some long-held view of the Labor Party that they do not accept mandatory minimum terms, yet in their election documents they brag about doing so in relation to people smuggling. I think this is a very convenient shift in position from the Labor Party, and unfortunately it is going to prevent us from making Australian communities safer and more secure.

Under their stewardship we saw budgetary cuts to Customs of more than \$700 million. We saw sea cargo inspections decreasing by 25 per cent and air cargo inspections decreased by 75 per cent. Since we have come to office, we have made a very tough and unyielding commitment to remedy the recklessness that the Labor Party brought to these sorts of issues, and we have put in a further \$88 million commitment to reverse some of the cuts that Labor made in our screening processes to do all we can to keep Australia safe from illegal firearms coming in from overseas.

Any import of an illegal firearm should be of great concern to all Australians, and mandatory minimum sentences of five years imprisonment are a key part of our pursuit of a strong and nationally consistent approach to gun crime. We know that illegal firearms are the weapon of choice for criminals to commit violent acts, and sadly we have been reminded of that in that dreadful siege in Martin Place. The report that was brought down by the head of PM&C and the head of the Premier's department has alluded to the vital importance of continuing to be very tough on gun crime in Australia.

I am very disappointed that we are forced to move these amendments, but the legislation that we are dealing with is too important to get held up on this issue. But I will take the next available opportunity to continue to press this parliament to introduce minimum mandatory sentences for gun smuggling crimes, and I do so because we on this side of the House seek to do absolutely everything we can to make the Australian community safer.

I present an addendum to the explanatory memorandum.

**Mr FEENEY (Batman) (12:18):** I rise to speak on the subject of these amendments to the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Psychoactive Substances and Other Measures) Bill 2014. This is perhaps one of those occasions when Labor's amendments, unsuccessfully moved in the House but successfully moved in the Senate, may have saved the government from itself. Let me just respond to some of the remarks made by the minister.

By way of background, let us remember that this piece of legislation is not the product or fruit of the work of the government, whether in opposition, in their pronouncements in their election manifesto, or subsequently. This legislation is the fruit of the work of the previous Labor government. Time and time again, we have seen this minister come into this chamber and self-righteously move legislation in this place which, of course, was the legislation of the former Labor government. This is no exception. The only change of substance that the government made to the legislation, which had lapsed with the election being called and the end of the last parliament, was to introduce mandatory minimum sentencing. In every other respect, the bill represented the fruit of the previous government's work and the resolve of Labor to deal with the important questions dealt with by this bill.

To be absolutely clear, this is a bill that did and does strengthen this country's regime in terms of protecting ourselves against the smuggling and transportation of illegal firearms. That is something that both sides of this House are committed to, and I think it is generally well understood that laws and law-making in this national security and policing space are at their best when they are done in a sensible, rational and bipartisan way. That is the attitude we bring to the table when we discuss these matters.

That is why it is spectacularly unhelpful for the minister to announce only a few moments ago that these amendments 'prevent us' from making Australia more secure. That kind of nonsensical hyperbole does nothing for the government's credentials. If the government seeks to avoid any innuendo that it climbs into these issues for nothing more than short-term partisan gain then it would be well advised to steer clear of such over-the-top rhetoric.

Let us be absolutely clear: what we have done here is move and support a piece of legislation written by Labor in government that reflects Labor's position that we took to the last election and the work of the previous committee. In particular, with respect to mandatory sentencing—the one issue over which we have disagreed—that does not change or resile from the fact that we have strengthened penalties in this bill, and we have strengthened them very significantly. But the government's new-found enthusiasm for mandatory sentencing—the minister quoted the ALP platform to us, saying that this was the rationale for me originally moving the amendments in this House—of course is again nothing more than hyperbole. There are many rationales, one of them, of course, being that I think the government would be very well advised to have regard for its own handbook on the subject, a document produced by the Attorney-General's Department entitled *A Guide to Framing Commonwealth Offences, Infringement Notices and Enforcement Powers*. At 3.1, that document states that minimum penalties should be avoided. This is because, inter alia, they interfere with judicial discretion to impose a penalty appropriate in the circumstances of a particular case. They may create an incentive for a defendant to fight charges even when there is little merit in doing so. They preclude the use of alternative sanctions such as community service orders that would otherwise be available in part IB of the Crimes Act 1914 and they may encourage the judiciary to look for technical grounds to avoid a restriction on sentencing discretion, leading to anomalous decisions.

These are issues of import; and so, while Labor has supported the strengthening of penalties in this bill, we have not supported mandatory minimum sentencing, because mandatory minimum sentencing may offer the minister a cheap talking point but does not improve or strengthen law, lawmaking or law supervision in this country.

Let's be very clear: in creating an incentive for a defendant to fight charges, one takes away from our policing and judicial authorities the opportunity to enter into important bargaining and plea bargaining negotiations with a potential criminal. That, of course, ultimately has the effect of weakening our capacity to investigate and go after the big fish in this very serious world of criminal activity.

We believe these amendments have strengthened the bill. This is a bill, as I said, Labor supports on the basis that we wrote it. We support it because we are proud of the fact that it strengthens this country's regime in fighting the scourge of illegal firearms and we are confident that, in strengthening the penalties found herein and avoiding the simple talking points that the government clings to around mandatory sentencing, we have actually made for better lawmaking in this county.

Question agreed to.

**Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014**  
**Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014**  
**Second Reading**

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr PITT** (Hinkler) (12:24): It is good to be back, and what a difference a week makes! As I was saying, I had the great good fortune of meeting the Bundaberg winner of the Heywire competition, Ms Britteny Hunter. We had actually met Britteny before: the Prime Minister, now Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce and I had helped move a piano out of Britteny's flooded home in 2013. Whilst I do not recall everyone who was standing in the yard at that time, I certainly recall the piano, which was exceptionally large, heavy and wet! Unfortunately, we are in a similar circumstance in Queensland at the moment, but I will get back to that.

Ms Hunter's winning entry was centred on the issues of homelessness and disadvantage. I was also interested to learn that she spent some time examining an issue of great concern to me and, of course, many other locals in the Hinkler electorate: the issue of human trafficking and exploitation. It is a problem I have been particularly vocal about with the aim of better protecting seasonal workers and farmers from unscrupulous contract labour hire firms. Knowing that we have such thoughtful young people living in our region gives me great confidence that our community's future is in safe hands. Ms Hunter has a very bright future ahead of her. I congratulate her on winning the award and wish her every success as she starts study at the Central Queensland University. Digital media platforms and forums like Heywire are giving young people in regional communities a national voice. It is an opportunity for them to participate and to have their concerns and ideas heard, and I congratulate her once again.

Social media in the recent week in Queensland has been incredibly important. Certainly Tropical Cyclone Marcia, which crossed the coast just north of Rockhampton through Yeppoon and Rocky has caused damage in all those regions and also in Biloela, likely in Maryborough and, of course, Gympie. Social media has been the source of information for many people. However, the difficulty with social media is that that source is not always verified. I certainly recommend that the people in my electorate continue to rely on ABC regional radio and their emergency broadcast. Their information is verified and constant.

Certainly we see more of the difficulties in communications in regional Australia. From discussions with the member for Flynn, Ken O'Dowd, the loss of the communications network in Biloela has made it exceptionally difficult in trying circumstances at the moment. So it is very tough to get on Facebook and get information when you have no tower, no communications, no fibre link and no power. However, you can always turn on the car radio, and once again I congratulate ABC regional radio on their emergency broadcast; they have done an exceptional job.

The loss of communications is particularly important and brought back to me memories from 2013 and the floods in Bundaberg. It looks like we will be fortunate this time around; hopefully, it will only be a minor flood through the Bundaberg region. But my heart goes out to those people who are suffering in the other areas. Certainly I recall all the other issues around flat batteries for mobile phones, the inability to communicate rapidly with emergency services and the thousands of people who have had their homes damaged—including my mother-in-law. I was on the ground in Rockhampton first thing as soon as the highway opened on Saturday because I knew what the results would be. It will be a very trying time for the people in that area simply because they have no power, and the likelihood of that being back up quickly is very low. So our thoughts are with them.

But back to the bill. This bill is all about enhancing the balance of online safety. As I said, this is an area which grows exponentially. It is a matter of great concern to me. It is a matter of great concern to many other parents in

this country. I congratulate the minister no putting this together. I believe they have got the balance right. It gives parents the opportunity to go to a single point of contact rather than trying to raise these matters with our current law enforcement agencies under the Telecommunications Act. Hopefully, it will go through successfully. I am sure this bill will help to address some of the major problems that we have around social media.

Once again I thank the minister for the opportunity to speak, thank the House and of course endorse the bill.

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond) (12:28): I also rise today to speak on the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014. As we have heard from many of the speakers, the issues surrounding cybersafety and cyberbullying are quite rightly a concern to all of us here in the House and right throughout the community. I think we have all had experiences with constituents speaking with us about some of the issues they had. It is in fact an increasingly complex area containing many challenging issues that we as a parliament have an obligation to address. I also note that this is the first time that such a specific codified or hard regulation in this area exclusively has come before the parliament. I think it is a very good thing to be looking very specifically at this issue. I also note that bill has been referred to a parliamentary committee for consideration, the closing date for submissions on that was 12 January and the reporting date is 3 March 2015.

As has been stated on this side of the House before, the opposition will be supporting these bills. We certainly understand how important these matters are, and it is important they be approached in a bipartisan manner. So much now depends on the usage of cyberspace—everything from small-business activities, banking, government departments or online shopping that a lot of people engage in. All of those things are operated and accessed online and have opened up so many great opportunities. We are all experiencing this increased digital world and its benefits.

While it does bring family-positive opportunities to aspects of modern life, it also brings a range of concerns that we have to address, particularly those that relate to the safety of children and young people online. We can already benefit so much. We see so many aspects of health care, education and employment depending upon online access. That is all very good and we do all benefit, but we do have to look at some of the downsides as well.

This evolution within our technological advances has opened up to families more opportunities and so many new worlds of communication, contacts, friendships and social interactions. Very exciting and innovative approaches have occurred because of this evolution in technology, particularly as we have heard from other speakers that in emergency situations social media is utilised by many communities and often provides a vital link to services and information. So there is no doubt it brings to us an absolutely huge benefit with those advances.

We are also very much aware of the downsides of this medium and the negative impact it can have on the lives of our children. We know now that mobile phones, the internet and social networking can sometimes be the new playground for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying primarily affects young people because they are the biggest users of digital media.

We have increased engagement in addressing these issues. There already have been some initiatives taken in relation to cyberbullying; in fact, there have been many multifaceted approaches in taking action against cyberbullying. These include the Australian Federal Police's Child Protection Operations team, which investigates online child-sex exploitation. They are doing a fantastic job in that role. Other measures include the regulator, ACMA, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, which has a cybersmart program comprising an extensive range of cybersafety education initiatives. There is also the ThinkUKnow website, which assists parents and children in dealing with the risks posed by online predators. There are really good initiatives too like the Youth Advisory Group on CyberSafety. I note that the social-media companies have been very proactive and have taken active positive steps to stop online bullying as well, and I commend them on their involvement and proactive stance on that.

This bill seeks to create an independent children's e-safety commissioner, whose responsibility it will be to take a national leadership role in the ever-growing concerns around the safety of our children in the cyberworld. The commissioner will have in place the necessary structures that will allow an effective complaints system that can react swiftly to those materials considered harmful on social media sites. It will remove those materials considered to be of a cyberbullying nature targeted at Australian children.

The bill will set out the commissioner's functions and powers, and e-structures will be supported by appropriate legislation. The children's e-safety commissioner will be an independent statutory office within the Australian Communications and Media Authority. Under this proposed legislation, a child or their representative can complain to the commissioner about their having been the subject of cyberbullying material, and the commissioner may investigate such complaints.

The bill sets out an expectation of the parliament that each social-media service will comply with a set of basic online safety requirements. These include minimum standards in a service providers terms and conditions of use, a complaint scheme and a dedicated contact person. The commissioner will have many important roles other than the administrator of the complaints process of cyberbullying material. He will play a vital pro-active role not just in policing the medium of the online world but also in taking a lead role in the promotion of online safety and the coordination of relevant activities of Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies.

The role will also be in supporting, conducting, accrediting and evaluating educational and community-awareness programs, and advising the minister. The commissioner's powers will extend to the investigation of complaints, which can be made on behalf of children, their parents or guardians—or indeed any responsible person. The bill sets out an expectation that each social-media service will comply with a set of basic online safety requirements. These include those minimum standards that need to be in place. The bill will set out a two-tiered scheme for the rapid removal of cyberbullying material from social-media services.

Tier 1 is of a voluntary nature and is not subject to legally-binding notices or penalties. Tier 1 applicants would apply for this status in writing and would have to demonstrate to the commissioner the adherence to suitable complaints management and response standards.

The commissioner would have the power to request that the provider of a tier 1 service remove cyberbullying material within 48 hours. This is in a case where the commissioner receives notification that the material was not removed following a complaint made under the service's complaints scheme. Repeated failure to comply, to the satisfaction of the commissioner, may result in removal of the tier 1 status.

Tier 2 would be determined by the minister and subject to legally-binding notices and penalties, such as the issuing of a 'social media service notice' by the commissioner, which would require the removal of material targeted at Australian children. Only large social-media services could be declared subject to tier 2 regulation.

The commissioner would also have the ability to name and shame those social-media services that fail to comply with the basic online safety requirements, who ignore requests to remove targeted subject material, and to issue a social-media service notice by way of a statement regarding non-compliance or publishing it on its website. Civil-penalty provisions only arise in relation to non-compliance with the issuing of a social-media service notice. The commissioner would also have the power to issue notices to those who post cyberbullying material, including a requirement for them to remove that material. Non-compliance with such a notice would result in injunctive relief.

Labor has always been committed to doing all we can to combat online child bullying. It was Labor who established the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, in 2010, as part of our commitment to investigate and improve cybersafety measures. The committee released its interim report—*High-Wire Act: Cybersafety and the young*—in June 2011, containing 32 recommendations that were endorsed. The central themes were a focus on education and a multifaceted approach.

It is important to remember that while there is a role for policing and regulation—and that is very important in supporting the legislation today—we also must look at the value of education. In January 2013 Labor launched a new cybersafety program educating primary aged children on how to stay safe online. Labor has always sought to work with the community and industry and get their input and make sure there is consultation when it comes to important measures like this. We are conscious of the concerns raised by some parts of the sector in relation to this legislation, but, when we are talking about protecting our young people from online bullies, it is worth trialling and investing time and resources into any new approaches and any new measures. That is why I particularly support this bill. I think we should be looking at these new measures.

We know that young people aged 14 to 17 have the highest rate of internet usage, with 91 per cent going online weekly. Whilst the exploding use of online chat and social networking sites has provided great advances and assistance for young people, it is still an area of concern, as we see bullying increasing. As the Chief Executive Officer of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, Dr Judith Slocombe, has said:

There is no difference between someone who bullies online and one who bullies face-to-face. They are just different methods. They both can cause enormous harm.

Whilst that is true, it is important to note that bullying does not stop at the end of the school day. Through social media, chat and texts a bully can have direct access to their victims 24 hours a day, and that is indeed a concern. So it is not just happening at school; it is happening after school—at home, at the shops, at the movies and wherever children might be. Research has also shown that children are far more unlikely to report a case of cyberbullying than face-to-face bullying. The new and unrelenting nature of this bullying has led to many kids' lives being turned into a real misery, with sometimes very devastating consequences. This new form of bullying

can hound our kids from the classroom to their homes, via the vast array of different ways people can access the internet.

According to research by the University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre, one in five of our nation's children aged between 10 and 17 has experienced some sort of cyberbullying. That is quite a large number. It is worth noting that many instances will of course go unreported. As I have said, the consequences of cyberbullying can be devastating. Evidence suggests that students who were cyberbullied report lower levels of connectedness and higher levels of loneliness at school as well as feeling less safe at school. They are also more likely to experience psychological or mental health problems as a result of being a victim of cyberbullying.

As I have said, I acknowledge there have been some concerns around the practical implementation of parts of this legislation. The shadow minister, in her speech to the House, noted there are concerns expressed by the Digital Policy Group of the Australian Interactive Media Industry Association, or AIMIA, which represents some of the major social media companies. It is also important to acknowledge many of the proactive steps being taken by communications and social media organisations. As AIMIA states in its submission, its member bodies:

... have policies that expressly prohibit bullying; we invest in a reporting infrastructure that allows the millions of people who use our services to report any bullying content to us; we promptly review and action those reports; and, we undertake online safety outreach and awareness-raising.

There are also many antibullying organisations in Australia who are working very hard to protect our children online. I would like to note the efforts of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation on the recent launch of the eSmart Digital Licence, a really great initiative. It is an online tool designed to educate and protect children against cyberbullying. It must also be mentioned that Google contributed \$1.2 million to the program to ensure the digital licence is available to all year 6 students across Australia. It is a similar concept to the 'pen licence' a child obtains when they are ready to give up their pencil and are able to use a pen. I think it is a really great initiative.

As noted by the AIMIA Digital Policy Group in its submission to the Senate committee:

... online safety is best achieved when government, industry, and the community work together.

I totally agree with that sentiment. It is essential for the government to be working with the community in this matter. It is essential that government move with the evolving nature of digital technology and respond in a meaningful and purposeful manner to protect as best we can our children from online bullying or predatory behaviour or online violence. We all share a responsibility for that as individuals, parents, communities and governments. I recognise that it is really important that we are taking action now and into the future in relation to this issue, particularly as we are seeing an increase in the prevalence of online bullying and its impacts upon children. So it is important to have legislation like this in place.

The opposition believes strongly that we have a responsibility to do all that we can to prevent damaging outcomes caused by online bullying. I certainly commend all of those different groups that already have measures in place for the action that they have taken. It is good to see everyone working together and continuing to do so. It is important that we continue to work in a bipartisan way, as we have been doing in relation to this matter of online safety, and work very closely with industry, who, as I say, have been taking a very proactive approach to this as well. At the end of the day, it is important we work together to ensure we have greater protections in place for our children when it comes to the increasing prevalence of online bullying. I am sure every member in this House has had their local constituents, friends and family approach them about this. I think everyone in some way has been touched by the prevalence of online bullying and they know only too well firsthand the impact that it can have upon its victims and upon families. For all those reasons, I support this legislation. It is an important move towards making sure that our children are kept safe online.

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (12:43): I rise to speak on the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and the Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014. This legislation fulfils an election commitment that we made to protect Australian children. This is also something that has been promoted in discussion papers and in very broad industry and community consultation. Before we go on, I would just like to define for the House what I mean, and what the legislation means, by cyberbullying. Some of my constituents who are not familiar with this have raised this issue: what is cyberbullying? They read about it. Basically cyberbullying is a phenomenon of the digital age. It is using electronic digital media to seriously threaten, intimidate, harass or humiliate a person. This issue is so important because so many of our children now are connected in a digital way, through social media or texting.

In days gone by, bullying was always there. It has been a feature of schoolyards and social communities for generations. The issue that is different with cyberbullying is that the schoolyard is exponentially larger and more connected. We have all heard about issues going viral in the digital space. If cyberbullying happens, it has the potential to go viral. Threats, intimidation, harassment and humiliation can spread like wildfire through digital

media. Digital media is so universal now. Whether it is a smartphone, a tablet or hard-wired computers at home, it is pervasive particularly with youth culture. Depending on which age group is surveyed, the incidence of cyberbullying is quite frightening. I have seen figures of six per cent for one age group up to the other extreme that up to 40 per cent for teenagers to the age of 16 have experienced some form of cyberbullying, whether it is profound and severe or short term. That is a scary phenomenon.

The phenomenon too is that it does not go away. The schoolyard bully can be sorted out in the schoolyard. You could escape a schoolyard bully and go home; you could retreat to your friends. But if someone is harassing you online, it is very hard to combat. This bullying can have long-term serious effects on mental health and self-esteem, and can create anxiety and depression. The perpetrator is perpetually out of reach and it is hard to respond to that.

This legislation will give parents and children a mechanism. They will now have a system by which they can respond if this phenomenon is happening to them and they cannot resolve it person to person. The essence of this legislation is the establishment of a Children's e-Safety Commissioner. He or she will have several powers. The first is a promotional role where the Children's e-Safety Commissioner can promote research about online e-safety and occasionally make grants of financial assistance in relation to rolling out online e-safety programs for children. They will have a role, most importantly, of intervention and be able to enforce undertakings both to online services and to individuals posting bullying material. Material and behaviour that appear on large media sites as well as people posting bullying material will be under his or her remit of responsibility.

None of us on the coalition like overdoing or creating a nanny state. But the internet is a new phenomenon and you do not have the power of a personality to fight this sort of bullying. We need systems in place because of the reach of the internet. It is a light-touch system of enforcement. There will be two tiers of service created under the legislation. Tier 1 is the level that everyone is in. Any media service whether large or small will be voluntarily enrolled in the tier 1 system. Tier 1 is universal. It is not a question of having misbehaved to be a tier 1 service. But if there is an issue of bullying, a tier 1 service can be notified that there is a problem, and they either stop posting it and remove it if they are an individual or remove the bullying material from their site if it is a social media site.

Tier 2 is the so-called naughty corner where the minister can direct someone to become a tier 2 service—that is a service that has not complied with requests to remove offensive material. Once a site or a social media organisation is in tier 2, the Children's e-Safety Commissioner can issue a compliance notice, and there are consequences. If they repeatedly fail to act on the notices served upon them or on an individual, they can be fined up to 170,000 units. Up to 100 units can be levied and each unit is worth \$170, so that means a \$17,000 fine—and that is per day. So there are some teeth to the enforcement scenario that the legislation sets up.

The notices are of a certain type. There is an end-user notice which will be levied to a person posting aggressive material. The person or the party making the aggressive post will have to comply. A social media service is to a broader body; it is to the body that may not have posted it but is hosting the site where the bullying is occurring. It is pleasing to hear that all the large social media services that we are familiar—whether it be the huge ones like Google or Facebook—are complying with this.

Hopefully no-one will ever be in that tier 2 space. Usually a letter to the offender from a legal officer of some sort results in the situation being resolved there and then. The Children's e-Safety Commissioner can notify police of appropriate intervention. An injunction can be sought. All sorts of interventions can be made before a body, either an individual or a huge organisation, is declared tier 2.

My electorate of Lyne has a mixed demographic. It is now not unusual for children once they get to their teens to have their own mobile phone. As you know, the internet is available to them whether they have got an iPad, iPhone or one of the many other smartphones. Facebook is permeating youth just as it is everyone else.

Fortunately, in our electorate, internet services are improving all the time due to the actions of the coalition government in fixing and delivering the rollout of the NBN. We have got 17 towers of fixed wireless capability being rolled out across the electorate. New announcements have been made for improved internet services in Taree where we have got fibre to the premise being rolled out, including in the CBD and to the north-west of Taree in Cundletown; moving up with fixed wireless towers near Harrington and into the Camden Haven where improvements will be rolled out in the very near future.

With the internet being so pervasive, this phenomenon of social bullying is quite prevalent as I have mentioned—up to 40 per cent; that is a scary figure. I must admit my children have never told me they have been bullied on the internet, but these surveys are quite reliable. It is a real issue for parents, so there will be a mechanism for parents to complain to, there will be a mechanism to effect a notice to the end user—that is, the person who is posting it or the site that is hosting the offensive material. Hopefully, with the promotion of the

Children's e-Safety Commissioner and the rolling out of these programs, the issue will fade. I do not think we will ever get rid of it, but it is our duty to look after members of our society. So I commend this bill to the House and, hopefully, it will be put to good use.

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (12:54): I support the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and I do so because, amongst other things, I was a member of the parliamentary committee that several years ago was responsible for the inquiry into this very issue, which resulted in the report entitled *High wire act: cybersafety and the young*. That report was submitted to parliament in 2011 and contained some 30-odd recommendations. Amongst those recommendations was a whole range of things which I think, ultimately, led to the legislation that is before us today.

The central purpose of this legislation is to establish the position of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner. The key functions of the commissioner will be, firstly, to: administer a complaints system for cyberbullying targeted at a child; take responsibility for administering the online content scheme; and, thirdly, arrange for the removal of offending material using a two-tiered system that other members who have contributed to this debate have discussed.

The bill also creates a complaints system for cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child; creates the two-tiered system, which I just mentioned a moment ago; provides for civil penalties, enforceable undertakings and injunctions should the need arise; and establishes the Children's Online Safety Special Account to fund the commissioner's functions.

The genesis of this position was the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into Cyber-Safety carried out in 2011. It was a fairly extensive inquiry, and I can recall visiting a number of places around the country as well as people coming here to Parliament House to make their submissions. In particular, I can also recall that at the end of the inquiry there was an online survey to which some 33,751 participants responded—mostly from 10 to 15 years of age; I understand that over 80 per cent of them were in that age category. That is a lot of people and, in particular, a lot of young people making their views known about their concerns about bullying.

I might come back to that a little later, but this is an issue that is so widespread in the community and yet, to date, in my view we have not been able to somehow get on top of it. I say that with the full understanding that there have been many, many attempts and efforts by groups to try and get on top of cyberbullying in the community, particularly as it relates to young people. But I am not so sure that the problem no longer exists; I believe in fact that it does quite extensively when you go around your community.

I have been to many of the schools in my own electorate where I am aware, again, that this is a critical issue for them. Again, I commend and compliment all of the initiatives that I have seen by different schools as they too try to grapple with what is a very complex issue.

We know that we live in a rapidly changing world, and much of the change is being driven by innovation in cybertechnology, which continues to change our lives at an ever-increasing pace. Indeed the internet and social media are literally consuming the lives of so many people today—and that concerns me.

In June 2014, a report estimated that, over a 12-month period, around 20 per cent of Australians aged 8 to 17 have been victims of cyberbullying—that translates to around 463,000 children in this age group who have been affected. Those figures are only estimates; however, I would not be surprised if they are even higher. One of the problems that was made very, very clear in the course of our inquiry was that young people are very reluctant to talk about cyberbullying when it does occur. They are reluctant because, firstly, they often feel embarrassed about the fact that it is happening to them. Secondly, they feel that there is little that can be done about it anyway, and so they let it ride and, quite often, suffer in silence. Indeed I know some young people who, as a result of cyberbullying, have decided that their best option was to change schools and go somewhere else. That in itself is a problem. It is an even greater problem that the bullying may well continue outside of school hours right into the family home, which would otherwise have been considered a safe haven. Again, we have been unable to manage what is truly a major problem out there in the community.

The issue of cybersystems in the community generally has led to a whole range of problems, from computer hacking right through to child pornography, money scamming, money and identity theft. And then comes bullying. It seems that we have been able to get a better handle on all the others because in most cases we are dealing with adults, and our laws are better structured to deal with offences when they are committed by an adult. When it comes to cyberbullying, it seems that in many instances the perpetrator is a young person, and because they are a young person it is much more difficult to deal with them in the way that we would otherwise do if it were an adult we were dealing with.

That is why the joint standing committee's report of 2011 contained 32 different recommendations, all of which addressed different aspects of the problem in the hope that those different actions would collectively make a real

difference to how we manage this problem. That report was nearly four years ago, and whilst I accept that there have been considerable changes in the cyberworld with respect to hardware and software and the number of interactive social sites that are now available, I believe the issue of cyberbullying has not changed a lot and is still prevalent out there.

As the previous speaker said, cyberbullying could be described—and I cannot recall his precise definition—as the posting of menacing, harassing, offensive or intimidating material online. Obviously, it is done for a particular purpose by the perpetrator. Depending on the actual language used and the way it is sent it is very difficult to manage. But what is clear is that it is widespread amongst young people. Indeed, we know that in some cases young people have been driven to suicide. There have been reports of several cases of suicide which have been attributed to cyberbullying—I guess no-one will know precisely whether there were other factors in there—but if it leads to that kind of consequence then it is clearly time that we take action, and action that might provide the kinds of support services that will prevent that from happening in the future.

This is not a problem which is unique to Australia. It is a problem that you will find around the world. I note that many other countries have, like Australia, grappled with it to try to deal with it and have implemented their own laws in a similar way to what we are doing here in this parliament today.

I also note that one of the most effective strategies is to have a better education process in place, that educates not only the young person but the young person's friends, their acquaintances, their family members and, where the school is involved, the broader school community. Quite often it is as the result of the intervention of those close friends, family members or other members of the school community that the cyberbullying comes to an end.

It is also very much the case that at times the perpetrator remains anonymous, and that makes the issue more difficult to deal with. We heard in the course of the inquiry from many young people who received different text messages and the like, about the grief it caused them and their inability to respond either because, as I said earlier, they did not know who was sending the messages or because they felt there was nobody to turn to.

There have been a number of other community-wide programs with which I am familiar, and I commend the people who have got involved in putting those programs together. I also want to mention that in the course of the inquiry I held a forum in my own electorate with the member for Gorton, who at the time was the Australian minister for police. We also had the AFP and South Australia Police on hand, as well as educators in the area and many of the families and children who live in my electorate. It was interesting to note from that forum that the issues raised, the comments made and the concerns brought to our attention were entirely consistent with the kind of feedback we had received in the course of the inquiry that the parliamentary committee had carried out. It just confirmed to me that we were on the right track with respect to the recommendations that arose from that inquiry.

I do note that the government has allocated \$7.5 million for the online safety education and that one of the roles of the commissioner is to accredit online safety education programs. Bearing in mind that education is fundamental to resolving this issue, I believe this is a worthwhile initiative. It will be interesting to how it plays out and whether it makes a difference. I know that the federal government has already got cyberbullying online safety education programs in place and they have been taken up by schools in my area—and I imagine around the country—with some beneficial effect. But clearly more needs to be done.

The real problem with all of this is that we deal with a problem that quite often arises amongst young people who are under adult-age; therefore, it is difficult to bring them before the courts in a way which is going to responsibly resolve the matter. This is unlike when we are dealing with adults; it is much more complex dealing with young people. Indeed we have right now in this country several laws that could be applied with respect to cyberbullying if the authorities chose to use them. It has always been an offence to use a carriage service to threaten to kill or cause serious harm to anybody.

Each state has its own anti-stalking laws. Complaints could be made to the Australian Human Rights Commission. The Australian Broadcasting Services Act 1992 regulates online content and, in particular, illegal and offensive content. Each one of those actions could be used as a remedy. But the truth is that none of them would seem to be appropriate when you are dealing with a perpetrator who may be a young person.

In most cases the best solution is to get the perpetrator, the victim, the parents and school counsellors together to talk the issue through and resolve it in a satisfactory way, bearing in mind that we are dealing with young people. That is the aim of this process, as I understand; the commissioner has the ability to talk to the police and the education authorities and try to bring those parties together. The commissioner also has the role of trying to oversee the government's policies more broadly; managing this whole process of cyberbullying, and ensuring that the remedies we currently have in place are indeed effective; and, if they are not, then perhaps recommending to the government other alternative actions.

Finally—and this is where I see the real importance of this position—again, it was clear to me in the course of our inquiry that the young people felt they had no-one to turn to who would truly listen to them and take their complaints and concerns seriously. This position creates an office for them to be able to do that. It gives them someone to turn to, even if it is someone they do not personally confront; they can pass the information on, through the online system that will be available for them. And at least they will know that someone at the end of the line will take their concerns seriously and then take the appropriate action. With those comments, I reiterate that we support this legislation.

**Ms PRICE** (Durack) (13:08): These bills before us are a demonstration of this government's election commitment to enhance online safety for children, including: appointing a Children's e-Safety Commissioner to take a national leadership role in online safety; and implementing a complaints system, backed by legislation, that will get cyberbullying material aimed at our children taken down quickly from large social media sites.

The legislation was developed following considerable public and stakeholder consultation, and took account of more than 80 submissions in response to the discussion paper *Enhancing online safety for children*, which was released in January 2014. In addition to the commissioner and complaints system, the online safety bill: provides for the Commissioner to make a cyberbully remove material and to stop posting further material; provides for the cyberbully to apologise to the child; provides for some enforcement mechanisms for the commissioner; provides an account to fund the commissioner's activities; and, importantly, enables the commissioner to disclose information in certain circumstances.

Clearly, cyberbullying and online safety are important community issues—whether you are in the city or the bush, these issues are important to all individuals and families. Cyberbullying affects all of us, particularly younger people who are more vulnerable. But what do we mean by cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is when someone is tormented through any form of technology. This is a modern-day problem. New research commissioned by the Abbott government last year showed that one in five Australian children aged eight to 17 experiences cyberbullying each year. The successful passage of this legislation will be a powerful deterrent for cyberbullies and will help keep our children safe, providing some security and protection. The findings show that cyberbullying is widespread and that there is substantial community distress about whether there are adequate response mechanisms available.

I was pleased that our government announced funding of \$10 million in the May budget for a policy of enhancing online safety for children, which includes: \$7.5 million to assist schools to purchase accredited online safety programs; \$2.4 million to establish and operate the Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner; support for Australian based research and information campaigns on online safety.

Parents in my electorate of Durack periodically speak with me about their alarm and apprehension for their children and the online safety issue. We ask ourselves: 'Do I know where my children are, who they are with and what they are doing?' It should be no different when they are online. Because of my concern, I organised some cybersafety workshops in Durack. We had around 500 students and teachers in Geraldton, thanks to the good grace and skill of my very talented colleague, the member for Forrest. The workshop presentation addressed the risks associated with social media like Facebook and Twitter; cyberbullying; your child's digital footprint; what it means to be groomed online; your mobile phone and its security weaknesses, such as location services; and, of course, scams.

Students from Allendale Primary School, St Lawrence's Primary School and Geraldton Senior College participated in five workshops to learn of the dangers and management strategies for using technology. A further 50 teachers from Geraldton Senior College attended a workshop, many of whom are also parents. The workshops addressed unwanted contact, online friends, rude messages and online gaming; as well as how to recognise the associated dangers, and strategies for managing them.

If children are being cyberbullied, they need to 'block' or 'ignore' the contact, and tell a parent or responsible adult. The presentations were adapted by the member for Forrest, to be age-appropriate—that was where the skill came in—but the message was the same. The children at the workshops learnt to be smart, safe and responsible when using technology, and the teachers learnt to be vigilant.

The feedback from the schoolchildren, parents and teachers was quite overpowering. Many teachers and principals talked about the 'new' workload that had been created for them. This real and new workload emanated: from online bullying; from the endeavours of teachers and principals to protect their students; and from trying to manage new and distracting student behaviours related to bullying—sulking, feeling humiliated, not wanting to attend class, being on the outer of friendship groups, having poor attendance, and being unable to concentrate in class. As if the teachers do not have enough to do. This is obviously adding to their considerable workload.

Cybersafety is a dark issue; many of us, of course, do not understand it. It is a case of what you do not know will not hurt you. But, as we have heard in this debate, for many people, it can hurt. Ignorance is your enemy when it comes to online safety. This is not helped by the fact that many of our children are provided mobile and internet services at very young ages. They are phoning, emailing, texting and accessing sites from early primary school. It means they and others have direct access to all sorts of things, much of which can be harmful.

For youngsters, the 10- to 15-year-old age group in particular, it is the posting of humiliating or down-right harmful photos, videos, rumours, gossip and confidences which are then exacerbated by features that share and broadcast the damaging content that sees our children often get very upset. There can be awful consequences associated with online issues and bullying, as we have heard many speak about in this debate. A child can experience extreme anxiety; they do not want to go to school; they lose friends; they cannot face certain people. No-one wants rumours and damaging content broadcast for all the world to see, especially if it is gossip or untrue.

The following quotes are a taste from my electorate, from concerned citizens about cyber bullying, which I have taken from the *Geraldton Guardian* website. Vivien of Geraldton says:

Of course it is a growing problem. Ask any of the kids in Geraldton and they will probably tell you. It is not just limited to Facebook either; it is nasty messages, emails, photos being sent around. It is a serious problem and the law does not deal with it. Most of the problem is that people are so unaware of it—in terms of kids—because some parents don't know how to use a computer. Guess the first step is to ignore it, but it won't just stop.

This particular person is studying education and so has a particular interest in this from a research perspective. Lisa Marie from Geraldton said:

It's not just kids.... on the radio today I heard about parents slandering a school principal on Facebook. Many people who comment on *Geraldton Guardian* page, *Sunrise* page et cetera bully others and say hurtful things just cause they have a different opinion to them. when the adults stop doing it, the kids may follow.

Jenny from Geraldton said:

Most bullies are basically cowards, so internet is perfect for them. They are nothing but keyboard warriors.

I think we here in this House today would agree with many of those comments. As I said, these issues are most prevalent amongst the 10- to 15-year-old very sensitive age group; fortunately, the incidence of online bullying does start to decrease around age 16 to 17. As parents, some of us have seen behaviours that are problematic. Sadly, we have heard of severe cases that have led to depression and suicidal thoughts, and the ultimate taking of a young person's life.

Let us not forget the crime side of online safety. It is right that the new newly appointed commissioner, through the successful passage of this bill, will work closely with police, government agencies, the internet industry, child protection agencies and parent and teacher associations. And for those who break the law, if a provider of social media service fails to comply, it will be liable to pay a penalty, potentially \$17,000 per day for each day it fails to respond. There are also enforcement provisions, court injunctions, et cetera which are welcome.

I reiterate my support for the online safety bill and its amendments. And know that I can speak confidently on behalf of the constituents of Durack, who would throw their support behind this bill as well.

They have asked me, in my role as their local member, to do what I can in the parliament to fight cyberbullying, to protect and keep their children safe. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (13:18):** Few thoughts concern the mind of parents more than the safety of their children. In recent years, we have seen shocking cases of cyber bullying make headlines across the country.

One terrible story is the case of Sheniz Erkan, a 14-year-old Melbourne girl. A week short of her 15th birthday, she took her own life—a beautiful young woman with her whole life ahead of her. The outpouring of grief that followed her death demonstrated the community's resolve to ensure that this heartbreaking loss of life should never happen again.

Her devastated family pleaded with parents to keep a closer eye on their children's internet use. But even the most vigilant parent cannot realistically monitor their child's every interaction on the internet. An estimated 90 per cent of 12- to 17- year-olds in Australia use social media—and I imagine that is an underestimate. A majority of Australian teenagers over the age of 14 use Facebook more than once a day. With the proliferation of smart phones and tablets, access to social media has never been easier. All this comes with a lot of risk.

Research by the Australian Communications and Media Authority indicates four per cent of eight- to nine-year-olds; 21 per cent of 14- to 15-year-olds; and 16 per cent of 16- to 17-year-olds reported being cyberbullied. And it is not just parents that are worried about the growth in cyberbullying. Internal emails from Twitter CEO, Dick Costolo, revealed that he had admitted to his staff that he is 'ashamed' and 'embarrassed' by how his company handled bullying and harassment among its users. He stated:

We suck at dealing with abuse and trolls on the platform and we've sucked at it for years. It's no secret and the rest of the world talks about it every day. We lose core user after core user by not addressing simple trolling issues that they face every day.

These very revealing emails capture the scale of the problem that we face. Not even one of the largest social media companies in the world has worked out how to deal with cyberbullying. Nonetheless that is the objective of the bill that we are talking about today.

The Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014, seeks to reduce the risk of our young people becoming victims of cyberbullying. Dr Judith Slocombe, Chief Executive of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, a national charity protecting children from violence said:

There is no difference between someone who bullies online and one who bullies face-to-face. They are just different methods. They both can cause enormous harm.

There are laws in every state and territory which cover all forms of bullying. This bill backs up these laws for the digital age. It establishes a Children's e-Safety Commissioner and sets out its functions and powers. In practice, the establishment of the commissioner will mean a child or their parent will be able to complain to the commissioner if they have been the subject of cyberbullying. The commissioner may then investigate such a complaint.

The bill sets out an expectation that each social media service will comply with a set of basic online safety requirements. This includes minimum standards in a service provider's terms and conditions of use, a complaints scheme and a dedicated contact person. The establishment of a Children's e-Safety Commissioner is an important step in the right direction. Along with all members, I hope that the establishment of a dedicated Children's e-Safety Commissioner will lift the profile of cyberbullying. This will help to generate further the conversation in the Australian community about what to do. The primary role of the commissioner will be to resolve existing acts of cyberbullying, but we have to accept that cyberbullying is as much a social problem as a technological one. Bullying occurred long before the advent of the internet. The internet does enable the bully to remain anonymous and unaccountable for the torment they create. Preventing the bullying from occurring in the first place is vital to countering cyberbullying.

I am pleased to say in my electorate two local schools in particular have taken such an approach. Viewbank College, a secondary school, and Concord School are taking a positive and proactive approach to countering cyberbullying. Concord School is a special school for students with learning needs, while Viewbank is a large public secondary school with students from a diverse range of backgrounds. In 2013, the two schools established a cybersafety program that saw mainstream year 9 students from Viewbank and special education year 9 students from Concord come together to promote understanding and acceptance of difference.

The program was designed to help students develop strategies for dealing with issues arising from cyberbullying, sexting and unsafe content. I am told the project was very successful. Students from both schools engaged with the topic of cybersafety and enjoyed discussing issues, sharing ideas and collaborating with students from another school. Importantly, the program yielded results. Teachers noticed a change in attitude from the students participating in the program. Just to use one example, towards the end of the project in 2013, a student began to have some issues on Facebook. The student felt the issues were too difficult for her to handle alone. She drew on the skills she had learned in the program and collected evidence, saved it into a folder and discussed it with her mother. The child's mother was very impressed with how her daughter handled the issue and contacted the school, where the issue was resolved.

I do want to especially commend Concord School and Viewbank secondary for their innovative and collaborative approach to tackling cyberbullying in the local community. I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership of Judith Craze and Ross Purcell at Viewbank; Pam Wright, the e-learning coordinator at Concord; and Claire Park. Pam Wright, who conceived the program understood, that many of the special needs students at Concord had experienced bullying at mainstream schools. She understood that interactions between the two cohorts of students needed to be on a different level, so Pam came up with the idea of students working together to make short films about cyberbullying. The project culminated in a showcase evening of the students' work, where the films were displayed.

Concord School also became the first special school in Australia to become a part of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation's eSmart Schools cyberbullying program. This eSmart program helps establish important behavioural norms early in a child's life. This includes things like asking someone for permission before taking a photo of them on a smart phone, asking the permission of an adult before purchasing items online and, perhaps most importantly of all, establishing a dialogue between child and parent about their online activity. Establishing this last norm is vital if a child is to share experiences of cyberbullying with their parents.

This approach serves to underline an important truth about cyberbullying: changing the attitudes of our young people so that cyberbullying is prevented from occurring in the first place and equipping students with the emotional skills to deal with the challenges of cyberbullying when it does occur is essential to any approach to this problem. It is also worth noting a success achieved by the eSmart program include that 80 per cent of school principals believe that eSmart Schools is effective in changing school culture in relation to cybersafety, technology use and bullying. The message from the report is clear: no one action or approach will do.

Many of the contributions by members on this bill have been very personal and I do want to recognise that there is much goodwill towards this initiative. We will certainly be supporting it. We were pleased, when we were in government, to establish a cybersafety plan in 2008 with funding of \$125.8 million, which was committed to combating online risks and helping parents and educators to protect children from inappropriate material. I do support this bill because I know that parents in my electorate expect me to do everything that I can to help them protect their children. It is my hope that this bill will help children and their parents resolve matters of cyberbullying before any harm comes to them. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms MARINO** (Forrest—Government Whip) (13:29): I am actually doing everything I can to help young people stay safe online. I have delivered at least 250 cybersafety presentations to students, parents and community members. I have listened to thousands of young people in the process. I know that for the overwhelming majority—I think the figure is around 95 per cent—the net is their world. They are voracious users who see connectivity and devices as almost as essential as breathing. I know they face risks every day online. I know they want to be happy and safe online. I also know that many of them assume that they are safe; that is, until they have a problem.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott):** Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour, and the honourable member for Forrest will have leave to continue her remarks at that time.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### McLeod, Mr Connor

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (13:30): I am very pleased to congratulate a remarkable young man, 13-year-old Connor McLeod, from Oakhurst in Sydney. Last year, the member for Chifley and I met with Connor and his mum, Ally, to talk about Connor's idea to introduce tactile banknotes to Australia. Connor is visually impaired. He told us of the difficulties he experiences in identifying different notes, and that he is often forced to pay for things using coins. So Connor started a campaign to introduce tactile banknotes to Australia. His campaign attracted the support of the Human Rights Commission, of Vision Australia, and of the 57,000 people who signed his online petition. The member for Chifley and I supported the campaign by raising the need for tactile banknotes here in the parliament.

Last week there was a breakthrough: the Reserve Bank of Australia announced that the next generation of banknotes will include a tactile feature. As Connor's mum Ally has said, the new notes will enable blind and visually impaired people to easily and independently differentiate banknotes by touch. According to a report by Vision Australia, at the moment around half of all blind Australians feel they are being short-changed during transactions. Thanks to Connor's remarkable activism, the lives of more than 300,000 blind and visually impaired Australians will be improved. Congratulations Connor!

### Food Labelling

**Mr BROAD** (Mallee) (13:31): When I was still farming, my wife and I holidayed in Vietnam. When we were in Ho Chi Minh City, a young girl came up to us and she was begging. We went with her, and she wanted us to buy her some milk powder and, even though the Chinese milk powder would have been substantially cheaper and we could have got more, she insisted that we buy her Australian milk powder. And that was because she had learnt, even in Vietnam, that the cheapest is not always the safest. We see this now in Australia: we have had a scare with hepatitis A in berries. The government needs to look at this, very firmly, and to make some changes. Yesterday I was flying from Mildura, the dried fruit capital of Australia—the place where we grow 62 per cent of Australia's almonds—and, as I travelled on the plane, I was given this little snack—it is not a prop, Mr Deputy Speaker!—and it said on the packet, 'packed in Australia from Australian and imported products'. It just astounds me that I was leaving the dried fruit capital—leaving the place where we grow almonds, where we grow cashews, where we grow sultanas, and where we grow raisins—and flying on an Australian plane, yet I was eating food from other parts of the world. I think we can do better as a country.

### McLeod, Mr Connor

**Mr HUSIC** (Chifley) (13:33): So often, we as MPs gain inspiration from events in our own electorates, and hearing about the personal triumphs of our constituents, sometimes against the odds, fills us with awe. I wanted to bring one of those stories to the floor of the House—and this is a story whose end will impact on us all.

Last year, as the shadow minister and member for Jagajaga has said, we both met then 12-year-old Connor McLeod and his mother, Ally Lancaster, here in parliament. We were both left inspired by the possibility of a remarkable campaign. Connor, who is from Oakhurst within the electorate of Chifley, was born blind. He sensed a basic injustice with a situation that we all take for granted—because he could not tell the difference in the denominations of money he was handling—and he wanted to do something about it. So he came to Canberra, and argued his case. Connor met with people on both sides of the chamber, and I spoke on his behalf in the House. The member for Jagajaga and I met with Connor and his mother. I also questioned the Reserve Bank governor, Glenn Stevens, on the issue at a public hearing in Sydney last year. To his credit, the governor said that he would be continuing to look at ways to improve this situation and, aided by the persistence of Connor and his mother, he did just that.

After further campaigning through the Human Rights Commission and Vision Australia, it is fantastic to hear that the Reserve Bank has agreed to introduce tactile notes. I want to wish Connor all the best for what he has done. He has achieved something truly special for the people of Australia and he is owed full credit for that.

### Foreign Investment

**Mr TAYLOR** (Hume) (13:34): Recently I had the pleasure of hosting the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister of Agriculture at a property in Murrumbateman in my electorate. The Prime Minister announced new measures to monitor foreign ownership of agricultural land. From 1 March—that is next week—the screening threshold for the purchase of agricultural land will be reduced. Foreign investors will have to seek approval for any purchase of agricultural land that will result in their total landholding exceeding \$15 million. All investments in agricultural land over \$15 million will be added to a register of foreign ownership. This government welcomes investment in agriculture; we know we need more, not less. At the same time, we need to assure local farmers and producers that the investment is in the national interest. Smart policy underpins successful industries—I have never seen a turnaround like the one we have seen in the cattle market in the last couple of months.

We were hosted at Murrumbateman by the Hodgkinson family, who have been farming since in that area since the 1850s. Landon Hodgkinson says, 'the government's policies to re-establish export markets, to set up free trade agreements providing new access into Asia, together with a great season in southern New South Wales, have seen stock prices skyrocket, particularly for cattle'. In his words: 'We can't complain.' That is a ringing endorsement from a farmer. This government is delivering smart policy, for the Hodgkinsons and for other farming families across Australia.

### Greyhound Racing

**Ms PARKE** (Fremantle) (13:36): Last week's exposure of the sickening and apparently common practice of live baiting of racing greyhounds in Australia shows that the welfare of animals in this industry—the dogs, and the rabbits, possums and piglets used as bait—runs a distant last to the primary reason for its existence: the lure of great income. A breed renowned for being gentle, sensitive and loyal, the racing greyhound typically lives a short life of deprivation before being discarded once their money-earning days are over—and that is the treatment dealt out to the good ones. Around 8,000 puppies are born each year who never race, and four of every five racing dogs are euthanased. Only about 10 per cent of animals born will be re-homed and enjoy a natural lifespan.

There are many dog lovers involved in the greyhound racing industry who surely dote upon their animals, and I am sure they are equally horrified by the cruel, debased and apparently widespread practice of live baiting brought to light by Animals Australia, Animal Liberation Queensland and the ABCs *Four Corners* program last week. Animal lovers involved with greyhounds can make their disgust known by refusing to participate in what is an unfair contest on many levels.

It would be no surprise to hear that my view is that this declining industry should end. But if it is to continue, then there must be greater transparency, strong and independent regulation and tougher penalties. There is no place in our society for such barbaric treatment of animals.

### Chinese Club of Queensland

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (13:37): I rise to thank the Chinese Club of Queensland and President Michael Chan for inviting me to be part of their wonderful annual Chinese New Year dinner. This year was no exception. It was a wonderful evening. Master of Ceremonies Frank Liu put a lot of planning into the night, as always. He particularly oversees the entertainment for the evening. My invitation arrived last November; although it was sad

not to have his father Eddie Liu with us for a second year, I know Eddie would have been very proud of the organisation of this evening.

It is a very significant event and it was noted that it has been going since 1953. They have always had the governor in attendance; indeed in 1953 the then Governor, Sir Henry Abel Smith, was the first governor to attend. We were joined by his Excellency Paul de Jersey and his wife on Saturday night.

The Chinese Club of Queensland has noted that it is the year of the goat or the sheep. The Prime Minister asked me to represent him by reading his message on the night. I thought that the sheep, perhaps, is more significant to Australia given the fact that, as a young nation, our wealth was built on the back of the sheep. Possibly the sheep is a better omen and symbol for Australia going forward. The Prime Minister also mentioned in his speech the fact that President Xi was with us late last year as part of the G20 and in his address— (*Time expired*)

### **Kingsford Smith Lunar New Year Festival**

**Mr THISTLETHWAITE** (Kingsford Smith) (13:39): On Saturday evening I joined representatives from Botany Bay City Council, the University of New South Wales, the Kingsford Chamber of Commerce and the Confucius Institute to host the inaugural Kingsford Smith Lunar New Year Festival at Dacey Gardens in Kingsford. Locals came together to usher in the year of the sheep, or yang de yi nian, in the heart of one of Sydney's best Asian food precincts.

Thousands of locals enjoyed musical performances, cultural dances, songs, lion dances, paper-cutting classes and Asian food from the best local restaurants in the area. It was great to see families, the elderly, the young and the old come together to celebrate multiculturalism in our community, to learn Chinese traditions and customs and to generally have a good time.

One thing that I noticed on the occasion was that all Australians, no matter their background, appreciate the arts. Accessibility of the arts is very important. It was wonderful to see members of our community come together to appreciate Asian arts during this important period for the Asian community.

I thank and congratulate the councillors and staff of Botany Bay City Council. I thank the University of New South Wales for the wonderful work they do in supporting new Asian students in our community. I thank Zhu Minshen, a top educator; Laurie Percy and the staff of the Confucius Institute; Peter Schick and the staff of the Kingston Chamber of Commerce; and my staff—in particular, Trent Murray. Xin nian kuai le to all in the Chinese community.

### **Juvenile Arthritis Fundraiser**

**Mr COLEMAN** (Banks) (13:40): Last week I had the pleasure of meeting with Mary Kranitis, the founder of the Juvenile Arthritis Fundraiser organisation. Mary and her husband, John, founded the organisation in 2007 to raise funds to search for a cure for juvenile arthritis. Mary and John's son George suffers from the disease.

Juvenile arthritis affects about one in 1,000 children and is not as well understood by the medical profession as arthritis in adults. The family's success in fundraising has been extraordinary. Since 2007, Mary and her team have raised over \$700,000 to fund research into juvenile arthritis. Funds raised by the organisation have been used to open the first ever Australian research laboratory for juvenile arthritis at the University of New South Wales. Under the leadership of Professor Denis Wakefield, Associate Dean (Research) and Director of Medical Research, much progress has been made in trying to identify a cure for the disease. Research is conducted in Sydney, with the team also collaborating with colleagues in Germany. There is much more to do but progress has been encouraging. For her remarkable work, Mary Kranitis was named Hurstville Citizen of the Year at a ceremony I attended at Conca D'Oro, Riverwood, on January 22. This was an extremely well-deserved honour.

One of the great privileges of being a member of parliament is to meet with community leaders doing great work in our community. Mary is a tremendous example of such leadership and I look forward to assisting her in her work of finding a cure for juvenile arthritis.

### **Adelaide Terminal Control Unit**

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (13:42): In 2017 Air Services Australia proposes to transfer the Adelaide Terminal Control Unit from the Adelaide airport control tower to Melbourne. Forty-three traffic-control workers currently work at the Adelaide control tower and 20 of those positions will be lost with the transfer of the unit. The control tower monitors air traffic from Adelaide, Parafield and Edinburgh airports. All three are in close proximity to each other and have overlapping airspace, and I believe that is a unique situation. The air traffic controllers also monitor fire bombers and rescue helicopters in times of emergencies.

This is not the first time that attempts have been made to relocate the terminal control unit but, thanks to the efforts of the previous Labor member for Hindmarsh, Steve Georganas, the attempts were blocked. The latest attempt comes after a new \$17 million control tower was built in 2013. There has been no justification for the

move and no explanation as to how the relocation will improve air-traffic safety in Adelaide. If there is a system breakdown or if a local emergency arises, aircraft safety will be much better served by local operators with local knowledge operating from an on-site, purpose-built control tower that enables controllers to see what is happening.

We should not be saving money at the expense of the airport safety. I call on the minister to intervene, reverse this decision and ensure the Adelaide Terminal Control Unit remains in Adelaide.

### **Food Labelling Laws**

**Mr HOGAN** (Page) (13:43): A lot of Australians were quite shocked last week at the frozen berry hepatitis A scare and the infections that were happening across our community. What I am getting from this is that consumers want simple new food-labelling laws and labels that clearly state the country where the product was grown. Consumers would be happy to have this for a number of reasons, and I think consumers would be happy to pay a bit more for a product that clearly states it is Australian grown. Why? They would be doing two things. They would be supporting Australian farmers and Australian produce, but they would also be buying an insurance premium against getting sick, because our food is very clean.

The number of confirmed cases of hepatitis A is increasing and it is obviously a concern. We are bringing down a white paper which will be going to cabinet soon. I believe current food labelling is misleading and the new food labelling laws need to have much tighter control over country of origin food labelling rules. At the moment a product can say that it is made in Australia on the label but it does not necessarily contain Australian ingredients. This needs to change.

### **Hume Bank City2City**

**Ms McGOWAN** (Indi) (13:45): Today I would like to congratulate Albury Wodonga Health for the success of yesterday's Hume Bank City2City Run Walk. What a fantastic event! More than 3,500 people from as far away as Corryong ran, walked, ambled, strolled and pushed prams along the Lincoln Causeway from Albury to Wodonga. Instead of the flow of cars that you would generally expect to see on a Sunday, a flood of people took up the two getting from QEII Square in Albury to the water tower in Wodonga. Scots School and the Albury and Wodonga brass bands provided entertainment along the way and hundreds of volunteers decked out in orange added to the great atmosphere. City2City helps celebrate the two border cities, and the \$100,000 raised will be of great support to Albury Wodonga Health, who are committed to community health and wellbeing.

Thanks to the City2City committee—Michelle, Jen, Jemma, Jacquie, Megan, John, Wayne and Jacinta. Thanks also to the CEO of the hospital, Susan O'Neill; president of the board, Lou Lieberman; and CEO of the bank, Andrew Saxby, for your leadership. To the committee and sponsors: you have done your communities proud in organising a fun community event with a health and wellbeing focus and fundraiser for local health. I am delighted to share with my colleagues that I did the 7.5 kilometres in one hour and 17 minutes.

### **South Australian Country Press Awards**

**Mr PASIN** (Barker) (13:47): I was privileged to attend the South Australian Country Press Awards last Friday night. This event is akin to the Oscars for the South Australian regional media and the competition in each category is very intense. I am proud to be sponsor of the Young Journalist of the Year award, which I am pleased to say was awarded to a young journalist from the Riverland, Pamela Perre—a terrific up and coming journo from the Riverland's *Murray Pioneer*. As part of the prize I sponsored, Pam not only will be embedded in my office for a week but will also spend time in a ministerial office and with a member of the National Press Gallery.

I also record my congratulations to Fred Smith of the *South Eastern Times*, who, despite not receiving an invite to the event in 20 years, attended this year and was judged Best Editorial Writer on the evening. I congratulate the other winners and placegetters from Barker. William Bailey from the *Murray Valley Standard* got Best Sports Photo. Second place for Best Editorial Writing went to Paul Mitchell and third place went to Jason Wallace. Second place in the award for Excellence in Journalism went to Sandra Morello from *The Border Watch*, and an honourable mention to Raquel Mustillo from the *South Eastern Times*. Best News Photo went to Sam Dowdy of *The Border Watch* and third place went to Will Slee of *Murray Pioneer*. Best Sports Story went to Stephanie Gropler of *Loxton News*. Best Digital Contribution was won by *The Border Watch*. Third place for Best Newspaper, Large Circulation, went to *The Border Watch*. For Best Newspaper, Medium Circulation, *Naracoorte Herald* got second place and third place went to *Murray Valley Standard*. Third place for Best Newspaper, Small Circulation, was awarded to the *South Eastern Times*. Well done to the Country Press Association of South Australia for hosting a terrific night and to the winners for reaping the benefits of their hard work. (*Time expired*)

### Griffith Australia Day Awards

**Ms BUTLER** (Griffith) (13:48): Recently I held a ceremony to congratulate the winners of the Griffith Australia Day Awards—a set of awards instituted by my predecessor, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd MP. I was very pleased and honoured to congratulate the winners of the Griffith Australia Day Awards this year: Felipe and Sara Amorim, from the South Brisbane Futsal Club at Carina; Catherine Howieson, from the Camp Hill Monday Playgroup, which she runs on a voluntary basis; Rachel Kayrooz, who is a long-term domestic violence awareness advocate and was recently featured in some national media; Mary Maher, who was instrumental in the founding of the West End Community House, which is one of our fantastic community organisations in Griffith; Glenn Maymann, who is a Gabba icon and part of the Gabba Business Association; David Murray, a passionate advocate for preserving the character of local suburbs through his work at Kangaroo Point; Warwick Rapp, a wonderful member of the Morningside State School P&C—and, might I say, an excellent builder and cake decorator as well; and the volunteer pool at the Multicultural Development Association, which has over 250 volunteers who provide settlement support to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. I would like to thank my committee, Steve Rowan, Penny Cutting, Erin Evans and Karen Oliver, who discharged their duties and made that excellent selection of volunteers in our community who deserved recognition.

### Forde Electorate: Calyn Hoad and Dana Prokic

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde) (13:49): I would like to start by wishing our very own superhero, the 2014 Pride of Australia Child of Courage award winner, Calyn Hoad, a very happy 9th birthday. It has been almost 17 months since Calyn spared his brother's life and altered his own, when he pushed his little brother Kya out of the way of an approaching four-wheel drive only to be hit himself and consequently suffering significant brain damage. The latest update is that Calyn is doing wonderfully. In just the last few weeks he has made some huge breakthroughs with his speech. He is trying really hard to talk and is getting closer and closer every day. He is also experiencing significant improvement with his walking and mobility. Calyn's family have planned a family fun day for the local community in Beenleigh to celebrate his birthday, and they are hoping it will be the biggest superhero birthday party possible. It is great to see the local community coming together to make this a reality for Calyn and his family. It is a fine example of the kind of people in our community.

I would also like to recognise the efforts of a young skater determined to help guide Australia to an unprecedented Junior World Synchronised Skating Championship crown. Local skater Dana Prokic is part of the Acacia Ridge Iceskateers Elite team, which was chosen to represent Australia at the world championships in March in Croatia. Dana's team has successfully won five national titles to date. It is a huge honour to be able to represent Australia and I wish her and her team mates every success. *(Time expired)*

### Werribee Rotary Club Annual Charity Golf Day

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:51): I rise today to show some appreciation for the Werribee Rotary Club, who held their annual charity golf day on Friday at the Werribee Park Golf Club. I attended a dinner that evening with some 120 very, very tired golfers who had shared a great day of golf for a great cause. The golf day is an annual event run by the Rotary Club of Werribee. This year, as was the case last year, the funds will go to assisting homeless youth in our community.

I would like to thank Wendy Roper, the president of Werribee Rotary; Graham Roper, her husband; Roman Koslowski; and Ross Conley, who all worked tirelessly to put the day together. They were very pleased to have exceeded last year's target of \$20,000, this year raising \$23,000 to support Whitelion and its support of homelessness in my community. The money raised by Rotary will go to assist in funding a rental property, a three-bedroom residential property, where young people are looked after with outgoing costs and rent as well as support for those young people to find independent living of their own. *(Time expired)*

### Aviation Heritage Museum

#### Western Australian Airways

**Dr JENSEN** (Tangney) (13:53): As part of the government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program, RAAFA Aviation Heritage Museum Bull Creek, in my electorate of Tangney, has been awarded a grant of nearly \$81,000. John Park, the curator of the museum, has done a fantastic job with the museum.

The grant will fund the production of a documentary, *Legacy of the World War One Aviators*, exploring the stories of the group of legendary World War One pilots who came together to establish and operate Australia's first commercial airline, in the remote reaches of Western Australia. The documentary will be produced and directed by Peter Du Cane, a volunteer at the museum. It will tell the story of Western Australians Stanley Brearley and Sir Norman Brearley, who returned from World War One with the dream of establishing an airline.

Six years after the conclusion of World War One, Sir Norman launched Western Australian Airways, which took off on the first flight of a commercial airline in Australia on 5 December 1921. Over the next few years Sir Norman and Western Australian Airways would employ at least five more World War One fliers. This documentary is an important chronicle of that story. I acknowledge their industry, imagination and service and commend the award to the House.

### **Tongs, Captain Bede George Donald, OAM, MM**

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (13:54): It is with profound sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to a great Canberran, Captain Bede George Donald Tongs, who passed away on 14 January, aged 94. Sent off at the tender age of 22, Bede bravely fought for his country on the Kokoda Track. On the front line and with little-to-no training Bede was not only a soldier but a kind and resourceful man who understood the power of friendship. Through communicating with the native Papuans, Bede helped secure vital information, such as how to harvest safe water from the jungle. Bede's bravery was exemplified when he selflessly crawled through an enemy fire line and destroyed a machine gun rather than exposing his men to face machine gun fire. It was these great examples of leadership that saw Bede awarded a Military Medal by the end of the campaign.

But Bede was not only a hero he was also a tireless servant of the community. After moving to Canberra in 1939, Bede left a lasting legacy on this city. As a builder he contributed to the early formation of Canberra. As a community man he donated land to build a much needed children's playground and community hall.

On the 9 June 2014, Bede was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his contribution to the Kokoda story. He was president of the Oaks Estate Progress Association and an ambassador for the Kokoda Track Foundation. Canberra and Australia thank him for his service. Vale Bede Tongs. (*Time expired*)

### **Cyclone Lam**

**Mrs GRIGGS** (Solomon) (13:56): I rise to inform the House of the devastating impact Cyclone Lam had on some of our most remote communities in the Northern Territory over the weekend. The declared state of emergency area includes the communities of Milingimbi, Ramingining, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak and Mapuru outstations. Whilst this has been a very difficult time for the Top End, it has also brought out the best the community has to offer. Territorians have rushed to help, cooking in shelters, repairing homes, clearing away debris and volunteering in the Foskey Pavilion in Darwin to care for the hundreds of evacuees.

I would like to put on record my thanks to the Northern Territory essential services and the many public servants who worked around the clock on the weekend, also to the Northern Territory government for its proactive management in evacuating people in time, just before the worst of the cyclone hit. I would also like to put on record my thanks to CareFlight NT volunteers and pilots who flew a 400-mile trip around the edge of the cyclone to pick up a premature baby from Gove Airport on the second attempt whilst pounded by 100-kilometre-per-hour winds. Times like this show the enormous community spirit of Territorians. I am really, really proud to be a Territorian. Could I also use the last few moments to say, 'Hello!' to my uncle, my aunty and my cousin. (*Time expired*)

### **Helal, Dr Mike**

**Mr FEENEY** (Batman) (13:57): I rise to speak in recognition of the outstanding achievements of a 28-year-old active and dedicated community member, Dr Mike Helal, who sadly last week lost his fight for life. Mike arrived in Australia from Lebanon in 2004 and had an immediate impact on this society, which he dearly loved and treasured. He played a leading role in a number of community organisations. Mike's heavy community involvement did not stop him from completing three undergraduate degrees at Melbourne university, two of which he obtained with first-class honours.

Mike and his beloved wife, Lama, founded the Aspire Fund, a charity organisation which supports disadvantaged students to complete their undergraduate degrees, thereby impacting their lives forever. Through his research consultancy, Parkville Global Advisory, Mike continues to inspire public policy and education reform in Australia and the Middle East. He recently was awarded his PhD in the economics of education from Melbourne university.

Mike's enthusiasm and dedication to helping others will be truly missed. Mike was an inspiration to all who met him. My sincere condolences are extended to Mike's family on their tragic loss.

### **Trade**

#### **Reid Fruits**

**Mr HUTCHINSON** (Lyons) (13:58): As most would know, three free trade agreements were signed recently with South Korea, Japan and most recently China. I was very pleased to have the Minister for Trade and

Investment, Andrew Robb, in my electorate the week before last at Reid Fruits in the small town of Plenty. Reid Fruits has been exporting cherries to South Korea for about five years but has been able to do only about five tonnes a year. As a result of the ratification of the free trade agreement with South Korea, and the consequent removal of the 24 per cent tariff on cherries, it has hit 190 tonnes in 2015. The free trade agreement has meant a better price and greater confidence and capacity to invest and expand Reid's business, which means more jobs for more locals in Tasmania. It is an outstanding result. Reid Fruits currently employs 20 full-time equivalents and will look to increase that. Reid has 600 people working there during the peak of the season. Tasmania is leading the nation in business confidence. Small and medium enterprises are burgeoning. They are willing to invest with a strong state government and a federal government that is willing to invest in infrastructure.

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

## STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

### Queensland: Cyclone Marcia

#### Northern Territory: Cyclone Lam

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): On indulgence, the thoughts of all Australians were with the people of Queensland and the Northern Territory over the weekend as they grappled with the impact of two severe cyclones and remain with them as they are cleaning up and recovering from the devastation. In recent days, the Minister for Justice, who deals with emergency services, and I have been in close contact with our state and territory counterparts. I was briefed by Northern Territory Chief Minister Adam Giles on the impact of Cyclone Lam on Darwin on Saturday. I know the Deputy Prime Minister, in Rockhampton and elsewhere, saw firsthand the impact of Cyclone Marcia yesterday.

We are thankful that there was no loss of life. The fact that there was no loss of life is testament to the actions of emergency services and the precautions that were put in place. Nevertheless, this is a very trying time for everyone impacted on by the cyclones. Some people's homes have been damaged or are without power. Small business owners' businesses and properties have been impacted on. I can inform the House that there are still roads in parts of Queensland and northern New South Wales which are cut. I want to repeat the advice of emergency management authorities: if it is flooded, forget it. Please do not cross flooded roads. I can report that in Queensland the Army is assisting with the removal of debris and the restoration of critical infrastructure in the Rockhampton region.

The Commonwealth has activated the disaster recovery payment for the Fitzroy district of Queensland. This can be claimed through Centrelink. As well, the national disaster relief and recovery arrangements have been activated by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments for the local government areas of Livingston, Rockhampton and Banana. As members would know, this includes personal hardship and distress assistance for individuals who have been impacted on by the cyclone. Financial assistance is also available for local councils to assist with the costs of responding to Cyclone Marcia, including the costs of restoring essential public assets. Similarly, the national disaster relief and recovery arrangements have been activated in the Northern Territory for the local government areas of East Arnhem and West Arnhem. This includes personal hardship and distress assistance for impacted individuals. In Queensland it also includes financial assistance for the relevant councils.

As always in these circumstances, volunteers and community organisations have been hard at work. Since the dawn of our history, our summers have been difficult and dangerous. It turns out that this summer is no exception. But, as always, the Commonwealth stands ready to assist Australians in their hour of need.

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): On indulgence—no-one is more familiar with the changeable, unpredictable nature of Australian weather and the dangers it can pose than the people who call the tropical north home. But, even by their rugged standards, this was a dramatic event. When Cyclone Marcia made landfall near Shoalwater Bay it was a category 5 storm, one of only five in more than two centuries of record keeping. Cyclone Lam also threatened homes and livelihoods as it made landfall in the Northern Territory. We give thanks today that no-one lost their life in this wild weather.

I have visited coastal Queensland frequently and I have visited Gove and its surrounds many times. Everywhere you go in these places you meet warm and welcoming people, Australians happy to have a chat and share a laugh. In the face of adversity and in the midst of hardship, when disaster strikes the great character of those Australians shines through. We see it in the calm and cheerful courage of the SES, responding already to over 4,000 calls from assistance. We see it in the dauntless optimism of those returning to homes and businesses badly damaged by torrential rain, preparing to repair, rebuild and carry on. We see it in the instinctive generosity of Queenslanders and Territorians reaching out to help their neighbours, people whose first concern is the welfare of

others. Once again, we are reminded that there is nothing quite as humbling as the resilience and resolve of everyday Australians.

Labor wish all those affected by the cyclones a safe and speedy return to their normal lives. On that note, in government I was grateful for the cooperation of our coalition members in working to resolve insurance issues created by flood damage. Labor stand ready to assist if help is required on the vexed issue of storm damage insurance.

## CONDOLENCES

### **Bandler, Mrs Faith, AC**

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): On indulgence, I wish to inform the House that our nation has lost a great champion of civil rights with the passing of Faith Bandler AC on 13 February. Faith Bandler spent her long and illustrious life pointing the way to a better and fairer Australia. She once said that, 'Human rights for those who have been deprived of them is what my life has been all about.'

She experienced in her early days the worst excesses of the White Australia era. Her father, Peter Mussing, was born on a small island in Vanuatu but at just 13 years of age was brought to Australia and put to work in the cane fields of North Queensland. He got away eventually, and Faith was born in Tumbulgum in northern New South Wales. As a young woman, she moved to Sydney. During the Second World War she joined the Women's Land Army. It was at a concert in the town hall that she met her future husband, Hans Bandler, a Jewish refugee engineer, who shared not only her love of classical music but also her politics. Faith credited Hans with being her greatest supporter of her pursuit of civil rights. She said that she simply could not have done it without him.

As her father's story and as her own experiences of discrimination and of being paid less than her white colleagues taught her, she lived a life arguing for the rights of Indigenous Australians. She helped form the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, she served as General Secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and she formed the national council of islanders. She received the Human Rights Medal and was appointed a member of the Order of Australia in 1984 and a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2009. She received honorary degrees and she was named one of the 100 inaugural Australian Living National Treasures by the National Trust. But her crowning achievement was the 1967 referendum.

Faith spoke at literally hundreds and hundreds of meetings right around our country and collected thousands of signatures on petitions. She helped to inspire the highest yes vote ever recorded in a federal referendum. You might remember, Madam Speaker, that over 90 per cent of Australian voters voted yes to change. Many of Faith's petitions were presented to this House. They were often the first business of the House at the start of the parliamentary day. Sir Robert Menzies once said to Faith that her petitions had joined the prayers of the House as regular features of the day. In fact, he presented one of those petitions, and I understand this was the first time a Prime Minister had ever presented a petition to the parliament.

She was modest about her achievements, but she did accept a high profile because of the doors it opened to her to promote the message that she so believed in. I do offer the sincere condolences of the parliament to Faith's daughter, Lilon, who carries on her mother's legacy through her work on Indigenous health education at the University of Sydney. I say to Lilon: we sympathise with you and with your extended family. Our nation's loss is great; your loss is greater. She was a great Australian, who should long be remembered by our country and by this parliament.

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): On indulgence, Faith Bandler's passing on 13 February closed a chapter in one of the most remarkable and inspiring stories of our national life. Faith spent her life battling not her own injustices but the injustices she saw inflicted upon others. Surely that is humanity at its purest—a life spent in the service of others. Faith was an activist, a fighter, a warrior, but her weapons were compassion, respect and intelligence. In her leadership of the 1967 referendum campaign, she changed hearts and minds and she changed a nation.

Robert F Kennedy once said, 'Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.' For Faith Bandler, bringing meaningful improvement to the lives of the first Australians was an all-consuming mission. It was the test of a generation. As she recalled of the 1967 referendum, 'I used to get very emotional about it, because it possessed me. I became totally obsessed with that campaign.'

All of us in the Labor Party offer our heartfelt condolences to Faith Bandler's family and loved ones. Let us promise to honour her memory by carrying on her work. Let us vow not to rest until Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are honoured and recognised in our nation's founding document. Let us make Faith Bandler's

lasting memorial a full life of equal opportunity for every Australian. In Faith's words, 'It would be a wonderful thing.' May she rest in eternal peace.

**The SPEAKER:** As a mark of respect, I ask all those present to stand in their places.

*Honourable members and those in the gallery having stood in their places—*

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the House and those present.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Iraq

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): My question is to the Prime Minister. Has the Prime Minister ever participated in any discussions where a unilateral deployment of Australian troops to Iraq was considered?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:13): No, I have not. And, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, let me read a statement which has been recently issued by the Secretary of the Department of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force:

On Saturday 21 February the *Weekend Australian* reported that the Prime Minister had raised with “Australia’s leading military planners” the idea of “a unilateral invasion of Iraq, with 3,500 Australian ground troops to confront the Islamic State terrorist group”.

The Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin, and the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Mr Dennis Richardson, advise that this claim is false.

“At no point has the Prime Minister raised that idea with the ADF and/or the Department of Defence, formally or informally, directly or indirectly,” said Air Chief Marshal Binskin and Secretary Richardson.

### National Security

**Mrs WICKS** (Robertson) (14:14): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on actions the government is taking to keep Australians safe from terrorism?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:14): I do thank the member for Robertson for her question. As the member for Robertson well knows, the safety of our community is the highest responsibility of government. I want to thank all those who are involved in discharging that responsibility on our behalf: the Australian Federal Police, the state police, members of the Australian Defence Force, and members of ASIO and our other security agencies. Regrettably, their vigilance is more necessary than ever, because the terror threat to our country is high and rising. I regret to say that there are now well over 100 Australians fighting with terror groups in Iraq and Syria. There are now almost 150 Australians known to be supporting these terror groups here at home. Even more regrettably, there are about 400 individuals known to our security agencies who are talking about violence against their fellow Australians. The inspiration for all this is the Islamist death cult, Daesh or ISIL, which is responsible for the new dark age that is now settling over significant parts of Syria and Iraq.

As we know, to our cost, this death cult is reaching out to our country. We have seen the frenzied attack on two policemen in Victoria and, just before Christmas, we saw the Martin Place atrocity inspired by this death cult. Our community is fighting back: this government has put an extra \$630 million into our police and security agencies. There are now counter-terrorism teams at all our international airports; there is biometric screening being rolled out to stop people leaving on false passports; there are 49 additional AFP officers working on counter-terrorism; and we are making a much bigger effort to counter online radicalisation.

Today, Madam Speaker, I released our counter-terrorism review. There will be a national counter-terrorism coordinator to bring the same drive and focus to this as we brought to Operation Sovereign Borders and Operation Bring Them Home. There will be changes to the Citizenship Act to strip or suspend the citizenship of dual nationals involved in terrorism, and we will be strengthening our prohibitions on racial and religious vilification. This is about Australian values. We should never forget the pledge that all of us are encouraged to make at citizenship ceremonies:

I pledge myself to Australia and its people whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I share, as laws I will uphold and obey.

We will keep our country safe; we will never sacrifice our liberties in order to defend them; but we will never let people take advantage of us either.

### Ukraine

**Ms PLIBERSEK** (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to reports in *The Australian* newspaper that the Prime Minister suggested unilaterally sending 1000 Australian troops to the eastern Ukraine last year. Did the Prime Minister consider such action?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:18): In the days immediately after the shooting down of MH17 by Russian backed rebels—in the days when those Russian backed rebels were refusing to release the parties to the international community—we did talk to our Dutch friends about what might be done to ensure that those parties came back to their loved ones. We did talk to the Dutch about this, as the Australian people would have expected. We were not going to allow dead Australians to be violated by Russian backed rebels.

**Government members:** Hear! Hear!

**Mr ABBOTT:** We were going to stand up for the rights of their families and we will never—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lingiari will desist.

**Mr ABBOTT:** apologise for standing up for the rights of Australians here and abroad. We did talk to the Dutch about what might have been done in those perilous circumstances—and they certainly were perilous circumstances—to ensure those bodies came back to their loved ones. There was talk with the Dutch about a joint operation. Was the number that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition puts to me suggested by me? No. Was this some kind of frivolous exercise by me? No. This arose out of the most important and the most necessary discussions between the Dutch military and our own to uphold and defend our vital national interests and to do the right thing by the people of our country.

**Government members:** Hear! Hear!

### National Security

**Mr O'DOWD** (Flynn) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister advise the House of actions the government is taking to combat terrorism through countering the narratives of violent extremism?

**Ms JULIE BISHOP** (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:20): I thank the member for Flynn for his question and I note his concern about this very serious matter. The government is intent on impacting the drivers of terrorism. We have a clear strategy for countering the ideology that gives rise to violent extremism; we are investing considerable resources to protect those most vulnerable to the terrorist narrative and strengthen community engagement. To this end, the government has funded \$545 million for programs to strengthen relations across our multicultural communities. We are funding \$13 million for direct early intervention through mentoring, counselling and coaching and education and employment support for vulnerable individuals who appear to be on the path to radicalisation.

Last week we announced a further \$18 million for an initiative to counter propaganda that terrorist groups are spreading online to exploit vulnerable young Australians. Our message is clear: if you support terrorist organisations like Daesh here or abroad, you have been duped. It is not a noble cause; it is a barbaric, criminal outfit that seeks to take us back to the dark ages with its senseless savagery and inhumanity. I too want to applaud members of our Muslim community here in Australia who are taking a stand against extremism and working with the government, mosques and community groups to keep our people safe. The Attorney-General represented the government last week in Washington at the United States' Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. This was a really important forum for sharing information, experiences and techniques and for exploring strategies as to how extremism can best be countered in our respective nations. Australia will host a summit midyear with nations in our region to discuss how we can best combat the terrorist narrative and address the threat of online radicalisation.

Paradoxically, Daesh promotes its primitive, evil message by exploiting sophisticated modern technology and the very freedoms that we cherish. But we must protect citizens against the abuse of those freedoms, so the government will reduce access to extremist material online through working with government agencies, with the private sector and with international partners to take down online extremist content and to shut down extremist websites that pose a risk to our security. This is a global threat that requires a global response, and Australia is playing its part to counter terrorism wherever it occurs.

### National Security

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (14:23): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm reports today that not one Daesh foreign fighter has had their Australian welfare payment cancelled?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:23): This is not correct. To the best of my knowledge and understanding, all of the foreign fighters who are currently overseas have had any welfare payments that they were receiving well and truly cancelled, as you would expect. The last thing we want is to see Australian taxpayers funding terrorism. We are now looking at whether we can cancel the welfare payments of people engaging in terrorist activities here in Australia. The legislation passed late last year, with the support of both sides of this parliament, certainly does give us that power. We intend to use that power where it is in the best interests of our country to do so. There will be some situations—and maybe quite a few situations—where for all

sorts of reasons it is best not to exercise that power because we may not want to alert people to the fact that we are onto them or we may not want to endanger people who are providing us with information about them, but I do want to give the shadow minister who asked the question this categorical assurance: this government has the will, and increasingly has the power, to keep our country as safe as we humanly can be in these difficult and perilous times.

### Government Debt

**Mr PALMER** (Fairfax) (14:25): My question is to the Treasurer. If projected government debt continues for 50 years, Australia's debt as a percentage of GDP will be less than the OECD average today and less than the US, the UK and Japan today. So why destroy Australia's living standards with austerity? Has the Treasurer misled the Australian community? Why not tell the truth, Treasurer, and save your colleagues while you can from Newman's fate?

**The SPEAKER:** That sounded remarkably like debate. I remind the member for Fairfax that debate is not permitted within the confines of a question. However, I will let the question stand and give the call to the Treasurer.

**Mr HOCKEY** (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:25): I say to the member for Fairfax that when we release the Intergenerational Report in the next two weeks he will be able to immediately identify the legacy of debt and deficit from the Labor Party; he will be able to identify how far we have come to redress the legacy of debt and deficit and, importantly, he will be able to identify what he can do to help us ensure that the next generation of Australians does not end up being born with a \$24,000 debt hanging around their necks. What the Labor Party and the member for Fairfax do not understand is that Australia is an importer of capital. We import money from the rest of the world. We do so because we have not got an enormous population that is able to fund our growth. We cannot build the massive infrastructure that Australia has simply on our own domestic savings. We cannot do that.

Since 1788 we have imported money to fund our growth. When you import money to fund your growth, when you rely on the funding provided by the rest of the world, it exposes you to the volatility of global capital markets. It makes you, in one sense, subservient to the bankers in the rest of the world. At the more extreme end you can see it happening right now in Greece, where they are totally subservient, as a government and as a nation, to the views and opinions of the people in Europe and the bankers in Europe who pay the bills. We do not want to be in a position where we are subservient to other nations. We do not want to be in a position where we are beholden to people who lend money. That is not the way we want to be. The fastest way to pay down debt, and the fastest way to reduce our exposure to those people who lend us money, is to ensure that you have a government that lives within its means. If the government lives within its means, the nation starts to live within its means and it means that we control our destiny and we are not having anyone overseas, any bankers who lend us money or any lenders based offshore, telling us how to run our country and how to run our budget. We will not allow ourselves to get in that position, and therefore our view is we need to be a nation that lives within our means and that is exactly what Liberal and National governments always do.

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** (14:28): I advise the House that we have with us in the distinguished visitors gallery a delegation from the parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, led by the Hon. Wade Mark MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives. We make you most welcome.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Law Enforcement

**Mr PITT** (Hinkler) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister update the House on what tools the government is providing to allow our joint law enforcement agencies to protect our children?

**Mr KEENAN** (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:29): Can I thank the member for Hinkler for that question. He would be aware, as I am, that 87 per cent of child protection investigations involve the police accessing metadata—87 per cent—and, without certainty around access to this data, we would be wilfully blinding our police forces and tying one hand behind their back in their efforts to protect our children.

Last week, the Prime Minister joined child protection advocate Hetty Johnston in support of metadata retention. She said and repeated that it was a vital tool that we needed to protect our children at risk of harm. If I can quote her, she said retaining metadata was a 'no-brainer'. She said it was 'about making sure that this country is the safest place to raise a child' and that we should 'make a determined effort' to do so. These observations are equally applicable to other serious crime types, given that metadata is used in 100 per cent of cybercrime investigations,

as well as 92 per cent of counterterrorism investigations and almost 80 per cent of other serious criminal investigations.

This morning, the Prime Minister has highlighted the steps that we have been taking to ensure that our law enforcement agencies have the ability to respond to the changing security environment within Australia. We have introduced three tranches of legislation. The third tranche, the data retention bill, is the third vital piece that we need to keep Australians safe. I appreciate that there is concern within the community about this, but can I assure all Australians that this is not about Big Brother; this is a sensible response to the changing business model of internet service providers who are no longer retaining metadata for lengthy periods of time.

In this legislation we are making serious safeguards to protect people's privacy. The content of communications is protected. This legislation does not provide one additional power to access content, which still will be required to be accessed via a warrant. We have also—and I think this is not well understood—actually limited the number of agencies that can have access to this type of data, and they must have a clear operational or investigative need for such access. At the same time, we are also enhancing the oversight of the Commonwealth Ombudsman. This is a sensible response to an ongoing security concern for our police, both state and federal, and for our intelligence community, and it strikes the right balance between privacy and those who would seek to do the community harm or do such things as to exploit or groom children for their own gratification.

We all understand the irresponsible position that is taken by the Greens on such matters, but we only ever expect them to be hostage to their wild conspiracy theories about the way they think the world is run. But can I urge Labor to rise above it and support this sensible and balanced approach to retaining metadata.

### Hepatitis A

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:32): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister inform the parliament how many Australians have potentially been exposed to the contaminated frozen berries, and how many Australians are now at risk of contracting hepatitis A?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:33): This is a matter which our authorities are currently working on, but I do accept that this is a very serious issue. It is a very serious issue, and I want to assure the Leader of the Opposition that we certainly have been taking it very seriously ever since there were reports that contaminated product from overseas was linked to a hepatitis A outbreak.

I can inform the Leader of the Opposition and the House that swiftly in response to this information a health incident room was stood up, the National Health Protection Committee has met, the company, to its credit, has recalled all the relevant product, and berries from the overseas producer have now all been held at the border and certainly will not ever go for human consumption. Food Standards Australia New Zealand has reassessed the risk of this particular product and, as a result of a reassessment of the risk, much more surveillance will in future be taking place.

I do wish to assure the parliament, the Leader of the Opposition and everyone who is, quite rightly and properly, interested in this that, along with our state colleagues and along with people in the food-manufacturing sector, we will be vigilant to ensure that our country is as safe as we can humanly make it.

### Economy

**Mr ALEXANDER** (Bennelong) (14:34): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer please outline the importance of building a strong and prosperous economy? What does this mean for Australians, including those in my electorate of Bennelong?

**Mr HOCKEY** (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:34): I do thank the member for Bennelong for that question.

**Opposition members:** Mate!

**Mr HOCKEY:** Well, he is a mate. He is a mate, and he is a great mate of all Australians, because he was a—  
*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr HOCKEY:** He is a great mate of all Australians—not only a great tennis player but a great bloke as well, I might add. He also understands what it means to employ people, because, like so many people on this side of the House, he has actually run his own business and employed people. We understand how challenging it can be for an employer to continue to get the money in, to continue to make a profit and, at the same time, to get on with the job of employing more Australians. So we welcome more good news about the performance of the Australian economy at the moment. Quite frankly, it is very pleasing that the Australian Securities Exchange 200 is at its highest levels in six years and property prices are at all-time highs.

But, of course, not everyone is participating in that good news. Not everyone gets the same opportunities, and it is vitally important, as we go down the path of delivering a plan for more economic growth, more jobs and greater opportunity, that we keep our eyes closely focused on the needs of small business and families, particularly to give them the opportunity to participate in prosperity.

But you have to start by understanding your facts about the economy. You have to get your facts right, haven't you, in order to understand how big the challenge is. I was quite interested watching the member for McMahon on *Richo + Jones* the other night, when he was asked about the facts. There is one thing about the facts: you can be excused for not knowing the facts.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Rankin and the member for Charlton will desist, as will the member for Griffith.

**Mr HOCKEY:** I think you can legitimately be excused for not knowing the facts.

*Dr Chalmers interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Rankin is warned.

**Mr HOCKEY:** But, when you cover up that you do not know the facts, that is the problem. Last Tuesday night he did not know the facts about the tax-free threshold. Okay, forgivable. But the next day he said that he knew the facts; he just did not want to say it. The following day, on John Laws, he did not know the fact and he might have known the fact, and this morning he said he did not know the fact but he might have known the fact if he knew the fact.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Chifley will desist. The member for Fraser.

**Mr HOCKEY:** I will tell you what the facts are. Labor is in denial about the \$667 billion of debt that they left behind. Labor is in denial about the 200 jobs a day that they created compared with 600 now. Labor is in denial about the mess they left Australia. We are not in denial. We deal with the facts, and it is a shame the member for McMahon cannot.

### Hepatitis A

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Prime Minister. Today the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture informed Senate estimates that 'We have not made changes on surveillance rates for berries broadly at this stage,' but just days ago the Prime Minister said, 'We have moved to 100 per cent screening of these sorts of imports'. Given the Prime Minister's track record, who is telling the truth about frozen berry screening, the secretary of the agriculture department or the Prime Minister?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:38): There is no inconsistency with what has been said. As the secretary of the department has indicated, not all berries are being 100 per cent screened; but, as I said, all the berries connected with this outbreak are being 100 per cent screened. Very easy. Let me put the Leader of the Opposition's mind at rest. Frozen berries linked to cases of hepatitis A are no longer entering the food supply chain. FSANZ has provided interim risk advice that the suspect berries from the manufacturers linked to the cases of hepatitis A are a medium risk and a risk to human health and as such will be subject to 100 per cent inspection and testing at the border.

### Budget

**Dr STONE** (Murray) (14:39): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Will the Assistant Treasurer update the House on the government's action to reduce Australia's debt and deficit? What challenges are there to this approach?

**Mr FRYDENBERG** (Kooyong—Assistant Treasurer) (14:40): I thank the honourable member for her question and acknowledge the strong contribution she makes to regional economic growth. At the end of 2007, when those opposite took government, there was zero government debt and more than \$50 billion in the bank. They had the best terms of trade in 140 years, and revenue increased by more than 22 per cent under those opposite. But, despite those good conditions, they left us \$240 billion worth of deficit and a trajectory of \$667 billion worth of debt. It has been left to the Treasurer and people on our side to clean up your mess.

*Mr Perrett interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Moreton is warned.

**Mr FRYDENBERG:** As a result of our measures, debt will be \$170 billion lower under the coalition than it will be under the Labor Party and spending growth has been reduced from 3.6 per cent to just one per cent.

But I am asked: are there any challenges? The biggest challenges are those sitting opposite. Not only are they blocking around \$30 billion worth of savings in the Senate, including billions that they took to the last election, but the member for McMahon is kidding himself about the fiscal reality that we face. Just last week the member for McMahon said debt and deficit were just rhetoric. The member for McMahon said it was okay because in Australia we were far better off than they are in Greece. Fortunately, on this side we do not subscribe to the member for McMahon's ouzo economics!

We have to heed the message of the IMF, of the OECD, of the Parliamentary Budget Office, of the Governor of the Reserve Bank. The member for McMahon had a tough week last week.

*Mr Perrett interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Moreton I said is warned.

**Mr FRYDENBERG:** We do not begrudge him forgetting the marginal tax rate. We do not begrudge him not knowing the currency of our largest trading partner. We do not begrudge him not knowing the difference between gross debt and net debt. But we do begrudge him the cover-up, which is far greater than the crime.

*Ms Owens interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Parramatta is also warned.

**Mr FRYDENBERG:** Listen to what he had to say:

I didn't see it being as relevant to the conversation at hand.

I chose not to answer the question

I didn't want to get into a long discussion about what various thresholds are.

But the piece de resistance was, 'I do heaps of interviews, many hundreds of interviews—probably over a thousand.' We checked the member for McMahon's website. We counted how many interviews and speeches he did. Guess how many it was over the last year: 242. The member for McMahon cannot even get that number right!

### Hepatitis A

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Throsby) (14:43): My question is to the Prime Minister. When was any government department first advised that imported berries had been contaminated with hepatitis A, and how many Australians have potentially been exposed to contaminated frozen berries?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:43): I am advised that action was taken quickly by regulators and industry to withdraw any potentially affected product from retail on Friday, 13 February. As for the rest of the question: our health authorities are examining it.

### Education

**Mr TONY SMITH** (Casey) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. I ask the minister to update the House on the recently released Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group report into teacher training and to further advise what the government's response to the report is.

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:44): I thank the member for Casey for his question. I can tell him that, in more good news from the Abbott government, we are getting on with the job of improving student outcomes for students at school in Australia, this time by improving teacher training. We have already moved to expand explicit and direct instruction and phonics teaching in remote schools. We have already reviewed the curriculum and begun the implementation of a more robust and rigorous curriculum for our students. We have already expanded autonomy for independent public schools to over 1,500 schools in Australia with the cooperation of the states. So we on this side of the House are getting on with the job of actually delivering real benefits to students.

A couple of weeks ago, I released the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group report on teacher training at our teaching institutions in Australia. It found that there were some notably good exceptions of good practice, but there was far too much bad practice in the teacher training of our students at university. And, of course, that has been identified by the OECD as the most important factor in Australian schooling for bringing about good student outcomes for our students.

So we have announced that we will reaccredit all teaching institutions in Australia. They will be required to jump through a number of very important hoops before their accreditation will be confirmed. There are 48 teaching institutions in Australia. They will have to prove that they have rigorous selection criteria, including a combination of both ATAR and non-ATAR factors. They will have to introduce a literacy and numeracy test for undergraduates which they must pass before they are able to graduate from a teaching institution, before they can get licensed. We will introduce a primary school specialisation in science and maths and languages so that primary school student teachers have the opportunity to expand a specialisation rather than being generalists.

Teaching institutions will have to prove that their students are engaged in practical, in-school training from the very earliest stage of their training at institutions, including with experienced teachers who have been recently in the classroom rather than for decades in institutions. And we are going to require students to produce a portfolio of evidence as part of their training throughout university so that they graduate being able to actually teach students, not just knowing about education theory. They will not be allowed to graduate unless they can prove that, including in phonics.

So we are putting our money where our mouth is as a government by actually trying to improve student outcomes, this time through the training of teachers at universities.

### Quarantine

**Mr FITZGIBBON** (Hunter) (14:47): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. I refer the minister to the government's decision to amend the former Labor government's biosecurity reform bill to effectively abolish the position of Inspector-General of Biosecurity as we know it by removing his tenure and independence and many of his powers. Why did the government reduce the independent oversight of biosecurity and call it red-tape reduction?

**Mr JOYCE** (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (14:48): I thank the honourable member for his question. I am not quite sure about 'effectively remove', but we still have an inspector-general. We will continue to have one. His name is Bond—it is not James Bond; it is Michael Bond. He is still there. I checked his health this morning. He is happy, smiling and continuing on with his job.

### Child Care

**Mr VASTA** (Bonner) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. Will the minister update the House on the recommendations of the recently released Productivity Commission report on child care?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (14:48): I thank the member for Bonner for his question. I congratulate the member for Bonner and his wife, Fang, and his son, Zachary, on the arrival of their baby, Micah, just two weeks ago. Congratulations to the member for Bonner.

I commend also the Productivity Commission on the report that was released last week. I also want to thank all of those who participated. There were some 2,000 various contributions to that commission inquiry. The inquiry, which was an election commitment of this government, has been delivered upon, and it provides a very useful contribution to the debate in charting the way forward on how we are going to deal with the issues that are confronting Australian families when it comes to child care.

The report is a very timely reminder of what we are trying to achieve. What is actually the goal in spending \$7 billion of taxpayers' money to ensure that we are getting a result that is worthy of that level of investment? It is simply this: it is affordable and quality child care that will support families to stay in work and to get back to work to give their children the best possible start in life. That is what we are trying to achieve, and we need to be doing better than we are now when it comes to the expenditure of \$7 billion.

We know that, under the previous government, childcare fees rose by over 50 per cent. It is important that we address the issues, as the Productivity Commission report has highlighted, which can address that particular challenge, among many others. But we also need to remember that these payments are to support families and their children. This is not an industry development scheme. It is not a transfer payment scheme. It is not a training levy. It is not there to support wage claims. It is there to support families and their children to help them get in work and stay in work and afford quality child care that helps them with the kitchen table discussion that they have: 'How do we go forward now? How do we give our family the best possible start?'

The report calls for a simpler system. It calls for a more targeted system, particularly for middle- to lower income families, because that is where the commission has identified the area where we can have the biggest influence on that kitchen table conversation on the economics of child care and the affordability of child care. It recommends ways to keep downward pressure on the rising costs of child care by establishing a benchmark price that ensures that in the future we do not have an inflationary payment that beats up the price of child care and ensures that the taxpayer is paying for real child care, not for Zumba classes, as we have seen under the current system. It comes at a cost of some \$200 million. If all of us would like to see more invested in this area then it must be funded.

I thank the opposition for taking up the invitation to meet this week to talk about how we can work together on this. When we were in opposition, we worked together on the NDIS and aged-care reforms, and we can work together on this. I look forward to the contribution. (*Time expired*)

### Defence Procurement

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:51): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to an article in *The Weekend Australian*, by Paul Kelly, which states that the Prime Minister 'had struck a government-to-government deal of sorts with Abe'. Has the Prime Minister already done a deal with Japanese Prime Minister Abe to build Australia's submarines?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:52): The short answer is no. But, as I indicated to the House last time we met, we are exploring submarine cooperation with three countries. I have had discussions about submarine partnerships with Japan, I have had discussions about submarine partnerships with the Germans and I have had discussions about submarine partnerships with the French. It is true that those discussions, up till now, have been more detailed with the Japanese, because the Japanese make the best large conventional submarine in the world. But, under the arrangements that were announced last week, we will now enter into equally detailed discussions with the Japanese, the Germans and the French, with this objective: to give our country the best possible submarines at the best possible price, with maximal Australian participation in the production and the sustainment of these submarines.

Do you know what that means, Madam Speaker? That means more jobs for Adelaide. That is what that means. There will be more submarines—there will be up to 12 submarines—under this government, and more subs means more jobs for Adelaide. Do you know what will happen, Madam Speaker? Under this government, the next generation of submarines will actually be built. They will actually be built, because members opposite sat on their hands for six years, and what we saw with the conduct of the Future Submarine project was that you just cannot trust Labor with the nation's defences. Under Labor, what was looming was a massive capability gap. We will not leave this country defenceless.

*Mr Snowdon interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lingiari will desist or leave!

**Mr ABBOTT:** We will ensure that a decision on future submarines is made by the end of the year. It will be in the best interests of our country and it will be an arrangement that looks after people in Adelaide, because more subs means more submarine jobs in South Australia.

### Green Army Program

**Mrs SUDMALIS** (Gilmore) (14:54): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister update the House on the progress of the Green Army and how this new initiative will provide young Australians with practical skills and training whilst improving the environment in my electorate?

*Mr Perrett interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Moreton, one more utterance and you will leave under 94(a).

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:55): I would particularly like to thank the member for Gilmore, who has been a great advocate of the Green Army projects. She has in her own electorate already projects underway in Killalea State Park and the Bundanon Trust. She has the Shoalhaven City Council Central Shoalhaven project coming. And only recently we have had announcements of new projects in Bundanoon, the South Coast wetlands and Coomonderry wetlands.

I have to say this: after pink batts and Green Loans, is anybody responsible? Are there any of you who claim responsibility for pink batts or Green Loans? I do not think so. No takers. After the citizens assembly and cash-for-clunkers—was that one of yours, Bill, cash-for-clunkers?—after what we saw from the previous government—

*Mr Perrett interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** I said the member for Moreton will desist!

**Mr HUNT:** it is great to see real environmental projects that are helping young people, helping the environment, providing skills, repairing wetlands, building boardwalks, helping sand dunes be recovered, taking care of threatened species and doing practical work on the ground.

If you want a sense of where these projects are at now, already we have hit the 100-project mark on the ground around the country. Over 500 have now been announced. These projects are around the country. If we look just around this chamber, we see seven projects in the electorate of Blair, three projects in the electorate of Brand, four in the electorate of Cunningham, four in Fremantle, five in Lalor and four in Maribyrnong, among others. So we would invite people from all sides of this chamber to champion young people, to support the skills, to support the environmental work that is occurring on the ground.

What is it that young people themselves are saying about the Green Army? Let me give you a quote from Jared Marsden of Mackay, from the *Daily Mercury* there:

"I couldn't spend the whole day in an office," he said.

"With this opportunity, I get to help the planet and learn practical skills at the same time."

Chris Hockey, of Tottenham:

"Really, being able to get some skills to take away put into farming for myself down the track on my block of land is the main thing I want to get out of it," he said.

... ..

"There is nothing better."

This is the approach and the experience that young people are having around the country. We are ahead of our target, Prime Minister. We said we would have 250 projects on the ground this year. I can inform the House that we are likely to exceed that. We will be ahead of time. We will be achieving more than we had said. What is most important is that you can help the country, you can help young people get skills and you can do it without having the environmental project disaster which we saw with pink batts and Green Loans. It is possible to have good environmental projects. That is what the Green Army is, and I would urge you all to support those in your local area.

### Defence Procurement

**Mr FEENEY** (Batman) (14:58): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the decision to exclude Sweden from the government's submarine selection process. The Prime Minister has said:

... it's almost two decades since Sweden built a submarine ...

Is the Prime Minister aware that Sweden has built or significantly refitted 11 submarines since 1995, with the last delivered in 2013? Has the Prime Minister made his 'captain's pick' based on false information?

*Mr Champion interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister has the call. The member for Wakefield may not be here to hear many more answers.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Better than usual, I've got to admit. I call the honourable Prime Minister.

**Mr ABBOTT:** Of course I stand by my statement last Friday, and the weasel words in the member opposite's question give away the fact that what I said last Friday was absolutely correct. Let me inform the House that Sweden remains in the process of reconstituting an indigenous submarine industry since SAAB's acquisition of TKMSAB from its German parent in July 2014. This is important: the last full submarine design and build program delivered in Sweden concluded in 1996—a good year; the election of the Howard government and the last year that Sweden actually had a design and build submarine program. It is true that since then Sweden has modified six of its oldest submarines for Singapore. Four 1960 submarines were modified in the 1990s and a further two 1980s submarines completed modification in 2009-10. So that is what Labor wants—a 1960s submarine for Australia.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr ABBOTT:** Okay. That's right, bring back the Oberon submarine. That is what Labor want to do: bring back the Oberon submarine. Give it to the Swedes and they will modify it, and it will be as good as new. Really and truly, Madam Speaker. These people opposite have no shame. They sat on their hands for six years, endangering our nation's defences, and now with a ridiculous question like that, plainly, they want to give us a 1960s or, at best, a 1980s submarine. Well, it is not good enough. We want to give Australia the best possible submarine as quickly as possible and that is what will happen under this government.

### Industry

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey) (15:01): My question is to the Minister for Industry and Science. Would the minister outline how the recent antidumping reforms and other industry measures will help to level the playing field and provide stability for manufacturers and producers in my electorate and across Australia?

**Mr IAN MACFARLANE** (Groom—Minister for Industry and Science) (15:02): I thank the member for Grey for his question and congratulate him not only on the strong advocacy that he provides as the member for Grey. I think Grey covers over 90 per cent of South Australia and takes in a wide range of industries. I also congratulate him on a successful career, which I hope is not over yet as a farmer on the Eyre Peninsula. As a farmer, he knows how important trade and globalisation, and the liberalisation that goes with that, are to enable farmers and all industry to gain access to markets. But it is important that in gaining access to markets and opening Australian

markets up that we have a level playing field. The member for Grey knows that from time to time industries based in Australia are put under pressure by other countries importing here, sometimes at dump prices. The steel industry in his electorate is a great example of that.

What we as a government have done is we have introduced a significant reform package to deliver on our election commitments and improve Australia's antidumping and countervailing measures. We have strengthened and streamlined the regime. We have made improvements not only in antidumping and countervailing but also in the investigation process. The package includes greater onus on overseas businesses to cooperate, more rigorous enforcement of submission deadlines, cracking down on uncooperative exporters, better assistance and information for Australian businesses, addressing circumvention and reducing red tape, providing greater certainty, and improving the merits review process.

This has all been very well received. The Australian steel industry said, 'These reforms will assist in levelling the playing field through a tougher approach to time frames and remedies, and improve the process for Australian steel manufacturers through expanded information and support services.' I know that pleases the member for Grey and the steel industry in his electorate. As well as that, the Australian Forest Products Association said, 'The imposition of higher dumping duties and interim measures for those that do not comply with the Anti-Dumping Commission is particularly welcome.'

The Australian government are implementing these reforms as part of our industry innovation and competitiveness agenda as well as our economic action strategy. It is targeted at giving Australian industry every opportunity to perform and excel. Along with our innovation processes and the support that we are giving them through the growth centres, this better antidumping process gives them a good chance to create even more jobs in Australia.

### **Australia Day Honours**

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to evidence given in Senate estimates during question time today. Can the Prime Minister confirm that his office first raised awarding a knighthood to Prince Philip with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in November last year and, if that is the case, why did the Prime Minister raise it with his department in November but never got around to raising it with any of his cabinet ministers before Australia Day?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:05): It is because awards in the Order of Australia do not go to cabinet—it is as simple as that. Awards in the Order of Australia have never gone to cabinet and, as I have been absolutely crystal clear, henceforth all awards in the Order of Australia will be determined by the Council for the Order of the Australia.

### **Work for the Dole**

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde) (15:06): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Employment. Will the minister update the House on the rollout of the Work for the Dole scheme in my electorate and around the country? How is Work for the Dole supporting job seekers and communities?

**Mr HARTSUYKER** (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (15:06): I thank the good member for his question. The member for Forde is a member who understands the importance of employment in ensuring that people have a quality life in this country and understands the fact that welfare only leads to despair, and that the best thing we can do for job seekers is to help them with a job. Work for the Dole has a very important role to play in assisting many job seekers on their journey from welfare to work. Late last year I visited the good member's electorate and we went to the Twin Rivers Centre where there was a great Work for the Dole project that was giving job seekers experience in the areas of administration, maintenance and hospitality. The Twin Rivers Centre is providing great assistance to job seekers through their Work for the Dole project on their journey from welfare to work. More than 200 young people in the good member's electorate are participating in Work for the Dole and some 800 people have commenced a Work for the Dole placement in the wider Logan area.

The member for Forde understands the importance of Work for the Dole. The member for Forde understands the importance of having a job, and this government is committed to getting as many people as possible off welfare and into work.

Regrettably, when I get around the country, employers are telling me that many young people are presenting at the gates of their business without the necessary basic skills to help them in the workplace: simple skills such as turning up on time, how to act in the workplace, how to get on with their work mates—skills that we take for granted as we have been in the workplace for a long time but, regrettably, skills that many people lack.

Unfortunately, the members opposite are not showing great support for Work for the Dole. We on this side understand the benefits that Work for the Dole can bring. We on this side realise the importance of helping young people from Welfare to Work.

There is a range of Work for the Dole projects around the country. Recently, I visited the good member for Murray and saw a great project in Shepparton, the construction of the Shepparton botanic gardens and, as a result of that Work for the Dole project, some 11 job seekers have moved to continuing employment.

I visited the good member for Macquarie and saw a great project at Richmond Club, and the member for Dobell and saw a great project in the good member's electorate with regard to the Central Coast Wetlands Pioneer Dairy, and the member for Robertson and saw a great project at the Skills Generator. I must advise the House that, in my own electorate, a job seeker who had been unemployed for some 232 weeks received a job as a result of his involvement in Work for the Dole, a great achievement.

We realise the importance of Work for the Dole. It is a shame the members opposite seem reluctant to come on board.

**Mr Abbott:** After that splendid answer, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

## PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

### Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance

**The SPEAKER** (15:09): His Excellency has presented to me an authority to administer to members the oath or affirmation of allegiance. I now lay the authority on the table.

## AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

### Reports Nos 22 and 23 of 2014-15

**The SPEAKER** (15:10): I present the Auditor-General's Audit reports for 2014-15—No. 22 *Administration of the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme: Attorney-General's Department* and No. 23 *Administration of the Early Years Quality Fund: Department of Education and Training; Department of Finance; Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet*.

Ordered that the reports be made parliamentary papers.

## DOCUMENTS

### Presentation

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:10): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

## BILLS

### Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014

### Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014

### Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Ms MARINO** (Forrest—Government Whip) (15:11): The internet, as we know, is the most fabulous tool, which is why there are three billion people using the internet. When I ask young people what they do online and on their devices, the answer is: everything. But, with at least 20 to 25 per cent of young people being bullied online, there is no question that there is a problem. From my experience, these figures are extremely conservative, which is why I would like to see the e-safety commissioner develop more accurate methods to define and measure cyberbullying.

So what is cyberbullying for a young person? Given that we know that bullying is the wilful desire to hurt, humiliate, dominate and put someone under stress, online it is the same: it is being bombarded with insulting, intimidating, nasty, offensive, hateful, humiliating, threatening or abusive material—often 24 hours a day seven days a week. It could be via text messages; Facebook; Twitter; Snapchat; through embarrassing photos posted without permission; hate websites; WhatsApp; instant messaging; offensive chats during online gaming; comments on their posts or posts about them; voting and disgusting comments about them on rating sites; rumours and lies about the child ruining their reputation; by impersonation—a fake profile used to make defamatory;

cyberstalking—following the child online and posting where they post; flaming—a fight between two that spreads online to include others; or being excluded from online groups and forums.

This can be devastating for the young person who often has to deal with this alone—because they cannot talk to mum or dad. They are scared or worried about what is happening online but they are also scared that, if they tell mum or dad, they will have their device taken away, their time on the internet reduced, be punished or perhaps all three. The young person's physical and mental health and wellbeing is affected. We all have examples in our communities of suicide, attempted suicide, self-harm—the dreadful increase in cutting facilitated by social media.

Cyberbullying can affect students' learning and, ultimately, their achievements. But the young bully also has problems that need to be dealt with. At a presentation by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, I heard that 60 per cent of bullies in years 6 to 9 had at least one criminal conviction by the time they were 25; 83 per cent of those who bully online also bully physically; and 84 per cent of those who were bullied online were also bullied physically.

In many cases, cyberbullying can actually be illegal—but how many people know this? I presented a private member's motion to this House in 2013 that called for a national coordinated response. The motion was designed to help our young people manage the online risks they are facing every day. I want to help them and their families become much more aware and alert than they are now; for them to be confident, to stay safe and to know how to be responsible online so they can make the most of their experiences and opportunities, and have fun.

So, this legislation means a lot to me. It is an important step in helping to protect children online. It means a lot to young people, their families and school communities. That is why I am very pleased to support the government's legislation to establish the office, functions and powers of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner. The government promised to do more to protect children online and this legislation is a key part of that promise.

The e-Safety Commissioner will take a national leadership role in children's online safety initiatives across government to develop and implement policies to improve safety for children online. The commissioner will set up an effective complaints system and will work closely with police and other government agencies, as well as the internet industry, child protection organisations and parent and teacher associations. The commissioner will have the power to issue a notice to a large social media service to remove material and the power to issue a notice to the person who posted material to remove that material, to refrain from posting material or to apologise.

The key here is the words 'effective complaints system' because, clearly, that is not what we have now. My local police believe that rapid take-down powers would be, in their words, a 'sensational' new tool to help reduce the impact of cyberbullying. The key word is 'rapid'. This is an absolute priority: real-time action.

There is an extreme amount of damage done to the child in a very short amount of time online. Bullying material can be spread to millions in minutes, with devastating results—millions in minutes. The AFP says that the average Australian child aged 15-19 has 354 friends on Facebook. It has three main privacy settings: public, friends of friends and friends only. 'Public' means the messages and posts will be viewable by one billion Facebook users and anyone on the internet. 'Friends of friends' means those one removed from you: the friends of your friends. So with 354 friends on Facebook, that means that up to 215,000 people will see the messages and posts. This is why the setting should be 'friends only', the original 354 or fewer, depending on the number of online friends.

But even 300 can be too many at times. Last year, one school in my electorate dealt with four severe self-harm cases, where girls had been bullied at their previous schools. Even though their new school was safe, the bullying followed them online. One threatened suicide and the others had slashed their bodies so badly that they will be scarred forever. Even though the protagonists were not students at the new school, some students at the new school were bystanders who watched these incidents unfold online. So here are the words of a wise principal: 'The *Beauty and the Beast* of online for a young person: the beauty of having 300 'friends'; the beast is when they watch you suffer and your pain is magnified 300 times.'

Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram were all part of this cycle of bullying. A school in my electorate had taken on a student who had been bullied at a previous school. Even though mobile phones were not allowed in the new school, a student organised for a group of his friends to video him bullying the new student. It was on YouTube in 30 minutes and on the front of the local paper in two days. YouTube was difficult to contact and the school had the frustration of watching the number of views go into the hundreds. The student left the school four weeks later. The incident itself was bad enough but it was the magnification on social media that caused the greatest damage. The school was left to defend the safety of the school on TV and radio and in print.

At another school a young girl sent a topless photo of herself to a boy at school. Within seven minutes the principal was getting calls from parents screaming their disgust. The image had been forwarded to 40 other

students and then to the wider community. These are simple examples of why 'real-time' effective and rapid complaints and take-down notices will be a key role for the commissioner

Equally, I think the engagement with parents will be a key part of the commissioner's work. Many of the parents who come to my cybersafety sessions have no idea at all about devices, what their children are doing online, what they are exposed to or what they could be doing online. Often, they have very limited experience with the internet and devices and sometimes they just do not want to deal with their children on the 'hard' issues—or simply expect the school to deal with any problems.

Some parents have no idea how to report online bullying to a large social media service. As I said before, children will often not talk to their parents about the problems because they are scared the parents will take away their devices, limit their time online or punish them—or a combination of all three.

In my sessions I encourage children to find an adult who will help and not punish. I encourage parents to start the discussion with the very first device they give their children that is connected to the internet. Some actually have no idea that the games console or iPod touch has access to the internet. Parents need a single access point for information and advice, and to be able to report abuse to a social media company properly located in Australia—to actually be able to talk to someone here and tell them what is happening.

There needs to be a communication partnership between children and parents in this space. Our children are a big part of the answer here. We need the children to help the parents, grandparents and younger brothers and sisters with devices and the internet. They have the most knowledge and experience—they are the whizzes with their devices and apps. But on the other hand, we need the parents to help children with staying safe, managing online risks and encouragement to stand up to and deal with online bullies.

I cannot stress it enough: communication must start from day one of the first device with internet connectivity. It is the discussion we share before we buy the first device: about its security strengths and weaknesses, the agreed rules about how and when it will be used—by all parties, not just children—and how we will manage the problems and risks we will all face online.

The commissioner needs to assist schools in very practical ways. Bullying and social media problems often start out of school hours but the impacts carry over into schools. There are times when teachers and principals are literally inundated with cyberbullying complaints I read where new research shows Australian high schools deal with 22 cyberbullying incidents each year.

The commissioner will gain a clear understanding of the current state, territory and district or regional offices' protocols and processes in place in the public, private and independent systems to assist schools to deal with social media, cybersafety and cyberbullying. I would like to see the commissioner recommend pre-service training for teachers to analyse what the cybersecurity and safety protocols framework is in schools. Do they have the tools and processes to manage the cyberchallenges faced by students and IT systems?

I would like to see the commissioner develop a simple standard policy, program and procedure to assist schools to manage cyberbullying and cybersafety incidents, perhaps involving for some incidents mediation—certainly parents, teachers, AFP and the community—to develop effective processes capable of managing the continually-evolving risks at an individual school level.

I would like to see the commissioner inform students, parents and teachers about the legal aspects of cyberbullying and the upskilling of existing staff with ongoing updates, given the constant changes in devices, apps and online activities. I would also like to see the commissioner: work with the AFP, ThinkUKnow, state and local police in delivering cybersafety messages into schools—and they do a great job; assess the process used to advise state education departments of changes to search engine encryption; and assess state education departments' capacity to respond to provide immediate real-time advice to schools in this space, specifically with changes to search engine encryption when the likes of Google change their encryption.

Appropriate filters must be in place to keep children using school systems safe. Because devices, apps and online risks change constantly, the commissioner will need continuous, active input from young people, student groups, schools and teachers, the state and federal police and those in the justice system. Equally, the commissioner will need to be able to feed the most current information back. I expect the commissioner to examine and, potentially, to revise the National Safe Schools Framework in relation to covert or online bullying.

I have met the children who are being bullied. I have met those who are self-harming because of it and who are—or have—considered suicide. I commend this bill to the House, and I believe that there is much more work to be done in this space.

**Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (15:24):** I rise to speak on the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014. As outlined by our shadow minister, the opposition will be supporting this legislation which has been brought to

the House. I think it is incredibly important that we as a parliament try and keep up with advances in technology and the impact it is having on our community. Nowhere is that more true than when we are talking about the impact on children.

To say we are living in the age of technology is an understatement; technology has changed the way we work and the way we live. Those of you who, like me, would feel entirely lost without your smartphone will know this. While there is no denying the many benefits of advancements in technology, more than ever we are acutely aware of the risks and challenges that come with these emerging technologies, and how we, as policymakers, respond to them.

Anecdotally, we know that children are exposed to technology younger than ever. Anyone who has seen the hypnotic pull of a device for a toddler will understand that our children will have a distinct experience as digital natives, and that by the time they reach school they are likely to be adept users of technology. I am often shocked—and indeed embarrassed—when visiting primary schools, and even childcare centres, when I see children latching onto technology and embracing it. The things they can do with computers I know I can only dream about, and I can only imagine that this is going to grow and grow.

We know that by the time these children reach school they are likely to be not just adept users of technology; alongside their pen and paper, they are likely to be also using a mouse and computer. As a result of this revolution, children are not only comfortable with technology at a younger age; they are fluent. This is consistently reinforced by research. Statistics from the Australian Communications and Media Authority show that 95 per cent of eight- to 11-year-olds had accessed the internet in the previous month, across multiple internet-enabled devices, with 45 per cent of this age group using social networking sites. This is not something we necessarily need to be afraid of; rather, we need to make sure our children are equipped with the skills and tools to navigate the opportunities and risks of modern technology.

In an increasingly connected world, technology has broken down barriers and equipped our next generations with new opportunities for learning. There are an untold number of advantages which they can embrace. I am lucky enough to see the influence of this in the classroom, with teachers harnessing new tools to engage students and create vibrant learning experiences. There are also countless new opportunities for regional and remote students to be interconnected in a way that we have not previously seen.

In particular, the advent of the internet has been fundamental in changing the way we communicate and view information. Children are incredibly connected and social; the online world is intrinsically woven to their everyday life. Connecting with peers is no longer limited to school hours and the occasional play date. With social networking, conversations are no longer limited to the schoolyard; they are taken into the home. The flipside of this is that, where generations past might have been able to leave bullying behind at the school gates when they went home each day, now kids take it into their homes with their smartphone, with their internet access, with their social media. There is no way to say stop, and there is no way that they can turn it off at the end of the school day.

That is why we need tools to protect children and it is why we need parliaments to stay ahead of the challenges which are emerging. We know that offline and online worlds are no longer distinct and young people see technology as a vital part of their identity. The dynamics of this should not be underestimated; children are online more; they are forming relationships but they are also being exposed to the risks which come with the online environment. Most commonly, we think of aspects such as concerns of privacy, cyberbullying, inappropriate content and unwanted contact. Anything that we can do to protect children from these risks is a welcome step forward, and that is why we will be supporting this legislation.

Bullying, whether overt or hidden, is an insidious challenge in our school system. In my role as shadow minister for education, I am acutely aware of the need to strengthen anti-bullying mechanisms, and cyberbullying is absolutely no different. We have already heard from other speakers—and I note the previous speakers' contributions of some of the really frightening aspects which are occurring and which Australian children are being exposed to today as a result of cyberbullying.

One study conducted by the Australian Communications and Media Authority found that all children and young people who took part in the research aged eight to 17 had experienced some cyberbullying personally—having either taken part in it, seen it or had it happen to themselves. The study said:

To some degree cyberbullying and bullying in general was an accepted part of children and young people's lives. Cyberbullying was accepted as an inherent part of the online social experience. As a result, children may feel like they can't escape from a bully.

We can talk about trolling on the internet. Some of us who engage in social media see it ourselves from time to time. But we are not talking about adults engaging with one another; we are actually talking about children who

are being exposed to it constantly. The impact that that has on young people, on their development and on their confidence is truly frightening.

By regarding the internet as such a vital part of their identity, many young people can now accept unacceptable behaviour just to stay online. They accept that it is just part of their existence today. I am really saddened by this—that children are choosing technology over their mental health and welfare, and that they should have to make such a choice to begin with.

The repercussions of bullying, online and face-to-face, are all too real and they are extremely serious. Quite often individuals who are targeted online also experience face-to-face bullying. But it is also important to recognise what makes cyberbullying unique and particularly dangerous. Bullies online can be masked, can be anonymous and can be fuelled by a large audience. In addition, the 24/7 nature of social media can add pressure; it can be hard to ignore a notification when it lights up on your phone and even harder if you know that something unkind is likely behind the screen. It can be hard for anybody, let alone a teenager who is already going through so many transitions, so many changes in their life, to know that there might be a discussion taking place about them, that there might be unkind remarks being made, that there might be gossip and criticisms that are being exchanged about them and to not have a look at it, to not take it to heart. This is the Australia, this is the world that young people are growing up in today. It is right that this parliament does absolutely everything we can to ensure that we give them some protection. It is also important that we work with young people to build up resilience. It is important that we work with young people to let them understand the nature of the internet and the nature of the debates which they are engaging in.

In government, Labor was committed to eliminating all forms of bullying. In 2010, Labor established the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety as part of its commitment to investigate and improve cyber safety measures, releasing a report with 32 recommendations each of which was endorsed by the Labor government.

Labor established the Safe Schools Hub as a one-stop shop of information and resources to ensure that schools, parents and specialists could provide the support to students they need to ensure safe and supportive environments. Of course we also committed \$8 million to help stop homophobia and create more inclusive school communities, because we know that at every level bullying needs to be stamped out, and because we know that there is much more that needs to be done.

This bill is not the silver bullet. This bill, sadly, is not going to end all of these challenges and it is not going to mean that the young people of tomorrow do not still have to face these all too real criticisms and challenges. But we do acknowledge that it is a step along the way and, as such, as a constructive opposition we will not be standing in the way of it.

We know that at the heart of any policy approach should be the goal to build well equipped digital citizens who have the skills and resilience to navigate online risks. We know that equipping our children with these skills means equipping our parents, our schools and our community with the skills to support them. Sometimes this is a part of the challenge. We need to be not just talking to young people about these risks; we actually need to be talking to the people who did not necessarily grow up online, for who it is not a part of their second nature to know how social media works or how online communities interact. We also need to be talking to parents because it is the parents in those households who can keep an eye over what is happening online, who can monitor their child's online engagement and who can support their children when they need them and when they see the worst elements of the internet first-hand.

The importance of a truly multi-faceted approach should not be underestimated. Labor is committed to doing all we can to combat online child bullying. We acknowledge that the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 backs up the laws that exist in every state and territory which cover all forms of bullying. We will be encouraging the government to continue working with the community, working with the states and territories, working particularly with our schools and with our parent support groups to continually build up the arsenal that we have to tackle these challenges to make sure that tomorrow's young people, the people who are going through school with the sort of technology that we could never ever have imagined when we were in the classroom, have all of the support that they need.

Sadly, this legislation will not dissolve cyberbullying from being an issue but we should not become complacent. Any step to combat bullying in any form is a welcome step, and that is why I am happy to add my contribution today to support this bill in the parliament.

**Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (15:37):** I am very pleased that there is bipartisan support for these bills, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and the Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014. I rise to provide my support for these bills. My endorsement of them comes from a

common-sense position in that we have an expectation of safety and freedom from harassment and exploitation at work and in public places. Our children should also have the same expectation of safety online.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you know that the internet used to be a distant, abstract concept. It was something that we heard about through magazines and on television shows. Over the last 15 or so years, it has moved from a vision of the future to our everyday reality. I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you have got a smart phone in your suit pocket, just like I have. In researching this speech, the internet was used. I use my smart phone to engage with my constituents, through social media, to advise them about what is happening in my electorate and to advise them about what is happening here in the parliament. It has changed. We were hearing from the whip this morning about the phone boxes we have just outside of the chamber and how they are very rarely used now. That is unlike in days gone by, when the smart phone was not here and the technology was such that it was difficult to make contact with your electorates; but now we are always in contact 24/7 with these little smart phones.

Several people have contacted me with the concerns regarding online behaviour. They will have received an email from me in the last few days updating them on the progress of this legislation. As I said, I am really pleased that there is going to be bipartisan support for this very, very important piece of legislation. While most of the members of this House have learnt to use the internet in their adult life, in my son's generation it is the norm. He has grown up with technology, and it is moving faster than anyone could anticipate.

There is no way that you can foresee how much technology is going to change in my granddaughter Evie's generation and what she will experience. I have to say, seeing her with an iPad at just a few months old and how she just naturally knows how to use that technology was quite incredible. I think that, as years go on, we just cannot imagine how this technology is going to be part of our lives. The technology is at our disposal and it has changed dramatically, but the two things have not: one is the law and the other is our expectation that our children should be able to go about their lives, be it online or in real life, without fear of harassment, exploitation, intimidation or humiliation. This bill will address the former and be a great leap forward in the right direction of the latter.

I was a member of the coalition's Online Safety Working Group, which gathered submissions from people right across the nation with expertise in children and adolescent online behaviour. I would like to place on record the good work of my fellow committee members. It is great that the parliamentary secretary—the member for Bradfield—is here, because he chaired that online safety committee and did a fantastic job, along with my colleague Senator Bridget McKenzie; the member for Cowan, Luke Simpkins; the member for Longman, Wyatt Roy; the former member for Barker, Patrick Secker; the now President of the Senate, Senator Stephen Parry; the member for Mitchell, Alex Hawke; and the amazing Nola Marino, who is the member for Forrest and is our deputy whip. I have to say, I would like to commend the member for Forrest on her extraordinary work that she does in this area. She actually briefed the committee and also the coalition members on her presentation that she does in her electorate on a very, very regular basis.

What I learnt throughout that whole process was about the negative online behaviour and its consequences. That was both from my work on the committee and from talking with the people of Solomon. It was quite frightening. The children and young adults that I spoke to told me that they were more afraid of being bullied on the internet than they were of being bullied in the schoolyard. I could not comprehend that. It was all about how if they were being bullied in a schoolyard, there would only be a few people that saw it. But if something bad was written about them on Facebook or posted on Snapchat, YouTube or whatever, it could be sent around very easily. It was very easy to go viral. The kids were really, really scared about that. The view was if it was written down or if it was a visual that could be passed on, then it was actually making it reality.

The perception among young people is that while schoolyard teasing is distressing, it is only temporary and only visible to the kids who are around at the same time in the same place. But online abuse is on display permanently for all the world to see and kids are more likely to believe something, as I said, that is in writing or online than something that is yelled across a schoolyard or a bus stop. As I said, this is alarming and all the more so when you cross-reference it against figures on how much of their young lives people spend online. More than half of children have ready access or ownership of an internet-connected device before they are 10 years of age. Ninety-five per cent of young people use the internet regularly, including social media, emails, games, chats, shopping and of course entertainment. Half of 14- to 17-year olds have access through our smartphones, meaning that they can be, and often are, online anytime and anywhere. While this technology can be of incredible benefit, the same smartphone or tablet that a young person carries with them every day to help with their schoolwork and to stay connected to their friends and family can also be a powerful tool to coerce, intimidate and harass: behaviour that we now call cyberbullying. In a world where so much time is spent online—chatting, playing, learning—it is vitally important that we do all we can to keep the online world safe for our young people. This

bill, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill, and the related bill, deliver on the coalition government's pre-election commitment to protect children online.

I endorse this bill because its two-part approach offers a practical tool kit for dealing with unacceptable online behaviour which targets Australian children. Firstly, this bill creates a practical complaints channel for dealing with bullying material targeted at an Australian child. This system will provide an efficient and effective means to get inappropriate material removed. A few years ago in Darwin we had a situation where a number of schoolchildren had set up a Facebook page, and the things that were being put on that Facebook page were not true. It was like a gossip-girl column and it was very hurtful, and the young students involved were devastated. Parents were contacting me to get help to take this information down, because—apart from the fact that it was lies—it was so hurtful and, as I said before, it had the ability to go viral. We also heard the member for Forrest talk about how easy it is for information to be disseminated, particularly with Facebook.

Secondly, the bill creates an officer with the mandate and the powers to manage and enforce that system for complaints. The Children's e-Safety Commissioner within the Australian Communications and Media Authority will be a government entity with the powers required to order that material be removed and to enforce sanctions for non-compliance. This bill is a measured and sensible response to the changing environment we live in, extending the protections our children enjoy in real life to the online realm. But, just as in the real world, we as adults have a responsibility—above and beyond legislation—to protect children and to be appropriate role models in our behaviour. I would like to remind people that this responsibility extends to online behaviour too. All too often, we see adults engage in bullying behaviour online. As part of the online safety group, we heard a number of stories about fights outside the schoolyard—not between the students, but between their parents—that had arisen because of things that were being said on Facebook and Twitter. There would not be a member in this House—probably with the exclusion of yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker!—that has not been subject to online abuse and harassment above and beyond what is acceptable in robust public debate. A child's behaviour towards others will always reflect the behaviour that has been role-modelled for them. In my view, this bill is an excellent legislative response, as it extends the protections our children enjoy in real life to the online world. But it is our responsibility as parents, as guardians and as role models to ensure that we lead by example.

The internet is a wonderful resource for our nation's children. These bills will ensure that, just as there are laws to protect children from abuse and exploitation in the physical world, there are also laws to make online experiences safe for them, and an appropriate agency to enforce those laws against those who would harm children. As we have heard other members say, work needs to continue in this space, but this is a great first step. I am really pleased that there is bipartisan support for these bills. I think that with this bill, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill, we as legislators are doing the right thing. There is also other fantastic work happening—for example, the work that the Alannah and Madeline Foundation are doing; the education of parents and teachers in our communities; and the kind of training that the member for Forrest is doing. In my electorate, the schools do not issue computers or laptops until the parents and the children have had appropriate training to help protect against cyberbullying. I commend these bills to the House.

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (15:51):** The member for Solomon advised the House of some of the statistics regarding the take-up of social media—and regarding Facebook, and the use of the internet and the like—by young people. Just how rapid and dramatic that transformation has been is one of the striking features of our times. There is no doubt that people have been doing that at the expense, to a considerable extent, of physical activity and outdoor activities. I often think that, no matter how digital the world gets, there is no substitute for being there—for being out in the real world. I hope that young people do not lose that appreciation of the outdoors, and that they do not lose the benefits of physical and outdoor activity. Last week I had a forum at the Coburg Library in my electorate of Wills which was based around issues of concern to young people. It had a very heavy focus on various addictions, including the impact of ice and other drugs such as alcohol. We talked about employment, homelessness, mental health issues; we covered a range of issues. One of the things that was said was that, in this day and age, people are losing the ability to communicate and are using social media as a substitute for face-to-face and personal communications; that is a point that was well made at the forum. It is a significant point. We do need to try to protect and develop the capacity of young people to communicate in a face-to-face way.

The primary bill here establishes a Children's e-Safety Commissioner and sets out its functions and powers as related to a defined prohibition against cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child. A child or their representative can complain to the commissioner that they are, or have been, the subject of cyberbullying material targeted at them; the commissioner may investigate such complaints. The bill sets out the expectation of the parliament that each social media service will comply with a set of basic online safety requirements. These include: minimum standards in the service provider's terms and conditions of use; a complaints scheme; and a

dedicated contact person. The bill creates two tiers of social media services. Tier 1 comprises social media services which have applied to the commissioner to be declared as such; the advantage of a tier 1 declaration is largely reputational. Social media services within tier 1 may be requested by the commissioner to remove material that has been the subject of complaint as 'cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child'. By contrast, a tier 2 social media service may be issued a social media service notice by the commissioner which requires the removal of such material. The commissioner also has the power to issue notices to end users who post cyberbullying material, which can include a requirement for them to remove that material. The remedy for noncompliance with such a notice is injunctive relief. If a social media service fails to comply with the basic online safety requirements, a request to remove subject material or a social media service notice, then the commissioner may make a statement to that effect and publish it on its website. Civil penalty provisions arise in relation to noncompliance with a social media service notice—that is to say, 100 penalty units or \$17,000. The commissioner has other functions including the promotion of children's online safety and the coordination of the activities of other departments relating to this. There are laws in every state and territory which cover all forms of bullying and this bill backs up those laws for the digital age.

Labor established the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety in 2010 as part of its commitment to investigate and improve cybersafety measures. The committee released its interim report, *High-wire act: cyber-safety and the young*, in June 2011. It contains 32 recommendations, with central themes being a focus on education and a multifaceted approach involving schools, families and communities. Labor in government endorsed and responded to these recommendations.

Labor has consistently called for detailed industry and community consultation on these proposals. We facilitated community input on the legislation by referring the bill to a Senate committee. Labor is conscious of the concerns raised in some parts of the sector about whether this legislation will work. Nevertheless, when we are talking about protecting kids from online bullies, it is worth giving it a go.

For some time now I have been an ambassador for the Bully Zero Australia Foundation and I am aware of the importance of the issues covered by this legislation. I welcome the establishment of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner. The Bully Zero Australia Foundation was established after the suicides of Allem Halkic, Olivia Penpraze, Sarah Walker and Sheniz Erkan. All four teenagers were cyberbullied. As an ambassador, I was involved from the inception and attended the inaugural meeting. The foundation was launched by then Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and I strongly support the development of this progressive organisation. More recently, Victorian government minister, Natalie Hutchins, and I launched the Bully Zero Hotline. This hotline has answered more than 3,000 phone calls, including successfully resolving 21 calls involving a potential suicide. Bully Zero responds to all forms of bullying via its dedicated national 24/7 hotline on 1800 Zero Bully or 1800 028 559. This hotline is funded by OracleCMS and the foundation. Calls relate to a range of bullying related situations but, in particular, cyberbullying. I should add that adults are not immune to cyberbullying, and the impacts can also be severe and damaging. The organisation offers schools, sporting clubs and community groups free cybersafety sessions using the funds of donors and those raised by a charity ball held yearly. This organisation has sought federal and state funding; to date it has only received \$71,000 from the Victorian state government. The foundation's Chief Executive Officer Oscar Yildiz and his team work tirelessly to ensure Australians live fulfilling lives, free from all forms of bullying. I commend the foundation and the 76 or more volunteers who give up their time to genuinely make a difference.

Currently there are stalking laws that deal with bullying in all states and in Victoria. Serious bullying is now a crime punishable by up to 10 years jail. The federal Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Offences and Other Measures) Act (No. 2) 2004 covers the use of a carriage service. In essence, a person is guilty if they use a carriage service, like the internet or a phone, to menace, harass or cause offence—for example, by sexting, trolling or cyberbullying. The penalty is up to 3 years imprisonment. Threats to do serious harm carry up to 7 years imprisonment and threats to kill 10 years, if made over a carriage service. In all circumstances it must be proved that the perpetrator intended the victim to fear that the offence would be carried out.

The Bully Zero Australian Foundation CEO Oscar Yildiz has said:

It's fantastic to see that the Commissioner will have the power to issue notices to end-users who post inappropriate material or engage in cyber bullying. Removal of such material by the Commissioner will further enhance policing and enforcement. I commend the Commissioner who will also have the ability to apply non-compliance notices. We look forward to further consultation and will support the Commissioner to ensure our children are safe on and off line.

The prevalence of cyberbullying has rapidly increased since it first emerged. This is probably a result of increasing numbers of children and young people having access to the internet and to smartphones and their increasing propensity to use online methods to communicate. Other factors could also be influencing changes in prevalence, including the perception that cyberbullying is more difficult to detect and that bullies are less likely to

face consequences for cyberbullying. What is not known, however, is whether this pattern is still continuing or whether it will continue to increase, stabilise or decrease.

Internationally and in Australia, there is significant harm associated with cyber-bullying. Several studies have ascertained that it is more than just hurtful name calling but can lead to serious psychosocial and life problems. Some studies indicate that cyberbullying can have more serious effects than 'traditional' bullying, because it is likely to involve more exposure and humiliation, can last longer and is more difficult to escape from.

The Australian Medical Association recognises that cyberbullying among children and young people is a significant health and welfare issue. Research about the impacts of cyberbullying suggests that the long-term impacts of cyberbullying are serious. It can have lasting effects on individuals and their families, including self-esteem, mental health, depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation.

The AMA supports the establishment of a Children's E-Safety Commissioner to:

- take a national leadership role in online safety for children
- promote online safety by coordinating relevant Government activities;
- support, conduct, accredit and evaluate education and community awareness programs about online safety;
- to deal with persons who post cyber-bullying material targeting an Australian child, and
- to work with large social media providers to remove harmful content aimed at a child within 48 hours of a request from the Commissioner.

Bullying peaks in years 7 to 10, and hurtful teasing is reported as the most common behaviour, followed by lies. Whilst bullying has always been a scourge on our young people, today bullying does not simply stop at the school gate; it hounds our children from the classroom to their homes via computer screens and mobile devices. When telecommunications were less ubiquitous, the home could represent a safety zone for adolescents, where they could switch off their school identities. But kids who come home and look up their Facebook pages face the same problem. The bullies who taunt you in school hallways can be there again, the moment you go into your bedroom and turn on your computer.

The evolution of technology has forever changed the way we are all connected, and our nation's young people have seized this opportunity with relish. But with these opportunities have come risks. Through the advent of social media, many of our children are enduring relentless harassment and anguish in the supposed sanctuary of our homes. Social media has brought people together, but it has torn others apart. Character assassination on Twitter is rife, as are malicious emails, texts and other forms of e-torment. A recent review of the academic literature on cyberbullying suggests that at least a quarter of school-age children are involved as either a victim or a perpetrator.

According to *The Economist*:

A new generation of smartphone apps is unlikely to help. With names like Whisper, Secret, Wut, Yik Yak, Confide and Sneaky, they enable users to send anonymous messages, images or both to "friends" who also use the apps. Some of the messages "self-destruct" after delivery; some live on. But at their heart is anonymity. If you are bullied via Facebook, Twitter or text, you can usually identify your attacker. As a victim of an anonymous messaging app you cannot: at best you can only guess which "friend" whispered to the online world that you might be pregnant ... anonymity frees people "from traditionally constraining pressures of society, conscience, morality and ethics to behave in a normative manner."

... ..

The app companies claim they have or are working on ways to deter slanderous or abusive posts. Secret says it removes such posts, although that rarely seems to happen quickly or consistently. And after hosting posts that have included multiple shooting and bomb threats—some of which led to school evacuations—Yik Yak is now using "geofencing" technology to prevent its app being used at a majority of America's middle and high schools. That will do little, however, to affect its use outside school hours or at universities, which Yik Yak is still targeting.

The hidden nature of cyberbullying has meant that perpetrators are thriving on incessantly tormenting their victims without fear of reprisal. The research showed most cyberbullying takes place on social media, and social media platforms can be slow to remove hurtful or abusive posts, and therefore that exacerbates their devastating consequences.

We must do all we can to tackle this scourge, and for that reason the opposition is supporting this legislation. We have a duty to do everything that we can to prevent and stop the bullying of young people, and we hope that this legislation achieves those aims. But, as Jennifer Duxbury said in an article in *The Age* last year:

For my parents' generation, thoughtfulness and respect for others' feelings were just plain good manners. In the digital age we are losing the habit of civility. Abrupt texts, caustic tweets, celebrity bashing, ritual humiliation of contestants on reality TV, "shares" of denigrating slogans overlaid on images of politicians - these are routine expressions of a lack of empathy in our communications.

It is tempting to shift accountability for what happens on social media onto the platforms and the government and away from ordinary people. At some point, we need to accept personal responsibility for scripting our conversations.

**Mr ENTSCHE** (Leichhardt) (16:06): As elected officials we know what it is like to receive hate mail, threats and other verbal vitriol. It certainly hurts. It could be from people we know in the community or strangers from another part of the country. It might be sparked by something that we have said or done, but the attacks can be personal, targeting how we look, what we wear or how we talk. But we are adults and we know there are ways to deal with this and find support to get through it. Unfortunately, our children do not have that experience and so they need our protection as parents, as politicians and as a country to protect them from bullying.

It has never been a simple task, but in a world before the internet kids could escape bullying—even if just for a while—in the safety of their own home. Unfortunately, that is not the case anymore. Our communication has moved from writing letters by hand to asking Siri or Cortana to send a text on our behalf. We have gone from passive TV watching to actively engaging in real-time with our favourite shows, and we have gone from bullying being limited within the schoolyard to bullying continuing as long as we are within reach of the internet.

We made an election promise to the children of Australia that we would act to better protect them from cyberbullying and to make our online world safer. It is a promise that I, as the father of an eight-year-old girl, hold very highly because I will do anything possible to protect her from any form of bullying, online or in the real world.

This Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 is delivering that promise to kids. One in five Australian children are victims of cyberbullying. Cairns State High School guidance officer Anne Jillett told our local paper that she was dismayed by the number of young people who present with depression and anxiety symptoms at school. Sometimes their symptoms are so severe that they are unable to engage and learn. She said that, due to mobile phones and the internet, young people are at risk of no longer having a private life.

From my perspective as the Chair of the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Australians, I see and hear about the extent of bullying against young LGBTI people. In fact, you may remember that early last year I outlined the findings of a new report entitled *Growing up queer: issues facing young Australians who are gender variant and sexuality diverse*, in which I found two-thirds of young LGBTI people reported harassment or violence across different aspects of their lives. As a result, 16 per cent of these young people had attempted suicide and 33 per cent had harmed themselves. That survey is obviously only representative of one portion of the Australian population, but I use it to highlight that bullying is not just a term; it is a real problem affecting real people and has real, sometimes fatal consequences.

The coalition undertook an extensive public consultation process while in opposition and while in government to draft this legislation. In January last year we released a discussion paper asking for feedback on the measures we had established to enhance online safety for children. We received over 80 submissions from stakeholders, including community organisations, industry, education bodies, academics, legal representatives, government bodies and individuals. The draft of this bill was shared around 30 stakeholders and adjusted based on their feedback. Our consultation process showed us that the best method to tackle the problem of cyberbullying was to establish a single point of contact for online safety issues—an authority to take the lead across government in implementing policies to improve the safety of children online. This is precisely why this bill establish a children's e-safety commissioner, an independent statutory office within the Australian Communications and Media Authority. Although our government does have a clear deregulation agenda, that does not mean we will not introduce new light-touch legislation if and when it is needed. In this case, because of the explosion of social media and the profound impact it is having on our children.

The commissioner will have very clear functions. Firstly, they will administer a complaints system for cyberbullying material targeted at any Australian child. If they receive a complaint of cyberbullying material targeting an Australian child, they will be able to issue notices to the social media service and the bully who has posted the material, requiring the material to be removed. If the bully or social media service fail to act on the commissioner's notice, there are several legal avenues that can be pursued, including civil penalties, enforceable undertakings, injunctions or referring the matter to the police. The commissioner will take a national leadership role in promoting online safety for children. They will administer \$7.5 million in funding for online safety programs in school and \$100,000 to support Australian based research and information campaigns on online safety. The commissioner will coordinate activities of Commonwealth departments, authorities and agents relating to online safety for children. Tackling this problem will take all of us working together. The commissioner will bring together police, the internet industry, child protection organisations, and parent and teacher associations to find solutions to make our kids more aware of online dangers.

Finally, the commissioner will administer the online content scheme that was previously administered by the Australian Communications and Media Authority. They will have the power to issue a notice to a large social

media service, requiring it to remove content that is targeted at and harmful to an Australian child. Having a commissioner in this role to protect and educate our kids is so important in this fight against cyberbullying. This government is already looking to appoint someone into that position, because we are a government of action, of getting things done rather than constantly stalling like the previous government. This government expects to appoint the child safety e-safety commissioner during the next few months even if it is to be on an interim basis before the legislation is actually passed. I am told a search process is underway and some positive candidates have already come forward.

Obviously this bill is just one facet of helping our children stay safe online. I would also like to commend other initiatives being done, including the federal government's national cybersafety and cybersecurity education program Cybersmart. The Cybersmart program is run by the Australian Communications and Media Authority as part of a commitment to cybersafety. It has invaluable content for young children, teens and their parents to have a better understanding of cyberbullying, social networks, privacy, trolling and identity theft. It even has culturally appropriate content for our Indigenous friends and families, with 'Be Deadly online'.

As our Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications said recently:

Clearly the internet and social media are a central part of the lives of children and young people, and they bring up a new set of issues ...

... Just like road safety, and water safety, or like educating kids about drug and alcohol use and sexual behaviour, this is another set of issues that kids need to be educated about ...

I would also like to add that the parliamentary secretary helped launch another initiative just a few days ago: the eSmart Digital Licence. It was developed by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation as an online challenge combining quizzes, videos and games to prepare Aussie children over the age of 10 to be smart, safe and responsible digital citizens. I have absolute admiration for the Alannah and Madeline Foundation for helping our children in this area. I give them extra credit for teaming up with Google, which has provided funding to make this program available to every year 6 student in Australia, from my far north-east Queensland electorate of Leichhardt to the far south-western electorate of Forrest. I encourage all teachers of grade 6 classes to go online and sign up today.

I would also like, in talking about this bill, to just recognise the outstanding effort that the member for Forrest has put into raising the issue of online bullying, or cyberbullying. It is a campaign that she has been relentless in pursuing now over a number of years. She has made herself available to travel around the country speaking to groups of schoolchildren whenever she is invited, very much assisting and supporting them in raising awareness about dealing with this challenge. I think it is something that the member for Forrest needs to be congratulated on. She had been doing it for a long time before these issues were brought into this chamber, so I say congratulations to her for her efforts, and I am sure that they have made a significant difference to young people's lives.

We then ask: why are we creating a central point, and why do we need a commissioner to receive the complaints, when Australians could go directly to the social media business, whether it be Facebook, YouTube or Twitter? I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that we are doing this because we just cannot go to these people. We have commissioned research from the University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre and found that social media and other service providers are unaccountable. They are reluctant to take down offensive material and are often slow to respond to requests, even from the police.

I have had personal experiences there myself in my electorate, where there is a very offensive website called hillbillywatch.com. Some of the material that is on it is just absolutely offensive. It is blatantly untrue, and in recent times they have even been targeting the children of some public officials there. There are all sorts of efforts trying to get Google to deal with this. The problem is that as one is shut down they tend to open another one.

There have been numerous submissions describing instances when cyberbullying material was not removed, even after being reported to the social media site. That is why I think we need to step in with legislation. Something as insidious as cyberbullying, something that is damaging to the mental health of so many of our young people, needs a central point for all Australians to go to for help. If a social media site does not act, then I believe that we must.

This bill establishes a two-tiered scheme. If a social media service has volunteered to participate in tier 1, the commissioner can issue a notice for it to remove material. It will not be legally binding, but, if the site repeatedly fails to respond, it is moved to tier 2. If a large social media service is in tier 2, it is legally required to respond to the notice. Having the two-tier system will minimise the burden on social media services that cooperate, while putting in place a strong government response to those who fail to work with us to protect our kids against online bullying.

As I said earlier, I have an eight-year-old daughter, and I know that many of the members here have children or even grandchildren. We do everything that we can to protect them from danger. The Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 is our way, as a government, of sending a loud and clear message to the community. We will fight cyberbullying and do everything we can to make the internet safer for Aussie kids.

We cannot stop bullying from happening. It is unfortunately a very sad part of life. But we can protect our children by creating a system that will ensure cyberbullying material is taken down from social media fast. We cannot stop people from being horrible to others online, but we certainly can show that our government is serious about responding quickly and effectively against these online threats to our children.

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (16:21): About two years ago, I went to Wanniasa School. It is a large school. It has a junior school, a primary school and a secondary school. It is in my electorate. I went there to speak to a number of young Canberrans who were taking part in a pilot program on cyberbullying. They talked me through the program, what they were doing and how it was enhancing their understanding of the risks that take place in cyberspace. When I spoke to them, I asked: 'Have you been a victim of cyberbullying yourself? Here you are learning all about cyberbullying and what you need to do to stay safe in that environment. Have you yourself been a victim?' I was absolutely shocked to find out that in the group that I spoke to—it was about 20 or 30 students—80 per cent of those students had experienced some form of cyberbullying. So it is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to speak on the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 today, to join my Labor colleagues in supporting this legislation and to join those opposite in commending this bill to the House.

Cyberbullying is an issue that is only going to become more important as Australia and the world look further to technology. Cyberbullying can be targeted towards people from all walks of life, from the young to the old. It does not discriminate. It does not discriminate in terms of your address, how much you have got in your bank balance or what your level of education is, just as it does not discriminate in terms of age. The impacts can be far-reaching and permanent. Research shows one in 10 young people has been cyberbullied—and I would say, from the experience I had at Wanniasa School, the figure in all reality is far, far greater than that. And around 25 per cent of child suicides each year are due to bullying more broadly.

Cyberbullying can involve social, psychological and sometimes even physical harm. It often causes fear, shame, guilt, withdrawal, loneliness and depression. Cyberbullying can come in the form of abusive texts and emails—and we as politicians are kind of used to that. We get lots of abusive emails, texts, tweets and Facebook posts. It can also come in the form of deliberately hurtful images or videos, offensive online chat or gossip and excluding other people online. That is really where a lot of, particularly, teenagers are experiencing this. These gangs of people are created, these online virtual groups, and people are bullied by being excluded. It is kind of insidious. We have all been through it at school. We were excluded from particular groups, from the cool kids club—

**Mr Frydenberg:** Speak for yourself!

**Ms BRODTMANN:** Not the member for Kooyong maybe, but we mere mortals. We did experience a lot. The majority of Australians experience some form of that at school—being excluded from their peers. Now it is not just happening when you are in a school environment but it is happening when you get home. So you get to your home, to that safe environment, that sanctuary, and you are still exposed to this insidious behaviour, this exclusive behaviour, this sinister behaviour.

Because cyberbullying is often done behind the screen of anonymity, it can be particularly nasty. As I mentioned, we as politicians get it all the time. That is part of our job, unfortunately. But, if you are a teenager or a young child, you have not signed up for that and you may not have the resilience, the strength of character or the maturity of character—you are only a child or a teenager—to be able to deal with that nastiness. It gets beyond nasty actually; it becomes quite poisonous.

Labor are committed to doing all we can to combat online child bullying, and that is why we support this legislation. However, I must add that this bill has been referred to a parliamentary committee for consideration, with the reporting date coming up on 3 March this year, so Labor will support this bill subject to any recommendations that may arise from that Senate committee.

What does this legislation do? This bill establishes a Children's e-Safety Commissioner and sets out its functions and powers, with an aim to banning cyberbullying material targeted at Australian children. A key function of the commissioner will be to administer a complaints system for cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child. The complaints system will include a two-tiered scheme—and the former speaker went into quite a bit of detail about that—for the rapid removal of any cyberbullying material targeted at a child. The commissioner will have the power to issue an end user notice to a person who posts cyberbullying material, requiring the removal of the material, asking them to refrain from posting the material and apologise for posting

the material. The commissioner will also be responsible for promoting online safety for children, coordinating activities with government departments and administering the online content scheme that was previously administered by ACMA.

This legislation will ensure that each social media service will comply with a set of basic online safety requirements. This includes minimum standards in a service provider's terms and conditions of use, a complaints scheme and a dedicated contact person. If a social media service fails to comply with the basic online safety requirements, a request to remove subject material, or a social media service notice, then the commissioner may make a statement to that effect and publish it on its website. A social media service notice of 100 penalty units or \$17,000 may arise in relation to noncompliance. Ultimately this legislation is about ensuring online safety for children so that they can use social media services and electronic services in a safe way. It aims to protect Australian kids from cyberbullying.

Labor established the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety in 2010 as part of its commitment to investigate and improve cybersafety measures. The committee released its interim report, *High-wire act: cyber-safety and the young*, in June 2011. It contained 32 recommendations, with the central themes being a focus on education and a multifaceted approach. The scheme I just spoke about, that pilot scheme, was part of the education process. Labor in government endorsed and responded to the recommendations of that report. We have consistently called for detailed industry and community consultation on these proposals. We have facilitated community input on the legislation by referring the bill to a Senate committee. Given this is the first piece of legislation on this specific subject matter, that is both desirable and appropriate.

The former Labor government delivered \$125.8 million towards a cybersafety plan to combat online risks to children and help parents and educators protect children from inappropriate material and contacts while online. Part of this plan was funding for National Cyber Security Awareness Week, which was a partnership between industry, community organisations and all levels of government. I understand that that week is still going. As part of the spirit of those initiatives that Labor introduced when we were in government, I have held a number of cybersafety forums in my electorate. They are free community forums and they are designed to engage and inform the community about how they can be smarter and safer online. I had a number of them in my first term. They were targeted at members of the community from all sorts of backgrounds but specifically parents and grandparents. As I mentioned, there were a number of schemes across a number of government agencies, both at the federal and state levels, that were targeting cyberbullying for children and for teenagers and there were a number of pilot schemes and a range of measures. In my view, there was a gap there for the parents and grandparents of young children and teenagers, particularly to raise awareness amongst them about what is actually happening, what their children could be up to and what they could be experiencing in terms of behaviours that surround that.

At the forums that I organised, the presenter was the well-known, well regarded and highly respected Alastair MacGibbon from the Centre Internet Safety, which is here at the University of Canberra. At those forums, Alastair gave some frightening statistics on the range of scams that are taking place in cyberspace. He went into quite a bit of detail about online scams, who had been hit and what people need to look out for. He also outlined to quite astonished parents and grandparents just what their children, their grandchildren and their teenagers could potentially be up to in cyberspace.

The parents and grandparents went away very grateful for their raised awareness and for having had highlighted for them the activities that their children and grandchildren were engaged in beyond the school gate, at home and quite often in the wee hours. When people think they are fast asleep and getting their sleep and rest for the next day at school, a lot of kids are still texting. He highlighted the signs that parents need me to look out for when it is interfering with a child's wellbeing, health and education. He also highlighted the signs of cyberbullying and what they need to look for in their children and their grandchildren. So they were incredibly useful forums and I am looking forward to holding a number over the next couple of years as well. They were very popular and specifically designed to raise awareness amongst parents and grandparents.

We also heard about romance scams. I recently did a piece for the local *Chronicle* on buyer beware, particularly with Valentine's Day coming up. Lonely hearts need to be aware that romance scams last year were the largest scam in terms of money lost, as identified by SCAMwatch and the ACCC. There are all sorts of scams out there. I know that my mother has been a victim of one. I know that a number of her friends, post 70-year-olds, have been victims. Again, I send the message to all Australians that if it is too good to be true then it probably is. This is particularly important for small businesses as well. Having had my own business, I know you are a jack of all trades and it is easy for people to think something is a good deal or something will save some time. But when you get involved in it, you see not only a substantial sum of money lost but also the integrity and security of your

business lost. That is probably more important than the money because the money can be made again; the integrity, security and reputation take a long time to build.

Labor are conscious of the concerns raised by some parts of the sector that this legislation will not work. The opposition have consulted widely with industry and with a variety of interest groups and individuals on this legislation. We acknowledge some concerns around the practical implementation of some of the elements of this scheme. I would also like to acknowledge the work that many social media companies have already done to reduce cyberbullying directed at children. However, more often than not, if a site receives a complaint and acts on it promptly there will be no need for the complaint to go to the Children's e-Safety Commissioner. That means that this legislation will have little to no impact on the operations on those social media providers. Labor have also consulted with the Australian Interactive Media Industry Association Digital Policy Group, which represents Facebook, Google, Twitter, Microsoft and Yahoo7. As noted by the digital policy group in its submission to the Senate committee, 'Online safety is best achieved when government, industry and the community work together.'

There is a range of activities that are also taking place in Canberra. I am running out of time, so unfortunately I cannot outline all of them. I know a number of schools in my electorate have already taken part in the Youth Advisory Group on Cybersafety. I mentioned Wanniasa School, but there is also St Mary MacKillop College, Caroline Chisholm High School and Telopea Park School. I commend these schools for taking up the challenge to beat cyberbullying and taking a multifaceted approach to that.

The internet has the capacity to transform this country. Through the internet, the vastness of our land will no longer be a barrier to education, to health, to culture or to community. However, with expanded opportunity comes expanded risk and cybersafety is an issue that we will face well into the future. Cybersecurity is a collective responsibility, shared by all who use the internet. It is government's role to ensure the right system is in place to protect those users, particularly the most vulnerable: our children. I believe this legislation enforces the government's commitment to cybersafety and the establishment of a Children's e-Safety Commissioner is particularly pleasing.

We will see what arises from the Senate committee report and whether any substantive measures might need to be taken up. At this stage, I commend this bill to the House and will it to achieve what it sets out to do which is to eliminate the scourge of cyberbullying in Australian society.

**Mr VARVARIS** (Barton) (16:36): I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on this important bill, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014. Today's legislation is one crucial aspect of the coalition's election policy that will enable a suite of measures to improve the online safety of all Australian children. The safety of children is one of paramount concern in our nation. This is embedded in the legislation we enact and an essential part of our law enforcement and protection agencies. As the federal member for Barton with children of my own, the idea of any sort of harm inflicted on a child is unthinkable. Yet harm is not a simplistic notion. It is not isolated to a sticks-and-stones mantra. It can carry many forms and be disseminated through various mediums. With the advent of modern technology and the prolific use of social media and almost all children having access to a smartphone, a computer or laptop, children and young people are more exposed than ever to a cyberworld in which they need to tread carefully. Yet, children and young people can be naive or ignorant to the risks posed by engaging socially online and the sort of psychological warfare that endangers them. Online mediums such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Dig, YouTube, Flickr, Tumblr, Reddit and other chat forums which allow for direct and open lines of communication, banter and debate can sometimes lead to personal attacks, incidents of trolling and even threats, whether intentional or not, that can create adverse consequences for the participants.

What was once schoolyard banter can now rapidly escalate into bullying through far more sophisticated channels. Some participants deliberately choose not to confront their victims face to face and, instead, hide behind keyboards using pseudonyms and online identities or avatars to unleash verbal assaults on those less suspecting with far-reaching psychological effects.

Cyberbullying, as the term has been coined, is sadly a familiar concept and frequent occurrence in the lives of many young children. As parents watch helplessly on or are perhaps even unaware of the damage inflicted on their children, the unresolved issues often result in severe depression, anxiety, low self-confidence and, in some extreme cases, suicide. The fear of loss of reputation and social standing is traumatic for children and teenagers. To rule out internet use completely as a solution is unfeasible in this day and age. Rather, we must ensure there is a multipronged approach to dealing with often sensitive but extremely critical matters.

The coalition is committed to ensuring that no children should have to be exposed to racism, violence, discrimination and prejudice, specifically in an online environment. Bullying statistics demonstrate that cyberbullying is actually one form of teen violence that can inflict lasting trauma on the victim. A staggering 20 to 40 per cent of adolescents have been bullied on more than one occasion either via mobile phones or the internet.

Being aware of this occurrence is one thing but having the specific legislation and resources in place is the only way to safeguard all children.

Having specific resources dedicated to this increasingly prevalent issue is essential, given the nature of this bullying. Many parents report a feeling of helplessness upon discovering their children have been victims of cyberbullying, because it is an unfamiliar concept to them. It can be difficult to provide a solution if you are also navigating uncharted waters yourself.

The coalition has undertaken thorough research and stakeholder liaison in the preparation of today's bill so that there is appropriate leadership to this ongoing matter. As such, today's proposed bill will allow the establishment of a Children's e-Safety Commissioner which will act as a single point of contact for online safety issues and spearhead the government's policies for improving the safety of children online.

The coalition proposes that the commissioner be an independent statutory office within the Australian Communications and Media Authority to focus solely on the issue of online safety. We propose that the key function of the commissioner is to administer a complaints system for cyberbullying. We also propose that the commissioner will have two sets of powers when responding to and dealing with complaints.

The aim is to leverage the commissioner with appropriate power and resources to issue a notice to a large social media service asking for it to remove offensive material. It can do so voluntarily but, if it fails repeatedly, the request for removal will become legally binding. Furthermore, and this is quite critical, the commissioner will also have the power to request the person directly—that is, the end user, who posted the original material—requiring the individual to either remove the offensive material, refrain from posting the material or apologise for having posted it. Of course legal sanctions may not be necessary at all if the social media site removes the offending material in a timely manner.

Today's bill incorporates the legal sanction aspect, because so many social media sites have failed to do so. Simultaneously, large social media sites should be given notification through its processes for offending material to be removed and, in the event that this does not occur, a complaint is formally registered with the e-safety commissioner. If the social media site removes the material promptly, there will be no need to further pursue this with the commissioner and obviously no legal action. In this way, we are ensuring all parties are given an opportunity to seek appropriate remedy without diving straight into a punitive process.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure everyone that this is not about creating excessive regulation and red tape. As I mentioned previously, the rate of cyberbullying and its ramifications have been recorded in the public space for some time now and it is imperative we act accordingly to the needs of those affected and safeguard all children.

While previously little was known or understood about this modern dilemma, cases such as Charlotte Dawson, Louise Stalker and the Australian Defence Force Academy Skype scandal highlight the need for an efficient and effective case handling process that involves civil penalties and appropriate levels of accountability.

Cases of children, young adults and even fully-grown adults experiencing online bullying, harassment and threats demonstrate the need for an authority that is equipped with the resources to tackle the issues where previously, social media sites have failed to do so. This was supported by a government commissioned detailed report by the University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre which concluded that a crucial obstacle encountered by our police and agencies when dealing with this was lack of liability and ownership of the issue by the social media sites.

Many public consultations have also concluded that, even when the complaint process was followed through the social media site, material was not removed; and cases where fake accounts were set up to disseminate offence were still permitted to operate. This has nothing to do with free speech, excessive regulation and content censorship—rather it is strictly about protecting individuals against harm.

I want to assure everyone that freedom of speech is not at stake here, and that is why these measures specifically target those communicating with children, who are at impressionable stages in their lives and do not possess the cognitive functioning which might shield them from online assaults.

As parliamentarians, we are obliged to create a safe environment for children and, by streamlining and simplifying the cyberbullying handling scheme, we are getting on with the first step of enhancing cybersafety. Other duties that will complement the e-safety commissioner's key functions include promoting online safety for children; coordinating relevant activities with Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies; creating educational and community awareness programs; and advising the respective minister.

Fundamentally, the legislation will ensure that social media services comply with basic standards of care for their users. Shifting their responsibility to that of the user and victim, essentially blaming them for events outside

of their control, is grossly unfair and unhelpful in deterring cyberattacks. Unfortunately, evidence provided to the coalition shows that social media sites cannot be trusted to remove offensive material on their own accord. So the bill before us today is absolutely necessary to monitor the breach of safety and enhance online security for all children. The longer something remains online, the more harm it can do, especially if posts, pictures, videos and so forth become viral—something that happens time and again once it has a particular audience reach.

As I mentioned before, the safety of children is of paramount concern when it comes to Australia's legislation, and this one is no different. We owe it to the victims, past and present, to act immediately with an effective solution to curb cyberbullying. I commend this bill to the House.

**Ms HALL** (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:45): Mr Deputy Speaker Vasta, I would like to congratulate you on the birth of your latest child. In doing so, I would also like to speak on the bills we have before us today, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and the Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014. Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that as a parent this is something that will be very close to your heart and something that you will be pleased to see pass through this parliament. The primary bill establishes a Children's e-Safety Commissioner and sets out its functions and powers, which relate to a defined prohibition against cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child. I am not sure that Australians are aware of the depth of this problem. It is enormous. It is a problem that affects practically every family within this nation. For every family that has a computer and has young people who are computer literate and are involved in social media, it has the potential to impact on their life.

There has been considerable research done on cyberbullying. The previous speaker mentioned the research conducted in conjunction with the University of New South Wales—*Youth exposure to and management of cyberbullying incidents in Australia*—which showed that one in five Australian children aged between eight and 17 experience cyberbullying each year. In 2013, 72 per cent of schools reported at least one incident of cyberbullying. In conversations I have had with schools within my electorate each and every one of those schools can roll off a list of accounts of cyberbullying that those schools have had to deal with. The estimated number of children and young people aged eight to 17 who have been a victim of cyberbullying in Australia is around 463,000—of whom around 365,000 are in the peak age group of 10 to 15. Girls are more likely to be victims, and that reflects their relationship with their peers. It is devastating for a young woman to be a victim of cyberbullying. One young woman in the Shortland electorate actually left school early and has gone to TAFE to complete her schooling.

It is said that 'cyberbullying is like any other form of bullying'. I attribute that quote to the chief executive of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, Dr Judith Slocombe. I would have to say that I disagree with her. It is not like any other kind of bullying; it is much worse. If you are being bullied within your school it tends to be confined to that school community or the immediate community outside the school. With cyberbullying, it goes viral. It can cover a whole region. In the Hunter, where part of my electorate is, or on the Central Coast, where the other part of my electorate is, a young person may be a victim of cyberbullying within their own school community but that goes viral and they become a victim of cyberbullying within the whole region. It really does impact on that person's ability to learn and to relate to other young people and it impacts on that person's mental health. There is a need for much work to be done on deterrents to cyberbullying.

Last Friday, the state member for Charlestown, Jodie Harrison, and I met with the school leaders within our electorates. We talked to them about issues that are important to them and we talked about issues that were having the greatest impact on their lives and the lives of the young people in the communities where they were leaders. The two issues that they raised were cyberbullying and mental health, and then they went on to explain how the two were interlinked and how part of the work that they were hoping to do as school leaders in 2015 was aimed at addressing the impact of cyberbullying. As one young person spoke another young person would be nodding in agreement, and there was a definite consensus throughout the whole of that room that cyberbullying was bullying of a different order, bullying that affected a person's life in so many different ways. It attacked their self-esteem, made them feel marginalised and led to a situation where their overall mental health and wellbeing were jeopardised.

I do not think that we as a parliament can underestimate the impact of cyberbullying. I do not think that we as the nation's leader can walk away from our responsibility to create a safe environment for young people who are using the internet. An Edith Cowan University report stated:

Cyberbullying appears to be related to age (or access to technology), with older students more likely to engage in cyberbullying than younger students.

I would also argue that students, when they reach a certain level of maturity, tend not to be quite so involved as those in the key peak age group of 10 to 15 years of age but that by the time they get to the end years of school

and have decided: 'Maybe I might take my Facebook account down,' which I have heard many young people say, the damage has already been done for the most vulnerable students.

The Catholic schools have a cybersafety website that keeps parents up-to-date with what is happening in their children's world. I think it is really important that parents, teachers and all the significant people in a young person's life are aware of the internet, of its positives and of its negatives. They need to know what is happening in that child's world. They need to be involved in a child's life to ensure that the computer is a tool that delivers knowledge and a good quality of life not something that can destroy a young person's life. The New South Wales Department of Education and Communities has an 'A to Z' website for parents which looks at ensuring that parents have knowledge about cyberbullying and the impact that the internet can have upon young people. In the Hunter region we have a headspace that was opened in 2013. There is a new headspace that is going to operate in the northern part of Wyong Shire with an outstation at San Remo Neighbourhood Centre in Shortland electorate.

Discussions with all the major stakeholders have led to the conclusion that cyberbullying has the most enormous impact on young people's lives. There is a great debate about whether or not there is a link between bullying and mental health. I have definitely seen examples where there has been that link, where a young person has ended up needing to seek help from a mental health professional. It can be argued that teenage suicides are directly caused by bullying. That is a simplistic approach. It is not that simple. It cannot help but be conceded that an environment that belittles, intimidates and frightens does not create rehabilitation. There can be extreme consequences, such as self-harm, caused by mental illness. But bullying sows the seed. It does not cause mental illness but it sows the seed. It attacks a young person's self-esteem and their self-worth. It marginalises them. That is why it is important that at every level, when we are considering the mental health of young people, we use every tool possible to ensure that they enjoy good mental health.

Social media provides a wonderful opportunity for young people to express themselves. However, the faceless nature of online communication makes people more brazen. I think many of the speakers in this debate have mentioned this. What results is that the forum for help turns into an arena for ridicule, and that can have an enormous impact on young people.

The legislation before us today establishing a Children's e-Safety Commissioner to look at cyberbullying material targeted at young people in Australia is supported by us on the side of the House. A child or their representative can complain to the commissioner that they are or have been the subject of cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child, and the commissioner may investigate such complaints. The bill sets out an expectation of the parliament that each social media service will comply with a set of basic online safety requirements, including minimum standards in a service provider's terms and conditions of use, a complaints scheme and a dedicated contact person. The bill creates two tiers of social media. Tier 1 comprises social media services which have applied to the commissioner to be declared as such. Tier 2 social media services may be issued a social media service notice by the commissioner.

Social media and the internet are something that most Australians value, particularly young people. This is the era of social media. This is an area when we communicate with each other through social media, and we have to ensure that it is safe. We on this side of the House support the legislation. In doing so, we acknowledge that there are many cases where young people's lives have been impacted upon by cyberbullying on social media.

**Mr MATHESON** (Macarthur) (16:59): It is great to see the bipartisan approach that has been taken in relation to cyberbullying. I thank the member for Shortland for her contribution today. I rise here today to offer my support to the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014. Parents, schools, teachers and children throughout my electorate of Macarthur have given me extensive feedback about the harmful effects of cyberbullying and the terrible impact it can have on young people.

This bill will play a significant role in addressing the growing problem of cyberbullying and will enhance online safety for children living in Macarthur and across the country. The bill includes a range of measures to combat cyberbullying and provide a safer online environment for children, including establishing the office of a Children's e-Safety Commissioner and setting out the commissioner's functions and powers, creating an effective complaints system for harmful cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child, with the commissioner given two sets of powers it can use in responding to a complaint—(1) the power to issue a notice to a large social media service requiring it to remove material, and (2) the power to issue a notice to the person who posted the material, requiring that person to remove the material, refrain from posting material or apologise for posting the material.

Ultimately, these measures are designed to encourage large social media services to work with and cooperate with the commissioner under what is called tier 1. However, if a large social media service repeatedly fails to

respond to a notice from the commissioner then it can be moved to tier 2, meaning it has a legal duty to remove cyberbullying material if it receives a notice from the commissioner and faces substantial fines if it does not.

The government has consulted very extensively with schools, parents, children, young people from the ages of five to 17, social media services and other stakeholders. The message we received from the community was emphatic and unequivocal: the government must act to fight cyberbullying and help keep Aussie kids safer online. This bill is a big step towards Australian children being better protected against cyberbullying and being safer when they go online.

The coalition went to the 2013 election with a policy to establish an effective complaints system backed by legislation to get cyberbullying material down fast from large social media services. This legislation delivers on that commitment. This legislation will establish the office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner, which will be a single point of contact for safety issues and will take the lead across government in implementing policies to improve the safety of children online. The legislation will state the parliament's expectation that social media services comply with certain basic online safety requirements to have: terms of use that sufficiently prohibit the posting of cyberbullying material; a complaints scheme under which end users of the service can seek to have material that breaches the service's terms of use removed; and a contact person for the commissioner to refer complaints that users consider have not been adequately dealt with. The commissioner will have the role of communicating the expectation to social media service providers as far as practicable.

Complaints regarding cyberbullying material on social media services may be referred to the commissioner if they have not been adequately resolved by the social media service. The commissioner will have the power to investigate complaints and conduct such investigations as the commissioner sees fit. The commissioner will maintain registers of tier 1 and tier 2 social media services and will be able to publish statements about social media services failing to comply with the basic online safety requirements, failing to comply with a request for removal of cyberbullying material or failing to comply with a social media service notice.

A very clear principle of the complaints process is that the first step before a complaint can be received and considered by the Children's e-Safety Commissioner is that the complainant must have reported the cyberbullying to the large social media site under its established processes. This is because the government recognises that many social media sites have significantly improved their complaints handling arrangements for removal of cyberbullying material. If a site receives a complaint and acts on it promptly, there will be no need for the complainant to go to the Children's e-Safety Commissioner and the scheme will have no impact at all on the operation of the site's normal processes. It is only if a site does not respond that the Children's e-Safety Commissioner will get involved. The design of the rapid removal scheme minimises the impact on industry by utilising social media sites' existing complaints handling processes and online safety initiatives. Ultimately, the two-tier scheme has been developed to minimise the burden on, and regulatory exposure of, social media services that cooperate with the Children's e-Safety Commissioner.

The government is committed to working with industry to ensure that better child online safety tools for smartphone and other devices and internet access services are readily available for parents to purchase. The coalition's stated election commitment was to work with mobile phone companies—such as Telstra, Optus, Vodafone and their resellers—and internet service providers that provide fixed broadband services to the home to make software available that parents can choose to install on their own devices to protect their children from inappropriate material. The government has established a child online safety tool working group with representatives of major internet service providers and mobile operators which has begun work on this service. The Children's e-Safety Commissioner will take this work forward once appointed.

The commissioner will take a national leadership role on children's online safety initiatives across government to develop and implement policies to improve safety for children online. The commissioner's office will be established as an independent statutory office within the Australian Communications and Media Authority. The commissioner will work closely with police and other government agencies, as well as with the internet industry, child protection organisations, and parent and teacher associations.

The commissioner will administer funding of \$7.5 million for online safety programs in schools and also support Australian based research and information campaigns on online safety. Other functions for the commissioner will include: coordinating relevant activities of Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies; supporting, conducting, accrediting and evaluating educational and community awareness programs; and making grants and advising the communications minister. The commissioner will also have the function of administering the online content scheme set out in schedules 5 and 7 of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. That was previously administered by the Australian Communications and Media Authority and is being transferred to the commissioner without substantive amendment.

Since I have been in parliament, the member for Forrest has been a champion against cyberbullying and has travelled around Australia to cyberbullying forums. In my electorate there have been many, many forums in relation to cyberbullying. I know a young man by the name of Josh Cotter who works within the Catholic school system. He has been going around to all the Catholic schools. They have a cyberbullying network that they talk about in the schools. At every forum I have been to in relation to cyberbullying people have got up to talk about their experience and what has occurred to them in relation to cyberbullying. You can see the pain etched in their faces when they start to talk about it. Very often it brings tears. There are mental health effects.

This bill addresses a lot of things a lot of things in relation to cyberbullying and will stop people from getting online and virtually terrorising people. Too often, we hear of young people who have taken their lives because of cyberbullying. The youth forums have worked really well in relation to it. The big issue that arises in relation to cyberbullying is mental health. It has a huge impact in the Macarthur region. This legislation goes a long, long way to addressing those concerns.

The member for Forrest, who has championed this matter since I have been in parliament, has done a wonderful job. Through her efforts, she has brought this to the attention of this parliament. She has worked tirelessly and fearlessly since I have been here to make sure that legislation is introduced to address cyberbullying. I congratulate the member for Forrest.

**Mr BROAD** (Mallee) (17:07): I am quite proud to speak on the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and cognate legislation in the Australian parliament, because I understand the innocence of youth. It is important that we protect our youth, who need an opportunity to grow up and develop as people and not be subjected to harassment and predators, which have now become more prevalent because of online technology.

Years ago a father and a mother could very much protect the Australian family home, but now the family home can be infiltrated so much more easily because of technology. Around half of Australians between the ages of eight and 11 use social media services. I am always astounded by how tech savvy our young Australians are. Even a two-year-old can work out how to use the remote control for the television. It just amazes me, especially when I find myself still, as a federal member of parliament, typing with two fingers. Technology has afforded our children great opportunities, but it also has some inherent risks. While 50 per cent of people between the ages of eight and 11 use social media services, that figure greatly increases, to 90 per cent, for those between the ages of 12 and 17.

I hark back to my best mate, who was best man at my wedding and whose daughter has recently turned 15. On her 15th birthday she said to her mother, 'Mum, how old were you when you got your first mobile phone?' Of course, those of us born in the late seventies will realise that mobile phones were not around when we were 15. She said to her daughter, 'I was 35 when I got my first mobile phone,' and her daughter said, 'Have I got to wait till I'm 35, Mum?' And her mother promptly replied, 'Yes!' If we could, we would protect our children by keeping them away from technology, but we cannot. The world has moved on, and technology is very much a part of their lives. But it is right and appropriate for the government to have a look at how, within the means of technology, we can protect our children.

One of the most important roles of the Australian parliament is the defence of its people and the protection and security of its people. Protecting our young children and teenagers, as they are walking the journey of growing up, from those who seek to be predators and from those who seek to bully them is very much the role of the Australian parliament. It is something that unites both sides of this parliament when looking at issues like child safety and enhancing online safety.

This bill has a lot of good in it. It talks about developing the Children's e-Safety Commissioner. I think it is appropriate that we resource someone with the key role of looking at this issue and making sure we protect our children. It is very simple to talk about it but not to resource it. It is very simple to appoint it to lots of different departments, but then it gets missed because everyone is busy. The establishment of an e-safety commissioner is very good. It is the first point from which we should start. Promoting online safety will be part of the e-safety commissioner's role. It is important that we start with the fence around the top of the hill, ensuring that parents are looking at what their children are viewing and what access they have to online material. It is important that a conversation occur between older peers and younger peers about what is appropriate viewing and about what is appropriate behaviour and unacceptable behaviour. The fence around the top of the hill in promoting online safety is a very good place to start.

The other thing is an effective compliance system. There also needs to be a way of removing bullying from the internet. The trouble for so many people is that the internet has a way of retaining things, and things can pop up again and again. That can be quite traumatic, particularly for young males or females as they are growing up. It can be quite traumatic when they are dealing with bullying not only in the schoolyard but also through social

media, where the bullying spreads and is sent to their mates. Having a way of removing that online presence is critical. We have been quite strategic in doing this in the bill, and I think the approach taken is very wise, with a two-tiered system, essentially asking online platforms to be socially responsible and, if they are not, using legislation to bring that about.

Statistics tell us that 21 per cent of 14- and 15-year-olds and 16 per cent of 16- and 17-year-olds have experienced cyberbullying. Every one of us in this chamber, who have had different life experiences growing up, would be able to remember what it is like to be bullied as a child. It does stick with you. In the chamber, where people throw abuse at one another—that is a bit of an overhang in the Australian parliament—we have thicker skin and we can behave ourselves and handle things a bit differently. But in those early years when you are growing up and struggling with self-image and self-worth, those things can bruise. Making sure that we have a good system of removing that possibility through legislation is very important.

The third key feature of this bill, which is also part of protecting our children, is additional funding of \$7.5 million for schools to access online safety programs. There are filters we can have but the teacher cannot always be watching, even with the new style of classroom—I am glad I was not brought up in these classrooms because it is very hard to hide in the corner—there is the ability to use online equipment. It is important that we have allocated \$7½ million for the National Safe Schools Framework to help online safety programs. I am always very impressed with the way youth culture stands up for youth culture. Surrounding our children with positive messages is very empowering to young women and men as they walk this journey. Whilst I know this is quite an indulgence, I want to quote some of the lyrics from a Taylor Swift song. It is quite a controversial song, because recently it was banned from Triple J's Hottest 100. There are many Taylor Swift fans who would say that banning this song from the Hottest 100 is the strongest argument for cutting ABC funding and Triple J funding. According to 'Shake it Off':

Cause the players gonna play, play, play  
And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate  
Baby I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake  
Shake it off.

It is a really positive song when you look at online bullying. What it is actually saying is: 'Just let it wash over you.' It is a great symbol for a young successful singer to say to her culture: 'Bullying can happen, you cannot control what they are going to say to you, but you can control your response to it.' That is another way that we can also address this issue.

Certainly the Australian government's commitment to have a children's e-safety commissioner is great. It will promote online safety and a two-tiered compliance system that can remove bullying and abusive words from the internet is the next step. Spending \$7½ million for the schools access online safety program is fundamental for protecting children and our schools. In the words of Taylor Swift, 'Shake it off'. Let's say to our young people out there: 'You are worthwhile; you are someone; you have a strong future. Shake it off. The haters are gonna hate, the players are gonna play. We want your innocence protected; we want you to grow up in peace and harmony and you to contribute to make this country a great country.'

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (17:18): We all know that mental health is the single biggest health issue facing, confronting, many Australians today but particularly our youth. The government has a role to play to ensure that adequate services are developed that are responsive and supportive but that also aim to build resilience amongst young Australians. 'Resilience' is the key word—it is so important. I commend the member for Mallee for his fine speech. I am a bit disappointed he did not vocalise the lyrics of Taylor Swift a little more and do a few of her moves, although perhaps the parliament is fortunate that he didn't, but the message is correct: songs can reach out so well to particularly young Australians and they can send a powerful message—much better than we can standing here in the parliament making speeches. I am sure that will go viral on You Tube when the good member for Mallee loads it up later on, and I am sure that that message is going to resonate not just with the young people of his Victorian electorate but, indeed, with young people throughout Australia. It is important that we do whatever we can, as a government, as a parliament and as a nation to curb the scourge that is online bullying, cyber bullying; to curb the scourge that is people taking advantage of other people in a most unfair way and in a way that can affect their mental health.

The rise of social media networks and online digital platforms has grown and developed rapidly over the past few years, in such a short time, and it is constantly changing and evolving. We give it and take it across the dispatch box and we give it and take it when it comes to the public's views about us, but we are used to that—this is the hurly-burly world of politics. Young people should not have to put up with some of the things that are said

about them, anonymously, on line, that are said about them via cyberspace. They get affected by it. Everybody is different. We need to build resilience but everybody is different and takes things in very different ways.

New challenges arise daily as online technology continues to evolve and as the way we communicate continues to change. It leaves us with the challenge of how best to respond and ensure children are safe when using the world wide web, interacting on social media networks—such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter—and engaging on online games networks. Today children are spending more time online than ever before. The internet is an extremely useful tool—we all know that—but it also poses some great risks and ongoing challenges for users, for parents and for people who are responsible for the care of children, in particular. The growing sophistication of internet and social media platforms is accompanied by an increasing risk and threat to users. Research shows that one in five Australian children are the victims of cyber bullying. Cyber bullying can be even more debilitating than direct bullying, with victims feeling as though there is no escape. How sad is that? It can be destructive and lead to very serious long-term mental and physical health issues. Even worse, it can lead to suicide—a very long-term solution to what is often a short-term problem. We have seen far too often, far too tragically in this nation, kids driven to such despair that they take their own lives. This government is taking action to combat cyber bullying and provide a safer online environment for children and young Australians. I know that members opposite are also very much in lockstep with the sorts of things that we need to do as a parliament to prevent these sorts of mental health issues becoming even more prevalent.

This bill will enact a number of measures to provide a safer online environment particularly for children. This legislation will establish the office of Children's e-Safety Commissioner to provide a single point of contact for online safety issues. The commissioner will take the lead across government in implementing policies to improve the safety of children online. This is not Big Brother stuff—this is needed. As a parent of three children, I can see the immediate benefit of a one-stop shop for reporting any harmful or untoward behaviour targeted at vulnerable children. My children are pretty tough—they have had to be; they have grown up with me as a newspaper editor and I suppose a public figure, and over the last 4½ years as a politician. They cop a fair bit, being the children of a politician. Even they have been subjected to online bullying, and it hurts. It affects kids. No matter how resilient or how tough they are, it affects kids—and let me tell you there are a lot of kids out there who have not had, I suppose, the upbringing in a family where things are talked about over the dinner table, as happens in my house, where things are openly discussed and everybody has access to each other's Facebook. We are all friends on Facebook in our family. Some kids keep to themselves. Things are not discussed in busy households and sometimes things build up—kids bottle things up inside and there is no proper release valve. The release valve sometimes is self-harm; the release valve is doing things that they would not have resorted to had they not been bullied or seen something online.

The e-safety commissioner will work closely with the police and government agencies—that is completely necessary—as well as child protection organisations and parent-teacher associations. They will also support Australian research and information campaigns on online safety and will administer funding for the development of online safety programs in schools. How important will that be—getting the message out to where the kids are, to where they learn, to where they develop many online strategies. The bill will also see the creation of an effective two-tier complaint system to assist the commissioner to work cooperatively with large social media services.

This bill was a policy commitment the coalition made prior to the last election and one which is widely supported by the Australian community—as it should be. The government has played a proactive role in putting in place extra protection for children and supporting children and families in building resilience—a very positive outcome for the community, as a whole, in addressing some of the conflict issues which arise when people are engaging online.

I take this opportunity to recognise and praise the efforts of the member for Forrest, Nola Marino—a great regional member. I listened to her speech very carefully earlier today. She is constantly bringing cyber safety to the attention of members and senators and keeping that issue at the forefront of their minds.

**Ms O'Dwyer:** That is true.

**Mr McCORMACK:** The member for Higgins knows, as I do, being a member of the class of 2010, how the member for Forrest has engaged with us as members of that year group—as well as with those here before we came into parliament and those I am sure in the class of 2013—on the importance of those online safety forums for kids. She has brought experts in from the police, from social services and from all areas of government and the community to talk with members of parliament—not just on the coalition side but members opposite, too, because she cares about this issue. We all do, but she has made it one of her real key issues. I am sure when Nola Marino retires from parliament, and for many years hence, people will look back and say, 'That was the fearless lady who made such an issue of online bullying measures.' Let me tell you, her name is writ large in this legislation—as it

should be. She has delivered numerous cyber safety presentations to children, teachers, parents and families and the broader community with the support of the Australian Federal Police and Western Australia Police. This truly is remarkable work from the member for Forrest. This year she is working with young children from preschool through to year 12 to do what she can to ensure our young people, many of whom are vulnerable, are able to better protect themselves and build their resilience.

I know I am going on a bit about the member for Forrest, but she has been such a great advocate on this that I need to. People out there listening to this broadcast will hopefully go onto her website and see the great work that she has done—and perhaps also pick up a few tips. She has been a fierce advocate of improving online safety knowledge and skills, and she encouraged her local communities to engage with and respond to the discussion paper process which led to the development of the measures in this bill. As I say, her name is writ large right throughout this bill and her advocacy will not cease following its passage. I commend her efforts and know she will continue to make a strong case for ensuring young Australians are best placed to protect themselves online. I must say my predecessor Kay Hull—the member for Calare will agree with me—was also very noisy on this issue. I know that she put out some good publications in the Riverina electorate when she was the member from 1998 through to 2010 about this very issue. I am sure she will be pleased to see the passage of this legislation as well.

Education is a major part of the answer to the problem of ensuring young Australians have the skills and ability to manage online risks when faced with them. I would like to acknowledge the vital role headspace plays in assisting young people encountering mental health problems and helping thousands of young Australians to get their lives back on track. I was delighted last year, in early October, to announce that Griffith, in western Riverina, would benefit from one of several new headspace facilities announced as part of last year's budget. When health minister Peter Dutton told me that that was going to happen, I was delighted because I knew what a difference that would make to the western Riverina—not just the western Riverina but parts of the Farrer electorate and indeed parts of Mark Coulton's electorate, Lake Cargelligo in particular, who draw upon Griffith as a central hub for all sorts of things—health and social services and particularly, now, mental health services. Better mental health services are vital for regional communities, particularly for young people as predominantly large users of the internet and who engage frequently on social media networks. Mental illness amongst those aged 25 and under make up three-quarters of cases treated in Australia—75 per cent. And with the rise of the digital world, online communications and social networks this figure will increase if we sit idle and are not proactive in our response—and that is what we are doing today.

I have fought hard for improved mental health services in regional areas and a headspace for Griffith over a number of years now, speaking numerous times in this place about the need for better mental health services in regional areas in the Riverina. To that end, I commend the committee chair of the Griffith headspace, Peta Dummett, for the work she has done in getting people enthused about this project and continuing to lobby to get the headspace and, since it has been announced, to continue to lobby to make sure that when it does become a reality that it is everything that we need it to be for the western Riverina.

The community, local councils and thousands of people contacted me, indicating their support for a headspace facility in Griffith and I am pleased to have been able to deliver this important facility for that city and for the wider western Riverina region. This is a great outcome for the community to assist in supporting and building resilience—that word again—in young people when it comes to dealing with mental health.

Government alone will not be able to combat cyberbullying—we all know that. But a coordinated approach from government, with education programs in schools and the role parents play, are critical, crucial elements in assisting children to develop skills to respond to bullying behaviour while helping them build resilience and broader social skills online and when using social media platforms.

I have to say that coalition governments have led the way in assisting young Australians with mental health issues. I will put a shout out to Labor; I know that Labor is committed to these sorts of programs too. It is a whole-of-government and a whole-of-parliament approach.

Headspace, established in 2006, is a world-first initiative which fills a gap in the system by treating young people who have mental health issues. To date, headspace has helped tens of thousands of young people through numerous headspace facilities dotted right across this wide, brown land and through their online support service, eheadspace.

This bill provides another active step by this coalition government to ensure that Australian children—our most precious resource; let's never forget that, that kids are our most precious resource—are better protected against cyberbullying and that they will be safer when they engage in the online world.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications in bringing this important policy commitment forward since the last election, to better enable and protect our most vulnerable users of the internet. When I talk about that parliamentary secretary in particular, I know the great efforts that he has gone to also—as has the member for Forrest—to ensure that this legislation goes through; to ensure that every little aspect of this legislation will ensure that kids get a safer internet and that kids are protected from those pariahs—those dreadful people—who use the internet for means with other than good intentions, and also for those who, unintentionally perhaps, bully others.

This legislation is particularly good legislation. I commend it for its intent and I know that it will make a real difference to the young people of Australia, who are our leaders of tomorrow, who are our future and who deserve every protection that they can receive.

**Mr JOHN COBB** (Calare) (17:33): I have enough grandchildren to field an AFL team. Admittedly, they were not born south of the border and, being normal people, they know more about rugby league, rugby union and netball than they do about AFL! The point is that even if I did not have that many grandchildren I would still have to support this Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014. I guess if you come here and do not see looking after children as one of our priorities then you should not be here.

I think the figure that is really amazing in all of this—and we are talking about cyberbullying in particular—is that they say 20 per cent, one in five, children aged between eight and 17—and they are not really children by the time they are 17—are the victims of bullying. Not that they have had it tried on them, but if you are a victim then it has affected you badly.

We live in a very different world; a world where far older people can be influenced online and even convinced that they need to go over and be part of the lunacy that is happening in the Middle East at the moment with the death cult. If they can be lured, then it is not surprising that those between the ages of eight and 17 can be extraordinarily influenced by it.

If you were born before 1980 or 1970 or, if I am honest, before 1960, then it is a bit hard to imagine why it happens. Why do they bother reading it? On the other hand, there is no pressure stronger than peer pressure, as anyone in this House knows. We suffer from it and teenagers are more prone to the pressures of their age group than almost anyone else at all.

Research has revealed that almost half a million Australian children suffered some form of cyberabuse last year alone. I would be absolutely staggered if there were no person in this room who does not see that as an incredible figure. Obviously, we do have to do something about it and I am sure that this is a bipartisan debate that we are having. I certainly hope that it is. These changes are awfully important and they certainly need to work. As government representatives, or representatives of electorates, whatever your position in this place—it is an incredibly important bill to keep our children safer online.

Children have access to all kinds of internet—including social media, which can make bullying a lot easier. But the damage is still the same and we will have an incredible effect upon them. I encourage us all to stop and think for a bit about our children—and our nieces and nephews, our grandchildren, whoever it might be. We should think about whether we want them to think that we ignored something so incredibly painful, something that has such a huge effect on their lives—if we did not do everything we could to stop cyberbullying.

I am sure we are all behind this, and we have to do what is possible in this day and age to meet a modern phenomenon with a modern approach. Anxiety, depression and behavioural issues are just some of the effects. Yes, I think the member for Riverina used the phrase 'mental illness', but certainly this sort of behaviour socially will cause all of those things—deep depression and even suicidal tendencies—a terrible thought, and one you would not have thought possible. It is hard to think that people could so seriously consider such things when young, but they do. And it is caused by modern communications and social media. If this bill can bring about changes that stop just one instance of that, then obviously it has been worthwhile. We have an obligation to all victims, those who have been in terrible straits up until now because of it, to make sure they know that from now on it will be somewhat harder for people to get away with indulging in it.

We are all aware that we, the coalition, made a commitment at the 2013 election to improve the safety of children online. We had a policy to establish an effective complaints system backed by legislation to get this sort of bullying material down from large social media services. This legislation delivers on this commitment. It will establish the Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner, which will be a single point of contact for online safety issues and will take that lead across government in implementing policies to improve the safety of our kids online. This commitment won overwhelming support from the community because everyone recognises that this is a very real issue. But it is not something you can touch; you can only deal with it in the same way it happens.

The figures and facts that I provided are very real. We have consulted extensively with schools, parents, children, social media services and other stakeholders over the last few years and long before we got into government. While everyone agrees we have to do something, we have heard that message loud and clear. It is now time to do something. This bill does have the potential to make a difference to hundreds of thousands of lives. When you consider that almost half a million young people are going to be affected by this in any one year, it is quite a staggering figure. If it makes life easier for parents—it is very hard for parents to deal with these things. It is not visible. There is obviously no child today that is not going to be online; they are all going to be using modern IT and social communications. It is almost impossible for parents to deal with it directly. Doing something that makes it possible for government to come down hard on those providers who are advised of where the problems are and do not deal with them when they are able to is something I think we would all have to be in favour of.

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey) (17:41): It is often said that the pen is mightier than the sword. Unfortunately, it seems that in this modern world the pen has been retired to the backbench or even out the back door. It constantly amazes me how empowering and disassociating the internet has become. It is empowering in the sense that all kinds of people can have opinions on everything—without necessarily being very well resourced or having a well thought-out argument—and they are able to peddle that over the internet. The thing that constantly amazes me is how indignant and rude, how offensive they can be, on the internet, when most times they are not like that in person. What is it that makes a normally meek, mild and inoffensive person a mean and offensive attacker when they get on their keyboard in front of their computer?

My experience is that, as members of parliament, we are all, from time to time, on the receiving end of fairly nasty emails. In fact a close young friend said to me the other day: 'What is it about people that they think they can say absolutely anything about politicians on the internet?' Every now and then I find a phone number for some of those people that say nasty things to me on the internet, and I say: 'Hey, Rowan here. You're not happy. What's going on?' And I am amazed, because they are not anywhere near as offensive when you meet them in person. When you talk to them on the phone, or if you visit them in person, they revert to the social norms. They live within the kinds of constraints we all live in. We might think things from time to time about people, but we do not abuse them and attack them to their face. So what is it that says, if you are on the internet it does not matter what you say? What is it that makes people think maybe they are not even identifiable when they are on the internet?

I was, as this House well knows, a farmer before I entered politics, and two-way radios are a very important part of modern farming. While it is not the same kind of technology as the internet, I often used to smile when I heard some of my neighbours, or people sharing my channel, say things like: 'We're going away for three weeks after lunch. Keep an eye on the place will you?' And I am thinking, why would you be advertising that in the ether? It is much like that with the internet; I think people just feel disconnected from the message, as though they are invisible. Unfortunately, that kind of behaviour is not reserved for just adults. In fact, the children of today are very adept with all things technological and certainly the internet, and make great use of it. Unfortunately, because they are just human like the rest of us, they seem to form the same impervious view when they sit behind the computer keyboard.

When bullies start on someone, when they start on your point of difference it really hurts. Children, we know, are far more sensitive to this than the rest of us. As we grow older, we do develop a little bit of defence; our skin gets a little bit thicker but not always—adults can be affected by the same attacks. I can remember as a kid, as a seven or eight-year-old, that all I wanted was to be just like everyone else. I did not want to stand out in a crowd and I do not think kids of today are any different.

We have always had schoolyard bullies. We have always had bullies at lots of points in our lives. I have got to say, schools have worked incredibly hard to try and round up bullying in the schoolyard, but they have always been there. But at least in the old days—if that is what we should call the pre-internet days—the child, the person could get relief because when they left school they could enter another part of their life. Maybe it was a scout group or somewhere they could go to where they were accepted or maybe it was just home. But the internet of course is 24 hours. It is at you the whole time. The really sharp point of it is not just when someone sends you a message but when they send hundreds of people the same message and then they all push the 'like' button. It just grows out of control. You can see why kids are driven to anxiety, depression and, as we well know, some to suicide. That is the saddest story of all. Often it occurs when those responsible adults around them do not even know what is going on.

This bill is about trying to address some of those issues. Like others that have spoken before me, may I heap some more praise on my good friend the member for Forrest, who has been a tireless campaigner in this area. The cyberbullying and education classes that she runs within her electorate, I think, are probably world standard. She has developed them to a fine art. I have looked at them and thought, 'How do I get these up and running myself?'

and have not really got past that point—more shame on me for that. Perhaps this bill will make us go away and all try and repeat the kind of performance that the member for Forrest delivers for her electorate. It has been said before that it is difficult a backbencher to influence large policy outcomes in this parliament. But I do not think there is any doubt in this particular case that the member for Forrest has had a very large influence on this policy. If we have to chisel that on her grave stone, I do not think that would be such a bad thing—she would be remembered for the right things.

With the appointment of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner, \$7½ million will be given to the commission to spend in a suitable way to set up education programs, to handle complaints and to provide advice to the government. The government on this issue is saying that it is serious. It is not just another issue where it is going to kick the can down the road. It is serious, it is now, it is happening and we need a response. I would not be so foolhardy as to say this bill is going to fix the job up and we will not have to worry about cyberbullying or inappropriate internet approaches to young people again. Of course it will not work that well.

It is worth saying in this place that the primary gatekeepers here are parents. They should not think that because the parliament is making a new set of laws surrounding cyberbullying that their children are safe and they do not have to do anything. If your kids are behind closed doors and on a computer, you should have some idea what they are up to. It is just too dangerous out there. I encourage parents to take every step to make sure they are close to their children so they can share those secrets, to keep a very close eye on them so they can so they can read their emotions and to try and have some understanding of what they are doing on the internet in those hours when they cannot see them.

I encourage parents to take the next step of putting filters on their home computers and filtering the kids' access points to computers. I think most parents would agree with that premise but might say, 'I should do that but little Sally is okay. I know she knows how to look after herself.' Or 'This does not happen with Tristan,' or whatever. Do not think that the government can do it for you. Do not think that that the Children's e-Safety Commissioner can do it for you. Parents have to take a very real role in this. As they always are, parents are the primary protectors of children.

I gave a little speech earlier up in the Federation Chamber and it was loosely about how unfortunate we can be if we choose the wrong parents. Consequently, some children are brought up in pretty dysfunctional households where the chances of coming into contact with cyberbullying are probably the least of their concerns. In those households, it is much harder and I hope that this legislation will provide some protection for them. But for all the others—the good parents—get on board, make sure you know what your kids are doing and show a direct interest.

The Children's e-Safety Commissioner, most importantly, will have the ability to bring the major providers under its wing. The process is broken up into two tiers. Tier 1 is virtually voluntary. We are asking the providers to do the right thing and it is basically a code of conduct. But if the provider does not do the right thing repeatedly, they will be moved onto tier 2 restrictions, which means there will be a forced compliance.

The bill follows over 12 months of consultation. A discussion paper was put forward in January last year. I think this is an example of careful, considered and sensible government where we have consulted with all the players and then arrived at a point of legislation that all agree, including the opposition—and thank you very much for your support—that this is a step in the right direction.

It is one of those things that we do agree on, and perhaps this is when parliament is at its finest. As I point out to many people who get a bit frustrated with the parliamentary process, if we all agreed on everything then there would not be much point in doing anything, would there? We do not always agree on the important issues and so it should be, because there are often two points of view. On this one, we are in very close harmony because we all realise the harm that can be done to young people. Harm done at a young age can be a legacy for the rest of your life. I commend these bills to the House and look forward to the commissioner are being appointed.

**Mrs MARKUS** (Macquarie) (17:53): I am pleased to rise this evening to talk on these very important bills, which focus on enhancing online safety for our most important asset the generations to come; that is, indeed, our children. Today, in the 21st century, all of us communicate in large part with iPhones, iPads and computers. The distinction between the concrete world and cyberspace or the cyberworld, if I may use the terminology, is increasingly blurred.

It has already been highlighted by many speakers as this debate has been conducted today that what people are prepared to communicate across the internet is not necessarily what they may be prepared to communicate if they see or meet you face-to-face. Nine in every 10 children between the aged 10 and 11 years say that their parents are their first point of call when they have an online safety issue. But as young people increase in age into the early and middle teens, that is less likely to be the case. As a parent of a 21-year-old and a 19-year-old, I have observed over the last decade as they immerse themselves online. The main access for their communication with their

friends and their social network is across the internet. We all know Facebook and so on is how they communicate and how they build their networks and their relationships and keep in touch.

I have also observed firsthand the impact on my daughters' and my sons' friends as they have experienced cyberbullying directly: having to move from school to school, being isolated from their friends and having the experience of not being able to escape from the bullying. As has been discussed already, it is a 24-hour experience. They are at school and they experience bullying. The bullying continues on Facebook, through the internet and through emails. It is spread through their own network and their own friends, which may be several hundred, and is also connected with everybody else, their friends and their friends' networks. Thousands of people get to see and be a part of this bullying experience. For the individual and their family, it has a profound effect psychologically: depression, thoughts of suicide and, unfortunately, for some it has contributed towards them ultimately taking their own life.

While we cannot 100 per cent prevent this, what we can do and what these bills endeavour to do is to put in place some measures that will help contribute towards the safety of our children. What these bills do is establish the Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner and sets out the commissioner's functions and powers. It creates a complaint system for harmful cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child. It provides the commissioner with two sets of powers, the first being to issue a notice to a large social media service requiring it to remove the material and the second being to issue a notice to the person who posted the material, requiring the person to remove the material and refrain from posting material or apologise for posting the material. Organisations and social media services, providers and businesses will have to—if they do not already—set up a complaints system. That is, a point of contact not just for the individual that is being bullied but also for the Children's e-Safety Commissioner to be able to contact them. A key function of the commissioner is to administer this complaint system for cyberbullying material targeted at our children.

In 2014, the University of New South Wales' Social Policy Research Centre concluded that the best estimate of cyberbullying over a 12 month period is 20 per cent of Australians aged 8 to 17. I concur with many who have spoken today in that I believe that this is probably an underestimation of the impact. The University of New South Wales research also found that 87 per cent of secondary schools reported at least one instance of cyberbullying in 2013, as did just under 60 per cent of primary schools. These figures are deeply concerning to anyone who has a commitment to our children and to their future.

The legislation will state the parliament's expectation is that all social media services should comply with certain basic online safety requirements: firstly, to have terms of use that prohibit the posting of cyberbullying material; secondly, as has already been mentioned, to have a complaints scheme under which end users of the service can seek to have material that breaches service's terms of use removed; and, thirdly, to have a contact person to whom the commissioner can refer complaints that users consider have not been adequately dealt with. Many in our community believe this is necessary legislation. Director of the National Children's and Youth Law Centre, Matthew Keeley, states: 'The Enhancing Online Safety For Children Bill is good law and good policy. Kids—both victims of cyberbullies and the cyberbullies themselves—will be the major beneficiaries. Parents and teachers benefit too. The cyberbullying provisions, I think, will come to be seen as a world-leading strategy. The accreditation and grants provisions will do more to ensure consistent best practice in education and preventative approaches.' We in this place can do nothing better than provide legislation that will contribute towards the current and future protection of our children. This is an opportunity for us to take a step in a direction that will focus on a challenge that we face in the 21st century, as the internet—communication in cyberspace—is where most of our communication takes place. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (18:01): I also rise to speak in this cognate second reading debate on the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and a related bill. To feel powerless, scared, embarrassed or humiliated is not something that I or any other member in this place would wish upon anyone. But I think members would agree that the thought of an innocent child having those feelings strikes a different chord entirely. To victimise a child, in my mind, is one of the lowest forms of human behaviour. It is something I have actively campaigned to prevent, both in this place and outside it. Prior to the Christmas break, I stood in this place and called for members to join with me in implementing initiatives that would help to achieve the aim of zero abuse of children. I said then that this is a discussion which I believe that Australia as a country needs to have. Throughout our history, child abuse has often been dismissed, particularly by those who had the power to hold to account those who sought to commit such acts—as we saw for many years with care leavers, and with children in institutions, which is now the subject of a royal commission.

I have just heard the member for Dobell speak in the Federation Chamber in regard to child abuse in her electorate, which is the second-worst electorate in New South Wales on the statistics. I endorse her speech and the sentiments which she expressed in relation to child abuse. At that time, I also asked our nation to look out for our

children and to protect them from any sort of abuse. As members know, abuse can take many forms; physical, sexual or emotional, or it can be just pure neglect. What people do not often realise is the connection between emotional abuse and bullying. Too often, people reduce the significance of bullying in schools, at home or in the workplace, despite its impact; and despite it often having long-lasting effects. It can increase the likelihood of self-harm, and suicidal thoughts and behaviour, particularly for young people. Today, in the 21st century, the impact of bullying—that is, the impact of this abuse—is no longer limited to a certain day or a certain time when you personally interact with that bully. As a result of social media surrounding us, in every facet of our lives, bullying has now also reared its vicious head in the virtual world—with the result that there is no escape. A child can leave the playground, but the bully will follow them home; not physically, but on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, or simply through text messages. I am sure members are well aware of the term 'keyboard warriors': in the case of cyberbullying, this could not be more accurate. It never ceases to amaze me that a person can be so cruel and so tormenting when they are hidden by a cloud of anonymity. It is time that that cloud was lifted, and that children in particular are once again able to feel safe—and that children know that it is okay to tell someone that they are being bullied.

In January 2012, while in opposition, the coalition established an online safety working group to consult with the community and industry stakeholders about cyberbullying, and about what we as a government might be able to do to raise awareness of the impact of cyberbullying on children, and to reduce its prevalence. In 2013, we took our policy to enhance online safety for children to the election. In 2014, we released a discussion paper to gain final feedback from industry groups, including some of Australia's most predominant social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. As a result of these consultation periods, both in opposition and in government, the coalition developed the Enhancing Online Safety For Children Bill 2014, which is before the House today.

This bill is vital in our 21st-century world, where social media surrounds us, and it is something that I wholeheartedly endorse. I say that it is vital because research has already suggested that cyberbullying is occurring most frequently to children between the ages of 10 and 14, who make up 50.6 per cent of cases; closely followed by 15- to 18-year-olds, with 44.2 per cent. These are alarming statistics which cannot be permitted to continue. This government and the Australian community need to work together now to safeguard our children in this cyber-environment, in the same way in which we are working to safeguard our children on our streets and in our homes. The reality of today's world is that social media is expanding every minute of every day. It may be hard to believe now, but it was only 17 years ago that Google was founded; 11 years for Facebook, and nine years for Twitter—so in less than two decades these forms of networking sites have managed to become instrumental in our daily lives. In many cases, they have become something that we rely on for research or to interact, on both personal and professional levels. Nor do we have to be strapped to a computer to access them; all we have to do is to pull our phones out of our pockets—as the member for Macquarie did just before—our phones are now stuck to us like glue. Yes, there are those who would say, 'then do not have social media', but to that response I would highlight two things. First, some say that social media is the world's future. Trying to hide from it will only hinder our children's ability not only to adequately utilise this tool but also to safeguard themselves from its adverse impacts. And second, just because you or your child does not have social media, that does not automatically mean you or your child will not be the subject of cyberbullying, because it is all around us. There is no single or simple answer to reducing the prevalence of cyberbullying in Australia.

This government's response and the communities will each need to be multifaceted, with the legislation before the House the first of many bills that will need to be introduced in this place over the coming years to respond to the issues that are presented to it and obviously with the development of social media and other areas of communication. I highlight that this bill is not a means to attack social media sites or to accuse them of not safeguarding their users. Many large social media sites have worked hard to improve their complaints handling arrangements to remove cyberbullying material. The bill before the House does not seek to disregard this but instead, as its title suggests, to enhance it. This is because to appropriately respond to cyberbullying an effective complaints system must be in place. Prior to the e-safety commissioner becoming involved, a complainant must therefore have reported the material to the social media site under its established processes prior to making a complaint to the commissioner. It is only if the social media service does not adequately respond to the complaint that the commissioner would then get involved.

Under this bill a children's e-safety commissioner will therefore be established to respond to complaints of cyberbullying material which is targeted at children. The commissioner will be established as an independent statutory office within the Australian Communication and Media Authority, or the ACMA, and will utilise a two-tiered system to administer or respond to complaints. The first tier is for those social networking sites which have agreed to work with the government on a cooperative basis to remove cyberbullying material of this nature. Under this tier the commissioner will be able to request that the social media site removes the material, but it would not

be a legal requirement. Comparatively, tier 2 social media services will be subject to legally binding notices, which if not complied with could result in civil penalties for noncompliance. Under the bill's provisions, a social media service can request to be classed as a tier 2 service, and registers of both tiers will be maintained by the commissioner. If a tier 1 repeatedly fails to remove material upon the commissioner's request over a 12-month period, it can also be declared a tier 2 service by that commissioner.

Another key provision to help ensure social media services take this government's commitment to removing cyberbullying material seriously is the establishment of end-user notices. This may require a person to take all reasonable steps to remove the material, refrain from posting further material or apologise to the child for posting the material. If this person fails to meet the obligations of the issued notice, the commissioner would then be able to go to the Federal Circuit Court to seek an injunction. At any time, the commissioner may also notify federal, state or territory police if he or she believes a case of cyberbullying breaches criminal law.

Although these are important powers to protect our children in the cyber environment, I also believe they strike an important balance between implementing necessary regulation and not being heavy-handed in our approach. This balance will in particular be achieved in the commissioner's application of the cyberbullying definition in this legislation, which, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications highlighted in his speech, 'must be likely to have the effect of seriously threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating a particular Australian child' I believe that this definition adequately embraces the legislation's intent and will help to ensure that complaints of cyberbullying are appropriately and efficiently addressed. Like child abuse of any form, mental illness or diseases such as dementia, bullying has for too long been swept under the rug, despite its often being the catalyst for future depression as an adult, or even suicide. As I have said, the ability for people to bully anonymously in the virtual world only makes it much more dangerous and presents many more challenges. These are challenges that I am pleased to say this government is working hard to meet head-on, and we will continue to consult with industry groups to ensure we are doing everything we can to prevent and raise awareness of bullying in the future. Raising awareness of these issues cannot be left to any individual or even to this government. It is up to every parent to discuss social media with their child and the dangers it presents. It is up to our schools to engage openly with students and be on the lookout for instances of bullying. And it is up to this government to facilitate this work on a national level.

The Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill before the House is a very important step in the right direction, and I thank all those opposite who have also stood in this place today and in the last sitting to join with this government in supporting these measures. I would like to make particular mention of the member for Forrest, who has run anti-cyberbullying campaigns for many years now in her electorate and across Australia and has set the standard for local and community forums to advise parents on how to deal with cyberbullying, particularly when it comes to their children, and how to put measures in place to prevent cyberbullying. So, along with the other members—I heard the member for Grey speak, and he spoke about some of his experiences, but also the member for Macquarie and the other members—I rise and join with them in commending this bill to the House.

**Mr CRAIG KELLY** (Hughes) (18:12): It is often said that the internet has changed everything. If we look at today's mobile phones and social media, I think the number of improvements they have made to our lives is almost immeasurable. I think of my mobile phone sitting here at my desk—about what I could use that to do today that I could not do when I was going to school. It is not only a telephone; it is a device to send and receive emails and to send and receive text messages. It is as good-quality a camera as one I think I could ever have bought when I was younger. It is also a voice recorder. It records and plays movies. I can use it to research the news around the world. I can look up information, look up a textbook. It also gives me the power to take and send photographs. I think back to several generations ago, and my parents or grandparents did not actually know what their forefathers looked like. They never had an image of them unless they were someone who was famous—royalty or a famous explorer—and had a portrait painted. Today's generation will always have hundreds if not thousands or tens of thousands of photos of themselves that they can pass down through the generations. These are some of the many wonderful things that the internet, our modern communications and our social media have bought: the ability to contact friends and family around the world at a low cost.

But there is a dark side of this new technology, and the dark side is through cyberbullying. I am sure that many of us here, as members of parliament—especially when we have stood on a particular issue that is politically divisive—have received messages, including text messages or email correspondence, that have been most hostile and aggressive, something that we would never have imagined several years ago. It appears that, when you are online, the fact that you can be slightly anonymous allows you to pick up the aggression and hostility in your communications and express that through. Often I have found that, with people who have sent me, I would say, very nasty and abusive text messages, when I actually get to meet them face to face I think, 'How did such a person write something that was so hostile?' It is obviously that ability to be anonymous online that has somehow

encouraged and created this current environment, where people make much more aggressive and hostile abuse of other people. That is why such legislation as we are bringing here today, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and the Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014, is important.

While legislation like this is important to get the legislative steps in place to deal with this new phenomenon, we need to also encourage our children to be resilient and explain to them that they will almost undoubtedly through their lives be on the receiving end of some type of hostile message through Facebook or Twitter. The message we should be telling kids is a version of a line that my parents told me. We should be telling them that, although sticks and stones may break your bones, Facebook or tweets will never hurt you. That is the resilient message we need to get through to our kids, as well as this legislation. It is important because in today's society, with today's communications, it is a completely different world with the world of cyberbullying.

What the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 does is to establish the Children's e-Safety Commissioner as an independent statutory office within the Australian Communications and Media Authority. The commission will take a national leadership role on online safety for children. A key function of the commissioner is to administer a complaints system for cyberbullying material targeting an Australian child. The commission will have two sets of powers it can use in responding to a complaint, under a two-tiered scheme. There will be the power to issue a notice to a large social media service requiring it to remove the material. If the social media service has volunteered to participate in tier 1, the notice will not be legally binding. However, a repeated failure by the large social media provider to respond to such a notice exposes it to the risk of being moved to a tier 2 complaint. If a large social media service is in tier 2, it is legally required to respond to the notice. Secondly, the commissioner has the power to issue a notice to the person who posted the material requiring the person to remove the material, refrain from posting material or apologise for posting the material.

Other functions of the commissioner will include promoting online safety for children; coordinating relevant activities of the Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies; supporting, conducting, accrediting and evaluating educational and community awareness programs; making grants; and advising the minister. The commissioner will also have the function of administering the Online Content Scheme set out in schedules 5 to 7 of the Broadcasting Services Act, which was previously administered by ACMA and is being transferred to the commissioner without amendment.

While we commend the bill to the House, I would also like to raise the issue of child safety in another particular area, and that is the issue of child marriage. It is estimated that there are about 250 young Australian girls that are engaged in a forced marriage under the age of 16. We saw one example of that in previous weeks reported in our courts. A 27-year-old man used his telecommunication device, his telephone, to bombard a 12-year-old girl with hundreds of text messages. He ultimately married that young 12-year-old girl. The young 12-year-old girl became pregnant and miscarried. This is a most horrific and shocking case that is happening in the cities of Australia today. So we in this parliament, when we are talking about online safety and protecting our children, need to make very clear and concise and completely unambiguous comments that such conduct against children is completely unacceptable in Australia today.

With that, I will leave my comments there. I commend the bill to the House. All members of parliament from both sides must work to ensure our children can grow up in a safe, protective environment.

**Mr TONY SMITH** (Casey) (18:20): I rise to contribute relatively briefly to this important debate. It is a debate I have listened to throughout the day and in earlier days when it began. This is an issue that all of us as members of parliament have grappled with at a constituent level. We all know the internet offers wonderful opportunities and freedom, but of course it also enables those who wish to bully to do so in a way not possible before the technology that we now have arose. In the past, of course, bullying, bad and destructive as it was, was not as all-consuming as it is in our new modern communications environment. Specifically when it comes to online bullying, the subject of the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014, it has become unrelenting for so many young Australians.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications, who introduced this bill, has worked long and hard over many years to come up with this package of measures.

It is a package of measures that will make a difference, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications, who joins us now as we sum up this debate, would be the first to stress this will not and cannot solve the problem but can make a difference and make a difference in a very targeted way. Before his appointment as the parliamentary secretary he spent a lot of time in the last parliament travelling the breadth and depth of the country as he developed these very initiatives. Previous speakers have gone over them in detail: the establishment of a children's e-safety commissioner, a two-tier scheme for rapid removal of cyberbullying material from large

social media services and an end-user notice regime under which the commissioner will have the power to issue notices to any person who has posted cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child.

Indeed, the parliamentary secretary came to the Yarra Valley, to the electorate of Casey. He spoke at a couple of forums at secondary schools, as did the Minister for Communications around that time. He is very familiar with the horrific and harrowing stories that have affected so many families, where cyberbullying has in many cases robbed young Australians of their mental health and in the most tragic cases of all robbed families of the lives of their children. In my electorate I have heard those horrific stories from a few families—some public, others not as public. Whilst all of us would like to be able to push a button and prevent any of this ever happening again, we know these measures will make a difference. That is what they will do.

The creation of the commissioner with the powers of take-down, with the resources for materials in schools and with the power to issue notices to end users will not just make a practical difference in those cases; I believe what is at the core of this is to turn the tide culturally in something that really has been very difficult to grapple with. The parliamentary secretary has made the point repeatedly that in so many areas the growth of the internet and the advent of social media sites has run thousands of times faster than our regulatory regimes, and in some cases they are very difficult to respond to. That is certainly the case here. But I think the measures that have been put forward will make a difference. I think that, if they can have a multiplier effect and make a difference culturally and in an education sense, we will have really started a wider educative process on these important measures.

I know the parliamentary secretary himself is familiar with some of the worse stories that have occurred and he has taken a personal private interest in some of those, including one family in my electorate. Just the other week I was speaking to another family that had suffered a tragedy that involved cyberbullying that ultimately led to the suicide of their son as well. So I think this is a good step forward—the best first step forward possible—and it is the product of a lot of consultation from when the parliamentary secretary was in opposition and in government. I know it has involved consultation not just with important stakeholders such as the National Children's and Youth Law Centre, the Australian Medical Association, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and many others and also with the opposition in this parliament.

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (18:28): I am very pleased to speak and to express my thanks to the members who have contributed to the debate on the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014 and the Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014. I am particularly pleased that these bills have received support from the opposition and from members from the opposition who have spoken as well as the members on this side of the House.

The importance of keeping Australian children safe on the internet is above politics. It can sometimes be the case that members in this House are subject to criticism in the community—often justified criticism—about playing politics on a range of issues, but I think the debate that we have had on this very important topic is an example of this House working at its best to reflect and to respond to community concern and to do that in a constructive and bipartisan spirit reflecting the importance that every member of this House attaches to the objective of keeping Australian children as safe as possible when they are using the internet.

I want to thank the shadow assistant minister for communications, the member for Greenway, who has taken the lead on this issue on behalf of the opposition. I want to put on record my appreciation of the constructive way in which she has engaged in relation to the detail of this bill, as indeed has the shadow minister for communications, the member for Blaxland.

In the debate on this bill, we have heard some outstanding contributions from members on both sides of the House. We have heard a number of members share stories about their own personal experience in relation to this very important topic. Some have spoken in their capacity as parents. Some have spoken in their capacity as former teachers. Some have spoken in their capacity as members of parliament, having dealt with these issues facing children and parents in their electorates. Many of them have spoken about the discussions that they have had with principals, with teachers and with parents and children in their electorates. I think the breadth of commentary that we have heard is an indicator of the extent of this issue in the Australian community today. I want to thank every member who has made a contribution in a debate which I think has been of a very high standard.

At this time, I also want to express my thanks to a number of people around Australia: parents, siblings or family members of teenagers who tragically have committed suicide or otherwise been lost as a result of dangers that they have been exposed to online. I am not going to mention names, because in some cases I have been told some intensely personal stories. But I do want to acknowledge the courage of a number of people who have taken the time to speak to me about the loss that their family has suffered and to share with me some very difficult stories of the bullying that their lost family member was exposed to.

It is a statement of the obvious that today's children are better informed, better able to express their creativity and better with technology than any previous generation. The internet is a central part of the lives of today's children, and it will be a central part of their lives as adults as well. Children are drawn to the internet for the same reason as adults: it is a means to be informed, to be educated, to be entertained, to express your own ideas and creativity and, most fundamentally, to satisfy the deep-seated human need to interact with other human beings. But, just as with human interactions in any other context, while the majority of interactions online are positive, a minority go wrong. When that happens, the internet, and social media in particular, can make bullying behaviour more dangerous to children who are the victims of it.

On 3 December, the government introduced these bills into the parliament to implement the coalition's election commitment to enhance online safety for children. The bills were developed following substantial public and stakeholder consultation, including consideration of over 80 submissions received in response to the public discussion paper released in January 2014. Research commissioned by the government, led by the University of New South Wales and involving a consortium of universities was undertaken, and the results of that research confirmed the messages that politicians had been receiving from the community regarding the prevalence and impact on Australian children of cyberbullying.

Following that public consultation process, the government has continued to engage with key stakeholders including members of the government's Online Safety Consultative Working Group. I want to thank all of those members—industry representatives, community representatives, representatives of many excellent non-government organisations doing wonderful work in this space—for their contribution.

The bills that are before the House this evening were referred to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report, and that report is due by 3 March. There were 29 submissions received by that committee. I would also like to express my thanks to all the organisations that contributed to that inquiry. I do note that a number of submissions made the point that, in their view, the eligibility criteria for the appointment of the commissioner should include experience in or knowledge of child welfare or wellbeing. I want to state that I understand the emphasis that stakeholders have attached to this particular criterion. I also want to note that there is an inherent danger in setting out in the legislation an exhaustive list of criteria together with a requirement that every one of those criteria must be met, because it would necessarily become extremely difficult to find somebody who meets every criterion on a long list.

There are clearly a range of factors that would be positive for a person in the commissioner's role. In the draft bill are the criteria which, in the government's view, are the critical success factors, particularly that the commissioner needs to be a person with a deep understanding of the internet and how it is used. That being said, I want to acknowledge that to have experience in relation to child welfare matters would certainly be a plus for any candidate for the role of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner, although in my view it should not be a mandatory criterion.

The public policy process undertaken to date demonstrates in part that the government does not believe that keeping children safe online is exclusively or even largely a job for government. There is a collective responsibility to keep our children safe online. In that regard, I would like to acknowledge the constructive engagement I have had with the local management teams of a number of the large social media services, including Google, Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and Yahoo!7. I also want to note the recent statements made by the global CEO of Twitter, Dick Costolo, who said in a company memo, in quite blunt language:

We suck at dealing with abuse and trolls on the platform and we've sucked at it for years ...

That is colourful language, but it is a very significant statement from Twitter, acknowledging that that company believes that it needs to do more to combat abuse, trolling and cyberbullying on its platform. I see this as a welcome example of growing recognition by social media platforms of the nature of the social responsibility that attaches to the power that these platforms have. I hope we will see more of that, not least because, if the social media platforms take the lead in offering their users a safe environment in which to interact, that will minimise any need for government intervention. I do want to acknowledge that the social media services have put additional resources into these issues over recent years. A number of the members in the debate did refer to this significant statement from Twitter.

A number of members also referred to some very significant child online safety initiatives launched recently—for example, the eSmart Digital Licence, which is a partnership between the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and Google. The licence is designed to educate and empower children. Another recent initiative is the Thread app from the Carly Ryan Foundation, helping children and young adults to check in with their loved ones, to stay connected and keep safe. I have been very pleased in recent weeks to attend the launch of both these important online safety initiatives. Of course, as part of this government's commitment to online safety for children, we are

providing funding of \$7.5 million for schools to access online safety programs of the kind delivered by organisations like the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and the Carly Ryan Foundation.

Let me touch on the specific measures in the bills. The legislation will establish the Children's e-Safety Commissioner as an independent statutory office within the Australian Communications and Media Authority, to take a national leadership role in online safety for children. The commissioner will administer a complaints system for cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child, along with promoting online safety for children and coordinating relevant activities of Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies in relation to online safety for children. The commissioner will also accredit and evaluate online safety educational programs, along with taking responsibility for administering the existing online content scheme.

The legislation sets out a two-tiered scheme for the rapid removal from large social media services of cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child. Social media services participating under tier 1 will do so on a cooperative basis—that is, the service will apply to participate and, on acceptance of its application, it will be included as a tier 1 site. The commissioner will have the power to revoke tier 1 status if the service repeatedly fails to remove cyberbullying material following requests from the commissioner over a 12-month period. A service may also be declared tier 2 at its own request. Those services which are declared to be tier 2 sites will be subject to legally binding notices or face the risk of civil penalties for noncompliance.

The two-tiered scheme allows for a light-touch regulatory approach in circumstances where the social media service has an effective complaints scheme that is working well, but it enables the government to require that cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child be removed in circumstances where a social media service does not have an effective and well-resourced complaints scheme.

The legislation gives the commissioner the power to issue an end user notice to a person who posts cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child. An end user notice may require the recipient of the notice to take all reasonable steps to remove the material, refrain from posting further material targeted at the child or apologise for posting the material. If the recipient of the notice fails to respond, the commissioner may seek an injunction or refer the matter to the police.

The measures in these bills implement key aspects of the government's election commitment to enhance online safety for Australian children. The measures will bring a better and more rapid response to bullying behaviours targeted at Australian children and in turn will help to keep Australian children safer online. I thank everybody who has contributed to this policy process, and I look forward to continued engagement with all relevant stakeholders as we move to taking this legislation to the other place and in due course, provided it passes there, to the implementation of the measures contained in this legislation.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

### **Third Reading**

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (18:42): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

## **Enhancing Online Safety for Children (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014**

### **Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### **Third Reading**

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (18:43): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**BUSINESS****Rearrangement**

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (18:44): I move:

I move that order of the day No. 6, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

**DOCUMENTS****Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House take note of the document.

**Mr NEUMANN** (Blair) (18:45): I acknowledge the Ngunawal and Ngambri people, the traditional custodians of this land on which we are meeting and pay my respect to their elders past and present. I rise today to speak on the *Closing the Gap: the Prime Minister's Report 2015*, the seventh annual report. It is a sombre read. As I stand here today there remains an uncomfortable and unacceptable truth in this country of two Australians—one, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person; the other a non-Indigenous person. One is more likely to die at a younger age. One is more likely to suffer trachoma, a Third World disease all but eradicated in developed countries—except Australia. One is up to 15 times more likely to be imprisoned and 31 times more likely to experience family violence. One will find it twice as hard to get a job.

Seven years ago, Australian governments of all levels and political persuasions created the Closing the Gap framework, acknowledging that the perpetuation of Indigenous disadvantage was unacceptable. It remains so today. This year's Closing the Gap report is a serious wake-up call for all of us who share responsibility to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to end intergenerational disadvantage. We are on track to meet just two of the seven Closing the Gap targets. Though there has been some modest improvement in life expectancy, our efforts must be strengthened and accelerated if we are to Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation.

The disparity in educational outcomes remains, with no overall improvement in Indigenous reading and numeracy since 2008. We did not meet our early education target, with an alarming backward slide in early education enrolment. Sadly, the gap in employment rates has widened. In challenging times, it is easy to question whether we can really make a difference. The answer is a resounding yes. There are wins and it is important to acknowledge them. The report shows that we are on track to halve the gap in infant mortality rates, following sustained investment in maternal and child health over the life of the Closing the Gap framework. There are more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing year 12 or equivalent and we are on track to halve this gap by 2020. It is through the commitment and dedication of individuals, organisations and governments working together that we are beginning to see improvement.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the thousands of front-line services, their hard-working staff and supporters for their tireless efforts in Closing the Gap: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services; Family Violence Prevention Legal Services; children and family centres; community controlled health services; and drug and alcohol services.

Even now as we stand in this place, thousands of critical Indigenous front-line services continue an agonising wait to see whether they will be funded into the future. Now is not the time to scale back our commitment. The *Closing the Gap* report presents a startling reality and the warning signs are clear. If the government continues its funding cuts and the upheaval and uncertainty, we will not Close the Gap at any level beyond this year. The government must not continue down this path.

This is not the first report to express concern about our progress in Closing the Gap. The *Social Justice and Native Title Report 2014* from Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda characterised this past year as one of deep funding cuts, uncertainty and upheaval in Indigenous affairs. The findings of his report were significant and serious. The massive budget cuts and radical reshaping of existing programs, determined without meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, have resulted in corresponding loss of services to the community, despite the promises of the Minister for Indigenous Affairs that cuts would not affect front-line services. The time for fine words from the Prime Minister and the minister has passed.

If we are serious about Closing the Gap, we must look to our actions. The Prime Minister's *Closing the Gap* report clearly shows that we cannot afford the Abbott government's massive cuts to Indigenous affairs. You cannot rip more than half a billion dollars from Indigenous programs without dramatically reducing the capacity of front-line services. You cannot rip \$165 million from Indigenous health programs and expect to close the life

expectancy gap within a generation. You cannot create funding uncertainty for more than 5,000 organisations and expect that they will have the capacity to continue to maximise their efforts to Close the Gap. I could go on and I will.

There has been \$13.4 million ripped from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services; \$9.6 million cut from Indigenous language programs; the prisoner Throughcare and antirecivism programs have been cut entirely; \$15 million cut from the only national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples; the Indigenous and Remote Eye Health Service is gone; and the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee axed without warning. The impact of these cuts is devastating. The casualties are our most vulnerable people.

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services are at the coalface of family violence. Its centres provide culturally safe, holistic services for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children escaping domestic violence. Anyone who knows Antoinette Braybrook would know her to be a passionate advocate for the protection of women and children and the prevention of family violence. Her commitment and tireless advocacy has seen the service grow over the past 12 years. Nationally, in 2013-14 the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services have helped 5,330 clients, more than 90 per cent of whom were women and children fleeing family violence. The service was cut by \$3.6 million initially, and last year was pulled within the scope of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, effectively defunding it to the tune of \$20 million. That means that more than 5,000 Indigenous women and children escaping family violence may have nowhere to go in the future, nowhere to get urgent legal assistance and nowhere to turn for early intervention. Staff relying on incomes to support their families have been forced to make incredibly tough decisions to leave in search of secure employment.

The chaos and uncertainty created by this government continues to take its toll. These are the human costs of their cuts. I stand here today as I did last year I stand here today, as I did last year—and as I will again next year—to call on the government to honour its commitment to develop a justice target in closing the gap. We cannot stand by as our First Peoples continue to be among the most imprisoned in the world. The incarceration epidemic will undercut our efforts to close the gap in education, employment and health. It will not be addressed, as the government would have us believe, simply by working towards the other Close the Gap targets. The evidence says otherwise.

While we have made modest improvements over the years in closing the gap in health, education and employment, incarceration rates have continued to increase. We had two landmark reports last year. The Productivity Commission's *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage* report found a 57 per cent increase in Indigenous incarceration rates between 2000 and 2013. Mick Gooda in his *Social justice and native title report* said:

It is shameful that we do better at keeping Aboriginal people in prison than in school or university.

The fact remains that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adult is 15 times more likely to be imprisoned than a non-Indigenous person. These statistics should horrify everyone in this House.

After 12 months of misleading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about his commitment to a justice target—and certainly in opposition said so—the minister, Senator Nigel Scullion, simply walked away from it late last year from this bipartisan commitment to develop a justice target in closing the gap.

I say to the Abbott government: if you are serious about closing the gap, walk back. Walk back. Let us sit at the table together both sides of politics, state governments, stakeholders, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and work together to close the gap in incarceration and victimisation rates.

There is a real disconnect between what the Abbott government says and what it does. This was picked up on in the recommendations of the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee's *Progress and priorities report 2015*, which found that the government's shambolic Indigenous Advancement Strategy was not adequately connected to the Close the Gap framework. Instead, the government seems to have substituted its own priorities without regard to the holistic nature of the Close the Gap framework.

The inconsistencies do not stop there. The report points to the massive cuts to the tackling smoking and healthy lifestyles program. The government cannot credibly claim to be committed to closing the gap in life expectancy while gutting funding for a program reducing Indigenous smoking rates.

I do commend the government for its commitment to implement the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan developed by Labor in office by the member for Lingiari when he was the Indigenous health minister. I urge the government to look beyond short-term budget fixes and understand that these cuts will be felt for many years to come. You cannot cut your way to closing the gap.

**Mr TUDGE** (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (18:55): I rise to speak on the *Closing the gap: Prime Minister's report 2015*. This is an important report. It was instituted by the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd back in 2008. I thought it was a very good idea to institute such a report where the Prime Minister of the day each year early on in the term of parliaments will table a report which goes through some of the key metrics to determine how well we are going overall in Closing the Gap.

There are six key metrics and a further one which we added last year, so seven in total. Perhaps similar to previous reports, this is in some respects a disappointing report. I think as a nation we would have liked to have progressed more rapidly than what we have done as indicated by the statistics enclosed within this document. But it is not all doom and gloom. There is some significant improvement in a number of areas. For example, the year 12 attainment rate has gone up quite rapidly over the last decade; and the proportion of 20- to 24-year-olds with year 12 or equivalent was 45.4 per cent in 2008 and is now 58.5 per cent in 2013, so quite a stark increase in a small amount of time.

The proportion of people with a university degree has also considerably increased in recent times; the child mortality gap target is very much on track; and even the life expectancy gap has made little progress in recent years but, overall, that gap is now only 10 years, when it was considerably larger some years ago.

So there are many positive signs in this report, and we should not lose track of it but, overall, the message from it is that there is still a very long way to go towards ensuring that there are equal opportunities and outcomes for and from Aboriginal people in this nation. I think together as a parliament across this chamber there is a very strong commitment to ensuring that we do whatever we can to ensure the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

When the Abbott government came to office, the Prime Minister made Indigenous advancement one of his core handfuls of priorities for his government. As a result of that, a number of steps have already been taken to fulfil that pledge. The first was a series of governance changes. Initially, it started with putting all of the government's Indigenous specific programs into the Prime Minister's department, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. What that did was ensure that those programs achieved greater status and could have greater coordination across the myriad programs which did exist.

The second part of that governance reform was—and this is ongoing at present—the merging of 150 federal Indigenous specific programs into five. Again, we do this so that we can more sharply focus on some core priorities and ensure that there is a greater streamlining of effort and greater coordination across the governments, and decisions will be made in relation to the funding applications against those new programs in the weeks ahead.

A final part of the governance changes has been to devolve power down to executive level officials in the regional areas. That allows those officials to act as problem solvers rather than just as contract managers and means they are able to work more effectively with local Indigenous leaders on the ground. It empowers them to work cooperatively with the government in a shared effort to advance local Aboriginal people. So that was the first series of reforms—important governance changes that we have instituted.

The second important reform was in some respects a philosophical change. By that I mean that the Prime Minister has articulated three very sharp priorities for this government in this area. They are: ensuring that kids are at school, that adults are at work and that communities are safe. Why were these three priorities chosen? In large part, it was because they have underpinned functional societies in almost all of human history. That is, kids learning from adults, adults working for their sustenance and law and order being the bedrock of a community. Without those core things occurring it is so much more difficult to ensure the advancement of other areas. That is why we are determined to focus on those three areas. We believe that if we do focus on those three areas and are successful in them then other things will be able to be achieved much more readily.

Then, finally, in our first 16 months we have already instituted some very practical changes. In school attendance we have identified the first 34 schools that will achieve the direct instruction model of education, which is much more explicit teaching in those schools. And we have 24 Indigenous-specific training centres up and running, which provide 5,000 Indigenous people with guaranteed jobs should they walk into those training centres. That is such a starkly different model to what often occurs—training for training's sake, which does not necessarily lead to a job at the other end.

We are rolling out full-time work for the dole in regional and remote areas across Australia and we will make many other decisions in relation to the Forrest report in the weeks and months ahead. We are taking every single one of those recommendations very seriously, including looking at the cashless welfare card idea. We are currently in discussions with banks and communities in relation to that.

So there are very significant changes which have already been made in the first 16 months of this government: governance changes, changes around priorities and some very practical changes to support those priorities. We

hope that when these are fully implemented that we will see much greater success against those Closing the Gap indicators.

Just in the few minutes which I have remaining I would like to express my disappointment with the response from the Labor Party to this *Closing the gap* report. In some respects I am most disappointed, because I believe some of their critiques and analysis of the problems are dishonest. And if there is a dishonest analysis of the problems then it is so much more difficult to get a sensible solution to those problems.

The first piece of dishonesty which I think that the Labor Party has put forward is the suggestion that any savings that we have made in this portfolio are somehow contributing to the poor results in this report. I would just like to make a few points about that.

The first is that in relation to this report, nearly every indicator actually relies on 2013 numbers—not 2015 or even 2014 figures. So, in some respects, this is a report of the years leading up to 2013 rather than a report on this government's time in the last 16 months. The Prime Minister did not point that out; he did not think it was appropriate. We are disappointed as a nation for not progressing more rapidly.

The second point I would make is that if money were the answer to closing the gap then we would have closed it years ago. That is the sad truth. There has been an 80 per cent real increase in funding to Indigenous-specific programs over the last decade. We now spend something like \$44,000 per Indigenous person, according to the Productivity Commission—about \$30 billion in total spent on Torres Strait and Aboriginal people. Our savings represent about 0.2 per cent of that \$30 billion.

No-one likes having to make savings—no-one does—across any aspect of the portfolio. But to suggest that a 0.2 per cent reduction out of the \$30 billion spend on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people somehow contributes to the failure to close the gap more rapidly I think is actually just dishonest and I think it is just disappointing.

The shadow minister was asked in an interview—in a debate that I was in with him—that if there were one single thing that could be done to ensure that the closing of the gap occurred more rapidly, what would he do? His response was, 'I would reverse the savings decisions which the Abbott government has made.' I just do not think that is honest—an honest analysis of the problem. We are investing in Indigenous affairs, and our sharp priorities of getting kids into school and adults into work are what will see progress being made. (*Time expired*)

**Mr SNOWDON** (Lingiari) (19:05): I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate, as I have done on a number of occasions over the past years.

Can I say that I, too, am disappointed—disappointed at the contribution from the parliamentary secretary; particularly at his reference to the shadow minister actually representing a dishonest argument. It is very clear that the argument being put by the shadow minister is that you cannot cut your way to closing the gap. What is very clear as a result of decisions taken in the budget last year is that we have had \$543 million taken from vital culturally-specific programs, leaving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians worse off not better off. That is the antithesis of what we have been striving for!

You cannot have it both ways. You cannot on the one hand, as the shadow minister said, come in here and say that the Prime Minister wants to be the Prime Minister for Indigenous Australians and then on the other hand take deliberate actions which undermine your capacity to close the gap—which is what they have done. They might ask: give us a real example of what we have done? Well, there was \$165 million cut from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs. Think about it: they have cut \$165 million from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs.

Now, I agree that this report that we are discussing tonight is not a report of the last 12 months. But, if we are to achieve the objectives that we are aiming for under the Closing the Gap targets, you cannot—over this past 12 months—cut funding to programs which are essential to improving health outcomes. It just beggars belief that you cannot see the contradiction. And the parliamentary secretary gets up here and spouts, as he did—very ineffectually I might say—that somehow the arguments being put forward by the opposition shadow spokesman were somehow not accurate!

**Mr Husic:** He didn't say 'inaccurate'; he said 'dishonest'!

**Mr SNOWDON:** He said 'dishonest'. He ought to come and apologise for that, because they are not dishonest; they are entirely accurate.

Tobacco smoking, for example, is estimated to be the leading cause of the burden of disease amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; it is responsible for about 12 per cent of that burden of disease. Yet this \$165 million is a direct cut to antismoking programs. Let me tell you just a little bit of data: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are more than three times likely to have diabetes than other Australians; they are

twice as likely to have signs of chronic kidney disease; they are more than four times as likely to be in advanced stages of chronic kidney disease; and they are at experiencing increasingly high levels of chronic conditions at a comparatively young age. If you want to stop this, you have to do a range of things. One of those things is to get people to stop smoking.

Currently the smoking rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the nation is 47 per cent; compared to the general population which is about 14 to 15 per cent. If we can cut down smoking rates, you can have a direct material impact on closing the gap. Yet this government forecast—when they were in opposition—by the then shadow Treasurer saying he did not think these programs were any good. We have learnt what has happened as a result: these programs have been cut. Frankly, you cannot have it both ways, and it is really dishonest of the parliamentary secretary to come into this chamber and abuse the integrity of the shadow minister at the same time that he gives this piffle of an argument, which is in fact empty.

We are making some progress. As has been pointed out, we will reach the target of halving the gap in infant mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under five, and that is a very important thing to do. It is being done as a result of investments made over a number of years by the participation of Aboriginal community controlled health services, through public health organisations and through private practitioners. It is being done in a coordinated way and it is only by addressing this particular need, by addressing programs that will deal with child and maternal health, that we will get the outcome we are after. We will only do that by continuing the investments that have been made.

As the shadow minister has said, we are very pleased that the government has adopted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health plan, and we are looking forward to its implementation strategy once it is developed.

But I have to say, standing here and listening to the shadow minister talk about the administrative changes which have been made, the governance changes, which are simply chaos—no-one knows what is happening across in PM&C, let alone the Prime Minister or the minister responsible.

We know that the Indigenous Advancement Strategy is an absolute mess. Decisions were supposed to have been taken late last year; they have been put off we are told now until the end of March. That means organisations, as the shadow minister pointed out, have been wondering whether or not they will be funded beyond the end of this financial year. They have no certainty; they cannot tell their staff whether or not they will have a job. Yet somehow or another this is a good thing, because the parliamentary secretary gets up here and tells us that his governance arrangements are making a difference. But they are not making a difference. They are creating chaos and uncertainty. And we know, as do they, that the whole thing is a mess. Five thousand applications have been received under the IAS. Critical services, including women's shelters in remote communities, did not receive their funding previously. And it is clear it is not proposed to fund them under this strategy.

We need to be very clear. We want to work with the government in a bipartisan way to improve these outcomes. But we cannot be bipartisan in approaching the budget in the way this government approaches the budget. We cannot accept that we must be bipartisan when we see administrative decisions taken which are inimical to getting the outcomes we all want. We cannot be bipartisan in supporting the government in that regard, just as we cannot be bipartisan in supporting the government for doing what it is doing.

It is scandalous really. The previous government funded the establishment of 38 children and family centres across the country out of the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development. This government has refused to provide them with ongoing funding and said that it is all a state responsibility. We know what happens in those cases. In my electorate, Yuendumu, Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Ngukurr and Palmerston have all been affected by this government's decisions, and that will adversely affect the outcomes for young kids. On the one hand, you are talking about getting more kids to go to school, making sure they all have a job and making sure communities are safe, but at the very same time you are not providing certainty for funding for organisations across 38 communities, having a material impact on the outcomes you want to achieve. It beggars belief.

I know that not all members of the government support the positions which have been adopted. I do know there are people of good will across the parliament who want to see an improvement in these outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. But I think it is worth noting that the Closing the Gap Steering Committee report makes a series of recommendations; one of which is particularly important. The government, just prior to Christmas, scrapped the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee. For what particular purpose, it is very hard to understand. But this particular committee provided a process for getting coherency and opportunity for communication around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drug and alcohol issues. It meant that experts, administrators, doctors, nurses and health workers—everyone involved—could come together and discuss what

were the best options for improving outcomes. That is gone. It no longer exists. And it says to me that the government is not really serious.

I commend to the parliament the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee report. It is entitled *Progress and Priorities Report 2015*. I commend the report to all members of parliament to read because it does make, I think, some good arguments as to what we should be doing and makes some, I think, very well founded positions on what we should be doing.

For my own part, there is one area that I want to make sure we continue to invest in, and I hope the government will continue to do so—that is, invest healthily in the Aboriginal community controlled health service organisations around this country, who have been fundamental in us achieving the gains thus far and will be fundamental to making sure we achieve the gains we all want to achieve in the end.

**Ms PRICE (Durack) (19:15):** I am pleased also to offer my contribution following the release of the latest Closing the Gap report. There are 274 remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia with the majority of them located in my electorate of Durack. They are located in the Kimberley, the Gascoigne, the Pilbara, the mid-west and also the northern wheat belt. But as we have heard, the gap remains very wide. Durack has the second largest number of Indigenous people living in any electorate.

In discussing the Closing the Gap report, you are left with this sinking feeling that serious restructuring of the way that we do things is required to address the difference between the living standards of Aboriginal people and the rest of the Australian community. The reorganisation does need to be transformational and this government has made a good start on the right path. We need to focus on education and schooling, jobs and meaningful work, training opportunities leading to a job—not training just for training's sake—safety and security in the community and in the home, and, of course, health and wellbeing.

Only with positive, reliable and sustainable practices in these four areas will outcomes be realised, will the breach lessen and will the gap narrow. This is an easy thing to say but so difficult to do, as previous well-meaning governments have experienced. Let us take some time to look at the progress against the seven targets as outlined in the recently released Closing the Gap report: closing the gap in life expectancy within a generation, not on track—limited progress and much more to do; halving the gap within a decade in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five, on track for the longer term—some good news there; access for Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities to early childhood education, not met—however, noting the target is 95 per cent and all jurisdictions have committed to this; closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years—new targets have been set against the 2014 baseline to close school attendance gap by 2019; halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy for Indigenous children, not on track—alarmingly, no overall improvement since 2008 so most unsatisfactory; narrow the gap in year 12 or equivalent attainment, on track and the gap is narrowing—some positive news there; finally, halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, not on track—in fact, in decline since 2008, very disappointing.

We see some improvement but, overall, a pretty poor report card by any means. Frankly, if we cannot get kids to school, which this government is working hard to achieve, and improve numeracy and literacy then we should not be surprised that employment targets have not been met. But are the expectations of the system we have too low? What are the programs? Who is getting funded and are these programs effective? Where is the accountability? These are the questions we have to ask ourselves. This government is focused on answering these questions and on quality outcomes for Indigenous people but there is much more we need to do—that is obvious to all.

To paraphrase Warren Mundine, Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Council: it is not about money; it is the fact that the money is not going where it is needed—and I sadly see that in my electorate all the time

However, others add that the problem relates in many cases to culture. So many Aboriginal Australians are caught in a cross-cultural chasm, which complicates, confuses and compounds everyday life for them. Further, many are homeless, victims of family violence, suffering from alcohol or other substance abuse issues or are incarcerated. But pretty well most Aboriginal Australians, to some greater or lesser degree, find themselves wedged and then torn between conflicting ideologies—the ancient, nomadic Aboriginal culture where land and ancestry are the essence of life and living and the Western culture, like the institution of this very parliament where we gather today to make speeches, to make laws and the like. But it is not Aboriginal lore. It is not how a 60,000-year-old Aboriginal culture maintains its law and order. As law makers, we must ask ourselves: are we addressing culture adequately and genuinely in our efforts to close the gap?

It is my view that the practices and reforms that are intended to reduce the gap must be brutally culturally appropriate and led by those who have the ear of Aboriginal Australians. I am talking about leadership. I am talking about opinion leaders. And I would offer to this important conversation that we need and want more

Aboriginal people to take on this leadership role. Perhaps, for too long, we have had politicians and administrators—mainly non-Indigenous—being the ones to present so-called solutions to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians.

There are many brilliant Indigenous leaders in Durack. I would like to take a moment to mention one young leader in Durack by the name of Torekana Bole-Turner, of South Hedland, which is a mining town in the Pilbara. Torekana is a finalist in the 2015 National Youth Awards in the Youth Leadership category. Torekana has been nominated for challenging racism and disadvantage in his home town by facilitating an outreach program known as 'The Hood Academy'. Torekana has shone through with his passion and dedication, showing that age is no barrier to getting involved, to showing the way, to being a leader. Torekana is a credit to our community and an outstanding youth ambassador across regional Western Australia. We need more people like Torekana to step up and to work in partnership with communities, the non-government sector and government. The federal government has commenced a program of real reform, significantly changing policies and programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As we have heard, the new Indigenous Advancement Strategy has three priorities: get the kids to school, get the adults to work and make communities safer. There is no argument there that they should be our three priorities. I stand behind the genuine efforts across all levels and all persuasions of government to close the gap. I share in the frustrations of those Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who have tried so hard to make a difference. The recent release of the seventh *Closing the gap* report has heightened the disparity in health, education, employment and safety between Aboriginal Australians and the rest of the community. Despite the best efforts of previous governments, there is still so much more to be done to improve quality of life for all. We all need to work together to close the gap.

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Throsby) (19:23): This House and this parliament is built on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. They so generously welcome us to country at the commencement of each parliament and on a daily basis when parliament is sitting. We start the day by acknowledging their continuous connection to land, their culture and their contribution to this region. I respect your elders, past and present, and extend that statement of respect to the elders of the region which I represent: the Dharawal and Gundangara people of the Illawarra and the Southern Highlands.

Before the time that Aboriginal people were displaced from their land and separated from their families, their stories, their traditions and their languages, Aboriginal Australians were our nation's first doctors, law makers, teachers and conservationists. Today, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience significant disadvantages in their daily lives, with poorer access to education, health, housing and employment—the cumulative result of generations of dispossession, injustice and denial. It falls to us to make right this historical wrong. The time for justice is now. The problem is urgent.

In 2008, the then Prime Minister Rudd outlined a new future for Australia, one where:

... we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

Prime Minister Abbott has now tabled the *Closing the gap* report for 2014, on the anniversary of Prime Minister Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generation. Regrettably, as numerous members of this place have observed, the progress we are making in closing the gap is stalling. We are on track and making progress on the target to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under the age of five. That is something that all members of this place must rejoice in. Progress was made to halve the gap for Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 24 in year 12 attainment. Again, that is something that we must take some pleasure in. But, worryingly, we are not on track with these other targets to close the gap in life expectancy; reading, writing and numeracy; employment outcomes; and early education access for under-4-year-olds.

Doing nothing is not an option and doing less would be a breach of faith. Here is why: the life expectancy gap is 10.5 years for males and 9.5 years for females; between 2006 and 2010, the age-standardised death rate for Indigenous people was 1.9 times the rate for non-Indigenous people; in 2003 to 2005, maternal mortality rates were 2.7 times higher for Indigenous women than for non-Indigenous women and Indigenous people were 3.4 times more likely to report having some form of diabetes than non-Indigenous people; over that same period, Indigenous people died from diabetes at almost seven times the rate of non-Indigenous people; and between 2006 and 2010, after age adjustment, the notification rate of end-stage renal disease was 7.2 times higher for Indigenous people than for non-Indigenous people. I could go on for all of the remaining time allotted and give example after example in the area of health and in the area of education where we are failing to address these gaps and where our failure to do that marks us down. That is something that we should all be ashamed of.

I have heard previous speakers talk about the terrible blight that smoking is having upon men and women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. In 2009, almost 50 per cent of Indigenous mothers reported smoking during pregnancy. This level is 3.8 times greater than that of their non-Indigenous counterparts. The figure is actually higher if you separate the Northern Territory for every other region in the country. I see the member for Chifley here. It is worth noting that it is not a universal statistic. There have been measures that have been put in place and programmes that have been put in place, including in the area that the member for Chifley represents, where maternal smoking rates have actually been reduced to that of the non-Indigenous population.

The case is not hopeless. We know that, with the right programmes and the right effort and giving control to the communities to take these issues up through local initiatives, we can do something to address these issues. If we were going to put in place one thing over the course of this year that would make a long-term difference for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, it would be to tackle the gap in smoking rates and, in particular, the gap in maternal smoking rates amongst Aboriginal populations.

In responding to the Prime Minister's statement, the Leader of the Opposition has pledged to incorporate Justice Targets into our Closing the Gap objectives, and there is a compelling case for this. Incarceration rates of Aboriginal Australians are damningly disproportionate: 25 out of 100 of Australian prison inmates are Aboriginal Australians. However, only three out of every 100 Australians is Aboriginal. Acting Deputy Speaker, that figure alone should cause us all to pause and ask what is going on here. One in four Australians behind bars is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person—that is completely disproportionate to the three per cent of Australians who come from Aboriginal backgrounds. As the Labor leader, Mr Shorten, said to this House: a target on justice is a missing plank in this picture. The situation has been getting progressively worse over the years. As a nation, we cannot simply attribute these rates of incarceration solely to the consequences of individual choices. To be sure, we cannot discount the importance of individual choices and decisions in these high incarceration rates. But to ignore the other factors—factors such as poor health, poor education, poor housing and unemployment, and a lack of hope in many of these communities—is to forget about the majority of the picture. These are all the social factors that lead to substance abuse and other criminal activity—the factors that are leading to this disproportionate number of people behind bars.

If we look at some of the reports—particularly out of the west and out of the Northern Territory—which look at the number of people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds who are in jail, or who are on remand for what most of us would say are trivial offences—the non-payment of parking fines, for example, and other trivial offences—we have to ask ourselves: 'Is this the best use of our corrective services dollars? Is this the best way to treat this issue?' Surely we can do better. We also know that the justice system does not usually address the causes of a crime, but it shows the symptoms of these deeper, more troubling, social issues. We are all challenged to address this together—to walk together. Labor proposes formal, measurable targets related to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

On Friday I was in the New South Wales parliament to listen to evidence being given to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. I was very moved by the evidence of many of the witnesses, and the next day I went out to Emerton in the member for Chifley's electorate—and I am certain that he will make some observations about the evidence that we heard at that hearing in his electorate. But, in Macquarie Street in Sydney, I was very moved by the evidence of the Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, Ms Kirstie Parker, who had this to say:

The increasing numbers of rates of incarceration for our people, particularly young people and women, is of huge concern within our communities. We do believe strongly that this is an area that the Commonwealth must show some leadership on.

Ms Parker went on to say that:

... there must be a concerted, collective effort to reduce incarceration rates. There must also be attention focused on reducing the number of our children in out-of-home care. These are things that are currently not covered by the Closing the Gap targets. We are on the record as pushing for justice targets, in particular.

*(Time expired)*

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (19:33): Yesterday in Wagga Wagga I attended the 23rd annual combined Rotary Clubs of Wagga Wagga Peace Day. Wagga Wagga was the first of Rotary Peace City in the world, and that concept has spread throughout the Wagga Wagga region, throughout the state of New South Wales, throughout Australia and, indeed, internationally. Cities are lining up now to become Rotary Peace Cities. At that marvellous function, the school captains of many, if not all, of the high schools of Wagga Wagga spoke of the ways which they have identified to promote peace and harmony within the community. Many of those school captains talked about the progress that their schools have made in reaching out to Aboriginal Australians, and about the programs whereby they have put in place peaceful ways to

help Aboriginal communities within the Riverina electorate and within the City of Wagga Wagga, which is part of the Wiradjuri nation.

The welcome to country at this Peace Day ceremony in the Victory Memorial Gardens was given by Aunty Isabel Reid, a former Citizen of the Year of Wagga Wagga; a fine upstanding citizen; and an elder of the very best qualities and attributes. Aunty Isabel Reid gave a speech at the recent National Sorry Day ceremony and, in this Closing the Gap debate, I thought it would be appropriate to read Aunty Isabel's speech into the *Hansard*. She said:

It has now been 7 years since Kevin Rudd made the historical apology speech which brings us all here together today.

I stand up here every year as I have done in years before the apology. I am one of the many children who didn't have a choice where they wanted to be, who were given a path to walk which we weren't prepared for. A path which took us from our homes, our family, our kin—a culture which had been all that we had known.

I've shared my personal story time and time again as have my other brothers and sisters. I don't do this to revisit the hurt or to blame governments past and present. I do this because sharing knowledge and having understanding breaks down barriers and the more that people are aware the more we reach common ground.

The apology laid the groundwork; we cannot rest on the speech alone for the words must be living and breathing. Make the effort on significant days such as today. I said this last year: "By being involved we deepen our knowledge and understanding, by being involved we share our unity and being in unity we have strength."

The journey for us going forward is about not forgetting the past. We cannot do that. We can close our eyes but the memory of past atrocities is engraved in our history: deep within our history. I will not focus on the negative—yes, I was taken, however I am not a victim I am a survivor and a leader for justice who was once a little girl without a home who became the Elder I am today.

... ..

Fine words from a fine person—Aunty Isabel Reid of Wagga Wagga, a Wiradjuri elder. We could do well in this parliament to occasionally reflect on those words of Aunty Isabel and other Aboriginal elders, who no doubt also made fine speeches on Sorry Day, and who continue to make fine contributions when they do welcomes to country to welcome people onto their lands or to events.

While reflecting on the *Closing the gap* report of 2015, as the member for Throsby just indicated, we note there is much work to be done and many more important initiatives to be gained. There is much more than we can do as parliamentarians, as a parliament, as a government and as an opposition to help bridge that gap. But the report had some positives. The life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in 2005-07 was 67.5 years; in 2010-12 it was 69.1 years. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in 2005-07 it was 73.1 years, and 73.7 years in 2010-12. They are not big gains but they are, nonetheless, important gains. This report notes that:

The Campaign Steering Committee welcomes the absolute gains in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy from 2005-2007 to 2010-2012.

These are on the ground improvements to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and should not be underestimated. Another year a father can spend with his son, or a grandmother with her grandchildren, or that a trusted elder can spend guiding the life of their community, is to be treasured. Certainly, that is very much the case.

When you look at the report, lifetime risky drinking and binge drinking is down in Aboriginal communities. On the child mortality rate, the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council reports that Australian governments are on track to meet COAG's target to halve the gap in child death rates—that is, the mortality rates of children under five—by 2018. However, the death rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is still more than double the rate for non-Indigenous children. It is still unacceptable. We know that; we appreciate that. But we are working hard at lowering those dreadful rates of infant death.

I know how hard the Prime Minister works. He goes into a remote Aboriginal community every year and spends a week there—he governs the nation from a remote Aboriginal community. I know what the efforts are of the Indigenous affairs minister, Senator Nigel Scullion. He has come into my community to talk to the Wiradjuri people on a number of occasions—to communities such as Brungle, Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Coleambally and Tumbarumba—and to tell them of the expectations of the government and the expectations of the parliament. I know he is pleased at the fact that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are graduating from university and that more Indigenous people are attaining year 12 levels at school. That is great. We obviously need to improve upon it—it is not the same rate as for non-Indigenous Australians—but we are making progress. As Senator Scullion says:

A good school education gives children the best start in life. Children need to be at school every day – no excuses.

He said that in an opinion piece on 11 February.

In his speech to the Senate on the *Closing the gap* report, Senator Scullion talked about the more than 410 school attendance officers and more than 100 school attendance supervisors now operating in the 69 priority Remote School Attendance Strategy, or RSAS, communities and 73 schools. In term three of 2014, there was a 13 per cent rise in the number of children attending school across 29 Northern Territory government RSAS schools and an eight per cent rise in the number of children attending the 11 Queensland government RSAS schools, compared with term three of 2013. They are small but not insignificant achievements, and the government is working hard.

I know there is bipartisan support to do all we can to close the gap. I see member for Chifley nodding; he knows how important it is. He has a number of Aboriginal people in his electorate and I know how hard he works to help those Aboriginal people in his electorate. I know how hard you work, too, Deputy Speaker Jones, in your electorate of Herbert, to do what you can to help Aboriginal people: to lower incarceration rates and to lower obesity rates, all those things which are affecting the life expectancy and opportunities other Australians take for granted.

As Senator Scullion said:

Guaranteed employment and job-specific training is the aim of vocational training and employment centres—VTECs—which build on the GenerationOne model. There are 28 VTECs around Australia and another VTEC in the pipeline.

So there is work and planning being done to help get better educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The government will also strengthen the Commonwealth's Indigenous procurement policy, using the Commonwealth's \$39 billion procurement budget, to encourage Indigenous businesses in employment. Giving someone a job means giving them opportunity—giving them an income and getting them off welfare. We know that is the case for all Australians, but particularly so when jobs are so much harder to get; and it is so much harder for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to actually start a business and make it work. We are doing what we can. There is much more work to be done. Let us hope that next year's *Closing the gap* report can indicate even further gains in this very important policy area.

**Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (19:43):** I am very heartened; I do not ordinarily like following the member for Riverina because it means I have to listen to his speech, but I will listen to those types of speeches every day. They demonstrate a genuine bipartisan commitment to this area—the recognition that we need to work together across the community to address some of the really difficult issues that are intractable and very hard to get movement on. But they have to be subject to an annual report, in the way that *Closing the Gap* speeches are delivered by prime ministers regardless of political complexion, because we cannot forget it. For too long these problems have been forgotten. They have been too easy to neglect, and they should not be. So we do need to be able to get focus on these issues.

We will have disagreements from time to time. We have, and we have expressed them. As much as this pains some of those opposite to hear, we understand the commitment that has been applied and expressed by those who stand on that side of the House and speak about this issue, but just understand that from our point of view, having known how difficult this is to deal with, we do have concerns when those budget cuts go on, because how do you actually make progress if those cuts are to eventuate? Those opposite will say, 'That's not actually running in the way you say.' That is an argument we will both prosecute across this table, and I appreciate that. But the main thing—the good thing—is not the argument itself but the fact that we are talking about it and the fact that we want to commit resources to it, work with communities on it and see something better than what generations have been stuck with for years before. This is something that we should find common ground to work on.

Chifley, the seat that the parliamentary secretary reflected on and that I am proud to represent, is home to 6,000 of our first people, Aboriginal people. In an urban environment, it is one of the largest populations. So I am enormously humbled that we are on Dharug land and I am enormously proud to represent the concerns of people from my area in this place. Certainly, when I travel through the electorate, we are trying to do our best to work more and more to recognise and to celebrate the various cultures, because it is not just the Dharug people; we are home to people who have come from all over New South Wales to make Western Sydney, and in particular Chifley, home.

I was particularly proud, as a member of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, that we had the report last year on Aboriginal language, because I think that is a bridge between generations and also a connection to culture. When you see how many Aboriginal languages are lost in this country, this is a central part of identity that is going before our eyes. Particularly for young Aboriginal people who do not have a connection to their culture principally through dialect, this is a big issue. So the fact that we could have more and more of our local sites named in the local Aboriginal dialect is important not just as a mark of recognition and respect but also for the survival of dialect and to be able to build stronger identity, the

lack of which, I would argue, is one of the big things that hold us back in making progress. So I certainly commend that work.

These were difficult. For a Prime Minister to deliver these figures is hard. I give particular credit for the fact that the Prime Minister is very committed in this area, and it would be hard to make these reports back, particularly in terms of the seven target areas of which only two are on track to be met—that is, halving the gap for 20-to-24-year-old Indigenous Australians in year 12 attainment and halving the gap in mortality rates in Indigenous children under five. We are on track to meet those, and that is excellent. But in closing the 10-year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2031 we are not on track. In halving the gap in unemployment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018, we are not on track. These are big issues, particularly in Chifley, where unemployment in the 15-to-64 age group is about 18 per cent, or three times the national average. It is simply unacceptable. We should not bear this in any way whatsoever. Halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy is also not on track to be met by the 2018 target, and these are big issues.

We certainly do need to be able to ensure that we are committed more and more to following this up. To be honest, I think that we should not just have a yearly report on this. Where we do have concerns and where we are falling behind, we should have quarterly updates, frankly, because you do wonder how progress is being made through the course of the year. In the period when we believe that we are not doing as well as we should, we should have quarterly reporting on this and then, when we get to a situation where we believe we are satisfied with progress, revert to annual. But, if we are serious about making headway on these things, we do need to commit more resources.

I was thinking of this the other day when my friend and colleague the member for Throsby referred to the visit by the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. It was a very difficult consultation, insofar as a range of different views were expressed, some very difficult. But there is this constant argument that we are confronted with when it comes to this area, and that is: what good is it to have recognition in the Constitution if we are having all these problems where people cannot get a job, they are not literate and they are incarcerated way more? Why don't we make progress on that? I understand that, but the recognition within the Constitution is important, because the first people of our nation are excluded from the principal document that founds this nation. I do not think this is an issue of debate between our two sides, but the issue, fundamentally, is: aren't we able to do both? Aren't we able to recognise within our Constitution the first peoples of this nation and improve the things that are holding them back from their progress? That is what Close the Gap does. This is a constant requirement for us as a parliament and as a nation to make headway on these things, and this is important for us to do, as is recognition. Again this is hotly debated, and I understand the reasons for that debate. But the head and the heart should be able to work together on these types of things, and we should be able to make progress. So I think it is important that we redouble our efforts in this area.

There is one other thing that was mentioned to me on the weekend that I want to end on if I may. While I was at these consultations at Emerton on Sunday—and I want to thank the Mount Druitt and District Reconciliation Group, who do a tremendous job, who hosted the event on Saturday and who have done a fantastic job of hosting since 1998 the reconciliation walk in Chifley; they are a tremendous bunch of people—I had an Aboriginal elder come up to me on the weekend. He was very concerned about what was happening to a centre called Muru Mittigar, which is outside the Chifley electorate. 'Muru Mittigar', in Dharug, means 'pathway to friends'. It is an Aboriginal cultural and education centre, and it is based in Castlereagh in the member for Lindsay's seat; I know that she is quite involved with it. What it does is to advance Aboriginal culture, improve the economic and social capacity of the Aboriginal people in our area and empower meaningful participation to enhance their role as traditional custodians. It is involved in training and employment for natural resources management and mine and broadacre rehabilitation. It also trains in retail and customer service, and it provides a cultural renewal opportunity as well as financial counselling. So it does some great things. The elder that approached me said, 'Have you heard what's happening to Muru Mittigar?' and I said no. He said to me, 'They're closing it,' which floored me. I did not know why we would have this closed. I did not know if it was a funding cut or what was going on.

It turns out that there is actually a lot of work being done in the Penrith Lakes Parklands to redevelop it and there is a draft vision plan in place. I certainly know and others certainly appreciate the issues confronting the Penrith Lakes development and that site. There are a lot of issues there that are not easy to deal with. But Muru Mittigar has been told they have until May and then need to relocate. You understand that these things happen in these processes, but they have been given no place to relocate. On the stream of things I have mentioned they are doing, they are providing important activities, some of which are at the heart of what we are discussing today. For them not to be told where they are going next puts enormous pressure on them, so I certainly call on the Baird government, in recognising—I will try to be as fair as I can—the challenge that they have in dealing with this

through the department of planning, to find a place for Muru Mittigar. They are going to be disrupted enough as it is through the move. They are doing fantastic work across Western Sydney and providing a very important platform for Aboriginal people across our area. I just hope we can find a place for them to move, to make it as smooth as possible and allow them to do their work, because there are people who are actually helping us in the case for closing the gap. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr COULTON** (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (19:53): I too rise this evening to speak on the *Closing the Gap* report delivered by the Prime Minister. I say at the outset that the Parkes electorate is one-third of New South Wales, and I am not sure if I am the second or the third highest Aboriginal population of any electorate in this place. But representing the Aboriginal people of western and northern New South Wales is a job that I take very seriously and a job of which I am enormously proud. I represent a large part of the Wiradjuri area, the Gomeri and other areas to the west. Those communities right across my electorate have large numbers of Aboriginal people in them.

I might start by talking about some of the issues that we are confronting, but I hope to finish on a more positive note. I might also note that last weekend was the 50-year anniversary of the Freedom Ride. We had a re-enactment of the Freedom Bus last weekend, and I was very proud to be in Moree. It came through my electorate at Dubbo, had a day at Walgett and then came back to Moree. Fifty years ago in Moree the Aboriginal children were prohibited from using the pool. The pool is something that defines Moree; it is an artesian wonder, and people come from all over the world to take the waters at Moree. The local children were prohibited.

At the 50th anniversary I was speaking to some of these no-longer-younger people—they are getting on a bit; it was 50 years ago! But they were saying what a big deal it was. Charlie Perkins came to town with 29 university students in a bus. They drove down to the mission and said, 'Do you kids want to come to the pool?' They said sure, and on the bus they were singing Little Pattie's song of the day, 'Stompin' at Maroubra', as they went up the Streets of Moree to go to the pool. It was a big confrontation. In hindsight these big changes that we see are obvious, but at the time it took enormous courage because it was going against the convention. I am very proud to say that Moree is a very different place now than it was, but it was only within our generation 50 years ago that we had this level of discrimination in the town.

I am pleased to say that now Moree would be one of the few places in Australia where its workforce in the council represents the community. Twenty-three per cent of the workforce in Moree are Aboriginal people. The Moree council has a director who is an Aboriginal man, who I believe is the first Aboriginal director of a local government body in Australia. They have taken a real lead. Last year I was also very proud to be part of the reconciliation action plan. There was a large function in the Moree town hall where the Aboriginal community and the non-Aboriginal community came together to work towards and recognise a reconciliation plan for Moree. One of the elders in Moree, a well-known gentleman by the name of Lyle Monroe, whom I was sitting with that night, said that he did not ever think he would see a night like that in Moree. So we have come a long way.

Also in this place I am a member of the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, and at the moment we are doing an inquiry into foetal alcohol syndrome. While that is not an exclusive condition for the Aboriginal communities, it is certainly prevalent in the Aboriginal communities. The fact is that a mother using alcohol at the time of conception can set the patterns and limitations on that child for the rest of their life. There is even evidence starting to show that possibly excessive use of alcohol by the father at conception can affect that foetus and the child and person it grows into. So alcohol has been a big issue for these communities—not exclusively, but it has afflicted them. Unfortunately, now we have moved to another stage. Even when we were in Cairns last week for the hearing of the committee, social workers from Cape York communities that have taken the decision to become dry communities are now battling with ice, as is every community in my electorate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Unfortunately for the Aboriginal people, these low forms of humanity that peddle in these drugs target disadvantaged communities.

If we as a society, as a community, do not tackle this issue head on, the consequences will be with us for a long, long time. When children at a young age get involved in taking these amphetamines, mainly sold as ice, more often than not they do not get a chance to grow up. If it does not lead to their early death, it certainly leads to a mental impairment that will affect them for the rest of their lives.

But I would like to finish up on some positive notes. Across my electorate in Moree, Brewarrina, Bourke, Coonamble and Dubbo, the Clontarf Foundation has been working for some time. Clontarf is doing a great job at keeping kids at school, encouraging them and mentoring them. It is one of the great pleasures of my job to be involved in Clontarf. Clontarf has been building relationships with the employers in town and corporate employers.

This time last year, two boys from Coonamble went to Sydney to undertake a 12-month traineeship with Leightons construction, one of the largest construction companies in Australia. On the weekend I got this text—wouldn't you know it; it has timed out, but bear with me. It is from one of those boys from Coonamble, and it goes like this: 'Me and Cody have a full-time job now with Leighton after our trainee finishes in April, and we're going to get a big pay rise. From Steve and Cody and the Coonamble boys.' When I was at Coonamble at Christmas time, I was talking to a young lad of about 13 or 14, in year 8. I said, 'Mate, have you worked out what you might do when you leave school?' He said: 'Too right. I'm going to go to Sydney and work for Leightons.'

It was not a concept. These two boys, until they were involved in the Clontarf Foundation, would not have had an opportunity like that. It just would not have been thought possible. I am personally so proud of them, and I know their community is and their family is, and that is happening all over. In Moree, we have young lads who have traineeships with GrainCorp and so on.

We have more to do with the girls because, more often than not, when the girls become women, they are the powerhouses that run the communities. They are the strong ones. Quite frankly, if we are going to close the gap in these communities, we need to do more to empower the younger women. I have done some work with people like Kristy Knight in Dubbo, who has a group called Shine Sistaz, who are helping these kids. Some of these girls have already been in trouble with the law. We are looking at doing a range of things for these girls. The Moree Boomerangs football club, after successfully coming back from 12 years of being banned, now are looking at programs for younger children, boys and girls, in sporting and mentoring to keep them going.

While we talk about closing the gap in this place and we talk about the Aboriginal people as a whole, I am personally convinced that we need to be out there and we need to be helping people one person at a time, one community at a time. Until we personally take ownership and put our heart and soul into helping our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, we are never going to close that gap. But I take great heart, as I go around and speak to the communities, whether it be in Bourke or Brewarrina, Condobolin, Lake Cargelligo, Moree, Dubbo or anywhere else, at the great work that these communities are doing to help themselves. What we need to do is to be giving that help and encouragement, keeping the children encouraged to stay at school and go into employment so that they can be the role models of the future and breaking this vicious cycle that has been afflicting these people for so long.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall):** I want to thank the member for Parkes and, if I may be permitted to say so in relation to his comments on Clontarf, I concur with him.

**Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (20:04):** I also congratulate the member for Parkes on his speech. We are on the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs together, and I know he is passionate about making change not only in his community but across Australia.

I begin this speech by acknowledging the traditional owners and thanking them for their continuing stewardship both here in Canberra and throughout Australia. A little bit of history before I go into the speech proper: I began by acknowledging the traditional owners, and I think that recognises those 50,000 years or more of history where Australia has had an Indigenous community and a non-European community, or a community from around the world. We can move forward to those interactions with the Indonesian traders, the Muslim traders, the Macassans in the north, the Chinese, the Dutch, the English et cetera—all those interactions on many levels with the Indigenous Australians—through to 26 January 1788, where that law of terra nullius came into play, where Australia was claimed for the Crown, the Crown that we serve under here today.

Obviously that concept saw a change from colonies to Federation in 1901, where the Constitution was written up—not with a significant recognition of Indigenous Australians. That pervasive legal fabrication of terra nullius existed. We go down the hill a bit to the opening of Old Parliament House, where Indigenous Australians, local communities, traditional owners, were there at the ceremony but not invited into the opening. There were many other changes, but we go through to 1967, when the Australian community turned around, as acknowledged by Prime Minister Abbott today in his words before the start of question time, recognising that Australia had changed. Still, sadly, nine per cent of Australians said that the Indigenous Australians should not be recognised in that referendum, but nevertheless we can focus on the positive that 91 per cent of Australians, in the biggest tick of approval ever for our 40-plus referenda, said that Aborigines should be welcomed as a part of Australia.

Then we go through to that High Court decision on, I think, 2 June 1992, where the High Court recognised that terra nullius was legally a furphy, effectively, through some meandering legal logic. Then later, in the Wik decision, we saw that Australia had always had an Indigenous presence and that traditional ownership sat alongside that terra nullius concept and the idea of the Crown taking control of Australia. Not every politician or every government stepped up when accepting this new legal reality. Not everyone did. Even though Indigenous Australians had always said it, not every government embraced that. Labor and Liberal had problems with these

changes. I was still a schoolteacher rather than a lawyer back in 1992-93, and I remember the hysteria in the classrooms, on the airwaves and in the newspapers over what this meant. But, as it turned out, it meant that we recognised the truth rather than having a nation based on some falsehoods.

I remember my very first day in this parliament after being elected in November 2007. We started out under the Australian flag, in that space between the Senate chamber, the House of Representatives chamber, the ministerial wing and the public area—the space where those four areas intersect. Under the flagpole, the traditional owners gave us a welcome to country and welcomed the Australian parliament for the first time ever. Then there was that historic first event, the apology. I know some people chose to walk out of the apology rather than hear that bipartisan approach from Prime Minister Rudd and Leader of the Opposition Brendan Nelson. But I think history has shown that that was a significant first day. In fact, I was just up in Townsville with the member for Parkes and saw, written and recognised on the boardwalk, that date in February 2008. A few days after that, I made my first speech in parliament, and I went through the number of Indigenous Australians from my home town who had died. Since I made that speech in 2008, more friends, more people that I went to school with, have passed away—more people from St George whose lives have been lost way too quickly.

Sadly, the latest Closing the Gap data reflects that, despite the best endeavours of both the Rudd-Gillard government and the Abbott government to do what they can to close this gap—and I recognise on both sides of the chamber the genuine commitment to do that. But I would say again that you cannot make significant cuts to the Indigenous community, especially in things like legal aid, in the area that I have shadow responsibility for. When you make cuts to legal aid, you put lives at risk. The reality is, if people do not have representation or support in the legal system, they will end up either back out doing the wrong thing or they will not be represented and they will end up in jail. There are all those diversionary programs that I could go into in detail, but I will not—but I will make that general comment. Despite the spirit of bipartisanship, there cannot be such significant cuts to the Indigenous community in health, education and, especially, legal aid without there being consequences.

Anyone that works as a lawyer in Aboriginal legal services or in services that deal primarily with Indigenous women knows that Indigenous people suffer incredible rates of violence, incredible rates of incarceration. Indigenous children are incarcerated at rates nearly 50 times higher than non-Indigenous Australians. Even before those \$530 million worth of cuts, the system was not perfect and had a long way to go and needed more support. Obviously the common-sense principle is that you must let local communities make decisions about themselves if you want them to be empowered. We are a long way from Cape York. We are a long way from north-western Western Australia. We are even a long way from the streets of Redfern. When it comes to Canberra making decisions that best serve the interests of local communities, we must have their input, must have their involvement, otherwise we will not have a decision that empowers people.

Sadly, I have heard too many Closing the Gap statements. As I said, they have all flowed from that first apology from Prime Minister Rudd, something that history will be incredibly kind to him about, because it was a significant day, even though there was a little bit of flak about how it would be perceived by the Australian people. I think all Australians now see that history will not judge kindly those who were on the wrong side of that debate. I know that much more needs to be done. Even with a tightened budget, with revenue difficulties, with headwinds coming the way of our economy, I would hope that the Prime Minister, with his responsibility of looking after Indigenous Australians, is able to make sure that they receive the best support possible, that they are empowered locally. If you are going to go into a tent in an Indigenous community symbolically once a year, that is a good thing, if the deeds match up with what the symbolism is supposed to represent. The symbolism of going into a tent in an Indigenous community just becomes hollow and abhorrent if you do not back it up with real dollars, real support, real engagement with Indigenous communities. I say that especially representing an urban electorate. As people have already mentioned, 50 per cent of Australia's Indigenous community now lives in an urban environment, not in a tent in a remote community. So more needs to be done. The empty words from this year's Closing the Gap statement need to be changed into direct action next year.

**Mr JOHN COBB** (Calare) (20:14): I think we all know that the importance of Closing the Gap cannot be underestimated. It also cannot be underestimated that it is not easy to do. Without doubt, if it was easy then the worst government Australia has ever had would have solved the issues a long time ago. What we all have to realise is that absolutely every member of this House, no matter what they stand for, would agree it is something that should be done in a very bipartisan way. We should all have that common goal whether we are in Western Australia, Tasmania or here, almost in New South Wales. Obviously, at some stage, our goal, our hope, our aim and our success must be that Indigenous Australians, like all Australians, must be able to reach their full potential.

We have always had the same issues and over recent years we have called it Closing the Gap. That is fine, but we also have to lift the game. The one thing nobody would ever want to do is leave here without being able to say that they did what they could to close the gap and to create the same opportunities for everyone in Australia,

Aboriginal or otherwise. I have always been willing to stand up and fight for the Indigenous Australians in my electorate, whether it was Parkes, where I was originally, or Calare, where I am now. Parkes had a higher Aboriginal population than Calare. We are all together in that.

There is no point in beating around the bush on these issues. The latest Indigenous disadvantage report, like the six before it, does show alarming statistics—some improvements in some places but not in others. It is very common to talk about school attendance rates and, yes, they are bad. I too will talk about them. Getting kids to school, wherever they are, is incredibly important. Without it, you are closed. I think society has changed to the point where it is very hard for Aboriginal people and kids in particular to get some placements. We demand so much from education before anyone is even allowed to have a go at most of the jobs that exist.

Getting kids to school gives them the one thing they have to have in life—that is, the knowledge and how to go about things. They do not just learn maths and English—and I always say that maths is the No. 1 subject; they learn interaction skills, lifelong skills and social skills. We undoubtedly ask more of schools than we should and we probably ask more of them in remote areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander period predominate. Children in this day and age need to be at school mostly five days a week, without excuses. The onus is obviously on parents, carers and the authorities to make sure children go to school, and the onus is very much on us—state and federal politicians—to make that possible.

Education does go a long way too in keeping people out of jail, which is an enormous issue. The number of people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage in jail is far too high. The number of Australians in jail is far too high, but the number of Indigenous Australia in jail it is totally disproportionate. If you think to yourself what does education have to do with jail, you find it does not have very much; the lack of it has a lot to do with the reasons that people are in jail.

Education is not just about going to school, going to college or going to university. Education is about learning generally. Life skills are probably one of the most important issues we are talking about here. If your parents, your community and your local state and federal governments do not combine on that, it does not work. It is education about drugs and alcohol, and that is not to say that people with a good education do not fall by the wayside too. But with education, you do not have much of an excuse. Without education, maybe you think you do have an excuse. It is important that we do whatever we have to to get better outcomes for Indigenous Australians in their education.

Having said that, we talk about programs and we talk about a lot of things, but there is no program as important as a job. There is no program or family that will teach us more about life skills and how to combine with a community than when one of the principals in a family has a permanent job. It is so upon us to deal with that issue, but it is very hard in remote communities. But we do make it hard too. I remember years ago being north of Broome in the north-west of Western Australian—in your state, Deputy Speaker Randall—at a community on the coast where they were doing a very good job of building their own homes. I remember the elder of that community saying to me: 'Minister, you white guys make it very hard for us. I worked for 20 years in the mines as an operator. What I did you won't let us do now. I learnt to work as an offsider for an operator until I learnt how to do it. Today, you won't let us do that unless we can fill in a heap of forms.' I guess there is a good reason for that. It is OH&S, and we have got to make sure they can do all these things but we have made it harder for those people in remote—and mining is such a great opportunity in those more remote areas, particularly in your state, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker Randall, but in a lot of Australia. We have made it harder for them to learn how to operate a machine, because we demand the education that we are struggling to make sure they have. I think we sometimes have to think how to see around corners and how we help them to do that.

There are success stories, and we have them in my electorate—and I am sure we have them all through yours, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker. We have them all around Australia. We should not be totally negative about it. The Aboriginal Learning Centre of TAFE New south Wales in Orange is doing a very good job of getting young Indigenous people to get into trades and vocational learning which will give them skills that they need.

I believe we must make a much bigger effort on the education side so that we have got Indigenous nurses, teachers and police. It is much easier for them to listen to people they feel more comfortable with. I think this is a huge issue. Nurses, teachers and police—we need to make a huge effort in education to get those three professions, in particular.

We are not speaking for long tonight. All I can say is: it should be bipartisan. I think anyone has the right to ask a question of our government at question time on anything they like. But I think when we have bipartisan speeches, it should be that. Thank you very much.

**Mr GILES** (Scullin) (20:24): I start my contribution by acknowledging the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, the traditional owners of this land, and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

I rise to make a brief contribution to the *Closing the gap: Prime Minister's report 2015*. In starting my contribution, I will reflect very briefly on the closing remarks of the previous speaker where he talked about bipartisanship. We are here to debate some bipartisan goals, but those goals and the fact that they are shared across this parliament should not obscure the real issues that we must consider that go to how we achieve these goals, and the role of government, whether it is a matter of leadership or investment. These are some matters that I will touch on in my contribution to this debate.

On that note, I was pleased and proud to be in the chamber for the full duration of the Leader of Opposition's contribution to this debate in which he starkly illustrated the challenges for all of us set out in this report. It was a compelling speech, and I hope that I and others in this chamber, on the government side as well as this side, will respond to the challenge it sets for all of us to make real the aspirations that we all sincerely share to close the gap.

This year's report tells us many things that are troubling and concerning. It finds that we are not on track in so many respects to closing the gap on a series of targets, including the gap in life expectancy within a generation; the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous students; and the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It is plain that we have not done enough to meet the standards we have set and which we simply must meet to do justice to the Australia we wish to see.

I also note, in particular, that the target of ensuring access for all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities to early childhood education by 2013 has still not been met. This is despite last year's Closing the Gap report showing good progress towards this target. Instead, this year's report shows that we have slipped backwards with only 85 per cent of Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early education.

This takes me to an issue that is very important to the Scullin electorate and one that I am passionate about. Last year when I spoke on the Closing the Gap report for 2014, I spent a large part of my contribution speaking about Bubup Wilam for Early Learning: Aboriginal Children and Family Centre.

This centre is one of 34 centres around Australia established and funded under national partnerships initiated by the former Labor government. Labor established these centres, because we recognise the importance of early learning for all children, but particularly for children in Indigenous communities both remotely and in metropolitan areas.

Bubup Wilam remains an important and integral part of the Scullin electorate. I am continually inspired by the work of Lisa Thorpe, the CEO; her dedicated staff; the board; and all the community members and family who are associated with it.

Last year when I spoke, its funding was under threat from this government; now that funding has been cut and the centre is currently running down its savings. It is in every sense an unsustainable position for the centre and the 70 families it services.

I have made frequent representations to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs in this place and his former Victorian coalition counterparts. Neither were keen to offer anything by the way of support, much less solution. In contrast, I note the visits to the centre by the Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten, Senator Peris and the member for Blair, the shadow minister, which have done much to provide a firsthand demonstration of the valuable contribution this centre makes to the community, and I hope the future Prime Minister and Minister for Indigenous Affairs, respectively.

I have also been pleased with the response from the new Labor government in Victoria, particularly from Minister Mikakos. I know that she will do everything she can to ensure the ongoing viability of Bubup Wilam. But it is unlikely the Victorian government can do this on its own. Bubup Wilam has always been a shared responsibility between all levels of government.

In government, Labor listened to the experts, recognised the problem and, with facilities like Bubup Wilam, acted to address them. The Abbott government has acted but, unfortunately, in exactly the wrong way. The link to quality early childhood education and better outcomes later on in life, particularly for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, is beyond dispute. I note that these outcomes are also targets mentioned in the Closing the Gap reports.

The Leader of the Opposition was right in telling truths uncomfortable for this government—uncomfortable perhaps for many of us—that, if we are serious about closing the gap, we cannot ignore the cause and effect of cutting funding to places like Bubup Wilam and the disadvantage it will engender and perpetuate.

It is all too easy for the Prime Minister to talk the talk about being the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs, but it is another thing entirely to walk the walk. Australia simply cannot cut its way to closing the gap. More investment is required if we are to make good on the promises we have made in this place, and so I call on this government to reverse its cuts to Bubup Wilam and the other children and family centres.

**Mrs WICKS** (Robertson) (20:29): The Prime Minister's delivery of the *Closing the gap* report is a very important moment in our parliamentary year and it is certainly a time when we can reflect on the Indigenous communities in our electorate—on some of the challenges but also on many of the opportunities where we can actually work together to see many of these challenges addressed.

I commend the Prime Minister for this motion and I also thank the many members who have shared their stories in this place tonight about their own experiences of working with Indigenous people in their electorates to help build a better future. It is heartening to see such bipartisan support, particularly in this area. It is an area that I am very passionate about and it is an area that I feel quite committed to in my local area on the Central Coast.

Last week I was honoured to have the opportunity to meet with many Indigenous leaders in my community. I was joined by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for the occasion. We spoke with many Indigenous leaders in my electorate about some of the challenges and also some of the opportunities that have been identified in the *Closing the gap* report. I would like to commend the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council CEO, Sean Gordon. May I also commend the Indigenous Advisory Council chair, Warren Mundine, who joined us with many other leaders to spend some time helping us understand what their perspectives are on some of the important challenges for them.

We were really pleased to see that the official school attendance rates were so high—basically at the non-Indigenous rate. However, many leaders recognise that there is still a lot of work to do on employment, particularly in my electorate on the Central Coast. I was pleased that the parliamentary secretary indicated a willingness for us to work alongside our local leaders to be able to assist them in this effort.

We have a strong organisation on the Central Coast called Barang. Barang is a partnership agreement between six Aboriginal community service organisations: Bara Barang, Bungree, Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council, The Glen, Mingaletta and NAISDA, our Aboriginal dance academy on the Central Coast. It was an absolute honour to spend time with all of these organisations because, while they identified so many of the challenges that they have experienced, they also identified many of the ways that they were supporting our young people on the Central Coast with employment and education opportunities. I believe that by working together we can achieve real and lasting results to help close the gap on disadvantage, so that all Australians have the same opportunities.

It was fantastic to have the parliamentary secretary in my electorate last week, because events such as this demonstrate that our government is here to listen—to listen to what the community has to say and to listen to where we can work better and more cooperatively together on some of these core goals. They are: getting kids to school, adults to work and helping to make the community safe. A meeting such as the one that we held last week was another step forward for Indigenous organisations, such as the NAISDA Dance College, which was actually originally funded under the former Howard government. Indigenous leaders on the Central Coast expressed to me last week the fact that they love living on the Central Coast and their desire to help us work together to establish a long-term vision of cementing what we can do together for the Central Coast.

Another pleasing facet of this visit was the opportunity to open one of the buildings at Kariong, which the parliamentary secretary attended with me. We were joined by a community of around 70 Indigenous leaders and young people from the electorate, all of whom expressed a desire to be able to work together to help us to get to these very important goals of getting more kids to school, adults to work and making our community safe.

I commend this motion to the House.

**Mr THISTLETHWAITE** (Kingsford Smith) (20:35): I consider myself to be extremely fortunate to represent an electorate with a very long and rich Aboriginal history and heritage. I have said it in this place before, that I am particularly proud of my family's heritage in connection with the community in which I live. But my family's connection with our community, although deep, is not a patch—it does not go near—on the connection of local Aboriginal families whose relatives' and ancestors' connection with our community dates back 7,000 years: countless generations of people who have developed, nurtured and passed on customs, language, laws and heritage that, importantly, still exist today and which make up the great fabric of the wonderful community in which I live. Their influence on the electorate of Kingsford Smith and, indeed, on our nation is everywhere.

The Aboriginal people have contributed so much to the development of Australia—to the way in which we live on this land, to the way in which we farm the land and to the way in which we fish in coastal communities. They have such a rich and wonderful heritage, a heritage which we all should be very proud of—the oldest continuous culture in the world. If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have contributed so much to our nation, then why on earth is it that we have failed them so dismally? Why do we continue to fail them in the manner that we do?

Why is there still a gaping chasm in the difference between living standards of Australians of Indigenous heritage and those who are not of Indigenous heritage? Why are Aboriginal men incarcerated in such numbers in jails

throughout the country? Why is it that a child born to an Aboriginal woman is half as likely to live as a child born to a non-Indigenous woman? We owe much to the original inhabitants of our great country, but tragically in our efforts to close the gap, to raise the health and life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to that of the non-Indigenous population, we continue to fail them.

Released on Wednesday, 11 February, the Close the Gap report showed efforts to raise the living standards and health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have come up short, with the nation off track to meet half the committed targets. Indigenous Australians can expect to live 10 to 17 years less than other Australians. Babies born to Aboriginal mothers die at more than twice the rate of other Australian babies, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience higher rates of preventable illness, such as heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes.

There has been little ground made in halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children. And equality in employment is still a long way off. A high rate of domestic violence continues to plague Indigenous communities. An Aboriginal woman is 30 times more likely to know the pain and fear of family violence, and 15 times more likely to be driven from her home as a result. These figures paint a disturbing picture and send a clear message that more must be done to help Indigenous communities. The starting point needs to be the restoration of the \$500 million in Indigenous funding and support for Aboriginal Australians that was cut by the Abbott government in their most recent budget.

In mid-August last year I was fortunate to visit the remote Northern Territory community of Ntaria, where, as a guest of the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy, I volunteered at the local primary school. It was my job to not only help promote and encourage healthy living, education and employment for the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but also to experience firsthand the challenge of improving educational standards in remote Aboriginal communities.

Over the course of the week that I spent in Ntaria, I was fortunate to meet some very special people, and some very frustrated people. Many of the teachers told me of the difficulties they faced in educating students who would make progress with reading or maths in one week, only to then disappear for a week before returning once again behind the eight ball. That perfectly highlights the challenge of Indigenous education in remote communities. How do we provide these kids with a decent education that offers them all the opportunities other Australian kids are afforded through their education? And how do we allow them to maintain that very important connection with their land, their heritage and their culture? That is the challenge of Aboriginal education in remote communities.

There is little doubt that a truly needs-based funding model would go a long way to improving the educational outcomes for these kids in remote communities and many more throughout Australia. The teachers in Ntaria told me that resources make a difference. The more resources they can devote to kids in education, the better the outcomes will be. It is unfortunate that the Abbott government has not only cut funding for Indigenous programs; it has also cut funding for education, and children will suffer if the final years of the Gonski reforms are not funded by the Abbott government as was proposed in the last budget.

All the problems with the current system, which have been perfectly highlighted by the Gonski panel, were acutely on display during the week that I spent in Ntaria. The teachers were stretched to the limit, and as a result the kids are receiving a substandard education. When Labor came to government, the literacy and numeracy results from some schools clearly demonstrated that in many areas—particularly low socioeconomic areas or areas where there is a high Indigenous population, a high population of kids from a non-English-speaking background or a high population of kids with disabilities in schools—they were falling behind. In a developed nation like Australia it is simply not good enough for us to allow our education system to fail our kids, particularly when we know what the cause of that failure is: a lack of investment in education—in support for kids with special needs, for kids with disabilities and for Indigenous kids throughout our community.

That was why the Rudd government implemented the Gonski process, to inquire into the deficiencies in our education system and, more importantly, to fix those deficiencies in our education system. We can do better. That is what Labor sought to do in government, to implement those Gonski reforms, which would make a difference in Aboriginal education. The Abbott government's abandonment of the Gonski funding model in the final years and their harsh education cuts may condemn many Indigenous students throughout Australia to continued poor outcomes and a continuation of the tragedy that is Indigenous remote education.

More broadly, the Abbott government funding cuts have exacerbated a number of problems in many Indigenous communities. For example, the rate of jailing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has almost doubled in the last decade, yet the Abbott government has cut funding for Indigenous legal aid. How can we expect to reduce the rate of incarceration for people from Indigenous communities if the support for proper

legal advice is being cut by this government? The Abbott government must recommit this funding and recommit the nation to achieving equality for Australia's—and indeed Kingsford Smith's—original inhabitants.

Justice must also be included as a benchmark for closing the gap. Around three in every 100 of our population are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, yet they are more than a 25 in every 100 of our prison population. More needs to be done in all areas. We need to work together and come together to fix the great injustice that is the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

**Dr STONE** (Murray) (20:45): This is the seventh Closing the Gap report since the targets were set by COAG in 2008. There have been some improvements in outcomes in education and health but, on the whole, Indigenous Australians continue to experience vastly increased rates of incarceration, lower life expectancy, higher rates of many life-threatening illnesses and poverty when compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

But I think we must look beyond some of those very sad statistics and focus on particular communities. For example, Aunty Melva Johnson is an elder of the Yorta Yorta community living in Echuca. She was forced to give birth on a veranda at Echuca hospital when she was younger woman. She then a little later worked in the hospital as an unskilled supporter. But now she is on the Echuca Hospital Board. She actually takes part in managing that very large public hospital. In her one lifetime she has gone from being a pariah forced to give birth on a veranda through to now being part of the hospital management board. I think that is an extraordinary situation and one we must celebrate.

When I was elected, I have to say, that the protocol of acknowledging country and welcome to country were practically unknown. In fact, if you had acknowledged country, people would have wondered what on earth you were talking about. But today we have that protocol of acknowledging country or receiving a warm welcome to country, particularly in my electorate, virtually every day. And the flags of the Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders fly at most schools, particularly the Aboriginal flag, alongside the Australian flag. If we were in Queensland, we would see many more of the Torres Strait Islander flags proudly flying.

Sadly, our Australian history curriculum in our states and wherever there is still Australian history taught to any extent still does not cover the pre-colonial Australian cultures nor of the culture contact period—the period when the people who were invading Australia largely from Britain did not understand the way the Australian continent was owned by numerous tribes, each with very distinct and well-known boundaries who were prepared to protect those boundaries with their own lives, not just from the new colonial British but also from one another if there was an incursion.

So we have a situation in Australia too often where there is a lack of understanding of why we have such extraordinary rates of poverty, violence in communities, very high-risk alcohol and other drug consumptions, which leads to violence, neglect of family, often brain damage and certainly some of the highest rates of incarceration in the world. Too many young Indigenous Australians are born with irreparable brain damage, particularly to their cognitive capacities, which are the consequences of their mother's drinking alcohol when pregnant. We all know the statistics where, per person, Indigenous Australians are less likely to be a drinker compared to non-Indigenous Australians. But when Indigenous Australians do drink alcohol, they tend to drink at much higher levels of risk.

A recently published report on the incidence of foetal alcohol syndrome and the foetal alcohol spectrum disorder in an Indigenous community in Western Australia has found some of the world's highest rates of irreparable brain damage and other associated disability in the population of children under eight years of age. Ironically, that particular community has imposed some of the most successful alcohol reduction strategies in their community in Australia. But now they have to live with the legacy of the alcohol impacts of the earlier high-risk drinking rates that were prevalent in their community for generations. We recently had a tragic car accident where one of these young, damaged people only some 13 years of age has been involved in an accident and there have been deaths. This is a tragic outcome for that community, which has seen so many deaths associated with high-risk drinking and the violence that often ensues.

I chair the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and our current inquiry aims to identify the reasons why Indigenous communities are drinking alcohol at such high-risk levels. We want to identify successful strategies that have reduced alcohol consumption or that have helped those with drinking problems to be rehabilitated. We have seen, unfortunately, very few examples of these successful strategies. Too often, the strategies that we do identify are extremely short-term in their funding generation or they have lost the champion who was making sure that they were well established and functioning in a particular community. The impacts of high-risk drinking include: extreme levels of violence—some of the highest levels of violence you will find in any communities in the world; child neglect; poverty; and, as I have already said, incarceration rates that rob children of their parents, particularly their fathers, as they grow. But

unfortunately there are also extremely high rates of Indigenous women incarcerated related to their high-risk alcohol consumption.

Our government's priorities for making real improvements in the lives of Indigenous people in Australia include: getting children to school; keeping them there for a good education; getting adults into work; and making Indigenous communities safe so people can live, work and raise their families. As I have been inferring, the key ways to make sure these communities are safe, that the adults are able to have meaningful work and that the parents supervise their children's school attendance are very often affected by whether or not the families are addicted to alcohol and other illicit substances.

One of the saddest things about the inquiry that we are undertaking now in 2015 is that almost identical terms of reference were given to a committee in the 1970s chaired by Mr Philip Ruddock. Those terms of reference came up with, I am sure, what will be similar outcomes and conclusions as our report will find. And that is the tragedy of Australian Indigenous life—the fact that we have been trying, government after government, state, federal and territory governments, to find ways forward. I do not agree with the previous speaker, who said it is just about resources. It is not just about more financial resources. It is about strategies that are put forward by Indigenous communities themselves. It is about champions, like June Oscar in Fitzroy Crossing, who are stunningly courageous women who have taken issues in their community and run with them. They are really working towards a better life for their children.

Unfortunately, in our particular inquiry, we are finding that there is still a great deal of despair. People are throwing up their hands and saying, 'We have tried everything. We are not sure how to get children to stay in school. We have tried removing welfare access and we have tried having the children go to other places for school, but we still have not as yet managed to find an outcome which ensures that most Indigenous children go to school and stay in school.' They end up having no choices in their life other than going back to a very remote and small community where their destiny is probably likely to be like that of their fathers and mothers. That is, a life of abuse, poverty, poor health and, too often, incarceration.

I just want to read a section out of a book which I produced many years ago in the 1970s, which looks at the evolution of Australian government policy in relation to Indigenous affairs. This is a speech made by Paul Hasluck in the House of Representatives on 8 June 1950. It says:

According to the census taken in 1944, there were then in Australia 71,895 persons who were classified as aborigines...

He goes on to talk about how many were half-castes. But he says:

... one-third were classified as nomadic and slightly fewer than one-third as being in employment.

So the unemployment issue was really being addressed. This was prior to the time of a lot of welfare being available. He says:

The problem today is not a problem of protection. In the old days, when they were a primitive people living under primitive bush conditions, the problem chiefly was to set up a barrier between them and the invading white community. Those days have gone and the nation must move to a new era in which the social advancement rather than the crude protection of the natives should be the objective of all that is done in this sphere.

He goes on to say:

We must either work for the social advantage of aborigines or be content to witness their continued social degradation.

He says:

... their future lies in association with us and they must either associate with us on standards that will give them full opportunity to live worthily and happily or be reduced to the social status of pariahs and outcasts, living without a firm place in the community. In other words, we either permit this social evil to continue or we remedy it.

If we take away some of the racist language, which refers to these people as primitives and so on, I think the sentiment is the same now as it was 75 years ago. That is that we have people in our Australian community who are underemployed or unemployed and who are not enjoying the advantages of being full participating members of our Australian community. I think he is saying that they can either be pariahs and outcasts or they can live with the community and enjoy all that is good. (*Time expired*)

**Mr CHESTER** (Gippsland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence) (20:55): It is with great pleasure that I participate in the Closing the Gap discussion before the House. I would like to recognise the other speakers who have participated in what I would regard as a largely bipartisan way. I also acknowledge the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs. I would like to thank him publicly, while I have the opportunity, for visiting my electorate last year and engaging with the Indigenous community in Gippsland. It was a greatly appreciated visit. He had the opportunity to learn from people in Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale, where we have quite significant Indigenous population, about some of the health and education challenges we face and also some of the great achievements. I think that is—

*Mr Tudge interjecting—*

**Mr CHESTER:** And the Clontarf Academy. The parliamentary secretary reminds me of our visit to the Bairnsdale Secondary College where the Clontarf Academy is doing some great work with young Aboriginal boys. I would like to begin my comments there in that while we saw some of the challenges faced in the Gippsland community, we also saw some of the great achievements. That pretty much sums up the *Closing the gap* report. There has been some significant achievements but also a concerning lack of progress in a range of areas. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of other members, particularly the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for their contributions to House. As the Prime Minister pointed out, improving the lives of Australia's first people is a challenge beyond partisan politics. For many of us in this place, particularly those members who are living in communities where there are significant Indigenous populations, it is one of the biggest issues that we face as federal members.

The quote from the Prime Minister that I would like to refer to is:

On days such as this, we should acknowledge where we have failed. Equally, we should acknowledge where we have made progress and stir ourselves to keep persevering on this vital but difficult journey.

I acknowledge that the Prime Minister indicated that for every step forward there may be steps back in many cases. There are some key failings in the Closing the Gap statement this year in relation to our failure to have success, if you like, in relation to closing the gap in life expectancy within a generation by 2031. Also, there has not been the success we would look for in halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous students. The one area where I think our greatest concern remains is in halving the gap in employment outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. That is because until we can find ways to have more Indigenous people becoming full participants and contributors to their own economic independence through paid employment and the dignity of having a job, we will not achieve the other significant challenges put to us by the Closing the Gap initiative.

In the brief amount of time I have, I would like to refer to one area where I am greatly concerned in relation to the health impacts on Indigenous people: the rate of domestic and family violence. The actual figures may be disputed from one reports the next, but the figure that is quoted to me is that an Aboriginal woman is 45 times more likely to experience domestic violence than a white woman. These violence patterns are of great concern in the non-Indigenous community, but to think that an Aboriginal woman is up to 45 times more likely to experience domestic violence remains an incredibly sobering statistic and a difficult challenge for our nation.

In a year when we have Rosie Batty being announced as an Australian of the Year and as we recognise that up to one woman per week dies at the hand of a partner or ex-partner, the challenge facing our Indigenous community is magnified beyond belief. It remains an extraordinary challenge to break down this pattern of abuse and dysfunction, which will require our ongoing and unrelenting focus both in this place and in state jurisdictions. We need to break that cycle of dysfunction. We need to get adults working. We need to provide safer homes and safer communities for young Indigenous people.

I congratulate members in this place who are committed to working to help close the gap on Aboriginal disadvantage in our nation.

## ADJOURNMENT

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)** (21:00): Order! It being 9pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

## Child Care

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (21:00): I rise tonight to talk about families. I welcome Prime Minister Abbott's changing rhetoric across the past two weeks around families. It is heart-warming to know that those of us on this side of the House who have been speaking endlessly about the unfair measures in the unfair budget—unfair for families, for women, and for education—may have been heard. And I hope, in time, that it is proven that we have been heeded.

I welcome Minister Morrison's understanding, in his response to the Productivity Commission report this week, that families are hurting. But Mr Deputy Speaker, let us be serious: before the PC report, this government got busy—they got very busy with cuts. Those actions speak volumes, across Australia and in our communities. There were \$5.5 billion worth of cuts to family payments; \$1 billion in cuts to child care; \$400 million in cuts to out-of-school hours care; and \$157 million was cut from family day care, which—those who have calculated it suggest—translates to a \$35-a-week increase in the cost of family day care. Support for parents to study and go back to work is gone, under the budget, and \$300 million set aside to support low-paid educators has also been cut. These cuts are working their way through the system, while we hear about the Productivity Commission report.

According to the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, this government's budget means that a single-income family on \$65,000 with two children aged between eight and 14 would lose over \$6,000 per year by 2016. The busyness of this government around these cuts is still a broad concern as these cuts work their way through the system. I believe the government is right to change the rhetoric—and now we have to see that followed by action. The people I represent deserve that.

The people of Lalor deserve it; the families in Lalor deserve a fair go. There are 60,000 families in my electorate—hardworking, middle-to-low income families where \$65,000 per annum is a common household income. Lalor is one of the five electorates in Australia that has more than 10½ thousand families utilising child care. Over 9½ thousand families received some form of childcare benefit. I represent these hardworking, middle-to-low income families, and so I feel I need to respond to the change of rhetoric this week with the hope that it will be followed by a change of action.

I listened carefully today to Minister Morrison's response to a question in question time, and I heard him say a few things. I heard him say that the goal is that childcare be 'affordable and quality ... that will support families to stay in work and to get back to work to give their children the best possible start in life'. I noted that he used the word 'quality', and I was pleased to hear him use the word quality. But he went on to couch it in some other terms:

This is not an industry development scheme. It is not a transfer payment scheme. It is not a training levy. It is not there to support wage claims. It is there to support families and their children, to help them get in work and stay in work and afford quality child care ...

And it took me back—back to the Price Waterhouse Coopers report that came down in 2014. That report was around putting a value on early childhood education and care in Australia. You only have to read the executive summary of that document: I went to the front page, and it talks about the benefits of early childhood education and care: a \$6-billion benefit to the GDP in increased female work participation. And I heard the minister acknowledge that today. But there are two other things the report talks about. One is the \$10.3 billion benefit to GDP for the quality education and care program, and the other is a \$13.3 billion value around the increased participation of vulnerable children—and that is really important in my electorate. So I am looking forward to the government changing its actions. But before we start finding the answers—the real solutions—no pun intended—to the questions around childcare into the future, we need to undo those cuts. We need to make sure families are living today.

### Small Business

**Ms HENDERSON** (Corangamite) (21:05): Small business is the backbone of our nation. There are some two million small businesses across Australia, and well in excess of 20,000 across the Corangamite and Geelong regions. As I said in my first speech in this place, more than 80 per cent of these businesses are operated by sole traders or have fewer than five employees. They need to be supported by policies which allow them to thrive, and grow, and employ our next generation of Australians.

The issue is that the market share of the big players—particularly in the supermarket and appliance sectors—are, to a large degree, crushing small business. Nowhere else in the world do two supermarket chains dominate as they do in Australia. Woolworths and Coles have a combined 72.5 per cent of the \$82-billion grocery sector. Our root-and-branch review of competition law, chaired by Professor Ian Harper, is one of the important steps we on this side are taking to stand up for the engine room of our economy. Whether it is the abolition of the carbon tax, extending unfair contract protections to small business, or the Harper review, our government has had the courage to ask the hard questions, to fight the status quo and to stand up for small business. Frankly, major reform is required. In December last year, Coles admitted—after denying any wrongdoing—that it had engaged in unconscionable conduct by demanding rebates and other payments from suppliers. In essence, Coles was engaging in a form of corporate blackmail, as I call it: if suppliers did not pay these arbitrary gap payments, the implicit threat was that they would be cut off and essentially destroyed. The ACCC is seeking \$10 million in penalties and further payments to repay the suppliers. I fully commend the ACCC and its Chair, Rod Sims, for commencing proceedings against Coles. But for most small businesses litigation is not possible; when subjected to such market abuses they have neither the capacity nor the resources to fight back.

One of the biggest issues killing so many small businesses, particularly in rural and regional Australia, is anticompetitive price discrimination. Time and time again, small and independent operators tell me they simply cannot compete on price. In some cases the big players are retailing goods at a price less than the independent owner can access at wholesale. Small businesses want and deserve a level playing field.

Until 1995, price discrimination was prohibited under section 49 of the Trade Practices Act. This meant that a supplier could not sell to a buyer at higher prices unrelated to economies of scale, which meant that small businesses could not be sent to the wall by duopolies, such as the supermarkets, intent on destroying them. In

some sectors now the pricing gap is so large—around 15 to 30 per cent—that it allows the two or three large operators to sell profitably all day at prices below the cost to operate of all other competitors, thereby ensuring the eventual demise of the competitive market place. Over a period of some 20 years we have seen anticompetitive price discrimination gradually send businesses to the wall. That is why every OECD country in the world, other than Australia and New Zealand, has legislation to expressly prevent this abuse.

A healthy, competitive market is good for jobs and good for families. It helps small businesses to thrive and country towns to prosper, and keeps prices down. That is why the decision to repeal the prohibition on anticompetitive price discrimination, made by the Keating government, needs to be re-examined. The Harper review in its draft report has not gone down this path, relying on the more general provision relating to abuse of market power; but for the sake of jobs and small business, in my submission, it needs to.

### **Manufacturing**

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (21:09): In the 1960s, manufacturing accounted for 25 per cent of the Australian economy. Today it has fallen to around eight per cent. The decline has been dismissively attributed by many to cheap labour costs in developing countries. That may have been the case in past years but today, when innovation and automation have substantially reduced labour content, the argument rings hollow.

The more likely reason for the continued loss of manufacturing industries to developing countries are lower energy costs, lower environmental standards, lower compliance costs and different product quality combined with government incentives and favourable taxation regimes and currency values. Indeed, advanced countries such as Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom have all maintained strong manufacturing sectors in the face of similar pressures from developing countries. According to a recent study by the Boston Consulting Group, businesses are now relocating back to the USA from China because the USA has a competitive advantage.

Yet in Australia the Abbott government seems determined to destroy what remains of Australian manufacturing. The Abbott government has no supportive policies and no interest in manufacturing. In signing free trade agreements and government procurement contracts the Abbott government has recklessly sacrificed Australian manufacturing. For example, that the contract for the supply of Defence boots went to an Indonesian manufacturer, rather than to South Australian manufacturer Rossi Boots, sums up the Abbott government's short-sightedness. Then we saw the hostile reaction of the Abbott government toward Australian car makers. There was no concern or consideration for the job losses, the business closures, the balance-of-trade impact or the temporary impact of the high Australian dollar—which logic dictated would inevitably fall, as it has done. With the Australian dollar today at US76c compared to over US\$1 two years ago, Australian car makers are now much more competitive. But is it too late?

The Abbott government never had any intention of supporting Australia's car makers and its sham Productivity Commission inquiry into the industry was a \$1.1 million waste of Australian taxpayers money. The same charade is now occurring with the replacement submarine contract, where it seems all roads lead to Japan. The decision by the Abbott government to shut the ASC out of the process is a clear admission that the government does not have confidence in the ASC to build the submarines either in their own right or in partnership with others, including international defence firms such as SAAB. Nor is the Abbott government prepared to support the development of a long-term strategic industry for our nation, yet government members cry crocodile tears about their concerns for future generations. Claims that many Australian jobs will be created from the submarine contract are not at all reassuring.

The fact remains that every submarine contract job that is carried out in another country is a job, paid for by Australian taxpayers, that has been denied to an Australian worker by the Abbott government. It also means exporting of Australian dollars at a time when the Abbott government disingenuously talks about Australian government debt and the need to reduce it. Nor do last week's comments by the head of Defence about most jobs being in maintenance fill Australian workers with optimism. A strong argument for building the summaries in Australia has always been that it secures ongoing maintenance work for Australian workers. Conversely, building the submarines overseas means that the maintenance is not secured. Secondly, the construction work begins now, not in years to come when the maintenance work kicks in. It is now that the Australian economy needs a boost; that Australian shipbuilders need certainty; that manufacturing businesses need confidence; and that thousands of skilled Australian workers need jobs. I note the Minister for Defence last week announced an open tender for the construction of a \$10 billion Defence project, LAND 400. He should do the same for all Defence contracts.

That brings me to the question of government procurement policies. In calling for tenders for the supply of goods or services, the assessment of tenders should be made against several criteria and not simply price. Nor does price necessarily reflect the true cost to Australia. We need to know what the accumulated benefits, over the decades ahead, of buying Australian will be. For example, how many jobs will be created? How much tax revenue

will return to the government from each of those jobs, and the many small and medium businesses that remain viable? How much will GST receipts increase by? What are the social costs and what social costs will be saved in the form of unemployment benefits, family breakdowns, health costs and so on which inevitably arise when unemployment rises? Lastly, what R&D investments are made? These are only some of the costs that must be factored in when determining what is the best value for money.

As the nation's largest investor in goods and services, it is incumbent on the federal government to place the national interest first when looking at procurement policies. It is in our national interest to maintain a viable manufacturing sector. Regrettably, it will be future generations that will pay dearly for the Abbott government's short-sightedness and its failure to support Australian manufacturers.

### **Calare Electorate: Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program**

**Mr JOHN COBB** (Calare) (21:14): I rise this evening to speak about the success of the Australian government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program in my electorate of Calare, and I acknowledge that the previous government obviously had a hand in that as well. We have been lucky enough to distribute nearly \$125,000 to nearly 20 projects around Calare, and it has been fantastic that we have been able to do it on the villages, not just the big towns. As somebody who is very passionate about Anzac Day and about where Australian soldiers, airmen and sailors have served around the world, I believe these projects are an absolutely incredible way to commemorate 100 years since the landing in Gallipoli.

Over the past few weeks, I have been visiting the successful RSLs, clubs and organisations to hear about their projects and see how they have been done. What has pleased me most has been the wide array of events, projects and things they have planned to make Anzac Day in 2015 one to remember. It should be one that young people today will still be talking about in 50 years time as they remember what happened when we commemorated the Centenary of Anzac.

For example, on Thursday last week I visited Lithgow, where two projects were approved. Lithgow Public School received nearly \$5,000 for the restoration of their gates, which were a memorial particularly to 1915. Also, as a memorial, it is where they start their Anzac march in Lithgow every year. Very quickly, it was amazing. They rang up a stonemason company in Sydney, and the owner of that said, 'My father's in Lithgow; he'll probably fix it for you.' This guy, who was 80 years old, could not wait to come down and use a lifetime skill to restore the gates of Lithgow Public School. I was lucky enough to be joined by Principal Vicki O'Rourke and the school's P&C committee to view these gates, and they were absolutely magnificent. Not only will they provide the perfect backdrop for Anzac Day celebrations this year; they will provide a lasting legacy in Lithgow for many, many years to come. Lithgow also has Lithgow City Band. They are doing a tribute in their own way, with the local people, to our Anzac heroes.

On Friday I went to Blayney. The Blayney RSL Memorial Restoration Committee successfully applied for \$10,000 to restore their memorial, which they have really brought to light. It is something I have seen for years, but I had never believed it could look as good and as memorial-like as it does now.

Earlier on I mentioned that there has been a wide range of projects approved in Calare, and a lot of them are unique. On Tuesday last week I was at Forbes, at their RSL club sub-branch. They had two separate projects approved. They received \$2,000 to hold a Spirit of Anzac art competition, open not just to people in Forbes but to people right around the Central West, to show the memories of people involved and what people have done, particularly in the world wars—all the places where our soldiers, airmen and seamen have served overseas. Forbes also received \$7,000 to create an interactive Gallipoli diary—an eBook. This is an amazing thing: as they do these days, you can read your book on an iPad. People will be able to read a most incredible diary by a local who went to Gallipoli and actually managed to come back. So that is just one of those amazing things that people in my electorate have been able to get the funding to do.

Obviously we could talk about this all day—or, more correctly, all night. There are plenty of war memorial upgrades, plaques and honour walls. Every project is different, but there is no difference in importance. I think the Dawn Service is the most important morning of the year.

### **Australian Constitution**

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (21:19): I speak tonight about a topic very dear to my heart, the constitutional recognition of Australia's Indigenous peoples. The Prime Minister is committed to constitutional recognition, and I give him full credit for that commitment. This project cannot succeed without his leadership. The Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, and the entire Labor movement will work with the Prime Minister to lead the national debate which lies ahead of us.

As we lead that debate, though, we should be very clear about the proposition to be put to the Australian people. The Prime Minister has recently made a habit of speaking not of changing the Constitution but of 'completing' it. I recognise that the Prime Minister wishes to lessen the concerns of constitutional conservatives, but we should not accept this description of constitutional recognition. No-one should speak of 'completing' our Constitution, because our Constitution can never be completed. Though the Constitution is, of course, an enduring foundation of our national life, it can and must adapt and be adapted to our changing society.

The injustice of our original constitutional arrangements was not an oversight or an accident. Our Constitution is a political document, drafted by imperfect men in a forum not dissimilar to this chamber. In some respects, it reflects great wisdom. In others, as in its treatment of Indigenous peoples, those who framed our Constitution made serious mistakes.

Fortunately, we are not bound, as Justice Deane of the High Court once put it, by the 'dead hands' of those who framed the Constitution or by the values of their era. Indeed, one of the wiser legacies of the framers is the trust they placed in future generations of Australians to adapt and update the document they left us. They placed the principle of parliamentary sovereignty at the heart of our constitutional system, an expression of the belief that each generation of Australians must make decisions for their own time. They established a High Court tasked with interpreting the Constitution and applying it to new problems and changing circumstances. Finally, of course, the framers of our Constitution left us the power to change the text of the Constitution itself by referendum. It is this power that we seek to exercise now, and we should not be shy about it.

Andrew Inglis Clark, the chief author of the Constitution and a figure too often overlooked, said in 1901 that the Constitution:

... must be read and construed, not as containing a declaration of the will and intentions of men long since dead ... but as declaring the will and intentions of the present inheritors and possessors of sovereign power, who maintain the Constitution and have the power to alter it, and who are in the immediate presence of the problems to be solved. It is they who enforce the provisions of the Constitution and make a living force of that which would otherwise be a silent and lifeless document.

On my first day sitting as a member of parliament the House heard the newly elected Prime Minister apologise to the Stolen Generations. On that February day in 2008 the Prime Minister proposed among other things that this country work towards the further task of constitutional recognition of Australia's Indigenous peoples. We have come a long way since 2008. We are, I believe, close to completing that task. The case for change is strong—as strong as any in our constitutional history—so we should not hesitate for a moment to say that it is in fact change that we seek. We should know that even when that change is achieved our work will not be done. If we do not reform our Constitution from time to time, it will become, as Andrew Inglis Clark said more than a century ago, 'a silent and lifeless document'.

### Infrastructure

**Dr HENDY** (Eden-Monaro) (21:24): The time has come to accelerate the cause of the very fast train, otherwise known as the high-speed rail project. In my maiden speech to parliament I talked about the need for rural and regional Australia to get a fair go. I talked of the importance of re-establishing a country-city compact that previously recognised the importance to urban Australians of the development of regional Australia for the future prosperity of the nation as a whole.

I am strongly behind the high-speed rail project because of its major implications for developing regional Australia. As the federal member of parliament representing the south-east corner of New South Wales, which encompasses much of the capital region, I have a personal interest in this because every major high-speed rail proposal put forward over the last three decades has nominated the Sydney-Canberra corridor as the first stage of any such project.

The federal government has rightly nominated infrastructure spending as a key to productivity growth. It is a central plank of our economic strategy for building the nation in the 21st century. The government has already committed \$300 million to finalise the plans for the inland rail project between Brisbane and Melbourne. This is a freight rail project that when completed will substantially reduce the travel times—up to 25 per cent—between those two cities and bypass the congestion on Sydney freight lines. The construction itself will take many years and an estimated capital cost of \$4.7 billion. It is a real nation-building project.

Equally, however, great attention should be given to high-speed rail. Happily, the government has announced that it is working with state governments to protect the identified rail corridors to ensure that, if and when the high-speed rail proceeds, it can do so in the least-cost way. Such a long-term project will lead to development in our region that kills once and for all Canberra's unhealthy dependency on the federal public service and concerns about being a one-company town. It will also help with wider regional development.

Just making an economically stronger Canberra will help the region; but, further, if a terminus came into Canberra Airport, it would be even more significant. The linkages with Moruya and Merimbula airports and, hopefully, a revived Snowy Mountains Airport south of Cooma would lead to huge economic spin-offs. Commuting from Goulburn to Sydney would become viable.

A detailed study for the federal government released in April 2013 by AECOM consultants costed the high-speed rail at \$114 billion for 1,748 kilometres of track that would take until 2065 to build. That would cover a route from Melbourne via Canberra and Sydney to Brisbane with 12 stops in regional Australia. Other researchers have estimated that it would cost between \$63 billion and \$84 billion to be built as early as 2025. The Sydney-Canberra link, according to AECOM's higher costings, would be \$23 billion.

Obviously these are substantial amounts of money. Together with my parliamentary colleague the member for Bennelong I have met with overseas proponents who are prepared to put private-sector capital behind the project. There are Japanese and Chinese investors who are prepared to spend serious money. Indeed, the completion of the recent trade agreements with China and Japan make the opportunities for such investment all the more attractive. I recently inspected the Chinese high-speed rail and participated in discussions at their Ministry of Railways. China, with its vast population, has a remarkably different economic equation from us for this transport mode; however, the various studies recently done show that it is viable.

Let me be clear: my support is not based on some pie in the sky hope that the private sector can fully fund such a project. An objective reading of the research shows that even with private sector involvement there would be a heavy reliance on the public purse, but how is that different from the tens of billions of dollars being spent on urban infrastructure right now for which rural taxpayers see little commercial return to help them meet their cost-of-living pressures. Regional Australians do not begrudge taxpayer spending on urban infrastructure but seem to cop it when it is used as an excuse for why they do not receive it in return.

In conclusion, I have presented some food for thought on how we can grow regional Australia and attract population away from the choking megacities. We could have a country-city compact that produces win-win results. I thank the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott):** Order! It being almost 9:30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

**House adjourned at 9:29**

## NOTICES

The following notices were given:

**Ms Vamvakinou** to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) since 1999, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has recognised International Mother Language Day (IMLD) on 21 February;

(b) on 16 May 2007 the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/61/266 called upon Member States 'to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world';

(c) IMLD has been observed every year since its inception to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism; and

(d) 21 February represents the day in 1952 when students demonstrating for recognition of their language, Bangla (as one of the two national languages of the then Pakistan), were shot and killed by police in Dhaka, the capital of what is now Bangladesh;

(2) recognises:

(a) the importance of languages and their benefits in the broader Australian community;

(b) that languages are the most powerful instruments for preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage; and

(c) that all moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue;

(3) acknowledges and commends the Speak Greek in March campaign;

(4) acknowledges that the Speak Greek in March campaign aims to encourage the greater use of the Greek language at home, in the month of March; and

(5) in collaboration with relevant organisations of the Greek community, undertakes a campaign to establish March as the month during which individuals and organisations endeavour to conduct most of their communications at home and in public in the Greek language.

**Ms Claydon** to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that International Women's Day:

- (a) will be celebrated globally on Sunday, 8 March 2015;
- (b) is a day to celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of women, and to review how far women have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development; and
- (c) in 2015 will reflect on the Beijing Platform for Action, a progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights launched 20 years ago at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing;

(2) notes that:

(a) at the launch of Beijing +20 in 2014, United Nations Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka identified that a number of critical areas for women raised in Beijing 20 years ago still require significant action to address, including:

- (i) reducing women's share of poverty;
- (ii) improving access to health and education;
- (iii) ending violence against women;
- (iv) ensuring women's full participation in decision-making;
- (v) ensuring women's equal opportunities in the economy;
- (vi) removing gender stereotypes;
- (vii) increasing women's role in the media; and
- (viii) protecting the human rights of all women and girls; and

(3) urges all Members of Parliament to be leaders in their community and act on the advancement of gender equality in Parliament.

**Ms Hall** to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

- (a) 14 to 22 March is New South Wales Seniors Week, a week that acknowledges their contribution to the community;
- (b) older Australians make an enormous contribution to our communities;
- (c) all older Australians deserve to live in dignity; and
- (d) the Government is attacking the standard of living of seniors and pensioners by undermining the pension, benefits to seniors, Medicare and support services for older Australians; and

(2) calls on the Government to reverse its anti-seniors ageist approach to government and service delivery.

**Ms L. M. Chesters** to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has announced it will end its television coverage of the Women's National Basketball League (WNBL) at the end of the 2014/15 season;
- (b) this decision will end a 35 year partnership between the ABC and WNBL;
- (c) the ABC has been a leader in the broadcast of women's sport, which has provided a significant boost to the development of women's sport in Australia;
- (d) any decision to cancel the television broadcast of women's sport will have a detrimental effect on the participation in the sport, which will reduce the pool of talent available within Australia and therefore the strength and viability of women's sports such as the WNBL; and
- (e) the basketball statement on the ABC/WNBL partnership on 24 November 2014 as a result of the Australian Government cuts to ABC funding, means that the 2014/15 Wattle Valley WNBL season will be the last shown on ABC TV live around Australia;

(2) recognises the strong role models elite women sports athletes are to young women and the positive value this has on young women, and that without such television broadcast coverage such positive role models will disappear; and

(3) calls on:

- (a) the Australian Government to restore the \$254 million in budget cuts to the ABC budget; and
- (b) the ABC Board to continue the television broadcasting of women's sport including the WNBL.

*Monday, 23 February 2015*

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke)** took the chair at 10:30.

## **CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

### **Victoria: Public Transport Infrastructure**

**Mr DANBY** (Melbourne Ports) (10:30): Less than three months ago the Andrews government came to power in Victoria. It has rolled up its sleeves and is getting to work on major public transport infrastructure, for the benefit of millions of Victorians. The Andrews government has started work on its promise to remove 50 of the most dangerous level crossings in the state. On 17 February the Level Crossing Removal Authority was created and allocated \$3 million to fast-track plans—if you will excuse the pun. Plans are for 20 crossings to be removed by the end of the government's first term. Obviously, safety is one of the issues with the removal of level crossings, but their removal also increases the speed of road and rail access and eases congestion.

The Melbourne Metro Rail Project is finally up and running, touted back in 2009 and drastically altered in the death throes of the previous state government. Daniel Andrews has gone back to the plan that put a Metro line north-south through the CBD and importantly to the Domain interchange on St Kilda Road, opposite the shrine in my electorate. The new underground will loop back to South Yarra and that central rail hub. These plans come in marked contrast to the east-west plan of the previous government, made, pledged and promised by former Treasurer O'Brien on the eve of a democratic decision by the people of Victoria. The federal government, rather than respect the wishes of the Victorian people, seems to be tying much of its federal funding to that scheme, which will put more cars on our roads, without considering the democratic views of the population.

Particularly our Ruritanian Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss, has criticised the priorities of the Victorian government. He probably thinks that the four million people of Melbourne are an addendum to his government's concerns. But, in his more lucid moments, Mr Truss has said, 'Frankly, the states and local governments are best equipped to manage and deliver public transport projects.' I completely agree. So, Mr Truss, stop dictating to Victoria what we can and cannot build. The federal government should hand over the cash, as the Prime Minister has suggested, by negotiating with the Victorian government, as is proper after the democratic decision of the Victorian people. The four million people of Melbourne are not going to do without their public transport because a bunch of Ruritanians want to impose their will on Victoria despite the will of the Victorian people.

### **Tasmania: Hospitals**

**Mr WHITELEY** (Braddon) (10:33): Currently in the state of Tasmania, my beautiful state, the state government is undertaking a review into the provision of health services throughout the regions. I find it disturbing this morning to report to this chamber that the Independent member for Denison, Mr Wilkie, from the comfort of his electorate in Denison, has conveniently called on the government to close one of the hospitals in the state of Tasmania, saying that four hospitals for a state population of 500,000 is uncalled for and that one should be closed. I say to the member for Denison that he should be man enough, strong enough, to stand up and indicate which hospital it is that he is proposing, because we all know which hospital it is that he refers to—that is, the Mersey Community Hospital, which services the area around the city of Devonport, the regions of Port Sorell, Latrobe and Kentish, probably servicing nearly 50,000 people.

I find this astonishing. On this particular matter—I say it with all the grace that I can muster on this issue—the member for Denison should pull his head in. I do not know that he would how to get to the electorate of Braddon unless he had a GPS. It is all very well for him to be saying that we should lose a hospital on the north-west coast. For your benefit, Mr Deputy Speaker, a couple of years ago the Mersey dealt with 26,000 presentations to emergency, 8,500 inpatient admissions and 48,000 outpatient visits, and it also conducted nearly 8,000 operations.

For generations in my electorate of Braddon, on the north-west coast, we have been more than willing to travel to the major hospitals in Launceston and Hobart, which are both great hospitals. We go there regularly for procedures, and that is just a part of the way that we live our lives. How difficult would it be if in fact, as a part of this review, the hospitals on the north-west coast were identified as having the skills that they do have and the magnificent staff that they do have and were to become centres of excellence so that people in Launceston and Hobart could maybe consider travelling the other way and going to our hospitals to receive the attention they need?

The people of the north-west coast are not fools. They know what Mr Wilkie, the member for Denison, is about, and they are just not copping it. We have great staff at the hospitals on the north-west coast, particularly at the Mersey hospital, and I want to see all of their jobs retained and enhanced. I want to see more services provided out of the hospital at Mersey. The two-campus model on the north-west coast works very, very well, and it should continue.

I think it is also time that the member for Denison realised that there is a lot of wealth created in my electorate. We pay our taxes, and the companies pay their taxes, and it is about time that he and many others realised that it is not just for those in the southern part—the Public Service part—of the state to spend those hard-earned taxes. We want to see some of those taxes reinvested in our region. *(Time expired)*

### **O'Grady, Mr Paul Francis**

**Ms CLAYDON** (Newcastle) (10:36): I rise today to pay tribute to a great friend and mentor, Paul O'Grady, who passed away on 18 January this year aged 54. Paul grew up in Sydney's west and joined the Australian Labor Party at age 15, following the dismissal of the Whitlam government. At 18, he became the youngest ever organiser for the Australian Workers Union, and in 1988 he was elected as a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council, where he sat for eight years before resigning to confront an altogether new battle in his life when he was diagnosed with HIV.

It was in his role as an MLC that Paul came to make some of the most significant contributions to public life. His impact, however, on the individual lives of so many people, including me, extended well beyond his public life and endured until his final days. Few understood the breadth of Paul O'Grady's reach; he was so many things to so many people. Whether it was the gay or HIV-AIDS community, environmental activists or everyday individuals who confronted discriminatory laws and practices, Paul made a difference in his advocacy for change. Paul's sharp intellect, his clever wit and his notoriously cheeky approach to life meant that he was terrific company, but he was never going to suffer fools, nor would he countenance the disingenuous. He lived his life with integrity and expected no less from those around him. He was often disappointed, and friends would find themselves being sent to Coventry from time to time, but Paul remained uncompromising in his pursuit of honest, frank and just outcomes throughout his life.

My first encounter with Paul was in Newcastle almost 20 years ago. In what I would learn was typical of his style, Paul's first words to me were to ask, 'So what will be your contribution?' With no time for small talk, Paul liked to cut straight to the chase, particularly when it came to the things that mattered. He believed that everyone had a contribution to make—that was the purpose of being—and Paul had a lot to contribute, so there was little time to waste.

As an MLC, Paul was fearless in his pursuit of social justice and a positive agenda for change. His inaugural speech touched on many issues that he was passionate about: Aboriginal land rights, censorship, drug law reform, workers rights, policing, public housing, prison reform and the legalisation of brothels. He pursued these issues and many others in his eight years in parliament, facing inequalities and discrimination front on, wherever and whenever he found them.

There was no better friend than Paul O'Grady. He was warm, generous and compassionate with a wicked sense of humour. His irreverent approach to life and steadfast commitment to living life with integrity meant that you rarely forgot your encounters with Paul. I most certainly will not. Thank you, Paul, for your extraordinary courage, your passion, your determination to make a difference, your generous spirit, your sage advice and most importantly your friendship. May we all learn from your example. Farewell, my friend. *(Time expired)*

### **Corangamite Electorate: Employment**

**Ms HENDERSON** (Corangamite) (10:39): I rise today to reflect on the many ways in which our government is driving jobs growth across Corangamite and the Geelong region. At a time when manufacturing, in particular, is under pressure across our region, our government is rolling out a range of funding programs, reforms and new investments to protect and create long-term sustainable jobs, not the bandaids solutions that we saw under Labor.

The Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund has already created 750 new jobs. It now sits at a value of \$29.5 million after our government negotiated a \$5 million contribution from Alcoa. Our \$155 million Growth Fund, which includes a \$60 million Next Generation Manufacturing Investment fund and the National Stronger Regions Fund. We are seeing some great applications into those funds, and they will be announced shortly. We are also going to roll out our \$30 million regional Infrastructure Fund. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the people of Geelong will have their eye firmly on how that can drive jobs investment across our region. We brought to Geelong the ABS Centre of Excellence—250 jobs; the National Disability Insurance Agency headquarters—300 jobs; and a \$500,000 Geelong employment connection program to fund local jobs programs. The abolition of the carbon tax is making a real difference. At AKD Softwoods, they are saving \$600,000 by not paying the carbon tax, and that is going into new investments.

In raising these various initiatives, I do call on federal Labor to cease its relentless campaign of negativity because it has the potential to cause real damage to investment confidence across our region. In the *Geelong Advertiser* on 20 February, the member for Corio said:

The federal government has let manufacturing die in Geelong—it's time they do something about our jobs crisis.

This is an absolutely disgraceful statement, which not only is false but also demonstrates the extent to which federal Labor is working to drag down our region. There are 500 manufacturers in our region. They are responsible for something like 40 per cent of our region's economic output and are employing around 12,000 people. This is a reckless statement by the member for Corio. Every member of parliament, no matter from what side of politics, has a responsibility to be a champion for our region—and our community will not cop this. Geelong is a thriving region. That is why I am fighting for LAND 400; it is such an important project. That is why we are fighting to build the East West Link and the 7,000 jobs which Labor is trying to destroy. I will not let Labor's negativity damage our region. We are a great place to live, to work and to invest in jobs.

#### **Giles, Ms Campbel**

**Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR** (Gorton) (10:42): Just after midnight on Friday, a friend and former work colleague Campbel Giles passed away after living beyond the time cruelly allotted to her after being diagnosed with cancer in 2012. Campbel was 41. She was a friend of many, a daughter, a sister, a wife to Matt and mum to Elsie.

I first properly met Campbel—a journalist and political adviser—when she applied for a job in my ministerial office soon after Labor's victory in 2007. I say 'properly met' because not so long before that I recall being witness to the arrival of a striking, boisterous and gregarious woman, accompanied by her more demure and laid back partner, Matt, at the races on Derby Day. She did not so much arrive but explode onto the scene, with energy and laughter. She was hard not to notice. But here before me, at this interview, was a serious, intelligent professional, engaging me with an intensity that was, I soon discovered, a hallmark of her dedication to any task she undertook. A fly on the wall would have had some trouble working out who was interviewing who. She had learned her trade at Shepparton News, WIN TV and the Victorian Labor government and joined my office early in 2008. While she was there, we abolished the Job Network, created Job Services Australia and embarked on a tour of the country with a then tireless Prime Minister Rudd in areas of high unemployment confronted by the global financial crisis. Her contribution in those early days, working with a fledgling minister, was vital to the successful execution of those reforms and initiatives.

If I was looking for an adviser who held her tongue and kept her opinions to herself I made an awfully bad choice. I knew of Campbel's views on any given matter whether I liked it or not. Her advice was direct and unvarnished and, most often, accompanied by a compelling argument and rapid-fire expletives. Even when I did not take her advice, my decisions were invariably better from having listened to her. I have no doubt our partnership would have continued if she had not followed her heart to the Top End, where her soon-to-be husband had his dream job of flying helicopters for a living. Of course, she had no trouble getting a job with the Northern Territory government. For all of her work success, the birth of her daughter, Elsie, was her greatest joy. There are, of course, so many people who knew her better and longer than I did, who knew much about this remarkable woman, and I look forward to hearing stories from them. Her lust for life, her energy, her care for others and her great courage and dignity in dealing with this random injustice will be forever remembered by all who loved her. May she rest in peace.

#### **Petrie Electorate: Roads**

**Mr HOWARTH** (Petrie) (10:45): I rise this morning with great news for the people of Carseldine: that the Lacey and Beams Road intersection will soon be upgraded. On 1 September last year, I called on the Brisbane City Council to make this intersection a priority and now, some six months later, I have been informed that the upgrade will go ahead. This is fantastic news and I would like to thank the local council and Ross McKinnon, a local resident who contacted me and helped me bring this to the attention of council.

I am pleased to also inform the people of North Lakes that the federal government has committed to an \$84 million upgrade of the Boundary Road overpass and associated works. The traffic on Boundary Road in peak hour is such a nightmare that this is the single biggest road issue in North Lakes. I have been campaigning for an upgrade to Boundary Road since my election, which is why I strongly welcome the federal government's commitment to busting this congestion hot spot. But the \$105 million upgrade cannot go ahead without a state Labor government contribution. I call on the government in Queensland to join with the federal coalition government in funding an upgrade to Boundary Road at North Lakes.

North Lakes, of course, is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. It is home to the first Costco store in Queensland and there are plans for new cinemas at Westfield as well as an IKEA warehouse. Every week there are new small retail businesses and hospitality businesses opening that are family run and operated in North Lakes. But with more and more families and businesses moving into the area, the congestion on the Boundary Road overpass is wasting commuters' time and is slowing business productivity.

One of my constituents in North Lakes, a local lawyer, Michelle Lember, said she used to use Boundary Road but quickly stopped when she found the traffic was just getting so ridiculous. As Michelle explained to me, the Boundary Road overpass is a vital artery which connects Narangba and Dakabin to North Lakes and the Bruce Highway, so the repercussions of a blockage on Boundary Road are felt far and wide in the region. This means Michelle has to plan ahead and use alternative routes when travelling to meet with clients and to get to her workplace in Caboolture.

An upgrade is long overdue. The proposed plan is ready to go and it would see the Boundary Road highway overpass widened from two single lanes to six lanes. I thank the Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss, for coming up at the end of January to announce this plan. I thank him for the contribution. Now all we need to get this road moving and see it become reality is a contribution from the state Labor government.

### **Cunningham Electorate: Fundraising Events**

**Ms BIRD** (Cunningham) (10:48): I want to talk to the chamber today about a wonderful new trend I have observed in my local area. It is not so much that the event itself is unusual; it is just how often it is happening now—and that is, the charity fundraising walk, ride or run. I do not tend to do the runs so much, I will be honest, but almost every weekend there is a fantastic opportunity to go out in the community to enjoy getting a bit fit and healthy and also to raise funds for good causes.

Yesterday I was able to join the Melanoma March, which was having its second year in Wollongong, obviously organised by the Melanoma Institute Australia. It was a really great occasion, though, as these things always are, tinged with some sadness as we remembered those who have lost their battles. But I just want to commend the organiser, Jay Allen, and the local melanoma support group. There were over 300 participants and we heard from people battling melanoma: Ruth Davey, Andrew Rust, Julie Sutton, Bettina and her daughter Maddie, and Sarah Roosink, who spoke at the end of the walk, as balloons were released in memory of those who were lost. It was a really great fundraising effort and well supported, I have to say, by the Rotary clubs as well.

In April the Kembla Joggers are organising their fundraising event. So far it has raised over \$100,000 for local charities. They have been doing that for 25 years, so I give great credit to the Kembla Joggers. Wave FM, our local radio station, has the Great Illawarra Walk. They are walking from 21 to 22 March. I will be participating in that walk as well. They have raised about \$330,000 over the last seven years. This year their support goes to Southern Youth and Family Services, which is a young people's homelessness and support service in our area. Again, that is a good cause.

Greenacres disability services have the Mountain to Mountain Challenge. You can walk from the base of Mount Keira to the heights of Mount Kembla in August. It is about 12½ kilometres. You can participate in the walk with spectacular views and great company. It is a good walk and if you want to you can assist in raising funds for Greenacres disability services as well.

My colleague the member for Throsby quite often participates in the Ride Around the Lake, which is a bike ride to raise funds for homeless young people, and the Lighthouse Youth Initiative. That is in May. As you can see, there are plenty of events in our spectacular part of the world.

On Thursday last week I joined Ryan Park, the member for Keira, to announce that a New South Wales Labor government would provide \$1 million to join our bits of walks up so that one day, we hope, you can actually walk the full length of the Illawarra coastline and enjoy our spectacular local area. Perhaps that will provide a new venue for charity fundraising as well.

### **Queensland: Cyclone Marcia**

**Mr O'DOWD** (Flynn) (10:51): I rise today to talk about the devastation suffered by many families in my electorate of Flynn which happened because of tropical Cyclone Marcia. This report is not complete, as there are many more damage reports still to come in. I have inspected a fair area of my electorate but due to the road wash-outs and bridges that have actually disappeared I have not been able to go too far inland, where the damage really happened. I did try on Saturday to go to Biloela, which was badly affected. Forty houses in a new area have been wiped out. There are big losses of cattle—some 500 head, one grazier has reported. Let's hope he finds them somewhere. With cattle, you never know where they end up, but hopefully he can recover some of those 500. Another grazier I know has had 100 head disappear.

It was not really the wind et cetera from the cyclone that affected Biloela; it was the rain which filled the Callide Dam and other dams in the area. They all seemed to let go all at once and a wall of water came through at about three o'clock in the morning. They told me it was just frightening how a river or a creek could go from one-foot high to about 30-foot high in a matter of minutes. That is what happened on the Callide Creek.

As I speak, there are no phones, there is no electricity, roads have been washed out, food is scarce and service stations do not have electricity. People have generators but not enough fuel to keep them going. It is a lesson for us all that when these disasters come we have to be really prepared.

The North Burnett Regional Council and the Banana Shire Council have asked me to express to Minister Keenan the need to reintroduce the daily labour so council staff can be employed on these cleaning up measures, fixing up the roads and bridges that would at least give access to different areas of the shire.

The Queensland Betterment Fund worked well in the 2013 floods and that should be reintroduced. That is where you do not reinstate infrastructure in the same place that will get flooded out again down the track. Whether it be pump stations or whatever, you put them on higher ground so it does not happen again. The volunteers have been great. We have the Army starting to move into these areas, but sometimes they just cannot get to the places where they would like to go. Telstra worked all last night and we got some form of communication into the town of Jambin— *(Time expired)*

### Asylum Seekers

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (10:54): Today I wish to raise the concerns of a number of constituents in my electorate over the issue of children in detention. I will start with the Bendigo chapter of Grandmothers Protesting against Children in Detention. On 11 February about 60 Bendigo grandmothers gathered together outside St Paul's Cathedral in Bendigo to protest against the federal government's detention of refugee children. The newly formed Bendigo chapter of Grandmothers Protesting against Children in Detention demanded that children with their families be freed immediately into the community. This is not your typical group of protesters—grandmothers in my electorate coming together to say, 'Free the children.' Co-founder of Grandmothers Protesting against Children in Detention, Dr Davey, told the crowd that she was 'deeply distressed by what is being done to mothers and children'. She believed that 'no civilised country has such a policy' and that we needed to have compassion when it came to children in detention.

In relation to this issue, I also wish to mention a group of religious leaders in my community, who last Thursday had their day in court. More than 50 people gathered near the conservatory in Bendigo on Thursday morning to pray and to sing in support of the eight religious leaders who had been arrested months earlier for trying to have a meeting with Senator Bridget McKenzie. Several Christian leaders faced the Bendigo Magistrates Court over charges relating to a silent protest that they held in her office foyer last year. One of the protesters was the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, John Roundhill. He said at the speakout before the court hearing that detaining asylum-seeking children went against their human rights; he called on the federal government to change the policy. He said that the plight of children in mandatory detention was not fair, that it went against human rights and that we needed to do our best to ensure that the children were protected.

These are religious leaders of my community speaking out about something they believe in deeply; these are grandmothers in my community speaking out about something they believe in deeply. The good news is that the magistrate found the charges against the eight to be proven but, using his discretionary powers, dismissed the charges. He said that there was clearly a breach of the law but it was hardly a serious one. It is also an issue of democracy: we need to ensure that people are able to speak up and speak out about what they believe in.

### Medical Workforce

**Mrs WICKS** (Robertson) (10:57): I am pleased to say there has been a breakthrough for people in my electorate of Robertson on the Central Coast of New South Wales who until now have been finding it difficult to find a local family doctor. In many suburbs, such as Erina, Avoca Beach, Green Point and Killcare, people who have been sick have called up their local GP, only to be told that the books were closed. One mother I spoke to had not been able to get her foster son into see her local family GP for several years because the books had been closed for so long.

Addressing the shortage of doctors was one of the commitments I took to the last election, along with our positive growth plan for the Central Coast. We pledged to look into the unique circumstances facing the Central Coast in attracting doctors—we accepted that more needed to be done. I am pleased to say that this government has listened. I would like to commend the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Fiona Nash, who has driven this reform process and the Minister for Health, Susan Ley, who joined me on the Central Coast last week to personally hear from doctors. Many doctors have told me that it is difficult to attract and retain GPs on the Central Coast—particularly in my electorate—because they were not adequately resourced. Part of the reason was the outdated District of Workforce Shortage system. Simply put, the DWS system was using data from 2004. This was an issue for GPs because so many suburbs in my electorate were not deemed to be a district of workplace shortage. In fact, one GP practice manager told me he had been trying to fill a place in his surgery for five years, but had not been able to.

Thanks to this government, these changes to the DWS calculations mean that from now on the most up-to-date data will be used to identify areas where there is a doctor shortage, which of course will make it easier to plan and to recruit doctors. We have a rapidly growing population on the Central Coast. The cost and availability of doctors matters a great deal, particularly to people on low incomes. I am confident these changes will benefit our community. Twenty-six suburbs in my electorate are newly eligible under the system, including Avoca Beach, Bensville, Copacabana, Daleys Point, Davistown, Empire Bay, Erina, Erina Heights, Green Point, Killcare, Killcare Heights, Kincumber, Kincumber South, Macmasters Beach, North Avoca, Picketts Valley, Pretty Beach, Saratoga, St Huberts Island, Terrigal, Yattalunga and Wagstaffe.

These changes mean that we are delivering on a commitment to improve the health outcomes for rural, regional and remote Australians through better access to medical services. They help fulfil an important election commitment to the people in my electorate, and I thank the government for its important advocacy in this regard.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke):** The time allotted for this debate has expired.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Auschwitz Memorial

**Mr DANBY** (Melbourne Ports) (11:01): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

- (a) 27 January 2015 marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the allies;
- (b) over a million Jews and 150,000 non-Jews were murdered in the Auschwitz death camp; and
- (c) 27 January has since become International Holocaust Day, and is marked by ceremonies around the world acknowledging the horrific nature of the official policy of genocide against Jews that was manifested in the Holocaust and that claimed 6 million lives;

(2) calls on all Australians to remember these crimes against humanity in order to ensure Australia's continuing condemnation of any attempts to repeat such horrors; and

(3) in light of Australia having one of the largest groups of Holocaust survivors and the bipartisan support for the previous government's legacy to the maintenance of the memorial of the camp, calls on Australia to keep a representative on the international committee that supervises the maintenance of the memorial at Auschwitz.

On 27 January the world commemorated the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in southern Poland by the Soviet armed forces. Seventy years ago is a long time in human memory and today there are only a few survivors who have memories of Auschwitz. Soon there will be none. That is why it is important to remember what happened there. Auschwitz was a place where the German Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler killed more than one million people in cold blood as part of a calculated campaign of extermination. On 30 January 1939 Hitler mockingly, in response to an appeal from President Roosevelt, told the Berliner Sportpalast that the outcome of a new world war 'will not be the victory of Jewry but the total annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'—the 'vernichtung der jüdischen rasse in Europa', as he said. We now know that he meant what he said.

The overwhelming majority of those killed in Auschwitz were Jews, transported in cattle cars—as very movingly portrayed in Mr Lowy's recent tribute to his parents by establishing of one of the original cattle cars at the site; a site where all of the people were exterminated in gas chambers or were worked to death in nearby camps such as Monowitz. Many years ago I had the honour of launching a book by Mr Grossman, who talked of his experiences in Monowitz. I will never forget his emphatic wish that the US B29s that were flying overhead had bombed the crematoriums and the gas chambers.

The dead of Auschwitz included 150,000 non-Jewish Poles, 23,000 gypsies, at least 15,000 Soviet prisoners and 10,000 of other nationalities. Finally, in late 1944, even when the war was clearly lost, the Nazis transported 400,000 Hungarian Jews to be murdered. By the end of 1944—the last people were killed in October, by the way—the SS had killed most of the European Jews that they could get hold of in Europe. SS leader Himmler, aware that Germany was losing and fearing for his own neck, ordered all the killing stopped and that the camps be destroyed and covered up as best they could be. The Red Army approached and the SS evacuated the camp on 17-18 January 1945. Tens of thousands of prisoners were marched towards the freezing landscape of other camps further into Germany, such as Gross-Rosen, Mauthausen, Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald, where Alfred Hitchcock and the British film crew later filmed those incredible scenes that we are all so familiar with. It is very interesting to recount the fact that a great director like Alfred Hitchcock thought it was his ethical responsibility to film those scenes. Thousands of people died in those futile marches.

On 27 January the 60th Army of the First Ukrainian Front under Marshal Koniev reached the town of Auschwitz. Only about 7,000 prisoners were still alive in Auschwitz and Birkenau, whose barracks had once

housed 200,000. To commemorate those things there are superb institutions such as Yad Vashem in Israel, the Holocaust museum in my electorate and of course the Auschwitz foundation.

The Auschwitz foundation was established in 2009 to raise funds required to ensure that the site of the extermination is preserved for future generations as a paradigm of the remembrance of racism and what happened during the Nazi occupied regime there. In 2012, Prime Minister Gillard gave the Auschwitz foundation, on behalf of the Australian government, significant support—\$500,000. This is important for Australia to do; after all, Australia is where the largest number of Holocaust survivors per capita have gone, apart from Israel. It is the right thing to do because Australia has an ethical interest in international affairs.

It is sad that at the recent anniversary memorial in Poland only the Australian government was represented. I think it would have been much better if it had been bipartisan. Australia was represented very capably on the international memorial foundation that supervises the camp now by Ambassador Jean Dunn. In the future, I would see it that the Australian government would elevate our representation on that, along with Germany, the United States, France and Poland, so that we preserve the memory of that dreadful place. It is a lesson to people right across the world of just what the outcome is of murderous threats against any race or individuals. We are seeing now a revival of these brutish sentiments across the world. Let it never happen again. Our watchword must be: never again. (*Time expired*)

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr RUDDOCK** (Berowra) (11:06): I willingly second the motion. I thank the member for Melbourne Ports for this motion. It is particularly important that we acknowledge events of this character, because they are so horrific we never want to see them again, as he said. I note that my colleague will also be supported by other Jewish members of this parliament in debate on this motion, but I speak as non-Jew. I speak as one who is moved by the tragedy that the Jewish people suffered and when I think of the enormity of it. I am told that some six million Jewish people died in the Holocaust. There were almost 11 million people in total who were killed, and it is important to acknowledge the many people of other backgrounds in Eastern Europe who also lost their lives. At Auschwitz, it is believed between 1.2 and 1.8 million people were killed. When you think of the atrocities, the torture and the way in which people were treated as less than animals, this Holocaust has to be regarded as one of the most depraved human rights abuses, a stain on our human history. I think it is very important that we acknowledge that.

I have not been to Auschwitz. I have been to Terezin in the northern Czech Republic. I saw something of that dreadful camp. I saw the gravestones of the many Jewish people who were killed there. It brought it home to me. What it also brings home to me is its impact upon us here in Australia. We took some 35,000 Holocaust survivors; only Israel, I think, saw a greater number. What I consider to be one of the greatest periods in Australian history was when we took so many people, and we continue to take refugees today. We have a very strong view that people should not be subjected to persecution of this sort.

Can I simply say that for me I do have indirect connectivity through my wife, whose father was a German Jew. He was one of those who did survive because he was able to leave Germany before the Second World War. In that sense, we know the pain that people have felt.

So I think it is appropriate that we mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. I think it is appropriate to acknowledge how many people were murdered. I think it is appropriate to recognise that 27 January was International Holocaust Remembrance Day and for all Australians to remember these crimes. Unless we learn from events like this, they will be repeated. It is the great tragedy of the world today that we see so little regard for human life and that in so much of the Middle East people are still threatened and that depraved conduct occurs which can in no way be defended. To my colleague I will just say that I feel for you and your community. We very much want to see the world be a better place. We thank you for your role in helping to remind us all that we as a people can be so much better.

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (11:11): I am pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to speak about International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which last month marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Allies. I thank and commend the member for Melbourne Ports for this motion. I know this is an issue very close to his heart and important to his electorate. I would also like to thank Rabbi Meltzer and Rabbi Feldman, who are both here from the Canberra Jewish community. It is wonderful to have you here today, gentlemen. Again, I welcome you both to Canberra as you are relatively new to Canberra. It is wonderful that you could be here to support this motion from my colleague. Thank you very much for joining us here.

There are few survivors who have memories of Auschwitz, and that is why it is so important for Australia and the world to commemorate this dark part of our world history and to warn against any attempts at repeating such horrors. And they were truly horrors. More than one million people, the majority Jews, were killed at Auschwitz

as part of Adolf Hitler's German Nazi regime. His calculated campaign of extermination is now referred to as the Holocaust. The dead at Auschwitz included 150,000 non-Jewish Poles, 23,000 Gypsies or Romani, 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war and more than 10,000 other non-Jewish prisoners of many nationalities. The campaign continued at other camps in Poland and Belarus. The total number of those killed in the seven extermination camps was at least 3.2 million and possibly 3.8 million. Those numbers are chilling.

Auschwitz was finally liberated by Russian forces on 27 January 1945, a date which has subsequently become International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This day is marked by ceremonies around the world acknowledging the horrific nature of the official policy of genocide against Jews that was manifested in the Holocaust and that claimed six million lives.

Labor has made a proud contribution to the Auschwitz foundation project. In 2012 then Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced Australia's contribution to the Auschwitz foundation project. Australia joined with the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Israel, Germany, France, New Zealand and Poland in providing funding to restore and preserve the memorial site at Auschwitz. The Labor government announced half a million dollars in funding towards the project, demonstrating our commitment to Holocaust survivors and the impact that they have had an Australian society in so many positive and constructive ways. Australia's commitment to the Auschwitz foundation project also forms part of a broader plan to educate and inform future generations. This commitment by Labor is something I am personally very proud of and something I believe will benefit all Australians in many, many ways.

The devastation of World War II has had a large impact on Canberra, with a number of Poles finding sanctuary here. In fact, I understand across Australia more broadly we became home to the second largest population of Holocaust survivors per capita. Many participated in great nation-building projects such as the Snowy Mountains scheme and later chose the nation's capital as their future home. The Polish community in the ACT began to grow significantly from the late 1940s, and the ACT Jewish community was formally constituted in 1951. The National Jewish Memorial Centre, which is in my electorate, just down the road from Parliament House, was opened in 1971, with generous financial assistance from individuals and organisations interstate.

The Canberra Jewish community is relatively small and is made up of many public servants, professionals, academics, students and those working in the private sector. The ACT Jewish community runs adult education classes, Hebrew school, youth activities, school activities, welfare and relations with the general community and Jewish organisations outside Canberra. This community makes up a strong and vibrant part of Canberra, and I hope it will continue to flourish in coming years.

I think the presence of the two rabbis here today sends a very strong message of their commitment to the Jewish community here in Canberra but also more broadly to the Jewish community across Australia. We have not had rabbis at our synagogues here, and we now have two. Their presence has been greatly appreciated by the community, which has warmly embraced them. It is wonderful that they are here today.

In concluding, I would like again to recognise the significance of this day. (*Time expired*)

**Mr FRYDENBERG** (Kooyong—Assistant Treasurer) (11:16): I thank the member for Melbourne Ports for bringing this important motion to the parliament and congratulate him on his strong advocacy on behalf of his electorate but particularly for what he has done for the Jewish community in this place. I also acknowledge the member for Canberra and thank her for her important words as well as acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Rabbi Meltzer and Rabbi Feldman.

I come to this motion with a heavy heart, because my own family background is no different to that of many other Jewish members in communities in Melbourne, Sydney and elsewhere, in that I had relatives who passed away in the Holocaust, including two great-grandparents and great aunts who lost their lives at Auschwitz. So it was with some trepidation that I went to represent the Australian government at the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and made my way, with 3,000 other people, to this historic ceremony. Ten years ago there were some 1,500 survivors there. This time round, there were only 300. In 10 years time, there may not be a survivor present. But I was able to see the presidents of Germany, Switzerland, Poland and France, and many other world leaders, come to pay their respects to the more than six million Jews who lost their lives in the Holocaust, including, tragically, 1.5 million children, and to remember what happened at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where 1.1 million people lost their lives, 90 per cent of whom were Jewish. Also, importantly, people from Romani backgrounds, people who were homosexual, people with a disability and political prisoners from Poland and Russia also lost their lives there. For the first time, I walked through those gates that said, 'Work will set you free,' and I saw the orderly nature of the camp where so many innocent people lost their lives. I saw the ovens and the showers where gas came down instead of water. People were put through slave labour in the coldest and most

brutal of conditions. People lost their humanity. And the cultured, intelligent, educated German nation was allowed by the world to get away with such horrors.

I left asking the question: how could we and the rest of the world have stood by when the country that produced Wagner, Mozart and Bach were allowed to kill their fellowman and deny them any human dignity? But that is the tragedy of the Holocaust. I know I stand with everybody in this place, regardless of their political persuasion, to say: never again.

I am reminded of that famous Lutheran pastor and theologian Martin Niemoller, who himself was targeted by the Nazis after originally being a supporter of the Nazis. What Niemoller said was: 'First they came for the socialists, and I wasn't a socialist, so I didn't say anything. Then next they came for the trade unionists, and I wasn't a trade unionist, so I didn't say anything. Then they came for the Jews, and I wasn't a Jew, so I didn't say anything. And then they came for me, and there was no-one left to speak up for me.'

That is the lesson of the Holocaust—that even the most cultured nation, such as Germany, could go down to the lowest possible level to do what they did. But the rest of the world was relatively silent. When General Dwight Eisenhower, the supreme commander of the Allied forces, came upon a liberated concentration camp, he said there would come a time in the world when people denied that what had taken place here had actually happened, so he called upon senior journalists and political leaders from around the world to come and bear witness to what had transpired in these most horrible of horrible places. Thankfully, there are good people like General Dwight Eisenhower who will ensure that all those innocent lives that were lost are remembered. This is a very important occasion to remember, but it is also a very sad day for many of us in this chamber.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons):** I thank the Assistant Treasurer. The time allotted for this debate had expired, and I also acknowledge the motion moved by the member for Melbourne Ports and also the presence of our guests in the gallery today.

Debate adjourned.

### Complementary Medicines

**Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (11:22):** I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) the importance of complementary medicines and practices, including traditional Chinese medicines, to the international healthcare landscape;

(b) that the Australian complementary medicines industry is worth over \$3.8 billion; and

(c) that Australia is the first western nation to nationally regulate Chinese medicine practitioners; and

(2) acknowledges:

(a) the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM), hosted by the University of Western Sydney, as Australia's premier research facility in complementary medicine, being the only Australian complementary medicine research centre to receive the top ranking of five in the Commonwealth Excellence in Research for Australia scheme; and

(b) the role of the NICM in fostering collaboration and engagement with Chinese hospitals, research centres and universities to provide trade, research and investment opportunities in Australia.

Early this month, I spoke to the House about the significance of the complementary medicines industry in this country and the contribution it can make to improving wellness outcomes for Australians, as well as benefiting the economy. I would like to pay special tribute to Professor Alan Bensoussan and all the staff at the National Institute of Complementary Medicine at the University of Western Sydney for their vision and pioneering work in this important sector. NICM is Australia's premier research facility in complementary medicines and is playing a key national role in ensuring that Australians have access to reliable evidence on medicines and treatments in wide use. NICM is one of the two UWS research concentrations to be recognised by the Commonwealth rankings as performing research at well above world standard, ERA 5.

NICM Director Professor Bensoussan and his team have forged a broad network of links with national and international organisations in government and industry, including major collaborative research projects with key institutions in China. Professor Bensoussan received the prestigious International Award for Contribution to Chinese Medicine in 2013, which was conferred in the Great Hall of the People in China. He is the only recipient of that award to be based outside the People's Republic of China.

NICM's strong credentials in the area of Chinese medicine are well recognised and form the foundation for the proposed partnership with China's leading Chinese medicine university, the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, BUCM, in establishing a clinical service and national education initiative that could eventually mature into a joint campus of the two universities. Founded in 1956, BUCM is one of the earliest established higher

education facilities for Chinese medicine in China. NICM and BUCM have worked together since the late 1990s. This has included several highly productive collaborative research projects, higher degree research supervision and visiting scholar exchanges.

With the recent introduction of the statutory regulation of Chinese medicine practitioners in Australia, both parties believe the time is right to consider more substantial investment and joint partnership in the delivery of specialist clinical treatment services, performance of multi-centre clinical trials and collaboration on the development of Chinese medicine intellectual property. UWS and BUCM have signed a memorandum of understanding which was witnessed by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott in Canberra in November 2014.

BUCM have subsequently offered to invest \$20 million in establishing a joint centre of Chinese medicine in Western Sydney. This funding will be directed towards building refurbishment and the first three years of clinical operation and educational services. Fully developed, the bilaterally supported initiative will provide clinical treatment services on a fee service basis; support student training and research; deliver Chinese medicine, education and training, including the development of potential double-badge qualifications; conduct pre-clinical and clinical research, including multicentre trials and clinical research training through NICM; and will include a museum, celebrating the history, depth and cultural significance of the practise of Chinese medicine.

I am proud to say that NICM is wholly located at the UWS Campbelltown campus in my electorate of Macarthur. However, the institute is rapidly outgrowing its current laboratory and office facilities and is exploring a range of sites in Western Sydney. The key national role that the institute is taking and its rapid expansion coincide with the dramatic changes currently underway in Macarthur. Thanks to the Baird and Abbott governments, \$3.5 billion has been committed to major infrastructure upgrades over the next 10 years that will support the development of Sydney's South West Growth Centre, which will contain about 110,000 new dwellings for roughly 300,000 residents—almost the same population as Canberra.

The institute is aiming to advance health services in this major growth corridor, connecting directly to a new population within the South West Growth Centre at Oran Park, Leppington, Austral and Macarthur. According to a report last week in the *Daily Telegraph*, UWS has created a blueprint for establishing 'medical, science, technology, aviation and agribusiness hubs, each dotted along the outer Sydney orbital corridor and centred around ... Badgerys Creek airport'. The establishment of a joint centre for Chinese medicine in Western Sydney with BUCM is at the core university's strategy as a key hub.

Other key hubs include plans to work in conjunction with the private sector to build a Sydney Science Park around Luddenham that would 'focus on becoming a leading international centre for research and development in food, energy and health'. There are also plans for a hi-tech business hub at Werrington Park 'that focuses on activating and growing technology and innovation-orientated businesses'. UWS's exciting and ambitious strategic plan has been dubbed Sydney IQ, with the Hon. Julie Bishop MP comparing it to how Silicon Valley was started in the United States. These key hubs will attract some of the smartest people in the world to the region and ensure that Macarthur's brightest students have access to cutting-edge research facilities and industries right on their doorstep.

Thanks to the UWS's grand plans and the hard work and dedication of people like Professor Bensoussan and his team at NICM, Macarthur is set to become an even better place to live and work.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons):** Is the motion seconded?

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

**Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (11:27):** I thank the member for Macarthur for bringing the matter before the House. Complementary medicines, as the House knows well, include Chinese medicines. It would be remiss of me to speak on this matter in this week without taking the opportunity to wish all of those within the Chinese Australian community throughout my electorate and throughout the country and indeed those of Chinese heritage within this House a very happy Lunar New Year. I understand that it is the year of the goat, and that does bode very well for many in this place.

Chinese influence on Australian history and culture and our community is something I also want to acknowledge. We are all the richer for it. Of course, Chinese medicine is only one small way in which Chinese Australians have made a contribution to our society. For many Australians Chinese medicine is something that they remain unfamiliar with—and perhaps this debate in the House today will help in some way to address that—and for others it is a tool for them in their quest for general health and wellbeing. Medical and scientific knowledge has evolved over thousands of years, nurtured by both culture and the environment. People for eons have looked to their local ecosystems to find relief from pain and to assist in their health and wellbeing. In its

crudest forms of experiment observed over histories the human and animal responses to certain plants and minerals were the first forms of medicine.

Medical practice of course continues to evolve along cultural traditions and for many Australians complementary medicines and traditional practices sit alongside modern medical practices. Indeed, there is a greater community awareness of complementary medicines today than there was in the recent past. It is why Australian regulators have had a greater interest in this space. Since 2003, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has made recommendations that were moved to reform the system and regulation of complementary medicines. I think that is an entirely healthy development.

The Australian National Audit Office made similar recommendations back then for us to strengthen the regulation to improve community confidence in what was a growing sector of the economy and of the health system. It was an important milestone. It followed the mass recall by Pan Pharmaceuticals of over 1,600 items. It was and remains important for Australians to have confidence in all of the medicines that they take. Closer attention to the regulation of complementary medicines was the surest way to ensure consumer confidence in this important sector.

Today, the TGA regulates complementary medicines on a risk basis. It means that lower risk medicines can apply to be listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods, the ARTG, but are not required to do so, while higher risk medicines must be registered on the ARTG, involving all the scrutiny that goes with it. That is important, because Australians are entitled to know that if they choose to use a complementary medicine there is a level of scrutiny applied to it and that it is safe. Moreover, they are entitled to know that the therapeutic claims that are made for a particular medicine have been tested by a reputable authority—that is to say, that the product they are using for a purpose actually does what it says it will do. I think all Australians would think that that was nothing more than reasonable.

Of course, the regulatory system is perhaps a little more complicated to go through than time permits me here, but it is important for me to say that we need to have a system of confidence in all of the products that are sold with a therapeutic blandishment in this country. Australia has been one of the world leaders in this area, which is something we can be proud of.

The National Institute of Complementary Medicine at the University of Western Sydney is a very healthy development. The academic rigour that this will help to bring to the sector is very much welcomed by all on this side of the House. I thank the member for Macarthur and the other Labor members who have lined up to speak on this motion, showing the importance that they attach to the sector.

**Mr ALEXANDER** (Bennelong) (11:32): I would like first to congratulate the member for Macarthur for moving this important motion. The electorate of Macarthur is very fortunate to be home to the National Institute of Complementary Medicine, which provides:

... leadership and support for strategically directed research into complementary medicine and translation of evidence into clinical practice.

The NICM was initially developed with \$4 million in seed funding from the Howard government and is hosted by the University of Western Sydney at its Campbelltown campus. According to the NICM website, its programs:

... encompass all aspects of the research agenda for complementary medicine, from pure basic research in the laboratory; to clinical trials tailored to address the challenges of testing the efficacy of medicines already in use; to the translation of research evidence into clinical practice and community use.

I have risen many times in this place to applaud the work of our medicines industry. I know of no other sector that is focused on improving the health outcomes of our constituents whilst also representing such a significant contribution to our national economic productivity. In Australia, the medicines industry is the brightest of lights in an otherwise repressed manufacturing sector, with an average of \$4 billion in exports each year.

Many innovative medicines manufacturers also maintain a range of vibrant complementary medicine brands. One of the market leaders in this field is Sanofi, headquartered in Macquarie Park in my electorate of Bennelong. Sanofi's portfolio includes market-leading household names such as Nature's Own, Cenovis, Bio Organics, Ostelin, MICROgenics and Golden Glow and it is our nation's largest distributor of nutraceuticals including multivitamins, fish oil and glucosamine. Australians can find these products in more than 8,400 pharmacy, grocery and health food stores across the nation.

As you can see, I am happy to take any opportunity to spruik the significant contributions that companies like Sanofi and so many others make both to my local region by creating thousands of jobs and to our nation's economy. This latter category is due to grow as a direct result of last year's signing of the historic free trade agreement with China. The visit by the President of China, Xi Jinping, and his address to this House represented a watershed in our relations with our largest trading partner. The Prime Minister Tony Abbot, Foreign Minister Julie

Bishop and the Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Robb deserve our congratulations for their magnificent work in securing this agreement together with the free trade agreements with Japan and Korea.

During President Xi's visit, he joined our Prime Minister to sign a memorandum of understanding between the University of Western Sydney and the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. This partnership will spark the development of a new research led Chinese medicine clinic in Sydney directly contributing to improved patient outcomes and giving our nation the potential to tap into the \$170,000 billion global traditional Chinese medicine market.

Beijing University of Chinese Medicine is a world leader in Chinese medicine. Through the National Institute of Complementary Medicine, the University of Western Sydney and the electorates of Macarthur, Lindsay and surrounds will benefit greatly as a direct result of this partnership. The MOU and the free trade agreement truly represent the way that this government and the members of Macarthur and Lindsay are delivering for their local communities.

The Bennelong region is the second most populous electorate of Chinese Australians and a quick walk down Eastwood mall will expose hundreds, if not thousands, of drawers filled with Chinese medicines. I was there just yesterday competing in the lunar new year cooking competition—I am too modest to say who won.

We are the only Western country to operate a unified national registration of Chinese medicine practitioners and have a strict regulation of Chinese medicines delivering safe healthcare outcomes to thousands of Australians and a subsequent boost to our export market and economy.

This ever-growing connection between Australia and China economically, diplomatically and culturally is central to our nation's development in the 21st century. This is so ably represented by the MOU, the free trade agreement and this motion brought forward by the member for Macarthur, which I commend to the House.

**Mr THISTLETHWAITE** (Kingsford Smith) (11:37): One of the great things about Australia is our cultural diversity. As Australians, we are welcoming people and we have benefited from generations of immigrants who have enriched our lives through their knowledge, skills and the values.

This past week Australia has revelled in the celebrations surrounding Chinese New Year and the beginning of the Year of the Sheep. Over the weekend I was honoured to host the first Chinese lunar new year festival in Kingsford Smith. We are blessed to have a strong and vibrant local Chinese community in my electorate who came along and shared their many talents and cultural highlights with members of our community.

One aspect of Chinese culture Australians have embraced is Chinese medicine. Chinese medicine has been used in Australia for more than 100 years, since the 1840s when the Australian goldfields first enticed Chinese people to Australia. Many Australians on a daily basis undertake and seek out Chinese medicinal therapies to cure all manner of ailments and ills. A classic example of Chinese medicine in our culture and our country is the widespread of acupuncture.

Chinese medicine has been utilised in China for more than 5,000 years. The challenge has been meeting these ancient Eastern medical practices with what we do in the West. The Labor Party has long been an enthusiastic advocate of Chinese medicine. In 2007, the then NSW Labor government helped facilitate the establishment of the National Institute for Complementary Medicine at the University of Western Sydney, providing \$600,000 to accelerate the establishment of the institute.

The state Labor government supported the formation of a joint academic chair in traditional Chinese medicine between the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney, committing \$800,000 over four years towards the chair, and also announcing the establishment of an Australia-China Centre for Research in Chinese Medicines. This is a joint collaboration between the University of Sydney and Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong, with the aim of undertaking research and development into traditional Chinese medicines for the growing complementary medicine market. As Australia looks to Asia and our Asian Pacific partnership to further our economic growth, the links that we can establish through Chinese medicine provide fertile ground for future endeavours and the relationship.

As mentioned in this motion, the Australian complementary medicine industry is worth over \$3.8 billion and Australia is the first Western nation to nationally regulate Chinese medicine practitioners. Since July 2012, students and practitioners must be registered with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia. The board also manages complaints and disciplinary processes and assesses practitioners trained overseas who wish to practise in Australia. Registered individuals must commit to maintaining and developing their skills, spending at least 20 hours a year in training, meeting a minimum English language requirement and having professional indemnity cover to the value of at least \$5 million in liability. This oversight is vitally important to the Chinese medicine industry and to ensuring that Australians have ready and safe access to this unique international resource.

I acknowledge as part of the motion the important work being undertaken by the National Institute of Complementary Medicine and the role of the institute in cultivating investment, education and research opportunities in this exciting space. The complementary medicine sector has the potential to make significant advances on the burden of disease in Australia, particularly chronic disease, as well as boost our economy.

With the celebration of Chinese New Year, it is wonderful and appropriate for this parliament to pay tribute to the historical links between our two nations and, in particular, the wonderful link that Chinese medicine has provided in not only boosting both our economies but providing support for people-to-people links.

**Ms SCOTT** (Lindsay) (11:42): Madam Deputy Speaker Wicks, it is fabulous to see your elevation to the Speaker's Panel. Today I stand here as a proud advocate for my community of Western Sydney, shoulder to shoulder with my neighbour and ally the member for Macarthur. We are proud members of Western Sydney and we are proud of the future that Western Sydney will have.

Today we are talking about Chinese medicine. Chinese medicine is going to be very significant to the future jobs growth for the people of Western Sydney. As part of the Chinese free trade agreement, the Beijing University of Chinese medicine and the University of Western Sydney have joined together in researching Chinese medicine in Western Sydney. This will mean thousands and thousands of jobs for the people of Western Sydney. Already we have seen \$20 million from this memorandum of understanding flow to the University of Western Sydney. However, the MOU contains more than just that; it will form part of an innovation corridor that will go from Campbelltown through to Luddenham, up to Werrington and then across into Blacktown. This innovation corridor includes amazing projects like the Sydney Science Park, which will be located in Luddenham. The Sydney Science Park will be a new centre of excellence in the key growth areas of food security, energy and health. This internationally recognised epicentre for research and development will employ 12,200 professionals, educate 10,000 students and provide quality residences and infrastructure to cater to them. This is about as exciting as it can get. We are not talking about low-skilled jobs; we are talking about smart jobs. Western Sydney has long been viewed as the poor part of the rest of Australia, but every single member in this place who represents Western Sydney from our side and even those from the other side is a proud advocate of this community. What is exciting about today is that this Chinese medicine MOU with UWS will allow us to compete with an industry which generates \$4.7 million locally and \$170 billion right across the world. What we will be able to do is to start an accreditation process for Chinese medicines and potentially then look at how we could provide western manufacturing techniques to then commercialise these medicines. This is important news for the people of Western Sydney. This agreement capitalises on all of these successes, but it will take Chinese medicines and western medicines that very next step.

For the first time outside China, an accredited institute will scientifically evaluate the worth of all these herbal medicines. With the scientific research behind them, the University of Western Sydney will establish GP prototype clinics where conventional medicine and Chinese medicines will be offered side-by-side—complementing each other, not exclusive of each other. The aim is to get Chinese medicines accepted inside the local GP practice with the confidence behind them so that our local GPs know exactly what they are prescribing and they know they can trust them. The outcome is more choice for you, more choice for the consumer, and, in the end, better treatments and cheaper treatments for us all.

I would really like to applaud University of Western Sydney for taking this leading position. It is a university that I am an alumni of, and it is leading the world and providing huge opportunity for all Australians. Their own National Institute of Complementary Medicine will provide all of these services. This agreement really does show that the University of Western Sydney is a dynamic, daring, smart and innovative institution—an institution that I am very proud to hold a degree from. While this is very much a team effort, one of the driving forces behind all of this has been the Vice-Chancellor, Barney Glover, and the Chancellor, Peter Shergold. I would like to congratulate them for their forethought in putting this all together.

This is one agreement that is a fantastic story. It is good news for all Australians, and it will initially lead to the employment of around 90 Australians, and in the future potentially thousands. This education corridor will be fabulous for the people of Western Sydney, it will be fabulous for all Australians, and it will allow Australians to lead the way when it comes to medical research.

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:47): I thank my colleague the member for Macarthur for bringing this important motion forward to highlight the importance of complementary and alternative medicines and practices, particularly Chinese medicines. The fact is that the complementary medicine industry in Australia is worth about \$4 billion, and almost half of Australians are turning to alternative medicines and therapies. Given the significance of the growing influence in this area, I understand that a group of senior Chinese officials will be visiting Australia in July of this year to advance negotiations around the development of a traditional Chinese medicines regulatory body. The proposal will open up opportunities for research and development partnerships

between Australian and Chinese universities, together with global medical research institutes for the integration of traditional Chinese medicines.

I represent the most multicultural electorate in the country—a third of my electorate are of Asian heritage and almost 10 per cent of my electorate are Chinese speakers. As a result, there are a number of alternative or complementary medicine stores across my electorate, particularly in Cabramatta. A little while back I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of the Beijing Tong Ren Tang herbal medicine store in Cabramatta. This manufacturer has a proud track record. As a matter of fact its history can be traced back nearly 350 years. What it has done for local residents has certainly made it a lot easier for them to be able to access high quality traditional Chinese herbal medicines right in the heart of Western Sydney. This is particularly important for the elderly, many of whom I know swear by the benefits of traditional Chinese medicines. This becomes very important with an ageing population in Australia. Traditional Chinese medicine is expected to contribute to helping people live longer and healthier lives.

Western Sydney plays a very important part in the growing influence of alternative and complementary medicines, with one of the most important complementary medicine research centres, the National Institute of Complementary Medicine, situated at the University of Western Sydney. This institute is led by Professor Alan Bensoussan, a clinical researcher with over 25 years experience in Chinese medicine. Professor Bensoussan has been the lead investigator on numerous high-quality clinical trials of Chinese medicines and has conducted collaborative research projects with key institutions in China. His 1996 publication on the practices of traditional Chinese medicine led to the statutory regulation of all Chinese medicine practitioners in July last year, making Australia the first Western nation to regulate Chinese medicine practitioners.

In 2007 the NICM received \$4 million from the Australian government to enable its establishment. Currently the NICM is funded through the University of Western Sydney, industry partners, research grants and contracts. Today the NICM is Australia's premier research facility on complementary medicine and is the only research centre to receive the top ranking in the Commonwealth Excellence in Research for Australia scheme. Hosted by the University of Western Sydney, the NICM continues to foster collaboration with Australian and Chinese hospitals, research centres and universities in the area of complementary medicine to conduct research through an evidence based approach into complementary medicines alongside conventional medicines.

I would like to commend the efforts and undertakings of Professor Bensoussan and the University of Western Sydney and the NICM research institute for the comprehensive research that they have conducted in this area and in elevating the potential benefits of traditional Chinese therapy as it applies here in Australia. We live in a highly multicultural country with a strong connection to various Asian cultures and, therefore, we should be open to a number of these influences. It is important that the government continues to support and fund research into this area to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the various medicines and therapies that fall within this category.

Debate adjourned.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Taxation

**Dr LEIGH** (Fraser) (11:52): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

- (a) the Government's failure to tackle multinational profit shifting in Australia;
- (b) every dollar that is avoided by multinational companies must be paid for by Australian taxpayers and businesses, or by cutting services; and
- (c) unfair tax arrangements distort investment decisions and put local companies at a disadvantage against international conglomerates;

(2) acknowledges:

- (a) the \$1.1 billion of multinational tax measures that the Government has handed back to large multinationals, including:
  - (i) \$280 million in reforms to the offshore banking unit regime;
  - (ii) \$113 million in legislative elements to improve tax compliance;
  - (iii) \$140 million from not proceeding with changes to rules applying to multiple entry consolidated groups; and
  - (iv) \$600 million from the abolition of section 25-90 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997;
- (b) the Treasurer's laggard implementation of the new G20 reporting standard behind the group of 40 'early adopters';
- (c) the \$200 million and thousands of staff cuts from the Australian Taxation Office which severely limit its compliance and investigative power; and

(d) the significant gap between this Government's rhetoric and its actions when it comes to ensuring multinationals pay their fair share of tax; and

(3) calls on the Treasurer to bring the same zeal to stopping multinational tax avoidance that he brings to his budget cuts on Australia's least well off.

In the 1970s, Australian conservative governments notoriously lost between \$3 billion and \$6 billion in today's money, a huge share of revenue at the time, to domestic tax avoidance schemes involving thousands of Australian income earners. The revenue streamed away through loopholes which were eventually closed by two separate major tax changes. The second was following the Fraser-Howard government's public shaming by the Costigan royal commission.

The bottom-of-the-harbour schemes were one of the historic peaks of rent-seeking behaviour in the Australian economy and one of the historic troughs of effective administration of the public good. Paul Keating famously said that the economic opening of the 1980s 'despivved' the economy. It was exactly those tax dodgers and rent seekers who flourished under conservative economic policy in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s that he had in mind.

Today we are talking about 'despivving' the global economy. Since the Abbott government has come to office it has handed \$1.1 billion back to multinationals. These are multibillion dollar firms with multibillion dollar profits receiving multibillion dollar benefits under this government with no strings attached. The issue of base erosion and profit shifting has attracted significant attention. Even big firms themselves are concerned about it. In an interview with the *Australian Financial Review*, Rio Tinto chairman Jan du Plessis said, 'Too many multinationals are getting away with murder.' He also pointed out that 'tax regimes need to catch up with the consequences of globalisation'.

Martin Lock, formerly a senior official in the tax office, recently told Fairfax journalist Michael West:

Almost effortlessly, a new subsidiary, partnership or trust can be established in any favourable tax jurisdiction, including in a tax-treaty country ...

This is a process known as treaty shopping. He goes on to argue:

... the multinational can even shift a parent company or subsidiary's tax residency by doing little more than flying the board members to a chosen tax-treaty country and holding a tax-deductible annual board meeting there.

Loopholes such as the infamous double Irish Dutch sandwich have allowed a single technology firm to avoid \$3.4 billion in tax since 2007. But, while the Irish are closing the double Irish Dutch sandwich, the Australian government is doing nothing of the kind. At the recent G20 Leaders' Summit, Mr Hockey claimed that Australia had kicked off moves towards better financial transparency by committing to a 2017 start date for the so-called common reporting standard on banking information. But that start date puts Australia behind over 40 countries, including the UK, Germany, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and Jersey, which will start the process for automatic exchange of financial information a full year earlier than us, in 2016.

Since the Abbott government have come to office they have talked the talk about multinational profit shifting but they have not acted. There is not a single new dollar that they have added to the government bottom line through a crackdown on multinational profit shifting. Zero new revenue means zero new action. Their actions so far have been entirely in line with what the Liberal-National parties did in opposition, when they voted against Labor's Tax Laws Amendment (Countering Tax Avoidance and Multinational Profit Shifting) Bill 2013, which plugged loopholes in Australia's transfer-pricing rules and anti-avoidance provisions, and when they attempted to block our Tax Laws Amendment (Cross-Border Transfer Pricing) Bill (No. 1) 2012, a measure championed by the then Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation, Bill Shorten. As well as giving \$1.1 billion back to multinationals, the government have announced the sacking of 4,700 people from the Australian Taxation Office, including as many as 1,000 auditors with specific expertise in complex international tax structures. Some of these gamekeepers will likely turn poacher.

Last November I moved a private member's bill in this House to ensure that we get more information in the public domain. With the conversation about tax fairness roiling across the front pages and back bars of Australia, Labor believes that tax reporting should happen sooner, not later. Whether you think that multinationals should pay more tax or less tax, it is hard to see why you should believe the public debate ought to be dumbed down, but the Abbott government are opposing Labor's private member's bill to get more information out in the public arena. Labor will give strong consideration, if we win government, to reintroducing the measures scrapped by the Abbott government when they came to office. Those include reforming the offshore banking unit to ensure that only genuine offshore banking activities access a concessional rate, changes to multiple entry consolidated groups to ensure neutrality between foreign and domestic companies, and the repeal of section 25-90.

This is not anti business. It is about making sure that all businesses pay their share, grounded in the principles of equity, efficiency and simplicity. *(Time expired)*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks):** Is there a seconder for this motion?

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

**Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (11:58):** I think the shadow Assistant Treasurer thinks he is addressing undergraduates at ANU rather than the Australian parliament. It is clearly evident he still views the world from the ivory tower. As a former CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and also, very early in my career, the Director of the Business Taxation section of the federal Treasury, I know a bit about this topic, so allow me to draw on decades of real-life experience at the forefront of policy debate on business and taxation to enlighten him.

The notion that the Australian Labor Party is the party that is serious about cracking down on the tax practices of big business is ridiculous. It is preposterous. It is laughable. The fact is that nothing could be further from the truth. Recall if you will the disaster of the mining tax, a tax the shadow Assistant Treasurer wants to reinstate. This is a tax, I remind you, that fell short of the original revenue estimates—and it did not fall a little short; it fell 97 per cent short. The shadow Assistant Treasurer and the Labor Party irresponsibly locked in billions of dollars of expenditure on the basis of anticipated mining tax revenue. Rather than taxing multinational companies, the perverse outcome of the mining tax before it was abolished was that it was actually doing the reverse—it was paying money to multinationals. It was doing the exact reverse of what the shadow Assistant Treasurer claims. So be very cautious when listening to those opposite on matters of taxation. Someone we might want to listen to is the Secretary-General of the OECD, Angel Gurría. Talking about Australia's strong leadership in international tax policy, he said:

Had it not been for the very serious political support that we have gotten from the G20 presidency of Australia, really we would not have gotten here.

As the Secretary-General noted, the coalition is very concerned about the issues of base erosion and profit sharing. We understand that the issue of multinational corporate tax avoidance is a subject of considerable public discussion. We understand that, and that is why the coalition will continue to examine the issue and we will not hesitate to take action.

This government is pursuing all avenues to ensure multinationals pay their fair share of tax. Unlike the view from the ivory tower, the reality is not straightforward. The development of the digital economy has made this endeavour increasingly complex. Australia has a suite of robust domestic laws to counter base erosion and profit sharing. These domestic laws include a comprehensive thin capitalisation regime; they include controlled foreign company laws; they include tough transfer pricing rules; and they include extensive anti avoidance rules.

The coalition is providing \$87.6 million to the Australian Taxation Office over the next three years to review the affairs of companies that have undertaken an international restructure or have significant levels of related-party, cross-border arrangements. Our domestic processes are not enough; international cooperation is required to address these issues. Significant progress has been achieved to date on the OECD's two-year base erosion and profit-sharing action plan, and Australia is a key contributor. As G20 president in 2014, Australia was at the forefront of promoting progress of this international cooperation. There has been significant progress to date, and it is anticipated that the remaining recommendations will be finalised by December of this year.

The base erosion and profit-sharing plan is ambitious, but it is something that we need to get right. We, like the OECD and other G20 member countries, have been consulting with business on the agenda, and we will continue to do so. We need to ensure that the structures that we put in place are effective and do not merely create an impost on international trade and economic growth. For example, following consultation with stakeholders and the ATO it became clear that the targeted anti-avoidance provisions of which this shadow assistant Treasurer has had so much to say would be ineffective. That is why it will no longer form part of the broader package of measures to address profit shifting by excessive allocation of debt of the Australian operations of multinationals. This is a case of conducting the necessary due diligence and consultation with stakeholders and delivering optimal outcomes. This is the way it is done in the real world. We saw far too much evidence of public policy being made without due diligence and without consultation under the last government. Nonetheless I can assure you that we are committed to working as hard as we can to make sure that companies that earn profits in Australia pay tax in Australia. I thank the chamber.

**Mr SWAN (Lilley) (12:03):** I wish to commend Dr Leigh on moving this motion but lament the fact that we need to move the motion in the first place. The Labor Party has always been committed to ensuring that everyone, including large multinational companies and wealthy citizens pay their fair share of tax so that working families and small businesses are not disadvantaged by having to take on a higher tax burden in the future as a result of rampant tax minimisation by some multinational companies—pushing up tax rates for working families and for small business. We understand that we need to ensure that our system is competitive and attracts investment, but

the best tax system is one that is fair and progressive. During my time as Treasurer, we acted to prevent these tax minimisation strategies, which were aggressive and which were leaching our revenue and pushing tax rates up for working people and other small businesses. That is why there was a comprehensive package in 2012-13 budget to crack down on this profit shifting overseas and rampant tax evasion.

The very first act of the new government was to wind back this package. They knocked off \$1 billion worth of revenue measures which were stopping multinational companies from avoiding tax and pushing their profits overseas. We were fairly aggressive in putting in place a range of measures to ensure that there was an exchange of information with other countries and, indeed, the Swiss agreement was put in place by our government.

What we were doing through this period was closing loopholes which were actually opened by the Howard-Costello government over a decade. That is why we needed these measures which would have brought \$4 billion of revenue, and the government has already shred \$1 billion of that. This is on top of its first act, which was to throw away \$12 billion in revenue which otherwise would have been paid by multinational mining companies and other large power companies by knocking off a carbon price, knocking off some fairness in the superannuation system and then knocking off measures to stop rampant tax evasion. So it was not surprising that almost the first act of this government was to give away \$1 billion in revenue that was contained in our BEPS package to multinational companies.

All of this happened at the same time as the government doubled the deficit in its first midyear update. It followed that with hitting the sick, the unemployed and pensioners with savage cuts and tax increases, precisely as it was doubling the deficit and giving away billions of dollars of revenue. That is why we say this is a government which is strong in taxing the weak and weak in taxing the strong. It is a government that is not serious about charting a pathway back to surplus because, if it were, it would not be giving away the revenue.

You only have to look at the coalition's record here. They consistently opposed all of the measures under our government where we were seeking to plug these loopholes in the system. Now they use the excuse that they cannot move so fast because they need some sort of international cooperation. That is bunkum. They do not need that. What they need to do is to get down and raise the revenue. What this is really about is that the government are blowing out the deficit as the excuse to seek the public permission for the harsh cuts that they are seeking to impose. That is why they are blowing out the deficit. They are so embarrassed they did not admit to these goals prior to the election, so they say, 'We'll give away the revenue, we will blow out the deficit and then the public might accept these cuts.'

What we need in this country is a balanced approach about the return to surplus which will involve concentration not only on the spending side of the budget but also on the revenue side of the budget. This government has created a problem with its revenue. It has done that by giving big tax breaks to all of its mates. We on this side of the House have consistently acted on multinational tax minimisation—some may even call it evasion. We have acted on BEPS at the same time that these people have been getting massive tax cuts from those on the other side. This is a government that claims it is open for business. It is open for business alright—open to giving huge tax cuts to a select number of very large multinational companies on the one hand and, on the other, jacking up taxes and the burden on those who are most vulnerable. This is all about an underlying agenda to put the tax burden on working people and take it off the very large corporates. *(Time expired)*

**Dr LEIGH** (Fraser) (12:08): by leave—The issue of multinational profit shifting is about fairly sharing the revenue burden. As the former Treasurer, the member for Lilley, has pointed out, this is about revenue adequacy because when a handful of big businesses ship their profits offshore it hits the federal budget's bottom line. It is about fairly sharing the revenue burden. When a small number of big firms do the wrong thing, it is the great majority of businesses, large and small, the self-employed and the PAYG taxpayers who end up paying more than they should. It is also about our prospects for long-term growth. If we do not tackle multinational profit shifting, we are effectively turning a blind eye to distortions in the market which are going to slow economic growth over time.

These are the sorts of dumb failings in the tax system which the former Treasurer set about trying to fix because they are loopholes that reward the wrong kind of ethic and they operate unnervingly like those old-fashioned subsidies, that old McEwenist policy, which favoured producers over consumers, which distorted the allocation of resources and which encouraged firms not to test themselves against the market but to test themselves against the rule book. We do not need that kind of economic activity because that is harmful economic activity—it encourages firms to focus their energies on getting their accountants to play with loopholes—loopholes that might allow debt shifting within organisations not in order to improve the productive capacity of the economy but in order to find the next loophole in the tax system. It operates a bit like trade wars, where each of us draws our knife only to have the effect of cutting off one another's face. We need to be able to confidently sustain an adequate revenue base.

*A government member interjecting—*

**Dr LEIGH:** Did you want to speak on this? If you do, that is excellent—one never knows whether a coalition speaker is going to turn up in these debates. I would like to see them in this chamber. I would like to see them having more than one member from that side engaging in these important debates on multinational profit shifting. These are the debates that ought to be bipartisan, because no-one in this House should stand for an extra tax loophole; no-one in this House should support giving a billion dollars back to multinationals while cutting the wages of the cleaners who clean our officers. They are the wrong priorities for Australia—that is not just against Labor values; it is against Australia's fundamental egalitarian values. With these sorts of McEwenist arguments against reform, it feels to me as though we are engaging in that old tariff debate all over again in which we have members walking in here supporting loopholes which, in the end, might be good for a few sharp-witted accountants but end up being bad for the budget bottom line.

Inequality has been growing steadily for the past generation—it did not rise over the last six years of Labor in government; from 2007 to 2013 inequality did not rise. But it is significantly higher than it was in the 1970s. To give just one statistic, the top one per cent has doubled its income share; the top 0.1 per cent tripled its income share. If you are in the bottom tenth of the wage distribution, your real earnings grew \$7,000 over the last generation, but if you are in the top tenth your real earnings grew \$47,000—more than three times the wage growth at the top of the distribution that we see at the bottom of the distribution.

So now is the very last time that we need a government to be giving money away to firms with multibillion-dollar profits while taking money away from pensioners, from those who are sick and by forcing the unemployed to spend six months without benefits, perhaps sleeping in a car, if they are unable to find a job. Australia's egalitarian values demand that we have a smarter approach on multinational profit shifting. The member opposite pointed out that the government is not proceeding with a targeted anti-avoidance provision. That is a provision the government promised it would put in place. They said they would not proceed with our repeal of 25-90 and they promised at the end of 2013 a targeted anti-avoidance provision. A year later, they broke that promise—like so many other promises that have been broken since this government came to office.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice):** The time allotted for this debate has expired.

### **Human Rights: North Korea**

**Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (12:13):** I move:

That this House notes that the:

- (1) United Nations commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) released its report in March 2014;
- (2) report found that 'systemic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the DPRK, its institutions and officials' against its own people, including:
  - (a) violations of the:
    - (i) freedoms of thought, expression and religion;
    - (ii) freedom of movement and residence; and
    - (iii) right to food and related aspects of the right to life;
  - (b) discrimination;
  - (c) arbitrary detention, torture, executions and prison camps; and
  - (d) abductions and enforced disappearances from other countries;
- (3) report found that crimes against humanity have been committed in the DPRK 'pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State'; and
- (4) Government:
  - (a) welcomes the United Nations Security Council's decision on 23 December 2014 to include a standing agenda item on the situation in the DPRK under which it can continue to consider the dire human rights situation; and
  - (b) continues to call on the DPRK to:
    - (i) treat its citizens in accordance with human rights standards; and
    - (ii) create the conditions for meaningful inter-Korean dialogue and Six Party Talks, including honouring DPRK commitments to denuclearise and demonstrating good faith, such as participating in inter-Korean family reunions.

It is an honour to move this motion and to talk on what is one of the worst human rights atrocities in the world today. We can speak in this place referencing the damning evidence and findings outlined in the report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which was released last year. Never before have we had the benefit of such a comprehensive, evidence-based report detailing the systematic and widespread human-rights violations in North Korea.

Before going further, I would like to commend the excellent work of the Hon. Michael Kirby as chair of this UN inquiry and the many others who I am sure contributed in putting this report together. The report makes for truly harrowing reading, reaching its carefully weighted conclusions on the testimony of hundreds of witnesses. Some of the most heinous crimes against humanity are listed in the findings, and these continue to be perpetrated against the people of North Korea by its institutions and officials to this day.

The report also notes the existence of a network of prison camps where as many as 120,000 North Korean citizens are held. Forced labour is a fact of life for the citizens of these camps. Prisoners are raped and forced to abort their unborn children. They are killed through deliberate starvation, torture and executions. The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea estimates that over 400,000 people have already died in these prison camps.

It is also no secret that the North Korean society is tightly controlled through a program of indoctrination, fear and institutionalised discrimination. In the 2014 Freedom House report, North Korea was listed as 'not free' and given the worst rating in the three categories of freedom, civil liberties and political rights.

These recent reports add to the picture of widespread human rights abuses in North Korea that were outlined in the findings of this UN commission report. This is a situation that should be and regularly is condemned by this government and other states around the world. The Australian government regularly raises its concerns about shocking human rights abuses in North Korea, both in multilateral forums and bilaterally. On 23 September last year, Minister Bishop joined US Secretary of State John Kerry and other foreign affairs ministers in New York to again draw the attention of the world to the appalling human rights abuses in North Korea. Australia's diplomatic representatives also raise these concerns directly with North Korean ministers and officials when they meet.

As a strong advocate for the promotion and protection of human rights and as a country deeply concerned by the continued oppression of North Korea's people, Australia has been a consistent supporter of the UN commission of inquiry. Australia co-sponsored the March 2013 Human Rights Council resolution that established the commission, and we also co-sponsored the 18 December UN General Assembly resolution that supported the recommendations of the commission's inquiry report.

I am especially pleased that, during Australia's term on the UN Security Council, we were able to lead efforts to have the terrible human rights situation in North Korea discussed by the council for the first time, on 22 December. As noted in this motion, and as a result of Australian diplomatic efforts, the situation in North Korea is now a permanent fixture on the Security Council's agenda.

We have been pleased to help lead increasing calls worldwide for improvements to the way the North Korean government treats its people. Of course, Australia's efforts in this area are wide ranging, and we have a long history of providing humanitarian aid and support to the people of North Korea. Australia has consistently provided humanitarian aid for North Koreans. In 2013-14, we provided \$3 million for North Korean mothers and children through the UN World Food Program.

Australia also helps vulnerable people in North Korea in accordance with humanitarian aid and human rights principles. We know that far too many North Koreans, through no fault of their own, face dire circumstances and are severely malnourished. I would also point out that our provision of humanitarian aid is consistent with the commission of inquiry's recommendation that states not use provision of food to impose economic or political pressure on North Korea.

Australia strongly supports the commission's calls for accountability for the perpetrators of human-rights violations and the crimes against humanity. To this end, we co-sponsored the March 2014 Human Rights Council resolution. We also strongly supported the proposal that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should establish a human-rights field-monitoring office on North Korean violations, and I am pleased to hear that this office is due to open in Seoul next month. Australia will also be working to ensure that the upcoming Human Rights Council session in March passes a strong resolution on human rights in North Korea to continue the work of the commission of inquiry.

Going forward, Australia will continue to raise North Korea's poor human rights record with the North Korean government. We will also continue to strongly support access to North Koreans for human-rights monitors. With or without success, I thank those collecting evidence of North Korea's human rights violations. The commission of inquiry and the new field office undertake important work in the gathering of evidence by which North Korea's regime will inevitably be judged.

I am glad to see that the North Korean government consented, a year ago, to allowing 300 Koreans to participate in the first family reunions since 2010. That does not, however, diminish the fact that there are still 70,000 South Koreans awaiting reunions, and I along with my government colleagues appeal to the North Korean authorities to let these reunions take place before more members of divided families pass away.

The tensions prevailing on the Korean peninsula are deeply concerning, and I am sure all in this House encourage North Korea to return to the six-party talks with constructive proposals for denuclearisation. It is also vital that the North Korean regime engages meaningfully with South Korea in the trust-building dialogue which South Korean President Park has offered.

On a personal level, I was recently fortunate to assist in arranging a visit to my electorate of Reid by a team of North Korean deaf footballers. Supported by a strong local Korean community, the North Korean deaf football team travelled to Australia to play in their first friendly international game against Australia late last year. It was an inspiration to witness the endeavours of this group of young athletes, who are severely challenged on a personal level let alone by the huge challenges that life in North Korea present for everybody. It was particularly touching as I am the proud father of a hearing impaired child.

I am especially thankful to my local Korean community representatives, who have been tirelessly working with me and my office in ensuring that I am up to date with the most recent announcements and progress on this issue. In particular, I would like to thank Cr Sang Ok; Tae Hyun Kim; the North Korean Human Rights Advancement Association in Australia, a recently established NGO promoting the advancement of human rights in North Korea; and Susan Lee and all of her committee at the National Unification Advisory Council in Australia for the many hours they have spent with me in recent months in putting together this motion.

I had the honour of having the Minister for Foreign Affairs in my electorate towards the end of last year, not long after this report was released. My local Korean community, a strong, vibrant and proud community, many of whose members have links back to North and South Korea, arranged for half-a-dozen refugees who have been in the labour camps to tell the foreign minister, members of my local community and me their very personal stories. They told us about how they escaped, what their life looked like and what they went through. You cannot sit and listen to these stories without breaking into tears. The foreign minister was no exception to that, nor was I or anyone else in that room. It was probably one of the most powerful hours I have spent since having the honour of representing the people of Reid. It is said that to represent their community a member of federal parliament must understand their community. I thank my local Korean community, centred predominantly around Strathfield and Lidcombe, for arranging that experience for the foreign minister and me that day. That is the motive behind not only this motion but the need for this government and the opposition to do more, in a bipartisan way, with all around the globe. I again thank Sang Ok, the newly formed North Korean human rights association and Susan Lee and her committee. I look forward to continuing to work with them. I hope they keep presenting me with powerful examples by which we can advocate on their behalf.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr DANBY** (Melbourne Ports) (12:23): I second the motion. In 2009, I organised an international conference on human rights in North Korea. It took place at the Hyatt hotel in Melbourne. It was opened by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. I hope it helped the change in the international atmosphere that has taken place on attitudes to the gross abuse of human rights in North Korea. In my view, it is the worst human rights situation in the world. That is a big call, but the number of concentration camps and the hundreds of thousands of people in them and the general terror that people in North Korea live in make it worthy of that description.

I welcome Judge Kirby's important inquiry. I cannot speak highly enough of him. It is amazing—which is a bit of an understatement—that the Security Council passed a resolution based on his inquiry, given the automatic majorities that take place at the Security Council. It just shows the level of detail and the hard work that a person of his standing was able to bring, in almost impossible circumstances, to the UN Security Council to actually get it to pass a resolution at the Security Council level on human rights.

My opposition to the Gulag-style system of North Korea's concentration camps has been long standing. I have spoken on this since I became a member of parliament in 1998. In 2009, I hosted in conjunction with the South Korean organisation Citizens' Alliance, a great organisation which supports North Korean refugees coming to South Korea, the ninth international conference on human rights in North Korea—a phenomenon which I think is partially responsible for this very important change in world attitudes to the abuse of human rights in North Korea. It was a bit of an ambitious project for an individual member of parliament; nonetheless, we pulled it off. It was the first of these international conferences opened by a foreign minister and was attended by 250 domestic and international delegates, including government officials, human rights activists and the previous special rapporteur of the UN on human rights in North Korea.

The conference was marked by pessimism and frustration. We discussed how North Korea continues to demand and receive large amounts of aid as a price for its behaviour in the nuclear stakes and its brinkmanship on the Korean peninsula, but that did not seem to improve its behaviour with regard to its own citizens. Six years have passed since the conference, and there is, at least, a changed international atmosphere about the internal

situation in North Korea. That is a very good thing and a big development, because it did not happen before then. The situation on the ground is probably as bad as ever, but at least people outside around the world, particularly in Asia, have focused on this issue.

We heard shocking stories of the plight of North Korea's people who are starved, regimented, deprived of the most basic rights, trapped in an Orwellian nightmare of lies and propaganda and cut off from the outside world. I think there are close to 300,000 people languishing in these labour camps. Some of them are incarcerated by generations, so that if a grandson is arrested then the whole family, including the grandparents' generation, is arrested. If the grandparent is arrested, the children and grandchildren are forced into these gulags.

It is 2015, and what has changed? In the 3½ decades since Deng Xiaoping's reforms in China, at least China has a partial market economy and has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. It is 25 years since the first free elections in Poland, which marked the end of European communism, yet the world still confronts the dilemma of what to do with 25 million people in North Korea, the last relic of high Stalinism from the era of the Cold War. Only in North Korea is there this deadly combination of a totally repressive political system and an unworkable economic regime still in place.

As this motion recalls, the 372-page *Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, chaired by former Australian High Court Justice Michael Kirby, has been released. According to Kirby, the purpose of the report was to ensure that we cannot say, 'We didn't know.' This parliament has just debated a resolution on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. One of the terrible things about the genocide during the Second World War was that people claimed that they did not know that it was happening. When I ran this conference in 2009 that was one of the driving impetuses for it. I was very proud to publish and you can still see the reports of the conference on my website. It is the first time ever that a map was published of all of the concentration camps in North Korea. Justice Kirby got to the point of it: people cannot say that they did not know about North Korea. We know where these people are. We know the circumstances under which they are existing. We know where these camps are. We know the names of them.

This unrivalled and damning report by the inquiry chaired by Justice Kirby, a year in the making, has presented evidence of countless abuses by the North Korean government and military that, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported, 'shock the conscience of humanity'. Justice Kirby's report states:

These crimes against humanity entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation.

What an indictment. Kirby's panel recommended the situation in North Korea be referred to the International Criminal Court; but, with North Korea's ally holding veto power over the Security Council, this is unlikely to happen. However, it was refreshing, as I said, that the Security Council adopted the human rights abuses of North Korea as a standing agenda item.

I ask: where are the demonstrators? Where are the people who exhibit such conscience in other areas on this issue of North Korea? Surely, when Justice Kirby released his report they should have been in the streets. When the report was released last year, Justice Kirby hoped that it would refresh dialogue on the atrocities committed in North Korea. The problem is that I do not think it has. People have tut-tutted but not enough has changed. The reality is that no amount of persuasion or bribery will induce Kim Jong-un to moderate his regime, because he and the army and secret police apparatus which he depends on care only about holding onto their power and wealth.

The continued existence of this regime in North Korea confronts all people of good will with a terrible dilemma. If we cut this country off from all aid in the hope that it will bring about the downfall of the regime it will increase the suffering of the people. If, on the other hand, the world engages with North Korea and increases its aid, the regime will, as it has always done, use it to feed the party and military elite and starve the people. This is a terrible dilemma but some decisions can be made that will help quicken the inevitable collapse of this repugnant regime.

First, there needs to be increased pressure on China over its treatment of North Korean defectors, particularly those people who travel to the Chinese-North Korean border. The UNHCR should be given access to the border region so that these people can act under some kind of protection.

Second, we must create every opportunity for North Koreans to engage with the outside world. This will help them see that the paradise which their regime tells them they live in is an Orwellian falsehood. Whether North Koreans come here as students, diplomats or most recently, as the previous speaker mentioned, as sportspeople when Australia hosted the Asian Cup, every North Korean who is exposed to the outside world can become an agent of change when they go home.

Third, the Australian government needs to introduce laws making it illegal for any Australian citizen to be involved in business dealings with the North Korean government. It was dismaying to see a report in August last year that a private equity firm, SRE Minerals, signed a joint venture with the North Korean regime's Korea Natural Resources Trading Corporation to develop a mining operation. This kind of venture can only assist in maintaining North Korea's iron-fisted control over its population. The Pyongyang regime needs hard currency and it is clear that these and other projects that I have not mentioned could provide billions of dollars to North Korea and help keep the North Korean leadership in power.

To people around the world Kim Jong-un may be a figure of fun, with his high-style haircuts. His father was a figure of fun in that memorable animated film titled *Team America: World Police*. But these people are not really just a joke; they are not just something for us to laugh at. The people of North Korea have suffered decades-long oppression. When you meet North Korean people, as I am sure the member who spoke previously has, you can see that they are a foot shorter than South Korean people as a result of the starvation and deprivation that they have faced. Theirs is a terrible situation. Congratulations to Justice Kirby on his report. I am pleased to the parliament raised this topic.

**Mr ALEXANDER** (Bennelong) (12:34): I also rise in support of the motion moved by my colleague the member for Reid on the appalling situation in North Korea, and I support the words of my friend and colleague the member for Melbourne Ports. I would like to echo their concerns about the horrendous violations of human rights that are occurring in North Korea. The widespread nature of these violations is as shocking as the incidents themselves. Living life in a 1984 simulation, with fear and rumour of the fates that have befallen your compatriots, is a concept too awful to contemplate. However, dwelling on the injustice and terror of this regime achieves few results.

Thanks in part to the United Nations' excellent report and the Australian government's work to bring this to the Security Council, the entire world now knows the depravity of life in North Korea. I firmly believe that the conversation needs to swing towards the hope for the future and an aspiration of change. Negativity can only reinforce the status quo; positivity can aspire to change it. This is a view shared by a number of my constituents. Bennelong has one of the largest Korean communities in the country, and I have spoken with a several community leaders in the last few days to prepare for this debate. I am grateful to Jason Koh of the Korean Chamber of Commerce, Agnes Shim of the Korean Women's Association and, particularly, Mr Kim, who shared memories of his time in the north. All have informed me of the 'tentative hope' that they hold for the future and their cousins across the border; yet, in a sign of the sad reality, Mr Kim did not want me to use his full name in this speech for fear of reprisals on his family that remain behind.

Unfortunately, time is not on our side. Many people in my local Korean community are 70 years or more. They remember the days of an undivided Korea and have relatives on the other side of the border. Reunions, when they are allowed by the North Koreans, see no more than 300 people to connect with each other for 24 hours. Even for this paltry time, there are over 70,000 people on the waiting list. The current rate of reunions is unworkable and many families will not have the chance to be reunited before it is too late. I join the government in calling for the north to allow more of these reunions, as a matter of urgency.

On behalf of the Korean community in my electorate of Bennelong, I join the government in welcoming the UN's report. It is essential that everybody be aware of the terrible things happening in North Korea, and I commend the Foreign Minister and everybody else who helped get this into debate in the Security Council. What happens next will be critical. My constituents have told me of the genuine determination of many in the north to stay the course that they have set themselves. As such, threats do not work. But as one of them said, 'It is the soft rain that soaks in.'

This motion ends by calling for dialogue between the Koreas, and a demonstration of good faith through participation in inter-Korean family reunions. I am sure that this dialogue and openness is the way forward. Family reunions must be one of the central objectives of negotiations. The good faith garnered through these, not to mention the connections created, will surely help to gradually open up relations and access to this closed nation. Other soft power tactics are also welcome. Perhaps one day the north can even send a team to join my Bennelong Cup International Table Tennis Tournament, as the south does? Anything is possible. If this soft power can lead to meaningful discussions on human rights or other subjects, we are halfway there.

North Korea is one of the world's last pariah states. One by one, detente has crept across the diplomatic world, opening up closed states to the point where even Iran has started communicating with the west. I do not know how this will change for North Korea. I hope it will be through a groundswell of opinion perhaps started from growing openness following family reunions. We can hope. However, if it comes about, I am hopeful that, very soon, the Korean community in Bennelong and across Australia will be able to relax in the knowledge that their cousins

back home are not threatened by tyranny and have all the benefits of a free society that we are so lucky to enjoy in this country. I congratulate the member for Reid for raising this important motion and I commend it to the House.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON** (Werriwa) (12:39): I congratulate the mover of this motion, the member for Reid, who has noted heavy Korean settlement in suburbs such as Lidcombe, and also, more particularly, the member for Melbourne, who has fought for this issue on a broader front, making sure that outside this House there was a conference that discussed this issue some years ago.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are organisations which, as gadflies, are often unpopular with many countries because they are critical of those countries on so many fronts. But they are no strangers to human rights abuses. Amnesty International has said of North Korea that it is 'in a category of its own'. As I say, they are no strangers to these issues. Human Rights Watch has spoken of it as 'a nation that continues to impose totalitarian rule with systematic denial of basic freedoms'. As other speakers have said, this is a country in a category of its own. Quite clearly, the level of abuse is by any standard horrific. It has been mentioned that the average size of North Korean citizens is far lower than that of South Koreans—27 per cent of children are born underweight. Obviously, there is malnutrition throughout the land; often it is state instigated—whether by seizure of crops or by policies that lead in that direction. I do not want to get into controversies about World War II, but former Justice Kirby said that he wished the definition of genocide was not as narrow as it is, because it was not wide enough to find genocide in the case of North Korea. That is how horrific he found the situation there.

As the member for Melbourne Ports says, in the arcane procedures and the self-interested support of nations for each other, it is very difficult to get Security Council activity around any one country. To accomplish this shows both the international disrespect for North Korea's regime and the work that Kirby has done on this issue. It is difficult. To have accomplished that resolution with all the self-interest and playing off of issues—you protect me, and I protect you and I will not interfere here—really does say something. We have a situation here where there are reports of women being raped within detention centres and prisons and then they are murdered to make sure the crime never comes to light. There is clear evidence not of a reduction, but an expansion in the numbers of prisoners since 2010. Clearly, we are not advancing under the new leader. The United Nations and private charities are not allowed in to monitor food or the circumstances of those in need. North Korea negotiates for food with the Western world and for tentative agreements over weapons, but there is no monitoring of how that is delivered. Whatever the rest of the world gives is seen as a gift to the state. Ji Hyunah, a person who fled in the 1990s, claimed in the UK *Telegraph* on 16 February that prisoners were given no food whatsoever, forcing them to eat frogs and grasshoppers to survive. She also claimed they forced an abortion on her without anaesthetic, leaving her bleeding heavily long after.

In a country which has very strong geopolitical interests in the region—and where an aunt of former Prime Minister Menzies was an early Christian missionary—it is quite appropriate that we take an interest. It is a situation which is beyond the pale. People are actually persecuted for knowing about the rest of the world. All means for getting information are suppressed—if you are found to be watching DVDs or having access to any technology that informs you, there is trouble. Pressure must continue to be maintained on China because of its policy of sending back people who clearly have claims for asylum to North Korea. I commend the movers and the other people who are supporting this resolution.

**Mr RANDALL** (Canning) (12:44): I too would like to support this resolution brought to this chamber by the member for Reid. I congratulate him for doing so and all the other members who have spoken, or are about to speak, on this motion. Your words are profound, and we are here to support the human rights of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

There is no doubt that these human rights abuses are well documented. However, unless we continue to ventilate them, as has been done today, and particularly in supporting the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, whose report was released in March 2014 by former Justice Kirby, we will not be doing our job.

I want to talk about some anecdotal evidence because late last year I led a delegation to Japan and South Korea. One of the clerks at the table, Mr Jerome Brown, was the delegation secretary, and he will confirm much of what I have to say in terms of some of the observations that we made. North Korea is a country that has been run and controlled by a tyrannical family dynasty since 1948. It started with Kim Il Sung from 1948 to 1994, 46 years, then his son Kim Jong Il from 1994 to 2011, 17 years. Now we have Kim Jong Un, who has been in place since 2011. This family company, which essentially runs North Korea on behalf of its own interest, does so by persecuting, starving and treating its own people with greatest of disrespect and the maximum amount of abuse possible.

It is true that they are starving. We went to the demilitarised zone. We looked at some of the issues. We stood on the border and looked across into Korea. Bizarrely, they have a convoy which leaves South Korea and goes into North Korea on a daily basis. They have to be escorted militarily as a convoy so that some of the families can go there and visit their relatives, as we have already heard. But what is even more bizarre is that there are companies now operating out of South Korea which take day trips of tourists to go and see the circus which is North Korea. Very expensively, they sell places for people to go and look at the mad, crazy, despotic circus which is North Korea.

The current leader, as I said, is Mr Kim Jong Un, with his great bouffant hairdo. It seems to be a sort of family tradition that you have to have that sort of hairdo to follow the family traditions. His greatest claim to fame is that his best friend is Dennis Rodman, the crazy, body pierced, heavily tattooed ex American basketballer. They sit there and smoke huge Cuban cigars and drink the best cognac while the people starve.

To that end, as our secretary will tell you, the people of South Korea who have family there and feel desperately for those people living there do strange things like get chocolate biscuits and tie them to helium balloons, wait for the prevailing winds and release them so that the people of North Korea can taste some luxury for once in their life. What is even more bizarre is that these chocolate biscuits are now becoming a currency in North Korea. If they get them, they can actually trade them and use them as some currency to buy proper food. This is just out of control.

To demonstrate how desperate they are: a former South Korean President along with the Hyundai company decided that they would try and help them develop a cattle industry. There are virtually no trees or grass because the people are eating it. They took 2,000 cattle in a great cattle convoy, which some people may well have read about, to go and start this cattle-breeding industry to feed the people of North Korea. Sadly, they ate the cattle. There is no cattle industry left.

Besides the fact that the North Koreans are persecuting and starving their own people, there is a greater responsibility from the neighbours in the region. Yes, North Korea can afford atomic weapons. Yes, they can afford great ships of destruction and the military that is in place, but they cannot afford to feed their own people.

**Mr GRIFFIN** (Bruce) (12:49): I join with other speakers in commending the member for Reid for bringing this motion before the House. When we look at the circumstances around North Korea, often when we see it portrayed in the international media—with films like *Team America: World Police* or even more recently *The Interview*—it is seen as a source of fun because, frankly, what is occurring there and has occurred there goes beyond the ridiculous. However, the commission of inquiry that the UN conducted actually highlighted that, although it is increasingly bizarre, the fact is it is also horrific. The circumstances faced by the people in North Korea, the nature of the regime, the way that it perpetrates crimes against humanity with respect to its own people and the nature of how it relates to the rest of the world lead, in fact, to an incredibly serious situation that requires international focus and international condemnation but also, on from that, international efforts to try and engage and to try and ensure that a way is found through the madness that is the regime that is in place in North Korea.

As some members know, I spent three months late last year at the United Nations in New York. One of the highlights of the time that I was there was a seminar sponsored by the Australian mission to the UN, which had Michael Kirby, the distinguished jurist and member of the commission of inquiry, there and actually going through the detail of the findings. Part of that was also to meet and hear from some dissidents who had in fact escaped the clutches of the North Korean regime, but also—and this was farcical—to hear the representatives of North Korea seek to defend the position of their government with respect to the findings of the commission.

I encapsulate that in a few basic points. Justice Kirby made it clear that the horror of what he had seen and had been told was, frankly, horrific and it was something which required international action. He made it clear that the commission of inquiry had done everything that they could to engage with the North Korean authorities, but that those attempts had been to no avail. He made it clear that there needed to be action taken on an ongoing basis to ensure that the issues in North Korea were not just forgotten and swept under the carpet. The thing that you find with the UN is that it is actually dealing with so many horrific issues at any one time that it is not hard to have a situation where matters such as this do not get the time and scrutiny that they deserve.

Certainly this report was detailed and complex and it went to the very essence of the evil that is the North Korean regime. The report had some 400 pages; some 80 witnesses in Seoul, Tokyo, London and Washington; more than 240 confidential interviews; and 80 formal submissions from different entities. It was comprehensive, and its findings were absolutely terrible. The crimes committed against the people of North Korea by their government know no bounds, and they are based in a philosophy and an ideology which is perverted in the extreme and actually impacts directly on the wellbeing of the people that they aim to say that they seek to protect but clearly do not. Facts such as that the average North Korean is an astounding six inches shorter than their South

Korean counterpart, which goes directly to issues of malnutrition, to access to health care and to the actual basis of what people need to live a decent life; that there are something like 80,000 to 120,000 political prisoners currently detained; and the that those camps are totalitarian horrors that ensure that people are treated in conditions which are absolutely inhumane.

I commend the fact that the UN Security Council has put the situation of human rights abuse in North Korea on the agenda as a watching brief for the future. I think it is important that these matters are reviewed on an ongoing basis and they are highlighted. I am at a loss to know the way forward in terms of how we would get change in North Korea. The one thing I am certain of is that we will not get change if we do not, as an international community, focus on what is occurring there, if we do not raise those issues publicly, and if we do not ensure that that regime has to answer for the crimes that is committing.

Debate adjourned.

### Protection of Civilians

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON** (Wills) (12:54): I thank the House for the chance to move this private member's motion. I move:

That this House:

(1) stresses the superiority of collective security through the United Nations over unilateral action or 'coalition of the willing' type adventurism, and strongly supports the 'responsibility to protect' principle as a vehicle to protect civilians; and

(2) urges the Government to:

(a) encourage the United Nations to establish peacekeeping forces in the world's trouble spots to protect civilians and to extinguish conflicts before they escalate in ways which potentially draw in Australia; and

(b) implement the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade regarding the establishment of a mediation unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to assist in resolving intrastate and interstate disputes before they develop into open conflict (similar to the Norwegian model).

I believe it is deeply appropriate that we should be having this debate on a day when the Prime Minister has made an announcement concerning Australia's national security. The Prime Minister's statement is caused by and acknowledges the threat posed by Islamic State, not just in the Middle East but right around the world, including here in Australia.

The Prime Minister's statements on national security so far have, in my view, been incomplete; what they are lacking is an apology. There has never been an apology from the Liberal Party or any sign of recognition or awareness that the response of former US President George W Bush—enthusiastically supported and unconditionally embraced by Liberal Prime Minister John Howard—to the attacks by al-Qaeda on 11 September 2001 was disastrous. The invasion of Iraq was an act of folly and self-indulgence which was a key driver of the threats to our national security that we are discussing today. Until the Liberal Party shows some sign of acknowledging and apologising for what was a monumental blunder, it cannot be regarded as a safe pair of hands when it comes to national security.

The link between the invasion of Iraq and the rise of Islamic State has been made by numerous experts. Sir Christopher Meyer, British ambassador to the US from 1997 to 2003, has said of the reasons for the success of Islamic State in Iraq:

Perhaps the most significant is the decision taken more than ten years ago by President George W Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair to unseat Saddam Hussein without thinking through the consequences for Iraq of the dictator's removal.

He said Islamic State is now fighting alongside former members of Saddam Hussein's army, which was disbanded in May 2003, 'throwing 400,000 angry men on to the streets with their weapons', and:

The order directly fuelled the eight-year insurgency against American and allied troops.

... former Iraqi soldiers were recruited by the Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda, have been fighting in Syria and have now returned to Iraq with ISIS.

Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has identified the 2003 Iraq war as one of the causes of the current situation in the Middle East. He says:

I spoke against it at the time, and I am afraid my concerns have proved well-founded.

... ..

The country has been in the throes of insurgency ever since and the ensuing chaos has proved an ideal breeding ground for the Sunni radical groups—

that now call themselves Islamic State. The commentator Tom Engelhardt, from Middle East Eye, identifies the US intervention in Iraq as a significant factor in the current situation. He says:

... just about everything done in the war on terror has facilitated their rise. After all, we dismantled the Iraqi army and rebuilt one that would flee at the first signs of ISIS's fighters, abandoning vast stores of Washington's weaponry to them. We essentially destroyed the Iraqi state, while fostering a Shia leader who would oppress enough Sunnis in enough ways to create a situation in which ISIS would be welcomed or tolerated throughout significant areas of the country.

As the motion makes clear, I do believe in collective international action to solve problems, and of course we have the United Nations, established precisely to solve international problems and to seek to improve on the abysmal record of the First and Second World Wars. I know it does a lot of good, but the increasing level of global violence suggests that it needs to be doing much more. Why doesn't it do more? That would be because the big powers, members of the UN Security Council with a veto power over UN action, are prepared to turn a blind eye to cover up the sins and misdeeds of their allies and supporters. No-one has clean hands here. Getting the big powers to do better globally is no easy matter. We must all be willing to put pressure on the big countries and demand action from them. It is not good enough to let them blame this or that rogue state, rogue general or rogue religious leader. We should tell the big powers that we know they can fix the problem if they genuinely want to or, if they cannot, that the world is willing to help out. Being part of the US alliance as we are does not mean that we are obliged to turn a blind eye to misconduct.

We must breathe new life into the 'responsibility to protect' civilians. This doctrine does have the potential to save civilian lives, and we should demand that the UN Security Council uses it when outbreaks of violence occur. This is far superior to coalition-of-the-willing type unilateral action and far superior to fatalism and meekly allowing this violence to continue.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones):** Is the motion seconded?

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

**Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:00):** I have spoken about war and conflict before in this place, about the enormous responsibility of government in making that decision to commit our troops to war, knowing full well that our decision will almost inevitably end with the loss of life of fine young Australians. There are no easy decisions in this space. This motion is framed in pejorative terms, perhaps more concerned about making a political point, but it is an important motion in that it brings the issue of peacekeeping before this parliament.

The United Nations plays an important role in international security and there is generally a benefit for nations confronting conflict in doing so under the cloak of a UN resolution. However, it is important that Australia never relinquishes our right and obligation to make decisions in our national interest. There may well be times where we must act with our allies to protect our interests and our nation and that may include circumstances where there is not a UN resolution in place. Australian governments must not abdicate our responsibility to place Australia's interests first.

I am a great believer in the benefits of effective peacekeeping. It is important to note that Australia has a long history of involvement in peacekeeping operations. As a founding member of the United Nations, we participated in our first peacekeeping mission in Indonesia in 1947. Since then we have provided more than 65,000 personnel to some 50 United Nations peacekeeping missions and are the 12th largest donor to UN regular and peacekeeping budgets. In our region we have effectively provided peacekeeping services in Bougainville, Solomon Islands and East Timor. In Bougainville, the scene of a long and bloody insurrection, the Howard government committed Australian troops to act as part of the Truce Monitoring Group and then the Peace Monitoring Group while they negotiated a peace agreement to bring an end to the conflict.

The challenge of that decision was the fact that Australian troops would be on the ground, unarmed, before the combatants had disarmed. It was a courageous call but, armed with Australian humour and friendliness and supported by our New Zealand and Fijian colleagues, the Bougainville process was remarkably successful. As the time for a referendum on independence approaches, it is well worth acknowledging Australia's contribution and that of our Defence Force personnel and indeed David Irvine and Nick Warner, our high commissioners to Papua New Guinea at that time. Their input was critical to that success.

Similarly, Australia's intervention in Solomon Islands during the times of the so called ethnic tension was critical to bringing an end to a conflict that had the potential to expand beyond the confines of Solomon Islands and into Bougainville, potentially igniting a broad regional conflict. East Timor likewise provided a fine example of Australian involvement in peacekeeping operations in accordance with a UN resolution establishing INTERFET.

It is fair to say that Australia is a strong participant in the United Nations' peacekeeping team. From the standpoint of the United Nations, the responsibility to protect means that if a sovereign nation does not or will not protect its citizens then the international community has the responsibility to do so. This was the basis for the UN involvement in Rwanda and the Balkans. And Australia supports the United Nations in its desire to stamp out

crimes like genocide and ethnic cleansing through participation in and support of many 'responsibility to protect' groups.

This motion calls for a further expansion of the responsibility to protect by calling on the United Nations to identify potential trouble spots and establish a peacekeeping force there before the conflict can escalate. This is what we might call a useful pre-emptive strike. This is why I personally support the proposal by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to create a mediation unit within DFAT to look at resolving conflicts before they escalate into war, particularly in our region. This model has been used successfully by Norway in helping to resolve or de-escalate a number of conflicts. Given the generally widely held respect for Australia in the international community, I see no reason Australia should not adopt a similar approach. The other potential role for this mediation unit could be to not only deter the escalation of conflict but also resolve the cause of the conflict, thereby minimising future disputes. I thank the member for Wills for his motion today.

**Ms PARKE** (Fremantle) (13:04): I am grateful to my friend and colleague the member for Wills for bringing this important motion forward for debate. In 2015, there continue to be many serious and dangerous conflicts around the world. Australia is directly involved in some and affected by others. The truth is that we have an interest in supporting peace and reducing conflict wherever it occurs.

The member for Wills is absolutely right to say that there is no security without collective security. History shows, and all our recent experience has confirmed, that without a shared approach and a shared commitment to building a lasting peace conflicts simply tend to morph from one set of antipathies to another. Yesterday's ally by proxy often becomes tomorrow's enemy,; and all those so-called solutions that have involved arming one group to balance the violence of another inevitably prolong the violence and inevitably see the weapons turned against those who supplied them in the first place.

On a number of occasions I have talked about the kinds of structural and procedural changes that can and should be made in Australia to improve our approach to regional and global security and to securing our own national security. These include a greater commitment to active and constructive participation in multilateral fora and associations, especially the United Nations, and in regional multilateral organisations with the UN's oversight, including using the responsibility to protect principle as a vehicle to protect civilians. Necessary change must also involve a preparedness to improve our own decision-making processes, for instance, through the introduction of a war powers act to ensure proper parliamentary consideration of any assignment of Australian forces overseas.

As I noted on 22 September last year in this place, it was profoundly disappointing that Australia, which at the time held a seat on the UN Security Council, did not raise the matter of the global response to ISIS and Middle East security within the council before committing special forces and equipment to the US-led coalition mission, which remains open-ended with no coherent objective or exit strategy.

Just this weekend, Australians have read in the *Australian* newspaper that in late November last year the Prime Minister raised the idea of unilaterally sending 3,500 Australian ground troops into Iraq. The Prime Minister has denied this report as false and fanciful. Nevertheless, it only reinforces the need for parliamentary involvement in decisions to send Australian troops to war. In my view, it is preposterous in the 21st century that such a significant decision should reside in the hands of a small group within the executive, made up only of the Prime Minister and those he chooses to consult with, under outdated, leftover royal prerogative powers, rather than require a decision taken by the elected representatives of the Australian people as a collective.

The final point in the motion goes to the very worthy recommendation by the Joint Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, of which I was a member at the time, in its report *Inquiry into Australia's overseas representation—punching below our weight?* of establishing a mediation unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The committee's recommendation grew out of evidence to the inquiry presented by Professor John Langmore regarding the Norwegian model of peaceful conflict resolution. This is a model whereby a mediation unit within the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides good offices and mediation to other states to help prevent conflict, thereby reducing the potential need for peacekeeping forces, reconstruction and emergency aid, and development efforts that inevitably follow an outbreak of conflict. The committee considered that Australia could play an effective role as a regional leader in mediation and conflict prevention in South-East Asia and Pacific regions where mediation is poorly resourced.

While conflict between nations is still too common, it is conflict within nations that represents some of the worst and most protracted harm. We only have to consider recent events in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq to understand how intrastate or subnational conflict causes great damage. Of course, that damage is not confined to the borders of the countries that suffer civil unrest.

In my former role as Minister for International Development, I was pleased to have the opportunity to be briefed by a research team from the Asia Foundation on their report titled *The contested corners of Asia:*

*subnational conflict and international development assistance.* The report begins with the sobering observation that:

Subnational conflict is the most widespread, deadly and enduring form of conflict in Asia. Over the past 20 years, there have been 26 subnational conflicts in South and Southeast Asia, affecting half of the countries in this region.

Of course, Australia has played a constructive and effective role in helping to address subnational conflict, as was the case in the Solomon Islands, where our leadership of the coordinated international effort involving 15 contributing nations through the RAMSI mission, with the support of the Pacific Island Forum, helped create peace and stability out of chaos, violence and danger. It was a privilege, as minister, to be present in Honiara in 2013 to mark the 10th anniversary of the RAMSI mission.

As this motion makes clear, it is only through cooperation and shared commitment to peace within and between countries that we in Australia, as part of the global community, can hope to experience and contribute to greater peace in our region and the world over.

**Dr HENDY** (Eden-Monaro) (13:10): I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on this motion moved by the member for Wills on the protection of civilians. I am always very happy to contribute to discussions on international relations, global governance and Australia's role in the world. There are few issues more serious than these, and as a former chief of staff of a former minister for defence and a former principal adviser on foreign affairs to the now Minister for Foreign Affairs, I take them very seriously indeed. Sadly, there are those in this place who either underestimate the gravity of these issues or simply fail to grasp their complexity. I am unsure which category the member for Wills falls into, but the subject is a good deal more sophisticated than this motion would indicate.

Let me outline three key elements pertinent to any discussion of global politics in this place—that is, the UN, the US and us, Australia. Firstly, the United Nations: of course the coalition supports effective action through the United Nations. Australia was a founding member of the United Nations and we have been a strong supporter for nearly seven decades since. Australians played a leading role in one of the United Nations' first peacekeeping operations at Indonesia's birth as an independent nation. Indeed, Australia had the privilege of providing the inaugural presidency of the UN Security Council in 1946. We filled that position again recently, and few would argue with the magnificent job performed by the foreign minister, the member for Curtin, and our Permanent Representative, Gary Quinlan. The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2166, the Australian drafted resolution dealing with the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, constituted the high-water mark of this period of Australia's diplomacy.

Since its inception, the United Nations has worked for peace, prosperity and the preservation of human rights. But there is another institution that has upheld these three values, which brings me to the second key element: our great and powerful friend the United States of America. This relationship can cause those opposite some discomfort. We in the coalition experience no such discomfort. We understand the unique role the United States has taken on since the Second World War, we understand the unparalleled burden placed on them and we understand the tremendous sacrifice and terrible cost. The role that the United States has played in establishing and maintaining the postwar world order has been uniquely powerful and pervasive. It is a role that we should never take for granted; for, if not the United States, then who? No other country has the capacity, the geostrategic circumstances, the inclination or the habit of upholding world order. Absent that engagement and absent that leadership, the world would look very different than it does today.

That brings me to the third key element: Australia's role. Lowy Institute Executive Director, Dr Michael Fullilove, caused quite a stir last year when he called for a larger Australia. Dr Fullilove's argument is that far from punching above our weight, as is often claimed, Australia punches at, and sometimes, below our weight. He reminded us that Australia is the 12th largest economy in the world, that we are the fifth richest people and that we are not a super heavyweight but we are certainly not a flyweight—and that is true.

Before we decide what weight division we are in, we need to define the reason we want to be in the ring in the first place. For me, the answer is a simple but extremely powerful one: as Australians, we are the beneficiaries of centuries of hard-won liberal democratic thinking, institutions, traditions and structures. The world order that has emerged from the horror of the Second World War has delivered unprecedented peace, prosperity and freedom. In recent times, our role as a defender of those institutions, through our support of both the United Nations and the United States, has increased. But the false dichotomy of unilateralism and multilateralism is a straw man. It has never been a reality. It has certainly never been a zero sum choice. The nuance-challenged binary presented by those opposite does not reflect the complexity and multiplicity of international action and international governance. Australia can, has and will continue to be a steadfast supporter of, and participant in, collective security through the United Nations. Australia can, has and will continue to act in coalitions of like-minded

countries to defend our common interests and common values. It is what we have always done. I thank the chamber for the opportunity to speak.

**Mr WATTS** (Gellibrand) (13:14): I rise today to speak in support of this motion on the protection of civilians, and I congratulate the member for Wills for raising this important topic. At a time when Australia's international aid budget continues to be the plaything of the current government, the member for Willis' reminder of the importance of international cooperation for peace and stability is refreshing. Our world is changing, and so too must our responses to the challenges we face. Our world is more interconnected, borders are more porous, international travel is cheaper and the threats we face transcend any single nation's control.

Our engagement with the United Nations is indicative of a world view that favours multilateral action and consensus building for collective security. It is clear that the pressures we face are international in nature. The spectre of climate change remains ever present. The danger posed by international extremist groups is ever growing. Interstate and intrastate conflicts threaten to undermine the stability of entire regions, including aspects of our own. These problems cannot be solved by any one nation acting unilaterally; they require collective solutions. The United Nations provides us with the platform for collective action that these complex issues require. This is particularly the case for international interventions and peacekeeping missions, which this motion speaks to.

The United Nations has deployed peacekeeping missions in hotspots throughout the world for many, many years, and areas such as Syria and Kosovo have benefited significantly. Through the involvement of the UN, many conflicts have been resolved and humanitarian crises averted, saving many lives in the process. Conflicts within countries and civil unrest within nations have also been mediated through engagement with the UN. In this respect, the Responsibility to Protect—an evolving and emerging norm of international law—states that a nation's sovereignty is predicated on its ability to protect its citizens from atrocities and genocide. The Responsibility to Protect principle, shaped and championed by former Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Gareth Evans, was designed to promote collective action to prevent or punish genocide.

Australia has used its two-year term as one of the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to promote this principle to the great benefit of both the international community and Australia's international interests. Despite this, the now Prime Minister, while in opposition, criticised Labor's campaign to win the seat on the Security Council. In 2012, the current Prime Minister attacked the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard for her efforts, saying:

Our prime minister should not be swanning around in New York talking to Africans ...

He even referred to a non-permanent seat that Australia was vying for as the 'bronze medal' of the United Nations. Yet Australia has been able to use its standing in the UN to create a better and safer world. One of the ways that we have used our position on the Security Council is by using the Responsibility to Protect, championed, as I said, by former Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, as the principle to guide international action in Syria. Australia helped lead the way in getting the Security Council to intervene there and so enable humanitarian assistance to be delivered, even when nation states did not want their borders crossed. Australia led the charge in putting pressure on Russia in the aftermath of the downing of Malaysian flight MH17, which other members have also alluded to in this debate. Australia has also put North Korea's humanitarian crisis firmly on the agenda as a permanent part of future Security Council discussions. These are real achievements that are built upon a sense of collective security and collective action. This is what it means to pursue change in the 21st century in the international fora.

In a similar respect, Australia's defence policy should not simply be about unilateral defence; it should also be about engagement with our international partners. This motion calls for the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade regarding the establishment of a mediation unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Australia can assist by providing resources and knowledge, as well as by engaging in conflicts as both a mediator and a legitimate third party. We have shown this before in our own region with the work of former Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. He worked to establish a durable solution to the conflict within the state of Cambodia. It is a very good example of the role that Australia can play in this respect. Australia could be of particular importance in the Southeast Asia and Pacific regions by playing an international mediation and peacekeeping role. Unfortunately, mediation has been poorly resourced in this region in the past and, as this motion alludes to, we could do much more in this space.

One of the necessary preconditions to effective development is peaceful resolution of conflict. We talk a lot about the objectives of our international aid program; but, without collective security and stability within these nations, economic development—something that we can all agree on is a worthy end in itself—is a long way off.

In that respect, I commend the motion moved by the member for Wills to the House and recommend it to the government.

**Mr SIMPKINS** (Cowan) (13:19): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the motion moved by the member for Wills on the protection of civilians. I had prepared a speech, but I thought that I would set that aside and speak a little bit more about my in-depth feelings on this motion. There is no doubt about the member for Wills's history with regard to his view on what happened in Iraq, and obviously this is the key driver behind this motion as well. I would say that when you look back upon history, it is always so much clearer with the hindsight and clarity of years past.

I would remind everyone that, when we think about what it was like back at the time of the invasion of Iraq in the Second Gulf War, when Saddam Hussein was running Iraq, there was a resistance and an obfuscation of attempts to identify what these weapons of mass destruction were. There was a lot of thought that they were there, but the question was whether there should be more time or whether there should be immediate action. There were very few people saying that these weapons just did not exist anymore. Ask the Kurds, ask even his own people, about whether chemical weapons were used. The reality was that Saddam Hussein had a history and a track record of using weapons of mass destruction and chemical weapons. So there were lots of reasons to suspect—and, as is well documented, as even the then foreign affairs spokesperson, Mr Kevin Rudd, also said—there were weapons of mass destruction. So it was not as though they just did not exist at all.

When I see motions that talk about adventurism and that denigrate what happened as some form of recklessness or some form of shooting from the hip—a fun moment, 'Let's go and have a little bit of a party in Iraq'—I just do not get that at all. I do not think that there has been a government in this country's history, and I cannot perceive that there will be a government in the future of this country, who would take our soldiers to war, take our forces to war and support a war without being gravely concerned and giving grave consideration. I think that it is a cheap shot, and I think that it is a shooting-from-the-hip sort of allegation. Obviously there were debates as to whether it was the right thing to do. In hindsight, there were no weapons of mass destruction found, but there was certainly evidence leading up to that point that they could well exist. On that basis, action was taken.

When we look around at what the UN has achieved over time, there have been plenty of good things done by the UN, and there is no doubt about that. It is, however, a very big bureaucracy. I think that some of the troubles with the UN are the processes that they have. As the member for Wills has already clearly identified—and we have common ground here—when the permanent five members of the Security Council have the ability to veto action by the UN, whether it is a peacekeeping mission or whatever, then we start seeing the national interests of those five key players, the historical players from the victory at the end of the Second World War, and those sorts of influences starting to come into the decision making.

We have something like 130,000 peacekeepers currently deployed around the world on 16 peacekeeping missions. There is no doubt the world is a more dangerous place these days. When you look at some of the things that have occurred and some of the people out there—when I look at what is happening with IS or Daesh—I do not blame their existence on the decision to go to Iraq for the Second Gulf War. I do not blame it on that. I blame that on an Islamist history where this sort of violent destruction of opponents and disbelievers is what they have done for 1,000 years. When we really look at what has happened more recently, the decision to abandon Iraq, leave it and allow the sectarianism that took place is one of the problems that Iraq has had, and that is the legacy we are leaving. The problem was a decision to pull out too early without leaving guidance to that country.

**Mr GRIFFIN** (Bruce) (13:24): I commend the member for Wills for bringing this motion forward. It raises some significant issues about the nature of the operation of the United Nations and the whole question about how nations can work together to try to create peace, often in parts of the world where peace is about the last thing on their minds. History, cultures and clashes which are very varied and very complex in their nature create circumstances which cause real problems for the international community in how to respond.

Some of the things that have been mentioned already, and my figures may be slightly at odds with some that have been mentioned, highlight the size of the problem. According to information from September of last year with regard to the United Nations, there were 16 current peacekeeping operations, 13 political missions, over 104,000 uniformed personnel from 128 member states—including just under 90,000 troops, 12½ thousand police and in excess of 1,700 military observers—and just under 19,000 civilian personnel.

The total number of personnel across those 16 peacekeeping missions was at that stage just short of 123,000 and climbing. If you go back over the last few years, in 2009 there were 121,700, in 2012 there were 120,900, in 2011 there were 121,600 and in 2012 there were 114,800. There was a decrease around that time that related to some improvements in circumstances in Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon and Timor. Resources per annum are about US\$8 billion, as I understand it.

What this highlights, I think, is that the size and the volume of the problems being faced is huge. There is a need for complex relationships and partnerships across a range of different organisations, whether it be the World Health Organization, the UNHCR, UNICEF and member state groups that relate to particular regions. It is a complex operation.

The other thing is that, when we talk about peacekeeping, what do we really mean? It is actually pretty simplistic to look at it in just those terms. There is the issue of conflict prevention, peacemaking and then, on from that, peace enforcement and peacekeeping, which overlap. Add to that the whole issue of post-conflict peace building. What this says is that you really have to have a multipurpose approach across a range of disciplines to ensure that you give some of these communities a chance to get beyond the violence and into the situation where they can get peace, which gives the community the opportunity to grow into the future.

UN peacekeeping is now bigger than ever before and growing. It is more diverse and it is more active. It requires, as I said, engagement with many more actors, and the fact is peacekeeping operations alone are not sufficient to deal with the issues we are talking about. There are a range of challenges which go into the future as well. Firstly, there is a question about the potential for operational overstretch and the risk of mission failure and capability mismatch. That goes to making sure you are meeting the needs of the conflict you are facing.

Others have spoken a bit about the UN and the circumstances they face. The UN in my view is an organisation that tries to do a range of tasks and does some of them well, most of them badly—but, frankly, no-one else does them. That is the point that people who criticise the UN have to remember: no-one else does some of the things that the UN does in the places the UN does it. We expect them to be the answer, often in a situation where we do not even know what the question is.

When we look back over the history of some of the engagements that have occurred—and I will use Afghanistan and Iraq as an example—I think there is no doubt that there was at times a complete misunderstanding of the nature of what needed to be achieved, of what the circumstances were. That led to circumstances such as going in in a manner which, in my view, probably on certain occasions was not the best way to go and leaving conflict zones at times when in fact there was a need to stay. I think that can be pointed out particularly in the first departure from Afghanistan and, arguably, around the question of Iraq.

They are complex problems, and that is why it is important to look at the recommendations from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on establishing a unit which would, from our perspective, allow the development of a more complex understanding of the issues faced. It is about coordinating our aid, about coordinating our responses and about providing the best opportunities to ensure our aid and our activity actually gets a result.

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

**Sitting suspended from 13:30 to 16:00**

## **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

### **Nikolopoulos, Mr Kostas**

**Ms BURKE** (Chisholm) (16:00): I rise to honour the life and work of Greek-Australian journalist Kostas Nikolopoulos, who sadly passed away in January leaving behind him an extraordinary body of work in political and Hellenic journalism and a family and community deep in mourning. There are few people in the Victorian Hellenic community who would not know of Kostas's name or his extensive work. Over a career spanning more than three decades, Kostas worked as a producer and presenter of Greek language radio news on SBS and served on the board of *The Greek Herald* and as deputy editor of *Neos Kosmos*. Kostas was a trusted voice dedicated to bringing the news to the community in both English and Greek. He interviewed countless public figures including premiers and prime ministers, and was absolutely committed to not only writing for the Australian Hellenic community but also promoting the significant contributions the Greek community makes to Australian life.

Kostas was more than a dedicated professional—he was a devoted member of a range of Greek organisations and also gave his time to teach the Greek language and culture. Kostas received a variety of awards from various levels of government recognising his pursuit of justice, contributions to multiculturalism and support of those in need. Sadly, he was never awarded an Australian honour, despite repeated attempts by me and others. Kostas was a wonderful man whose enormous contribution to our community endured far beyond the limits of his own life. He was an exemplary man, a true gentleman and a friend to the entire community. I will miss seeing Kostas at one of the many Greek community functions or just bumping into him at a cafe in Oakleigh. I offer my sincere condolences to his wife Effie and son Niko. Rest in peace, Kostas—and be assured I will continue to see if you can be recognised with an Australia honour.

### **Bennelong Electorate: Lunar New Year**

**Mr ALEXANDER** (Bennelong) (16:02): The lunar new year is being celebrated around the world but the festivities can be no greater than in my electorate of Bennelong. The big event and street parade in Eastwood will be held this weekend; however, the celebrations have already begun in earnest. In particular, last weekend saw the much anticipated return of the Lunar New Year Cooking Competition. This year it was again run under the excellent stewardship of community leader Mr Hugh Lee. This event drew on local personalities including the inspector for the Ryde police, Richard Puffet—he does sauteed parking tickets; Omar Amed of the Ryde United Community Cultural Centre; Rita Lepedjian from Ryde Hunters Hill Symphony Orchestra; and even our own member for Barton.

This was the sixth time I have competed and, despite seeing the award go to such people as Victor Dominello, ably assisted by his mother, I had always left empty-handed. Modesty prevents me from saying who won this year's event, but it was not the member from Barton! Thank you to Hugh Lee and Danny Yap for their wonderful work with the Easter lunar new year celebration, and may I say 'Kung hei fat choy.'

### **Petition: Climate Change**

**Mr BANDT** (Melbourne) (16:03): I rise to speak on behalf of millions of Australians who are demanding real and urgent action on climate change, many of whom have signed the monster climate petition approved by the Standing Committee on Petitions. More than 72,000 people have signed the petition, and that number is continuing to grow. Today I table just a portion of the petition, signed by 23,920 people. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Australia's daughters and sons, parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts and uncles, draws to the attention of the House the damage to the earth's climate and its oceans from humanity's continuing and increasing carbon emissions and the consequent severe risks to the future health, safety and well-being of our children and our children's children and future generations.

We remind the House that it is the fundamental duty of parliament, including this House, to protect Australia's people, land and seas.

We therefore ask the House to respect the science and build a safe climate future for our children and grandchildren and generations to come by enacting immediate and deep reductions to Australia's carbon emissions. We also ask the House to commit to and actively promote and support global strategies for immediate and deep reductions to global emissions at every designated international forum.

To that I say 'Hear, hear!' That is a sentiment that should be adopted by this House. I say to the government and the Prime Minister that if they really wanted to keep us safe they would also keep Australia safe from the effects of climate change.

Petition received.

### **Sunnyfield Disability Services**

**Mrs McNAMARA** (Dobell) (16:05): Last Friday I had the honour of attending the official opening of the Sunnyfield Charmhaven community hub, which was recently renovated and expanded. Sunnyfield Disability Services have operated on the Central Coast for over 14 years and provide programs designed to enrich the lives of people with an intellectual disability. Based at Woongarah, the Sunnyfield community hub provides a user-friendly environment where clients and carers can receive the support they need to achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations. I had the pleasure of meeting clients including Josh, Tyson and Vivian, who was celebrating her birthday, as well as the remarkable carers, families and staff members who make an everyday difference to those with a disability.

Sunnyfield Disability Services provide a variety of programs to approximately 160 people on the Central Coast, including transition-to-work, school-leavers and community-based programs. The community hub offers a variety of development activities including fitness, music therapy, gardening, woodwork and cooking. With a growing demand in Dobell for services that address the increasing need for child, ageing and disability programs, it is heartening and inspiring to meet the people involved with Sunnyfield, who are dedicated to making a difference. An organisation such as Sunnyfield Disability Services, which makes such an impact to the lives of people who need it most, is the sign of a selfless and noble cause that deserves as much support as possible. I am privileged to provide support as the federal member for Dobell.

### **Petitions: Climate Change**

**Ms McGOWAN** (Indi) (16:06): I am delighted today to present one part of a three-part monster petition that has been approved by the Standing Committee on Petitions. I support the call of the petition and call on the

government to take active steps to reduce atmospheric carbon, safeguard industry in regional Australia and pursue an equitable approach to climate policy for all Australians.

The petition of Australia's daughters and sons, parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts and uncles draws to the attention of the House the damage to the earth's climate and its oceans from humanity's continuing and increasing carbon emissions and the consequent severe risks to the future health, safety and wellbeing of all our children and our children's children and future generations. The petitioners ask the House to respect the science and build a safe climate future for our children and grandchildren and for generations to come by enacting immediate and deep reductions to Australia's carbon emissions.

The monster petition started with a conversation between Judy Brett, Clare Wright, Dur-e Dara and Mary Crooks at the Victorian Women's Trust and has had outstanding support by the lead petitioner, Professor Fiona Stanley AC. Thanks to those who took the lead on the petition and thank you to the 72,000-plus women, men and children who have put their names to this petition.

*The petition read as follows—*

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Australia's daughters and sons, parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts and uncles, draws to the attention of the House the damage to the earth's climate and its oceans from humanity's continuing and increasing carbon emissions and the consequent severe risks to the future health, safety and well-being of our children and our children's children and future generations.

We remind the House that it is the fundamental duty of parliament, including this House, to protect Australia's people, land and seas.

We therefore ask the House to respect the science and build a safe climate future for our children and grandchildren and generations to come by enacting immediate and deep reductions to Australia's carbon emissions. We also ask the House to commit to and actively promote and support global strategies for immediate and deep reductions to global emissions at every designated international forum.

from 23,922 citizens

Petition received.

### **Lyne Electorate: Agricultural Show Societies**

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (16:08): I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate the local agricultural show societies in my electorate of Lyne. Agricultural shows continue to provide an invaluable contribution to regional and rural communities and effectively showcase the best of our local talents. Whether it is across pastoral pursuits, agricultural and horticultural industries, everyone presents at the shows. They are a highly anticipated event for many, and their success would not be possible without the tireless and often thankless work on show societies and their long-serving committee members.

On the weekend, I attended the 67th Camden Haven show under very difficult circumstances, with an east coast low bearing down on them and many inches of rain. I would like to commend Ron Porter, the president, and secretary Mavis Barnes and all the committee members, judges, exhibitors, competitors and sponsors. Together, the show did go on, but unfortunately many ring events had to be cancelled on Sunday because of the resultant quagmire. We are fortunate to be able to celebrate many shows in the Lyne electorate, including the 130th Wingham show and the Wauchope show, which this year, under Bob Kennett, is up to its 105th show. The Wallamba Agricultural and Horticultural Society will also celebrate their 103rd district show this year.

### **Richmond Electorate: Health**

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond) (16:09): I rise to speak about The Tweed Hospital and the fact that it is at breaking point and also that our local health system is in crisis. Local families in the Tweed deserve so much better. They deserve so much better than the National Party. Families just cannot afford any more National Party cuts and cost of living increases. The fact is that Tweed Nationals MP Geoff Provest and his state Liberal-National government keep cutting funding from our health and hospitals. It is a shameful record and it is one that is hurting the people on the north coast of New South Wales.

The fact is that The Nationals have slashed \$3 billion from New South Wales health and hospitals, and this includes \$2.2 billion in program and operating costs and \$775 million from hospital staff budgets. New South Wales now has the longest elective surgery waiting list times in Australia. When you add this to the \$50 billion in cuts to health and hospital funding and the GP tax courtesy of the Abbott government, it is devastating news to the people of New South Wales. All these health and hospital cuts in regional areas within New South Wales prove that you just cannot trust the National Party. Whether it is hospital cuts or whether it is privatising electricity assets, which will push up prices for locals, or whether it is expanding harmful coal seam gas mining across our region, the fact is that you cannot trust the National Party. Locals know you cannot trust the National Party on a

range of issues. What is hurting locals the most are these recent cuts to our health and hospital systems. There has been \$3 billion in cuts to New South Wales health and hospitals. You just cannot trust the National Party.

### East West Link

**Mr SUKKAR** (Deakin) (16:11): I rise today to again draw attention to the growing community anger in my electorate of Deakin at the way the Labor Party has turned its back on the people of Melbourne's eastern suburbs in its reckless attempt to destroy the East West Link. Last Saturday morning, supporters of this crucial project gathered in Ringwood to support our Build the Link campaign launch—a campaign to tell Labor that its proposed destruction of this project will hurt the eastern suburbs of Melbourne the most.

I was pleased to join members of the community, along with the members for Aston, La Trobe and Casey, to demonstrate the federal coalition's ongoing \$3 billion commitment to the project. As I have said before, Deakin residents just want the East West Link built—no arguments, no evasion, no deception. Not only will the East West Link save communities over three hours of traveling time a week; it will also create 6,500 jobs during the construction phase and will improve the productivity of all Victorian businesses. But these benefits will be destroyed by the actions of the Labor Party as they insist on paying as much as \$1.2 billion of taxpayers' money in compensation not to build the road—and this is after the Labor Party said that these contracts were not worth the paper they were written on. We know that was a blatant lie, and so again I say to Dan Andrews, Bill Shorten and the Labor Party: get out of the way. And I say to all Victorian supporters of the project: please visit Build the Link.com.au to sign the petition.

### Asylum Seekers

**Ms PARKE** (Fremantle) (16:13): I rise to speak about children in immigration detention. The facts as presented in the recently released Human Rights Commission report entitled *The Forgotten Children* chillingly speak for themselves. In a 15-month period, commencing January 2013, 128 children engaged in self-harm. There were 233 assaults against children and 33 reported incidents of sexual assault against children. The report demonstrates unequivocally that children in our care, children who have come seeking refuge, have instead experienced physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse while in our effective custody.

This tragedy, this failure of responsibility, has occurred across current and former governments and should certainly lead to a royal commission as the commission has recommended. However, the Prime Minister has chosen to respond only by shooting the messenger. He said:

This is a blatantly partisan politicised exercise and the Human Rights Commission ought to be ashamed of itself.

That is an absurd and despicable attack on a respected public institution and is part of a calculated campaign against the head of the Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, whose qualifications and character are beyond reproach. It is we the political class who should be ashamed of ourselves—all of us.

The commission's report is clear that immigration detention is a dangerous place for children, that Australia is unique in its harsh treatment of asylum seeker children and that holding children in detention does not deter either asylum seekers or people smugglers. We therefore cannot accept that violence, severe mental and emotional distress, assaults and sexual abuse of children are an acceptable part of Australia's approach to asylum seekers. This is Australia's shame, and we need to confront it and begin to atone for it.

### Foodbank Queensland

**Ms GAMBARO** (Brisbane) (16:14): I am delighted to update the Federation Chamber on the exceptional work of Foodbank Queensland. During the Christmas and New Year period, I partnered with both Foodbank Queensland and Quest newspapers to help raise awareness of the Foodbank food drive by providing a drop-off location at my electorate office in Brisbane. Expenses in the lead-up to Christmas and the start of the school year frequently put extra strain on family budgets. This means families have to make sacrifices in other areas of their lives. That is why Foodbank is so vital. Foodbank provides an outlet to food companies for their surplus stock and at the same time allows community support agencies to save time and resources in the supply of nutritious food.

Welfare agencies are increasingly involved in an ongoing struggle to provide food relief to thousands of people who are dependent on food handouts to supplement their welfare benefits. Foodbank Queensland is the link between these two groups. In 2010, Foodbank Queensland provided enough food for almost 16 million meals. Nationally, more than 2,500 charities and 640 schools collect the donated food and distribute it to adults and children in need as prepared meals, food hampers and emergency parcels, feeding an average of 88,000 people a day.

I would like to specially mention Nicci Skerl, Business Service Manager for Foodbank Queensland, and her team of 16, who help collect, collate and distribute food across Brisbane and Queensland.

### Shortland Electorate: School Leaders

**Ms HALL** (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:16): Last Friday, the state member for Charlestown and I hosted a morning tea for high-school captains, vice-captains and prefects in our electorates. We were overwhelmed by the maturity and insight of these young people, and their ability to understand the issues that are important not only in their school community but in the community as a whole.

We had students from Cardiff High School, Hunter Sports High School, Kotara High School, Warners Bay High School and Whitebridge High School; and Warners Bay deputy principal Neil Best. The students were Sara Woodbridge, Dalton Yates, Jacqueline Edwards, Kurt Lawther, Molitoni Nasilai, Paige Davies, Ben Fleming, Ellen Frohlich, Jacquie Willing, Tom Gordon, Drew Worthington, Ellen Richards, Brody Wilson, Chloe Frizzel, Gemma Morgan, Michael Sturn, Joshua Turnbull, Bowen Parnell and Courtney Parnell.

I cannot emphasise enough how well these young students understand what being school leaders means and the importance of the role that they play within the school in connecting students and teachers, and leading that school throughout 2015.

### Economy

**Mr BROAD** (Mallee) (16:17): In March 1933, FD Roosevelt said the words:  
... the only thing we have to fear is fear itself ...

I say to the parliament that the Australian economic fundamentals are strong. We have low interest rates; we have good currency exchanges; we have market opportunities that we have opened up through free trade agreements with Japan, China and South Korea; and we have a stable and safe country where investment is welcome.

I have the belief that it is small businesses, the risks and endeavours of individual Australians, that grow our wealth. We have a great opportunity there. The challenge for us is to capture that and to build on confidence, and I fear that, because we have not had a vision coming out of the Australian parliament from both sides of the parliament, particularly through us as the government, that opportunity is not being captured.

The future is great. I remain confident, and I want to affirm my resolve, that together we can make Australia a prosperous and generous country in the Asia-Pacific region if we dedicate our hearts to it.

### Bendigo Electorate: Community Legal Centres

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (16:19): I call on the government to commit to funding community legal centres, particularly those in regional Victoria. I call on the government today to provide secure funding to ensure the future of the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre as well as that of the adjacent Goulbourn Valley Community Legal Centre.

These community legal centres rely on critical Commonwealth funding to deliver legal services to some of the most disadvantaged members of our community. These programs include supporting separated families, through the services of the family relationship centre, to help them access and understand family law in such a difficult period.

This funding is modest. Right now, what the centre is seeking is for the government to commit to \$207,000 for both services. This is quite modest when you consider the overall budget that this government has. These particular services help people every day. Every day, my office is contacted by people in need of access to justice, and they need that first step—that first advice. We always refer them to our local Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre. The particular programs that they fund support a number of vulnerable people—a number of people at risk, particularly women who might be seeking support in a situation of family violence. I call on the government to recommit funding to these services.

### Criminal Justice System

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey) (16:20): Life is a lottery and there are no guarantees, but we do know that children brought up in a stable and caring family have greatly enhanced life prospects. For others, life can be much more challenging and sometimes they come off the rails. Unfortunately, when these circumstances lead to crime, it often leads to prison, and how we address release, recidivism and rehabilitation to prevent the justice and punishment system becoming a revolving door is a challenge to all of us.

On the weekend I picked up a hitchhiker in his low 30s, and over the next couple of hours we had the benefit of a fairly frank conversation. Robert was from Victoria and dropped out of school after year 7. He had serious injuries inflicted on him in a car accident at 12, and by 15 he was in a youth hostel in Perth. He was jailed for assault in his 20s, and he told me virtually all of his friends were drug users, drug dealers and criminals. Robert had managed to put some distance between himself and his old friends and was travelling north for cheaper accommodation and in the hope of employment. However, even though he had accumulated a range of skills, he

knew he was unlikely to be picked up by any major mining companies, because of his record. Life certainly is more challenging for some than others.

Last week I listened to an address by the chairwoman of the SA Parole Board, Frances Nelson QC, who told us that assisted housing and work opportunities were the largest contributors to combating recidivism. Opportunities in jail are only half the equation. What we do with people when they leave jail is the other half, and our failure to deliver will be their failure.

Robert will survive. He has worked hard, but he could do with all the help he can get.

#### **Franklin Electorate: Saluting Their Service**

**Ms COLLINS** (Franklin) (16:22): Late last year it was my pleasure to present a number of certificates of appreciation to local veterans in my electorate. Certificates of appreciation, as members would know, are provided through the Australian government's commemorative program Saluting Their Service and are an expression of gratitude towards the local veteran community for their service and sacrifice during times of both war and peace.

I was joined at the certificate ceremony by the President of RSL Tasmania, Robert Dick. We presented certificates to four veterans in our community: Dean Vervaart, who served in Afghanistan, the Iraq War and peace operations; Arthur Collidge, who served in the Second World War; James Graham, who served in the Indonesian Confrontation; and Donald Buchanan, who served in the Second World War and the Malayan Emergency.

I was honoured to present these courageous men in my electorate with their certificate of appreciation. It recognises their service to our nation during war, conflicts and peacekeeping operations since the Second World War. The certificate of appreciation presentation is an important reminder of the sacrifice that veterans in our communities make to keep us all safe. And, as we approach the Centenary of Anzac, it is also important that we continue to recognise the contribution of our local veteran community, whether it be through overseas service or on the home front. I once again thank these brave men and other brave men and women for their service to Australia and for being able to attend this presentation.

#### **Macarthur Electorate: Appin Primary School**

**Mr MATHESON** (Macarthur) (16:23): On Friday last week, I had the great pleasure of visiting Appin Primary School in my electorate to congratulate them on becoming an Eco-School and achieving bronze accreditation, which took seven months of collective hard work and dedication by all the staff and students at the school. Eco-Schools is a program for environmental management and certification designed to implement sustainable development education in schools by encouraging children to take an active role in how their school can be run for the benefit of the environment. It employs a holistic participatory approach combining learning and action, thus providing an effective method for improving the environments of schools and producing actual awareness raising and behavioural change in young people, school staff, families and communities.

Appin Primary School's remarkable achievements through this program speak for themselves. Energy use has been reduced by 24 per cent; total waste has been reduced by 25 per cent; and waste to landfill has been reduced by a staggering 86 per cent. In relation to that last point, paper and food are the main items being diverted to landfill by Appin Primary. Before the program, the school was sending 23.2 kilograms of paper to landfill per week and recycling 15 kilograms. This has now been reduced to two kilograms to landfill, while paper and card recycling has been increased to 29.8 kilograms per week. Appin Primary was sending 64.6 kilograms of food per week to landfill and not recycling or composting at all. Thanks to the school's achievements through the Eco-Schools program, this has been reduced to 8.1 kilograms of food being sent to landfill per week and the implementation of composting has resulted in 31 kilograms of food waste per week being diverted from landfill.

I congratulate all the students, staff and parents at Appin Primary School for taking part in the Eco-Schools program and proving that by working together it is possible to contribute positively to the environment. (*Time expired*)

#### **Makin Electorate: Bombing of Darwin Commemoration Service**

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (16:25): Last Thursday I attended a service at the Salisbury RSL commemorating the bombing of Darwin. Salisbury RSL President, Mick Lennon, summed up the importance of the occasion with this statement:

At 9.58 am on the 19th of February in 1942 was the first time mainland Australia had been attacked by a foreign enemy. This was indeed the day War came to Australia. 188 Japanese aircraft bombed and strafed Darwin's wharves and city centre, and then at midday, a further 50 aircraft attacked Darwin's RAAF Base. At least 243 people died and hundreds of others were injured. Darwin was significantly damaged and 8 ships were sunk in the harbour with another 15 disabled. These were the most serious of the 64 air raids on the Top End, which continued until the 12th November 1943.

At the time, the national interest dictated that the scale and severity of the attacks were not publicised and largely the history of the war years and the loss of life have gone unrecognised.

Mick makes the point quite properly that it is an event that has not been properly recognised over the years for a whole range of reasons. I take this opportunity to congratulate and commend the Salisbury RSL, which each year commemorates the anniversary of the bombing of Darwin by reminding us all of what happened then and also paying respects to the families whose lives were lost and to those who were injured.

### **Hasluck Electorate: Aged Care**

**Mr WYATT** (Hasluck) (16:27): The ties that bind us to our families and communities enrich our lives. Mature age should be a time to strengthen those ties, not cut them. That is why I am fighting for quality aged care for the residents of my electorate of Hasluck. Too often I have been approached by a son who drives two hours a week to visit his mother in a facility far from home. Too often I meet a wife who is only taken to visit her husband once a fortnight, well across the city. Too often what stands in the way is nothing but red tape—the complex overlay of Commonwealth, state or local government approvals processes. It is red tape that makes it too hard to engage an in-home nurse or too hard to combine high- and low-care facilities. Red tape makes it so much easier to fill a vacant plot with government housing rather than the integrated aged care our community needs.

In the long term, the coalition is committed to negotiate the Healthy Life, Better Ageing Agreement over five years. In the short term, the Shire of Kalamunda is one local government area where I want to see an aged care facility start this year. Experienced aged care providers are ready and waiting for opportunities to invest in Hasluck. I am meeting with my state government counterparts and local councils as part of a working group to streamline the process. We have compiled a spreadsheet of potential sites, and we are working to break down the barriers to each. We are working together to cut the red tape, not the ties that bind. We are working together to give families the opportunity to be together, to be in proximity and to share the quality of life that was always meant to be.

### **Scullin Electorate: Chinese New Year**

**Mr GILES** (Scullin) (16:28): On Saturday, I was honoured to attend the Whittlesea Chinese Association celebration of the lunar new year, the Year of the Goat, along with my colleagues and friends Bronwyn Halfpenny, the member for Thomastown, and Lily D'Ambrosio, the member for Mill Park. This event was, as ever, a glorious celebration of culture and community, with dancing, Tai Chi, a demonstration of traditional costume—which, fortunately, I was not asked to judge—and also a performance by a choir.

What we saw on Saturday was not just a celebration of the Chinese community of Melbourne's north but a celebration of our diversity and the strength of multiculturalism in the communities that make up the Scullin electorate. It was particularly gratifying to see not only representatives of the Chinese community and others who celebrated the lunar year but many others who were interested in sharing the cultural experience and the strength of community that was on display.

I am aware that those born in the Year of the Goat are supposed to be kind and peaceable. In reflecting on Saturday's celebration, perhaps in this place we could all try to be a bit more kind and a little more peaceable as we go about our business this year, to encourage a year of prosperity and peace for all of us. I extend my thanks to Albert Yew and all those involved in the Whittlesea Chinese Association for doing such a wonderful job of keeping culture and community strong in the city of Whittlesea and for giving me an opportunity to make a brief contribution to that day.

### **South East Regional Hospital**

**Dr HENDY** (Eden-Monaro) (16:30): On Friday, 20 February, I was delighted to attend and represent the federal government at the community open day of the South East Regional Hospital in Bega. There I was joined by the Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency General David Hurley, and the New South Wales Treasurer and state member for Bega, Andrew Constance. Also present were Dr Max Alexander, CEO of the Southern New South Wales Local Health District, and Heather Austin, General Manager of Bega Valley Health Service. Treasurer Constance particularly noted the contribution of the late Dr Gareth Long, an orthopaedic surgeon who argued for years for this hospital.

This \$187 million project is the biggest single infrastructure project in Eden-Monaro. The federal government is contributing \$160.1 million. That compares to around \$90 million to \$100 million for the NBN rollout that is occurring in Eden-Monaro right now. The hospital is just part of the massive investment by the federal government in health infrastructure over the coming years. Investing in our local health services is essential. Overall, the coalition government will deliver a record \$5.3 billion increase in funding for hospitals, representing an increase of 40 per cent over the next four years. I am a strong advocate of the country-city compact whereby

the critical contribution of rural and regional Australia is appropriately recognised and the special barriers and the specific barriers facing country people receive the attention that they deserve. *(Time expired)*

### **Food Labelling**

**Ms PARKE** (Fremantle) (16:31): This week it has been revealed that certain brands of imported frozen berries grown and/or packaged in China are suspected of having infected Australians with hepatitis A through contamination with faecal matter. This is an important public health issue demanding a strong government response in the areas of food standards and food labelling. Given that there have already been hepatitis A cases in Europe and North America linked to frozen berries in recent years, it is astounding that Food Standards Australia and New Zealand have required that only five per cent of berries imported into Australia need to be tested, and even then not for hepatitis A. At the same time, local berry growers are subject to demanding chemical and biological testing and inspection procedures at the grower's expense. It is imperative that this discrepancy in testing standards be addressed and that consumer safety be made a priority.

Consumers wanting to know where their food comes from face confusing country of origin labelling. For instance, the words 'Made in Australia' can mean that all of the ingredients are made or grown elsewhere but are packaged in Australia. The Prime Minister's response to this crisis to the effect that it is up to businesses not to poison their customers and that he does not support improved food labelling because he does not want to increase regulation and red tape on the private sector is grossly irresponsible. This is a public health issue that deserves to be treated with the utmost seriousness. Consumers are entitled to have confidence that the food they buy for themselves and their children is safe, and they are entitled to detailed information as to its ingredients and origins.

### **Clean Up Australia Day**

**Mrs SUDMALIS** (Gilmore) (16:33): On the first Sunday of March 1990, Australians held their first ever nationwide Clean Up Australia Day. Born out of the Clean Up Sydney Harbour event in 1989, which originated from a Clean Up Lake Macquarie event, Clean Up Australia Day has become a national icon of Australia, a chance for all Australians to give back to the community by cleaning up our bushland, parks, beaches, rivers, roads and backyards.

An estimated half a million Australians take part in a local clean up event every year. To break that down, that is an average of almost 4,000 Gilmore residents getting out and about with their gloves, sunscreen, and rubbish bags. With this year being the 25th anniversary of Clean Up Australia Day, I am sure that we will see that number inch ever closer to one million Australians. Already there are over 5,500 individual clean-up sites registered across the country. This year, I will be joining up with Councillor Kellie Marsh of Shellharbour City Council to help clean up a local site. Kellie is a champion of Clean Up Australia Day, working year after year to host her area's largest and most effective clean ups.

In my maiden speech, I explained how I felt that many people have the mindset of 'I, me and mine' in some sections of our community, and now I believe that Australians are very much famous for a 'we, ours and us' way of looking at the world. Clean Up Australia Day is chance for every one of 'us' to do a little good in our community. As you would know, when every Australian does just one small deed for their community, there is no limit to what our great nation can achieve.

### **University of Newcastle**

**Ms HALL** (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:35): Last Thursday, I went to the University of Newcastle for O week. I was out there with the state member for Swansea and some young Labor members. We had students and prospective students lining up to sign a petition that we had about the cuts to funding to universities, about the deregulation of unions and also about the increased fees they face. I have never seen such a strong response to a petition, other than the petition that we put out about Medicare where I had people coming into my office just to sign it.

As I left my stall on the way out, I stopped off at the Young Liberals stall. I was absolutely surprised when I looked and I saw the big photo of Mike Baird, the Premier of New South Wales, and next to that a photo of the member for Wentworth. There was no photo of the Prime Minister. When I asked the Young Liberal member who was working on that stand why the Prime Minister's photo was not there, she said that they were hard to get. I commented that that must be because he is so popular!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall):** I thank the member for Shortland for her enthusiasm!

### **Hindmarsh Electorate: Morning Tea**

**Mr WILLIAMS** (Hindmarsh) (16:36): Last Friday, I held a morning tea with the popular Prime Minister. It was attended by representatives of a broad range of community groups, including RSLs, Meals on Wheels, Rotary, Lions, church groups and Probus clubs to name but a few. The morning tea was extremely well

represented by leaders from multicultural groups and businesses from Adelaide's Chinese, Indian, Korean, Greek, Italian, Singaporean and Taiwanese communities. I enjoyed speaking with many who attended, and I was impressed to hear the story of Mr Yong Koh, a Singaporean migrant who is the CEO of First Class Australasia, exporters of fresh Australian lobsters and abalone to China and Japan. Mr Koh is no doubt optimistic about the opportunities thanks to the government's free trade agreements.

Jan Smith, from the Glenelg Historical Society, wrote to me saying she 'was impressed by the representation of the multicultural and many-faceted community groups that make up the Hindmarsh community' and by the Prime Minister's genuine interest in the community groups represented.

The morning tea also took the form of a Lunar New Year celebration. It was great to see so many different community groups embrace the celebration and usher in the year of the sheep or goat with the Prime Minister and the Chinese community in particular.

While the Prime Minister was in my electorate, I joined him in a meeting with Mr Jin Liang, chairman of Datong Australia, a high-quality international developer in property, located in Adelaide. It was pleasing to hear of Datong's investment in South Australia and Mr Liang's vision to grow and expand the company, and also their support and commitment to sponsor Adelaide United in the A-League (*Time expired*)

### **Fraser Electorate: Belconnen**

**Dr LEIGH** (Fraser) (16:38): My office is currently running a campaign to keep the Department of Immigration and Border Protection in Belconnen. In conjunction with ACT MLAs Yvette Berry, Mary Porter and Chris Bourke, we are campaigning against the Abbott government's flagrant disregard for Canberra. You would expect that the Abbott government would be proud that, when the OECD looked across the advanced world to see which was the most liveable region in the advanced world, it settled upon Canberra. Yet, at every turn, the Abbott government seems to be looking to denude and damage this fantastic city.

Under a Labor government, we invested in Belconnen, ensuring that Belconnen schools had first class resources; ensuring that when the global financial crisis struck building workers were kept in employment through building facilities such as the skate park on the Lake Ginninderra foreshore; ensuring that Belconnen residents have high-quality medical care through the GP superclinic at the University of Canberra; and ensuring that their students are able to study sports science through the investment in the sports hub. I commend those ACT Labor members who are working to keep jobs in Belconnen. For those who have not signed my petition, join the 2,500 people who have and jump on the website and do so.

### **Swan Electorate: Centenary of Anzac**

**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (16:39): The Centenary of Anzac is a milestone that every Australian should be humbled to be part of because without those who fought on our great nation's behalf on the shores of Gallipoli from 1914 to 1918 and in all wars since we would not be living in this generous, diverse and tolerant country we all call home today. From 2014 to 2018, the Australian government has committed time, resources and energy to ensure communities across Australia can commemorate our service men and women, and embrace the good, the bad and the ugly of our history, and to learn from those events of our past to help create a better future. The city of Canning in my electorate of Swan has been focusing on developing a range of events and activities to respectfully and appropriately commemorate the Anzac Centenary, which is why I was pleased last week to announce that they would be receiving \$25,000 in local grant funding from this government to further enhance their upcoming community project entitled Gallipoli Voices.

Gallipoli Voices is a cultural festival which has been developed in conjunction with Canning World Arts Exchange. It will feature performances from Turkish international guest artists and a host of local arts organisations, while a series of stalls will be set up for attendees to enjoy, once again with a focus on combining Turkish and Australian cultures. As members know, this cultural affinity was also remarkably witnessed between Australian and Turkish soldiers on the battlefields of Gallipoli, so I congratulate the city of Canning for recognising and promoting this and developing an event which will ensure community members of all ages are able to participate.

### **Bendigo Electorate: St Kilian's Primary School**

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (16:41): Today, I rise to share with the House some ideas from the St Kilian's Primary School students. Recently, I met with the student leaders and grade 6 students of St Kilian's Primary School and I asked them what they would do for their school if they were Prime Minister. They said they would like more funding for their school for the music program and more funding for sporting equipment. They believe that all students at the school should have the opportunity to learn an instrument and that their school should have the sporting facilities for all sports, including basketball and tennis. They also said if they were Prime Minister

they would improve road safety and road crossings around the school to allow children to get to school easily. When I asked them what they would do for Bendigo if they were Prime Minister, they said that they would like better bike ways and pathways to ensure that people could get to school safely and ride their parks. They also said that they would like more sporting infrastructure like tennis courts and pools, and perhaps even a water park or a splash park. When I asked them what they would do for Australia, their response was clear. They said that they would like no Australian child to be homeless. They called on our government to invest more in homelessness services. These are some of our youngest Australians with strong ideas about what we need to do as a country.

#### **Swan Electorate: Youth Focus**

**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (16:43): Youth Focus is a community group in my electorate. I instigated a health committee report a few years ago into youth suicide and Youth Focus were the main drivers behind that. The CEO Jenny Allen visited my office last week to talk to me about funding for families and for assisting families who have had the trauma of suicide in their family, particularly young people. They gave me some background to what happened with a particular suicide recently in Bunbury and all the organisations that got involved to help out the family.

Youth Focus run an annual bicycle event which goes from Albany to various points through to Geraldton. They are starting a new leg this year, which will be their third leg. It has been going now for about 15 years and they have had some high-profile, professional cyclists from across Australia, and in that time they have managed to raise well over \$2 million to stop youth suicide in Western Australia. They are heavily involved with headspace and provide one of the best services you can find in Western Australia for young people with mental health issues who are facing the disastrous option of suicide. I congratulate them on the work that they do.

#### **Franklin Electorate: A Taste of the Huon**

**Ms COLLINS** (Franklin) (16:44): I would like to make the House aware of and encourage people to come down to my electorate for a wonderful festival 30 minutes south of Hobart called A Taste of the Huon. A Taste of the Huon this year will be held over Sunday, 8 March and Monday, 9 March. This festival is in its 23rd year and it celebrates the regional produce of the Huon area. Of course, in the Apple Isle you would expect to find lots of apples, but there are also cherries, mushrooms, ciders, salmon and of course our wineries. Importantly, there are fresh berries. Contrary to popular belief, there are a lot of berries grown in Tasmania. Indeed, at A Taste of the Huon, you can get blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries—a whole range of berries.

The festival usually attracts around 20,000 visitors each year. It is a wonderful festival celebrating the best of Tasmanian produce, and it is all run by volunteers. There is a volunteer community that organises the festival and it then puts the money back into the local community. So it is a regional festival run by volunteers, showcasing all this wonderful produce from southern Tasmania and celebrating the region of the Huon Valley, D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Bruny Island. It is a wonderful event down in my electorate and I encourage members of the House and people right across Australia who might be listening to come on down.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones)**: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

### **GRIEVANCE DEBATE**

Debate resumed.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones)** (16:46): The question is:

That grievances be noted.

#### **Canberra Electorate: Australian Public Service**

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (16:46): I rise today to speak on an issue I have been campaigning on since I was elected, and that is the Abbott government's disdain, contempt and lack of respect for the Australian Public Service and, most importantly, Canberra. As predicted, Canberra and the capital region are bearing the brunt of the government's harsh and sweeping Public Service job cuts. The Australian Taxation Office is feeling the full force of the Abbott government's axe; already there have been more than 3,000 job cuts, with a reported 1,700 more to follow. There have been more than 270 redundancies at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to date, three-quarters of which have been Canberra based.

What of the Abbott government's pre-election promise that every single Public Service job loss would be made through natural attrition? We heard that in 1996. In 1996, the Howard government said before the election that 2½ thousand Public Service jobs would go through natural attrition. That ended up being 15,000 Public Service jobs here in Canberra and 30,000 Public Service jobs throughout the country, and they were not through natural attrition. The Abbott government's promise was repeated by ACT Liberal Senator Seselja on almost a daily basis in the lead-up to the election; and, like most of the government's pre-election promises, it has been broken.

Unsurprisingly, the Public Service attrition rate has dropped since the election—because why would anyone voluntarily leave their job when there are no jobs to go to?

These job losses, the forced hiring freeze and the threat of privatising Public Service functions are taking their toll on Canberra's economy. I often speak to businesses. I go on business walk-arounds all the time. I speak to small businesses, large businesses and developers here around Canberra. I speak to them in little industrial enclaves in Fyshwick and Hume. I speak to them in satellite city centres, in Woden and Phillip in the inner south and in Weston Creek and Tuggeranong. The story always seems to be the same: consumer confidence has been down since the election, and it dipped even lower in the lead-up to the budget. It did not just dip; it fell through the floor. Canberrans just closed their wallets and purses. There was no spending going on in this town in the lead-up to the budget.

Consumer confidence has been sluggish since the Abbott government was elected and it has not recovered. It is still incredibly low. Canberra businesses are doing it tough across every sector. Their profits have either plateaued or, in some of the businesses I have been speaking to, dropped about 20 to 30 per cent.

Canberra learnt the hard way in 1996 that slashing public service jobs hits our economy hard. Despite the fact that our economy in Canberra is about 50 per cent public service and 50 per cent private sector, the 50 per cent private sector is still incredibly reliant on the public sector. A strong public sector means a strong private sector here in Canberra; they are interdependent. Thought of the Howard government years always sends a feeling of shock and horror through Canberrans, because whenever they reflect on that period they just remember the doom and gloom in this town. In 1996-97, non-business bankruptcies rose dramatically, by 17 per cent, while business bankruptcies jumped by a frightening 38 per cent.

Many of those opposite know that I am always talking about the value of the public service and that I am always talking about how important it is for Canberra, our nation's capital, to be respected. I know that those opposite get a bit bored with what I am saying, but I would just like to know how comfortable they would feel if some of the figures that I am recounting here in terms of job losses, the hit on the private sector, the business bankruptcies and non-business bankruptcies if that were happening in their electorate.

I speak here from personal experience, because, like so many Canberrans, like the 15,000 public servants in 1996, I lost my job when John Howard was elected. I saw firsthand what happened in Canberra when the Howard government came to power and how it sent our city into a downward spiral. I saw local shops closing down. I saw people leaving town. I saw house prices plummet. I saw people in tears because they had been sacked. I saw people who were trying to get jobs but who could only get part-time jobs—my husband was one of them. There were no full-time jobs. There was nothing going on in the town in terms of employment. I saw town centres where office space after office space had been completely abandoned. That is the future this Abbott government sees for Canberra. It is back to the future in terms of 1996. The Abbott government is doing exactly the same thing to this town, to the public service and to the capital region as the Howard government did in 1996. This is not just about people losing their jobs. The Abbott government also continues to wage war on public servants over their workplace pay and conditions—conditions that have been hard fought over a number of decades. The Abbott government's attacks on ADF pay, defence civilian pay and public service pay and conditions just underscores its contempt, its disdain, its lack of respect for the public service.

I have been very vocal about the government's unfair and insulting ADF pay and conditions offer. The original offer cut the real pay and conditions of our service men and women and slashed precious Christmas and recreation leave. After the offer sparked widespread community outrage, the Prime Minister backtracked on parts of the offer. While we welcomed this backdown, the Prime Minister still did not go far enough. He still cut the real pay of our service men and women. He still cut the real pay of the people who defend Australia, who defend our national interests and who put themselves in harm's way to protect what we hold dear. Australians were shocked then and they are still shocked. More than 65,000 people have signed Tony Dagger's petition on Change.org calling for a fair deal for our ADF personnel, and they are signing it because ADF members do not have a voice in their pay and conditions negotiations. They cannot vote, and they cannot take industrial action. That is why Labor has and will continue to stand up for our ADF personnel.

The Prime Minister has also used this insidious campaign for cutting ADF pay to set the bar for defence staff and public servants more broadly. Defence department staff were just last week offered a below inflation pay increase of 3.16 per cent over the next three years. This offer averages to just 1.05 per cent annually. Under this insulting offer, defence staff will not only see their real wages fall but also lose a range of conditions—hard-fought for conditions over decades. They will lose two days leave a year, including Christmas leave; they will have slower progression through pay grades; and they will have to work an extra 4.5 days a year. This unfair deal is worse than what was offered to the ADF personnel, and even the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Dennis Richardson, has labelled this wage offer 'regrettable'.

These attacks on ADF pay and Defence pay mirror what we are seeing across the Australian Public Service. The CPSU is currently bargaining for around 165,000 Commonwealth public servants, because agreements in 117 agencies expired in June last year. The Australian Public Service simply cannot continue to function effectively when staff are being sacked in droves and those left behind are forced to battle for the most basic workplace conditions and entitlements. Two weeks ago the Secretary of the Department of Finance, Jane Halton, came out and said that it is a myth that further cuts to the bureaucracy will create a surplus. Referring to the Public Service, she said:

We're actually a relatively small proportion of the spend.

Despite this, the government continues to target public servants.

I will continue to stand up for public servants everywhere. Public servants are valuable and valued people who keep Australia working. They support our community; they manage our hospitals, our schools, our universities and our transport networks; and they look after our forests and oceans, our Defence Force and our financial institutions. But, more than that, they are altruistic, they are people who take pride in their work, and they are people with families, with mortgages and with car repayments—like every other Australian.

I will also continue to stand up for a strong and central Public Service here in Canberra. It is a model that Robert Menzies championed and established, and I will continue to advocate for his legacy. Labor will continue to stand up against these attacks on ADF personnel, Defence staff and the Public Service, because what they mean is all bad for Australia.

### Domestic Violence

**Mrs McNAMARA** (Dobell) (16:56): I am extremely proud of my electorate of Dobell, but unfortunately there is one thing that no-one is proud of. Statistically, the electorate of Dobell has the second highest rate of domestic and family violence in New South Wales. This figure is shocking, saddening, frightening and completely unacceptable. In my role as an elected member, I believe it is my responsibility to bring about change and opportunities that make lifelong positive impacts that involve all members of my electorate. It is my role to be a voice and stand up for those who cannot—namely children.

Child abuse and neglect is one of Australia's biggest social issues. The *Report on government services* of 2015 reported that during 2013-14 nationally claims that were investigated and substantiated identified 40,844 children between the ages of zero and 17 years who had been abused or neglected. At the end of June 2014, 45,746 children aged zero to 17 years were subject to care and protection orders across Australia, and 43,009 children were placed in out-of-home care. Emotional abuse against Australian children was reported as the highest primary substantiated harm type, with neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse following in sequential order. These figures are just the reported statistics. As stated by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:

Child protection statistics are the best available indicator of the extent of the problem of child abuse and neglect in Australia. However, they do not reveal with accuracy how many children in the community have been abused or neglected.

I hate to imagine what the figure would be if all cases of child abuse were reported.

Tragically, this is the reality of child abuse in this country. This issue has no sides, and it does not discriminate. It is found in all societies, communities, demographics and suburbs, and it is one of our most shameful statistics. In Australia, we are fortunate to have such organisations as the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, the Australian Childhood Foundation, Bravehearts, and Adults Surviving Child Abuse available to advocate and provide support for the victims of child abuse.

It is the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect that promotes the Play Your Part campaign designed to encourage community involvement and play a part in creating a child-friendly community. Research indicates that one of the most effective ways to prevent child abuse and neglect before it starts is by building child-friendly communities that support and value children and families. Too often in our community people find it difficult to stand up for those who are suffering and those who do not have a voice. Often people turn a blind eye to the obvious, whether through denial of the reality that is occurring, fear of legal ramifications or genuine belief in not getting involved in someone else's problems.

Given the startling statistics that I shared earlier, this is an issue we need to take responsibility for and openly discuss. We need to stop and think that we could be the only person who could make a difference to a child's life. Many adult survivors of child abuse believe that the continued abuse causes more harm than any action taken to stop the abuse. Community members may think that they are overreacting or mistaken when it comes to actually reporting abuse. They may be worried that they will be seen by others as interfering or breaking up a family. The reality is that families need help when abuse is present in the home. Reporting suspected abuse can be critical in preventing further abuse of the children or young people in that family, and this includes the reporting of domestic or family violence. Reporting abuse can help families receive the support that they require. Reporting suspected

child abuse is not dobbing someone in and it is not interfering. Importantly, it is not turning a blind eye to something you know is wrong. Reporting child abuse creates a safer community for our children to live in—and this is a simple fact.

Victims of child abuse suffer not only at the time but also into the future. It is the effects on the victims and the community that can never be measured. As stated on the Family Relationships Online website, 'One of the most damaging things about child abuse is that it is usually done by a person whom the child knows and trusts.' Young children who look up to and believe in the adults who are important in their lives will often put up with all sorts of treatment. The effects of child abuse and neglect can be significant and often lead to lifelong problems. In the short term, child abuse can impact on a child's brain development and how they think and feel about themselves. It affects how successful they are at school and it affects their physical development, skills and behaviour. Long-term child abuse can lead to drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and complications with developing and maintaining healthy relationships. Alarmingly, in too many cases, the cycle is repeated when the abused becomes the abuser. It is imperative that this cycle of abuse is broken.

A recent report commissioned by the Adults Surviving Child Abuse lobby group utilised data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics to identify that dealing with the widespread effects of child abuse costs Australia \$9 billion a year. The report states that addressing child sexual, emotional and physical abuse alone could lead to a potential minimum gain of \$6.8 billion for the combined federal, state and territory governments. The report also states that active, timely and comprehensive intervention with appropriate support, resources, services and treatment enable adult survivors to participate more fully and productively in the Australian community.

The need for early prevention and intervention is also highlighted by the fact that child abuse can often be a recurring issue in families. The most recent discussions regarding child protection policy and its future in Australia involves the recognition that numbers of child protection notifications and children being placed in care are increasing at a concerning and, most likely, unsustainable rate. Child abuse is a complex and difficult issue that combines a myriad of factors and jurisdictions, but it is our role to ensure that these policies, procedures and programs are as simple as possible so that they can be easily implemented and delivered. Problems with the system currently include, but are not limited to, an increase in the number of notifications placing a greater strain on the system's ability to assess and process them; resources tending to focus on the investigation and assessment phases with less available for prevention and treatment; and children themselves having little input into any decisions made about their involvement in the system.

However, in the sadness of child abuse there is also hope. Recently, I met with Greg and Dawn Floyd, a couple in Dobell, who open their hearts and their homes to foster children in need of care. Greg and Dawn operate Cowboy Church at Beulah Ranch in Yarralong Valley. Here, in this picturesque surrounding, Greg and Dawn tackle firsthand the abuse faced by the children who come to them for respite. Through their patience, kindness and love they are able to provide a sense of trust and security to children in need. Greg and Dawn teach the children, who have been placed in foster care due to abusive situations, how to create trust and bonds with animals on their ranch, which ultimately leads to stronger relationships between the child and the adults who are trying to help them.

Greg and Dawn provide the opportunity for children to come to a safe haven, and they encourage them to participate in hands-on activities to create tangible objects whilst taking the time to listen and care for these children who genuinely feel that they have been forgotten. Listening to some of the stories shared by Greg and Dawn, I can honestly say that my heart broke for these children and what they have been subjected to in their young lives. Greg and Dawn have the passion and dedication to turn Beulah Ranch into a fully functional respite centre for foster children who have experienced abuse. It is my aim to help support them in their dream as much as I can.

The Central Coast has many dedicated, passionate and devoted community members who deal with issues of child abuse on a daily basis. To them I say: thank you for taking time in a role which I can only imagine challenges even those with the hardest shelled exteriors. I am planning on using my role and responsibility as a federal member to stand up for and speak out in support of those who cannot and to provide assistance to the organisations that encounter child abuse on a daily basis.

The issue of child abuse is one that every member of parliament should be continually striving to make a positive difference on. We need to work together to implement cohesive, proven strategies to combat this problem and ensure that perpetrators of child abuse crimes are made appropriately accountable for their actions. As stated in the report on the national framework for protecting Australia's children 2009-2020:

Our children must be able to grow up nourished and supported in loving and caring environments. They must have time to be children with all the wonder, happiness and innocence that childhood should bring.

All children have the right to be safe and receive loving care and support. The best way to protect children is to prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place.

### Community Television

**Mr BANDT** (Melbourne) (17:06): I rise today because the future of community TV in Australia is under threat. Community TV stations are a powerful and important part of our society and democracy. They add diversity to our media and give a voice to people and issues not often afforded airtime on mainstream networks. Like community radio, community TV is an incubator for some of our upcoming stars in the broadcast industry, both in front of and behind the camera. But it seems that Minister Turnbull and the government do not understand this.

In September last year, the Minister for Communications announced that he plans to cut access to broadcast spectrum for community TV stations at the end of this year, 2015. The plan of the minister and the Abbott government to push community stations off digital channels risks sending community television to the grave. Instead of keeping this valuable space open as a community asset, the government is putting the interests of media chiefs before that of community television viewers. While the big channels are eyeing off a \$200 million purchase of the spectrum, community TV is a not-for-profit community voice, there to enable all members of the community to produce content for broadcast on free-to-air television. Community TV broadcasts content that is unlikely to be seen on the major national broadcasters. It is also the place where people in the entertainment industry learn their skills. Australians know prominent figures such as Rove McManus, Corinne Grant, Stella Young and Costa Georgiadis. They are high-profile figures who have made a big contribution to Australian TV and entertainment. They all got their start on community TV. There are community TV stations across the country that provide an invaluable community service. Channel 31 in Melbourne and Geelong, 31 Digital Brisbane, TVS Sydney, West TV Perth and Channel 44 in Adelaide are all facing blackout as a result of this decision by Minister Turnbull.

While community TV is important around the country, I want to inform the chamber today about programs running on Channel 31, based in my electorate of Melbourne and broadcast to the whole Melbourne metropolitan area and Geelong. I have been on Channel 31 a number of times. It was my great pleasure to be a guest last year on *Chair Chat*, produced by Disability Media Australia. Disability Media Australia produces a range of shows by and for the disability community. *Chair Chat* is a show produced by volunteers who have a disability and are learning the technical skills of TV and broadcasting, gaining the skills that might lead to employment in the sector.

*No Limits* is a disability lifestyle program that speaks to the issues important to people in the community. Right now, there are serious issues affecting people with a disability in Australia. Government cuts to the disability support pension and implementation of the NDIS have been highlighted as key issues that do not get the representation, coverage or perspective in major broadcast media that a platform such as *No Limits* can provide. It is all the more important given this government's brutal budget funding cut to ABC's Ramp Up, a vital space for self-representation in the disability community.

Community TV also provides a platform for shows that are created by and for a range of community groups around Australia in a range of community languages. This includes in my electorate of Melbourne. Melbourne is home to people from all walks of life and speakers of hundreds of languages. Many people in Melbourne depend on community TV for information and connection with community in their own language.

One of the most watched shows on Channel 31 in greater Melbourne is *Vietnamese TV*, produced by the Vietnamese Television Association Inc. under the leadership of its president, Dr Tien Kieu. The Vietnamese community is this year celebrating its 40th anniversary in Australia. Its members have achieved so much in that time and made such an outstanding contribution to this country. *Vietnamese TV* on Channel 31 has been running continuously since 1996. Around 20,000 TV sets reportedly regularly tune into that show, representing perhaps some 40,000 viewers. Now, that is out of 80,000 members of the Vietnamese community in Victoria. It is the only locally produced free-to-air TV show that is by and for the local Vietnamese community. It carries content and stories about local issues affecting the community and news that is unique to Vietnamese speakers in Australia. While some Vietnamese speakers are able to access satellite broadcasts produced overseas, primarily by Vietnamese communities located in the United States or by the Vietnamese government, these broadcasts do not cover the local issues or reflect unique local viewpoints.

As part of Minister Turnbull's announcement, he made the suggestion that the best outcome for community TV would be to provide the entirety of their content and services online. But community representatives are clear that most viewers of shows like *Vietnamese TV* will not be able to continue watching these shows if they go online, and that stands to reason when you consider the age and language barriers that some of these viewers will face. If

it is the case, as the minister says, that the future of the nation's TV broadcasters is online, why isn't the minister pushing the commercial stations off air and online? Why is it only community TV, the one least able to afford it? It is clear that pushing community television to internet broadcasting at the end of this year will kill off this important part of our media mix.

The government has no plan for a viable future for community television. Community TV stations have received barely a year's notice of the government's plan and absolutely minimal financial support. Minister Turnbull has allocated just \$450,000 over two years to support community TV stations to make the transition to internet-only broadcasting—\$450,000 for five community stations over two years. Worse, this money would not be extra money; the funding would be taken from existing production grants currently used to support the production of new content. How are community TV channels and program producers expected to fundamentally transform their operating model under these circumstances? There will be no transition. Community TV will die.

What is more, as my colleague Senator Scott Ludlam has pointed out, the rolling NBN debacle makes any transition by 2015 simply out of the question. Network speeds simply are not there. Even for those fortunate enough to live in a zone with the NBN, it is clear that online-only broadcasting will not reach anywhere near the same audience as community TV. The current number of page views for uploads of community TV programs bear this out, being considerably lower than the number of broadcast viewers. According to figures provided by Nielsen, 89 per cent of all video hours viewed are still delivered by broadcast television. Free-to-air TV viewing averages 24 hours per week, whereas video viewed via the internet averages a little over two hours per week.

Many vulnerable Australians or older people or people who for whatever reason do not regularly use the internet or older members of the Vietnamese community who may not be able to afford computers or excessive data packages will just miss out. And there is a joy in casually flicking between channels and finding yourself seeing a suburban orchard on *Vasili's Garden to Kitchen* or getting sucked into a show about a hobby or interest that you would never think to seek out via an internet search. It is simply not realistic to expect that Australians will have access to community TV if it is taken off the free-to-air spectrum this year. Meanwhile, it is likely that many programs and broadcasters will be unable to continue producing shows if community TV is pushed off the spectrum.

Minister Turnbull argues that community television on the internet will be free from the current restrictions on advertising and so will be able to carry any advertising it chooses. However, this is highly disingenuous, as current sponsors are unlikely to move online. Community television is not for profit and currently self-funding, but losing broadcasting rights will break the business model. With the very limited resources available to the sector, it is grossly unrealistic to expect that community TV stations could find a new model of internet-only advertising.

There is no pressing technical need for the spectrum currently used by community TV stations to be vacated in the time frames given. The sector is clear that there are options that would enable community TV to continue broadcasting while also ensuring that valuable spectrum can be managed efficiently for all Australians. Many suspect that this is being driven by the department, out of a long held desire to wipe out community TV, but the minister has signed up to it. At the same time that this government is breaking its election promise by cutting funding to the ABC and SBS, meaning less local content, less diversity and fewer Australian stories on our TVs, Minister Turnbull is planning to wipe out the future of community TV.

I say to Minister Turnbull: this will mean political pain for no appreciable gain. This is a test as to whether life under your leadership, Minister Turnbull, would be more enlightened or just more of the same. Here is a change to kill community TV or save it. To the public I say that, if you watch community TV or you know people who do or, if you recognise how important community TV is for communities across Melbourne and Australia, now is the time to take action. A public campaign involving many well-known faces was put on pause while the sector lobbied the government. Well, it is time to rev it up again. Like so much of the Abbott government's brutal agenda, these cuts can be stopped—and we know that because we have done it before. Last year, the future of community radio was under threat, but the community came together and raised its voice and fended off the cuts. In the context of a brutal budget, the minister did the right thing by community radio broadcasters. Now it is time for him to do the right thing by community TV.

### **Australian Seafood Industry**

**Mr HOWARTH** (Petrie) (17:16): Tonight I want to briefly talk about the Australian seafood industry, particularly professional fishermen and trawler operators within the Moreton Bay region, close to my electorate of Petrie. In December last year I had the chance to go out for a night on a trawler that operates in Moreton Bay. I want to thank Rick Morgan from Morgan Seafoods—a local retailer—for providing that opportunity for me. It was a really interesting night. I certainly learnt that professional fishermen and trawler operators work extremely

hard, and I want to acknowledge all the trawler operators based out of Scarborough in my electorate and nearby in Sandgate as well, who also fish there. They do a wonderful job, providing Australian seafood to the local community.

I had the chance to go out on a boat called *The Marvan*, which was built in 1968. It was skippered by Ted Wodham and Mike Palframan. I spent the night fishing with these two men, and it provided me with a valuable insight into the industry. I learnt that Moreton Bay is flourishing. The actual fishing in Moreton Bay as far as catches go with prawns is improving every year and bycatch is very limited. The nets that they use now are working extremely well. We went out at about five o'clock in the afternoon and came back at about seven o'clock the next morning. The nets were put out at about six o'clock at night and they were out for about two hours. At eight o'clock at night the nets were brought in, the catch was put into the sorting trays and the nets were immediately put back out while the three of us sorted through the catch. The catch included tiger prawns, king prawns and bay prawns.

As far as bycatch, there was very little. There were some crabs, which were let go and thrown off the side, and there was a small amount of fish—like whiting and flathead. But there were no turtles or large fish like snapper or anything like that. In fact, when the nets were pulled up, a pod of dolphins came up the back of the boat—they must be able to hear when the nets are pulled up—and they were just picking off the fish that were thrown back. It was an interesting night. It takes about an hour and a half or an hour and 46 minutes to go through the catch. By that time, two hours later, it is time to pull the next net in. They work really hard and I pay credit to them. It is a great industry and I would encourage young people who are interested in fishing and the outdoors to get involved with it and maybe get their skippers licence or become a deckhand. The money is quite good and, if you enjoy fishing, it is a good thing to do.

Unfortunately, there is red tape involved in this industry, which I want to briefly speak about. There are two areas of red tape which I particularly want to address. The captain, Ted Woodham, who owned the *Marvan* which I went out on, also had two other boats which he had licences for. The *Marvan* is a 45-foot boat. I found out that, if you have another boat licence that a younger operator might want to lease, it is very difficult to do that unless you have exactly the same sized boat. For example, if you have a fishing licence for a 45-foot boat and a younger operator who wants to get into the industry has a 40-foot boat, they cannot use that same licence in Moreton Bay. It is just unbelievable. Because their boat is five feet shorter, the licence cannot be used. It just sounds ridiculous. It is an area of red tape that needs to be addressed. The boat that I went out on, as I said before, was built in 1968. To build a new 45-foot trawler today would cost well in excess of \$1 million. With rising diesel costs and wages and operators still getting the same price for prawns as they did 20 years ago, it is very difficult for them to go out and buy a new boat. That area of red tape in relation to the size of boats should be addressed.

The other area is bycatch. Small fish like whiting and flathead that are pulled up could be sold. They are dead when they are pulled up because they have been in the net for an hour or so being trawled. They are all thrown overboard. The dolphins of Moreton Bay are having a field day here. They get fed over at Tangalooma on Moreton Island and then they go out at night and scrounge round at the back of the trawlers. They are doing extremely well. I think there would be just a small amount of profit for the trawler fishermen if they could keep a small amount of bycatch, as in whiting and flathead. That would make sense to me. Unfortunately, as it is in Moreton Bay, it is a state government issue. I was planning to address this issue with the previous LNP state government, but we now have a new state Labor government in Queensland. I will be passing this input onto the state Labor members in my seat of Petrie, because it is certainly something that I would like them to address in order to make these professional fishermen a little more profitable and to encourage younger people to get into the industry.

I love to eat Australian seafood, and so do a lot of other people in the Petrie electorate. I was encouraged to hear that Moreton Bay is doing well. We do not want to buy all our seafood from Asian countries. I support aquaculture and I want to see that industry continue to grow, but we want to make sure that wild seafood is sustainable and that professional fishermen will be able to provide catches for Queenslanders like me and other Australians for a long time to come. Red tape in those areas is an issue.

The other area that state government needs to address is payroll tax. Payroll tax is a ridiculous tax. What sort of tax penalises you for employing new people? If you are a small business that turns over a couple of million dollars a year with, say, 14 staff—13 staff and you are on the cusp—and paying about \$1 million in wages, there is no incentive for you to put on more employees and grow your business a little bit more because you will get hit with payroll tax. It is an area that really does need to be addressed. As I said before, I will be talking to the new state government and the state members in my area to address those red tape issues on the size of boats and being able to use a small amount of bycatch, and payroll tax. I note that the previous LNP government was planning to

increase the threshold for payroll tax. It is still not good enough; it needs to go together. However, I hope the new Labor government will follow the LNP government and implement that as well.

Finally, I encourage everyone in the Petrie electorate to buy Australian seafood. I encourage you to buy Australian fish and prawns whether it is from a local retailer—like Morgans or Dutton seafoods at Woody Point; I know of another one at Gawain Road in Bracken Ridge—or even from Woolworths. They sell banana prawns and other seafood that is Australian caught. I encourage you to buy Australian seafood wherever you can. It is fresh, it is good quality and it certainly makes a big difference.

#### Interim Report on the 2013 Election

**Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (17:24):** I rise today in the grievance debate to speak briefly about the interim report on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 federal election that was undertaken last year by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, of which I am deputy chair. Members may be aware that the report was passed in May of last year; it considered the question of the issues around Senate voting practices and recent developments with voting for the Senate and some of the results that have become apparent as a result of various practices in play for Senate elections.

I start off by saying that all the practices I am talking about are absolutely legal—there is nothing to suggest anything other than the system is being utilised very effectively by some people who seek to contest the election. But I contend, and the committee contends, that that in itself has produced some outcomes that are problematic to the actual operation of the system. There have been significant increases in the number of microparties contesting Senate elections, and more recently we have seen evidence of that spreading into state jurisdictions, particularly in the recent Victorian election. The evidence which would suggest that parties are springing up that are designed to appeal, at least on a symbolic front, to subsections of the voting population, but which then utilise group-voting tickets to harvest preferences and through that process gain results that, I argue, are not in line with the democratic intentions of those who are voting.

There is no doubt that we are seeing the vote of the major parties declining and the vote for microparties increasing. Votes for Labor, Liberals, Nationals and even the Greens to some extent are on the decline, while the vote for others is on the increase. We can debate what that says about disaffection with the electoral system and the nature of the choice that voters face and with the way we operate individually and collectively. The conclusion that some try to reach is: the mere fact that people vote for somebody else means that they support anybody else. If 20 per cent of people are voting for a minor party or a microparty, then, frankly, it is any microparty. That is the end result of the sort of ticketing arrangements that we are talking about. Overwhelmingly those who vote in that way have their preferences gathered and forced into the electoral contest on the back of a handful of people. There is no doubt that many of the people who vote in that manner have absolutely no idea of where their preferences end up and no idea of the end result. A major example of that occurred in the last federal election where the Motoring Enthusiasts Party received some 0.05 per cent of the vote in Victoria, but still was elected to the Senate. I do not think there were many people who had a clue about who the Motoring Enthusiasts Party was—including some of those who voted for it. I am damn sure that an awful lot of people whose vote ended up with Senator Muir, with all due respect to him, had absolutely no idea that would happen.

It is a trend that is increasing. It is increasing because there are massive increases in group-voting tickets through the registration of parties, and this is having an impact on the percentages. I would like to introduce a few figures in support of that. This is a comparison of the 2010 Senate election with the 2013 Senate election, state by state, by the number of groups registered above the line—in other words, those with group voting tickets—and then by the percentage. In New South Wales in 2010 there were 32 parties registered and 32 group voting tickets; in 2013 there were 44. The 'other' vote—other than major parties and other than the Greens—went from 13.8 per cent in 2010 to 26.45 per cent in 2013. So group voting tickets went up by 12—a percentage increase of some 12.65 per cent for 'others'. In Victoria there were 21 group voting tickets in 2010 and 37 in 2013. The vote for others went from 13.17 per cent to 19.65 per cent. In Queensland there were 23 group voting tickets in 2010 and 36 in 2013, up by 13. The vote for others went from 16.37 per cent to 24.05 per cent. In Western Australia there were 22 group voting tickets in 2010 and 27 in 2013. The minor vote went from 9.89 per cent to 19.65 per cent—up by nearly 10 per cent. In South Australia there were 18 group voting tickets in 2010 and 32 in 2013. The vote for others went from 11.04 per cent in 2010 to 42.5 per cent in 2013. We have to take into account Senator Xenophon's impact on that, but there is no doubt that the increase is huge. In Tasmania there were 10 group voting tickets in 2010 and 22 in 2013. The 'other' vote went from 5.07 per cent in 2010 to 18 per cent in 2013. The total group voting tickets across those states were 126 in 2010 and 198 in 2013: plus 72.

That is having an impact not only in terms of the sorts of choices that people think they are making; it is also encouraging people to vote above the line, because it is so complex. The New South Wales ballot paper was a metre long and you needed a magnifying glass to look at it effectively in order to make your choices. A real

impact on democracy is coming through there. It is not only occurring in that situation. I mentioned Victoria, and in Victoria at the last election, in November, we had minor parties—the DLP, the Shooters and Fishers Party, Vote 1 Local Jobs, and the Sex Party—all elected in upper house regions. Who came close? The Rise Up Australia Party, Voice for the West, the Voluntary Euthanasia Party, the Animal Justice Party, the Australian Country Alliance and the Australian Christians.

We now have a crossbench of some eight senators, and if we went to a double dissolution election the probability is that that crossbench could be somewhere in the region of 17 or 18 members. We all know what the Senate has been like to deal with over the last year or two, and we all know that that has implications for the nature of policy. We might disagree across the chamber about what those policies should be, and we can argue the toss about the question of what we should support and when we should support it, but I contend that that in itself cannot be helping democracy and good governance within this country. When you look at that in the terms of the circumstances around a double dissolution election, or even around a normal half-Senate election, we can still see a situation where we will probably end up, on the basis of that last election result, with something like 14 or 15 on the cross benches. I think there is a grave concern there for the operation of our democracy, and I think that there is a real need, therefore, for action to be taken.

I call upon the government to take into account the recommendations made in the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters—a unanimous report, supported by both sides of the House and also by the Greens—in order to deal with this issue. I have to ask why the government has not acted on this report. As members know, a government normally has six months to respond to a committee report. That six months is well and truly up and yet there has been no action; it is all very quiet.

I understand that the government are endeavouring to work through what they can of its agenda with the existing Senate, but I put this to them: these issues will not go away. The fact is, as we look to the next election, if we are not careful, the circumstances that we now face will in fact be significantly worse, and that has implications for all sides of the House with respect to the operation of our democracy.

The government needs to move on this issue. It needs to pick up the bipartisan recommendations of the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and ensure that these issues are legislated before the next election. There is a need to get rid of group voting tickets to move into line with the recommendations of the committee around optional preferential voting. That is a major change, but it is a change which is needed. The electorate needs to be educated on those issues and the community needs to understand the implications for it in order to ensure that our democracy can continue to deliver results which we can all work with, even when we win and even when we lose.

### **Queensland: Cyclone Marcia**

**Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (17:34):** I am standing here today to report on the devastating cyclone that ripped through Central Queensland on Friday to Saturday morning. It is very sad in a lot of respects because places such as Biloela have had four floods since 2010-11. Jambin in particular and Goovigen have been severely hit by raging floodwaters. The Callide Dam flooded its gates. The first that Biloela people realised this was when the water came into their houses. These are houses that have never been flooded before. I was talking to one chap from Biloela who said that his grandfather had never seen a flood in this particular area. He told him where to build his house. Of course, you can guess what has happened. His house has been flooded. It happened because two dams upstream of Biloela burst at the same time, flooding the low-lying eastern Biloela area. There have been a lot of other houses damaged in the area and a lot of properties down the Callide Creek have been devastated, with fences wiped out and herds of cattle lost. Hopefully they will have found some more today. There has been widespread loss of electricity and phone service. Roads have been wiped out. Bridges have been lost. Really, it is a devastated area.

I tried to get into some of the parts of my electorate in the Callide Valley on Saturday but was turned away when I got to Callide Creek. There were people on the other side of the bridge, but there was a five-metre section of that bridge that had been washed away. Fortunately there was a fallen tree at one end of the road and another fallen tree at the other end of the road. The two trees probably saved lives because there would have been no way to see the gap in the bridge until it was too late. That act of God, as I see it, certainly saved lives. Those fallen trees at both ends of the bridge protected people from going into the hole in the bridge.

Gracemere and Mount Morgan suffered, as did Rockhampton and Yeppoon. The Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss and I did a tour of inspection of that area yesterday, but there were so many parts in my electorate we just could not get to to assess the damage. When people have no phones, no internet and no way of communicating, it is very hard to assess the damage that has been done. I am still getting calls today, and no doubt

I will tomorrow and the next day, as people on those properties bring to our attention that they can use their roads again and put the flag up to say, 'Hang on. We need help.'

Another disturbing thing from the cyclone was that service stations went out. Marmor service station in particular has been badly damaged. People's generators only lasted a small period of time before they ran out of fuel, and then they could not get more fuel from the service stations. In Rockhampton there was a service station that came back online with generators. I noticed a pile-up of cars going into the service station. The queue of cars to get fuel went back about five or six blocks.

It started off as a category 1 cyclone which no-one really thought too much about. We thought, 'We can handle this. We've done it before.' But it quickly went through the different categories and, by the time it hit Yeppoon, it was a category 5. That is the worst cyclone you can have on any sort of reading.

The people of Central Queensland were taken by surprise. They did not expect the blow. There was a terrible amount of damage, with trees and power lines falling. About 600 electricity lines had to be repaired before we could get power to most sites. All the refrigerated food had to be thrown out, of course. The emergency was with the hospitals. The Mater hospital had generators but no fuel for the generators, so they were caught out. The main aim was and is to get essential services like hospitals, ambulances—those sorts of facilities—up and running as soon as we could. Hopefully, today, we have had a bit of success. The Army Reserve based in Rockhampton was out yesterday, and I believe that some 200 to 300 servicemen from Townsville will be lobbying on the city, hopefully today. Ergon, the electricity company, is sending in reinforcements from all over Queensland. It is a credit to the volunteers.

I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker Prentice, were very much involved during the Emerald floods and that you know exactly what can happen when all hell breaks loose. It was not so much the wind in Biloela that caused problems as the release of water out of the dam. In 2013 we had the big flood that wiped out Bundaberg. The water that rushed through Jambin on Saturday morning was two metres higher than during the floods of 2013. That is how much water came down. I was talking to a grazier. He said that he had never seen water like that: it went past his eyes in a flash. He said it was amazing. He estimates that he has lost 500 cattle. I hope he has had some luck today in finding some of those cattle. You never know where cattle end up when they are in a flood situation. The tally so far is that Biloela has had 200 houses and about 200 properties flooded and Jambin and Goovigen were totally evacuated. Theodore was the first town ever to be totally evacuated, in the 2013 flood, and now we have to add Jambin and Goovigen. That is pretty sad. Most roads in and out of Biloela are still damaged or cut. Graziers have no fences left. They have asked me to get the agriculture minister into that area as soon as I can. There are no phones, no electricity, no fuel and no generators. We have NDRAA assistance from the federal government and the state government is helping out with its financial packages. The federal government's package is \$1,000 per male or female adult and \$400 per child.

My heart goes out to the people of Eidsvold. On Tuesday morning, they had an earthquake that measured 5.8 on the Richter scale. They started the week with an earthquake, which could be felt at Gladstone, where I live, which is probably 400 kilometres away, and then on Friday they had the flood situation. They survived. They are very resilient people. The road from Mount Perry to Monto has been cut. Bancroft and those areas out there have got no services.

It has been a hell of a few days. I take my hat off to all those people who are going about getting the place back to normal. Yesterday it was 42 degrees, that really steamy, muggy weather. I know how hot the army uniforms are, but those guys struggled on, mulching trees. The schools are all wrecked, although a lot of kids would have gone back to school today, with a bit of luck. Many houses around Mount Larcom, Gracemere and Mount Morgan were damaged. There was a lot of damage and it will take a long time to fix, but we will survive.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice) (17:43):** Thank you, Member for Flynn. I am sure the chamber shares your concerns for your constituents. There are no further speakers. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192B. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Federation Chamber adjourned at 17:45.**

**QUESTIONS IN WRITING**  
**Infrastructure Projects: Tasmania**  
**(Question No. 269)**

**Ms Collins** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 26 August 2014:

- (1) What total sum of funding across each of the forward estimates has been allocated to key infrastructure projects for (a) roads, (b) rail and (c) ports, across Tasmania.
- (2) In each of the forward estimates, what is the number of individual key Government funded projects (including the amount of funding) in building infrastructure across Tasmania, and what is the estimate of the number of associated jobs that will be created.
- (3) Can he provide any details on whether the Government will fund the construction of the Launceston Bypass; if not, why not.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) Total infrastructure funding for Tasmania across the forward estimates is provided in the table below.

	Total AG 2014-18 \$m	2014-15 \$m	2015-16 \$m	2016-17 \$m	2017-18 \$m
Road	485.05	113.53	145.19	135.07	91.26
Rail	98.42	27.12	23.20	23.50	24.60
Port	0	0	0	0	0

- (2) Funding for infrastructure projects in Tasmania is provided in the table below.

	2014-15 \$m	2015-16 \$m	2016-17 \$m	2017-18 \$m
<b>ROAD</b>				
Midland Highway	30	50	50	30
Brooker Highway	5.9	7.5	12.2	0
Tasman Highway Ramps	10	3	0	0
Huon Highway / Summerleas Road intersection	2	5	10.5	0
Domain Highway planning	1.5	2.5	0	0
North East Freight Roads	3.34	3.4	0	0
Port Sorell Road	0.25	0	0	0
Westbury Road, Launceston	0.5	0	0	0
Maintenance	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3
Black Spots	1.6	4.3	4.3	1.6
<i>Heavy Vehicle Safety</i> <i>(indicative funding)</i>	<i>1.08</i>	<i>0.85</i>	<i>0.85</i>	<i>0.85</i>
<i>Bridges Renewal</i> <i>(indicative funding)</i>	<i>1.28</i>	<i>1.26</i>	<i>1.24</i>	<i>1.24</i>
Roads to Recovery	11.4	22.8	11.4	11.4
Untied Local Roads Grants	37.28	37.28	37.28	38.87
Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package	0.1	0	0	0
<b>RAIL</b>				
Rail Freight Revitalisation	22.50	23.20	23.50	24.60
Improvement of Bell Bay	4.62	0	0	0
Intermodal Terminal				
<b>PORT</b>	0	0	0	0

Job numbers for these projects are currently unavailable.

- (3) No, funding has not been sought nor provided for construction of a bypass of Launceston.

**Attorney-General's Department: Commonwealth Grants**  
**(Question No. 417)**

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 22 September 2014.

In 2013-14, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister's department, and at what total cost, and of these, how many recipients have (a) signed funding agreements, and at what total cost, and (b) received payment, and at what total cost?

**Ms Julie Bishop:** The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

This information is available on the Attorney-General's Department website.

**Attorney-General's Department: Consultants**

**(Question No. 525)**

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, in writing, on 21 October 2014.

Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved?

**Ms Julie Bishop** The Attorney-General, has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

This information is available on the AusTender website.

**Cessation of the T-Qual Accreditation scheme**

**(Question No. 541)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 21 October:

What costs did businesses incur as a result of the Government's cessation of the T-QUAL Accreditation scheme.

**Mr Robb:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Businesses did not bear direct costs associated with the cessation of T-QUAL Accreditation.

**Cadbury's \$16 million grant**

**(Question No. 544)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 21 October:

Has the Government received a business case from Cadbury in respect of the \$16 million grant promised by the Prime Minister on 28 August 2013.

**Mr Robb:** the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Yes.

**Survey of Tourist Accommodation**

**(Question No. 546)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 21 October:

(1) Has he received any correspondence from businesses concerned about the cessation of the Survey of Tourist Accommodation.

(2) Will the Government fund the Survey of Tourist Accommodation in (a) 2014-15, (b) 2015-16, (c) 2016-17 and (d) 2017-18.

**Mr Robb:** the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) Yes.

(2) Through Austrade, the Australian Government provided funding of \$288,000 in 2013-14, in respect of the 2013-14 STA collection. Austrade is developing future funding model options for an accommodation data collection in consultation with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, state government and industry representatives.

**Government's Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda**

**(Question No. 547)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 21 October:

Was tourism included as one of the priority areas in any draft of the Government's Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda.

**Mr Robb:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

It would not be appropriate to comment on proposals that were considered during the development of the Agenda.

**Infrastructure Australia Board: Members**

**(Question No. 551)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

How has the Government implemented its election commitment to appoint representatives of (a) key federal agencies, and (b) state governments, to the Infrastructure Australia Board.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

All members of the Infrastructure Australia Board have been appointed in compliance with requirements specified in the *Infrastructure Australia Act 2008* (Section 8 – Appointment of members) and the Commonwealth Cabinet Handbook for 'significant government appointments'.

All Board members have private sector experience. Seven of the 12 members have public sector experience and two have local government experience.

**WestConnex**  
**(Question No. 552)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

What processes has the Australian Government ensured are in place to provide affected residents with information about the impact of the WestConnex on their communities.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government has retained the communications and feedback arrangements that were put in place when the Hon Anthony Albanese MP was the responsible minister for the WestConnex project. Community consultation and stakeholder engagement remain responsibilities of the NSW Government. Officials from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development participate in regular meetings and teleconferences with the WestConnex Delivery Authority (WDA), a statutory authority of the NSW Government, to monitor progress and keep updated on WDA's consultation and awareness-raising activities, events and media updates to provide communities with information.

**WestConnex**  
**(Question No. 553)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 28 October 2014:

What processes has the Australian Government ensured are in place to allow affected residents to provide feedback about the impact of the WestConnex on their communities, and how will this be a meaningful process.

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government has retained the communications and feedback arrangements that were put in place when the Hon Anthony Albanese MP was the responsible minister for the WestConnex project. Community consultation and stakeholder engagement remain the responsibilities of the NSW Government. Officials from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development attend regular meetings and teleconferences with the WestConnex Delivery Authority (WDA), a statutory authority of the NSW Government, to monitor progress and keep updated on WDA's engagement activities such as community consultation sessions and stakeholder meetings.

**Government Institutions: Buy Australia Products**  
**(Question No. 570)**

**Mr Katter** asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 29 October 2014:

- (1) Will he get his cabinet to agree to a policy decision that hospitals, army, prisons, and numerous other Government institutions buy Australian made unless there is a 30 per cent price differential.
- (2) Is he aware that Australia is already a net importer of fruit and vegetables, pork and seafood, and will very soon be a net importer of food overall.
- (3) Is he aware that imports are increasing at 125 per cent every ten years, whilst exports are increasing at only 28 per cent every ten years, and in fact, if we are talking about edible (food) we would be taking out the live cattle and grain, and getting pretty close to being a net importer.
- (4) Does he understand that Australia will not be able to feed itself.

**Mr Joyce:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) I strongly support the purchase of Australian products over imported products where possible, including in my own department. As part of our commitment to promoting Australian made products, the Minister for Industry and I instigated an Inquiry into Country of Origin Labelling, which has now been completed. In relation to whole of government procurement policies however, these are matters that fall within the Minister for Finance's portfolio responsibilities as well as state and territory governments.
- (2) I acknowledge that Australia does import some food products, however I am pleased to advise the honourable member that overall Australia is in fact a net exporter of food. The value of Australia's food surplus in 2012-13 was more than \$20 billion.
- (3) Although the percentage growth of food imports has been greater than food exports over the last decade, Australia still exports substantially more food than it imports, even excluding grain and live animal exports. In 2012-13 the net value of food exports (excluding grain and live exports) was \$11.0 billion.
- (4) Food security is a key part of the Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper. At present Australia feeds approximately 60 million people globally, or more than double our population. Australia has a high level of food security due to our income

level and trade surplus in food. Australia is ranked the 15th most food secure country (of 109 nations) in one assessment. The Government is committed to assisting Australian producers to meet our own domestic requirements and those of export markets whose buying power helps generate strong returns at the farm gate for Australian farmers.

### **Unemployment**

#### **(Question No. 608)**

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 14 November 2014:

Is the Minister aware of the report by John Masanauskas, 'Unemployment in Melbourne suburbs will be a social disaster, says researcher' (Herald Sun, 29 October 2011), that Dr Bob Birrell from the Monash University's Centre for Population and Urban Research stated that the unemployment figures were disturbingly being concentrated in areas where many young people with limited education were looking for work, and having to compete with very large numbers of temporary migrants; if so, what is the Government doing to address the integration of young people in such neighbourhoods.

**Mr Pyne:** The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable Member's question:

Yes.

Rather than the borderline xenophobic approach taken by the former Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Governments, supported by the Honourable Member, towards foreign workers, this Government is focused on creating more job opportunities for Australian workers.

A key example of the Government's job creation agenda is the Free Trade Agreements with Korea, Japan and China finalised by the Coalition Government which will create new export markets for Australian businesses with huge tariff reductions.

I firmly encourage the Honourable Member to support the Government's positive Economic Action Strategy.

### **International Competition Network**

#### **(Question No. 658)**

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Small Business, in writing, on 18 November 2014:

In respect of the International Competition Network annual conference, to be held from 28 April to 1 May 2015 in Sydney, (a) what are the details of the contract for (i) venue hire at Sheraton on the Park, including the date of tender and total cost, and (ii) the dinner to be held at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, including the date of tender and total cost, and (b) will a representative of the Australian Government open or officiate; if so, which Minister.

**Mr Billson:** The answer to the Honourable Member's question is as follows:

(a) (i) The venue hire contract was signed on 17 April 2014.

The total venue cost is to be confirmed as it will be affected by the number of attendees. It is noted that registration for the conference has only recently opened.

(ii) From April 2014, the ACCC conducted a tender in order to procure an appropriate venue for the ICN 2015 dinner to be held on Wednesday 29 April 2015.

The total cost of this event is to be confirmed as it will depend on the number of attendees. As noted, registration for the conference has only recently opened.

(b) I have been invited to open ICN 2015.

### **United Nations World Tourism Organization**

#### **(Question No. 660)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Trade and Investment, in writing, on 24 November 2014:

Will Australia remain a member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization under this Government.

**Mr Robb:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government has commenced a process to withdraw from the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

### **Five Star Trucking Initiative**

#### **(Question No. 665)**

**Mr Albanese** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 25 November 2014:

What are the current steps being taken by the Australian Government to support the Five Star Trucking initiative?

**Mr Truss:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

After careful consideration, the Government will not be providing further financial assistance towards the Safety Rating System for Heavy Vehicles project, formerly known as the Five Star Trucking initiative. This decision recognises work being

undertaken by the National Transport Commission and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator via their *Heavy Vehicle Roadworthiness Program Review*, to improve a range of current heavy vehicle regulatory arrangements, including the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme. The Government anticipates release of the Heavy Vehicle Roadworthiness Regulation Impact Statement for public comment to occur in early 2015.

### Medicare Benefits Schedule

#### (Question No. 666)

**Ms MacTiernan** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 25 November 2014:

- (1) Is she aware that neither foot and ankle surgeries performed by accredited podiatric surgeons, nor related anaesthetist fees, have an item number in the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).
- (2) Is she aware that many of these procedures, if performed by an orthopaedic surgeon, do have access to item numbers on the MBS.
- (3) Does she accept that this is not providing a level playing field and that podiatric surgeons are being disadvantaged.
- (4) Is she aware of the Access Economics report *The Economic Impacts of Podiatric Surgery* (2008) that shows that podiatric surgeons deliver the same procedures as orthopaedic surgeons, with substantial financial savings; decreased waiting time for elective foot surgery; increased productivity; improved prevention of co-morbidities; and quicker return to an improved quality of life.
- (5) Will she approve an MBS item number to allow patients the freedom of choice when requiring foot and ankle surgeries that could be performed by podiatric surgeons rather than orthopaedic surgeons.

**Ms Ley:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

- (1) and (2) Yes.
- (3) The purpose of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) is to provide rebates for patients for clinically relevant services by appropriately qualified health professionals. The Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) is an independent expert committee that provides advice to the Government on the strength of the evidence relating to the comparative safety, clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of any new or existing medical service or technology, and the circumstances under which public funding should be supported through listing on the MBS.
- (4) The Australasian College of Podiatric Surgeons' (ACPS) application to MSAC for Medicare funding of foot and ankle services by podiatric surgeons makes reference to the Access Economics report. The report and its claims for podiatric surgery, along with the other evidence provided by the ACPS to support its application, will be considered as part of the MSAC assessment process.
- (5) The outcome of MSAC's assessment of the ACPS' application will inform any Government consideration as to whether to list services provided by podiatric surgeons on the MBS.

### National Broadband Network

#### (Question No. 696)

**Ms McGowan** asked the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 9 February 2015:

What measures has NBN Co. Limited taken to ensure fibre-to-the-node cabinets are protected from, or resistant to, damage as a result of car crashes, vandalism, theft and weather events.

**Mr Turnbull:** The answer to the member's question is as follows:

"NBN Co has advised that a range of measures have been undertaken to protect Fibre to the Node (FTTN) cabinets from damage:

- *Damage from car crashes:* NBN Co has developed a set of siting rules for FTTN cabinets. These rules ensure that cabinets are located a suitable distance away from intersections, set back from the curb and away from driveways, to minimise the likelihood of damage from vehicles.
- *Damage from vandalism or theft:* NBN Co's FTTN cabinets are made of marine grade aluminium, that are fully lockable and securely bolted to a concrete plinth. NBN Co expects minimal levels of damage from theft or vandalism that could impact the performance of the equipment with each cabinet. Graffiti will be managed as part of NBN Co's maintenance program.
- *Damage as a result of weather events:* NBN Co's FTTN cabinets are sealed against harmful deposits of dust and are protected from low pressure water jets from any direction (Ingress Protection rating of "IP55"). The battery compartment is vented to comply with Australian Standards. The cabinet installation specifications are approved for use in all areas of Australia, including the highest cyclone rated area (Zone D)."