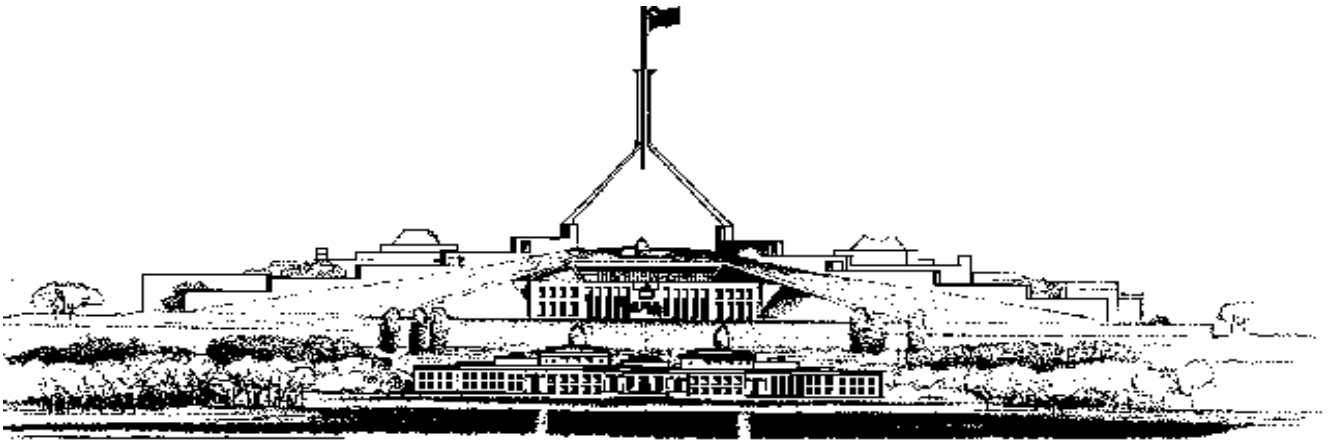




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



Senate
Official Hansard

No. 7, 2014

Tuesday, 24 June 2014

FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION—THIRD PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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SITTING DAYS—2014

Month	Date
February	11, 12, 13
March	3, 4, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27
May	13, 14, 15
June	16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26
July	7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17
August	26, 27, 28
September	1, 2, 3, 4, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30
October	1, 2, 27, 28, 29, 30
November	24, 25, 26, 27
December	1, 2, 3, 4

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

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Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Stephen Parry

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Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. George Henry Brandis QC

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

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy

Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator Hon. Mitchell Peter Fifield

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Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz

Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator Hon. George Henry Brandis QC

Leader of The Nationals in the Senate—Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion

Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate—Senator Hon. Fiona Nash

Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy

Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Christine Anne Milne

Chief Government Whip—Senator Helen Kroger

Deputy Government Whips—Senators Christopher John Back and David Christopher Bushby

Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Anne McEwen

Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Catryna Louise Bilyk and Anne Elizabeth Urquhart

Australian Greens Whip—Senator Rachel Siewert

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Members of the Senate

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Abetz, Hon. Eric	TAS	30.6.2017	LP
Back, Christopher John	WA	30.6.2017	LP
Bernardi, Cory	SA	30.6.2014	LP
Bilyk, Catryna Louise	TAS	30.6.2014	ALP
Birmingham, Simon John	SA	30.6.2014	LP
Bishop, Thomas Mark	WA	30.6.2014	ALP
Boswell, Hon. Ronald Leslie Doyle	QLD	30.6.2014	NATS
Boyce, Suzanne Kay	QLD	30.6.2014	LP
Brandis, Hon. George Henry, QC	QLD	30.6.2017	LP
Brown, Carol Louise	TAS	30.6.2014	ALP
Bushby, David Christopher	TAS	30.6.2014	LP
Cameron, Douglas Niven	NSW	30.6.2014	ALP
Carr, Hon. Kim John	VIC	30.6.2017	ALP
Cash, Michaelia Clare	WA	30.6.2014	LP
Colbeck, Hon. Richard Mansell	TAS	30.6.2014	LP
Collins, Jacinta Mary Ann	VIC	30.6.2014	ALP
Conroy, Hon. Stephen Michael	VIC	30.6.2017	ALP
Cormann, Mathias Hubert Paul	WA	30.6.2017	LP
Dastyari, Sam ⁽⁸⁾	NSW	30.6.2017	ALP
Di Natale, Richard	VIC	30.6.2017	AG
Edwards, Sean	SA	30.6.2017	LP
Eggleston, Alan	WA	30.6.2014	LP
Farrell, Donald Edward	SA	30.6.2014	ALP
Faulkner, Hon. John Philip	NSW	30.6.2017	ALP
Fawcett, David Julian	SA	30.6.2017	LP
Fierravanti-Wells, Concetta Anna	NSW	30.6.2017	LP
Fifield, Mitchell Peter	VIC	30.6.2014	LP
Furner, Mark Lionel	QLD	30.6.2014	ALP
Gallacher, Alexander McEachian	SA	30.6.2017	ALP
Hanson-Young, Sarah Coral	SA	30.6.2014	AG
Heffernan, Hon. William Daniel	NSW	30.6.2017	LP
Hogg, Hon. John Joseph	QLD	30.6.2014	ALP
Johnston, Hon. David Albert Lloyd	WA	30.6.2014	LP
Kroger, Helen	VIC	30.6.2014	LP
Lines, Susan ⁽⁶⁾	WA	30.6.2017	ALP
Ludlam, Scott	WA	30.6.2014	AG
Ludwig, Hon. Joseph William	QLD	30.6.2017	ALP
Lundy, Kate Alexandra	ACT		ALP
Macdonald, Hon. Ian Douglas	QLD	30.6.2014	LP
McEwen, Anne	SA	30.6.2017	ALP
McKenzie, Bridget	VIC	30.6.2017	NATS
McLucas, Hon. Jan Elizabeth	QLD	30.6.2017	ALP
Madigan, John Joseph	VIC	30.6.2017	DLP
Marshall, Gavin Mark	VIC	30.6.2014	ALP
Mason, Hon. Brett John	QLD	30.6.2017	LP
Milne, Christine Anne	TAS	30.6.2017	AG
Moore, Claire Mary	QLD	30.6.2014	ALP
Nash, Fiona Joy	NSW	30.6.2017	NATS
O'Neill, Deborah ⁽¹⁰⁾	NSW	30.6.2014	ALP
O'Sullivan, Barry James ⁽⁷⁾	QLD	30.6.2014	NATS
Parry, Stephen Shane	TAS	30.6.2017	LP
Payne, Marise Ann	NSW	30.6.2014	LP
Peris, Nova Maree AOM	NT		ALP
Polley, Helen Beatrice	TAS	30.6.2017	ALP
Pratt, Louise Clare	WA	30.6.2014	ALP
Rhiannon, Lee	NSW	30.6.2017	AG
Ronaldson, Hon. Michael	VIC	30.6.2017	LP
Ruston, Anne Sowerby ⁽⁵⁾	SA	30.6.2017	LP
Ryan, Scott Michael	VIC	30.6.2014	LP

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Scullion, Hon. Nigel Gregory	NT		CLP
Seselja, Zdenko Matthew	ACT		LP
Siewert, Rachel Mary	WA	30.6.2017	AG
Singh, Hon. Lisa Maria	TAS	30.6.2017	ALP
Sinodinos, Arthur ⁽¹⁾	NSW	30.6.2014	LP
Smith, Dean Anthony ⁽²⁾	WA	30.6.2017	LP
Stephens, Hon. Ursula Mary	NSW	30.6.2014	ALP
Sterle, Glenn	WA	30.6.2017	ALP
Thorp, Lin Estelle ⁽³⁾	TAS	30.6.2014	ALP
Tillem, Mehmet ⁽⁹⁾	VIC	30.6.2014	ALP
Urquhart, Anne Elizabeth	TAS	30.6.2017	ALP
Waters, Larissa Joy	QLD	30.6.2017	AG
Whish-Wilson, Peter Stuart ⁽⁴⁾	TAS	30.6.2014	AG
Williams, John Reginald	NSW	30.6.2014	NATS
Wong, Hon. Penelope Ying Yen	SA	30.6.2014	ALP
Wright, Penelope Lesley	SA	30.6.2017	AG
Xenophon, Nicholas	SA	30.6.2014	IND

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

Territory	Senator	Party	Senator	Party
Australian Capital Territory	Lundy, K.	ALP	Seselja, Z.M.	LP
Northern Territory	Scullion, N. G.	CLP	Peris, N.M.	ALP

- (1) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice H. Coonan, resigned 22.8.11), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (2) Chosen by the Parliament of Western Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice J. Adams, died in office 31.3.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (3) Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy (vice Hon. N. Sherry, resigned 1.6.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (4) Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy (vice Hon. B. Brown, resigned 15.6.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (5) Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice M. J. Fisher, resigned 15.8.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (6) Chosen by the Parliament of Western Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice C. Evans, resigned 12.4.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (7) Chosen by the Parliament of Queensland to fill a casual vacancy (vice B. Joyce, resigned 8.8.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (8) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice M. Thistlethwaite, resigned 9.8.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (9) Chosen by the Parliament of Victoria to fill a casual vacancy (vice D. Feeney, resigned 12.8.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
- (10) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice R. Carr, resigned 24.10.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
DLP—Democratic Labor Party; IND—Independent, LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals

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
Prime Minister	The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Minister for Indigenous Affairs	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 Josh Frydenberg MP</i>
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</i>
Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)	The Hon Warren Truss MP
Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development	The Hon Jamie Briggs MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs	The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Trade and Investment	The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</i>
Minister for Employment (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
Attorney-General	Senator the Hon George Brandis QC
Minister for the Arts (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
Treasurer	The Hon Joe Hockey MP
Minister for Small Business	The Hon Bruce Billson MP
Acting Assistant Treasurer	Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</i>	<i>The Hon Steven Ciobo MP</i>
Minister for Agriculture	The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</i>
Minister for Education (Leader of the House)	The Hon Christopher Pyne MP
Assistant Minister for Education	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</i>
Minister for Industry	The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</i>	<i>The Hon Bob Baldwin MP</i>
Minister for Social Services	The Hon Kevin Andrews 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>
Minister for Communications	The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</i>	<i>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</i>
Minister for Health	The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Minister for Sport	The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Assistant Minister for Health	Senator the Hon Fiona Nash

Title	Minister
Minister for Defence	Senator the Hon David Johnston
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson
<i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</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>
Minister for the Environment	The Hon Greg Hunt MP
<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</i>
Minister for Immigration and Border Protection	The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Minister for Finance	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>

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
Leader of the Opposition	Hon Bill Shorten MP
Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business	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>
Deputy Leader of the Opposition	Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development	
Shadow Minister for Women	Senator Claire Moore
Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)	
Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</i>	<i>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</i>
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate	Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy
Shadow Minister for Defence	
Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence	Hon David Feeney MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</i>	<i>Gai Brodtmann MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport	Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Shadow Minister for Tourism	
Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government	Hon Julie Collins MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</i>	<i>Allanah 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>
Shadow Treasurer	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>
Shadow Minister for Finance	Hon Tony Burke MP
Manager of Opposition Business (House)	
Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water	Hon Mark Butler MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Water</i>	<i>Senator Louise Pratt</i>
Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Shadow Minister for Vocational Education	Hon Sharon Bird MP
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</i>	<i>Tony Zappia MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Communications	Hon Jason Clare MP
Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications	Michelle Rowland MP

Title	Shadow Minister
Shadow Attorney General	Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP
Shadow Minister for the Arts	
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>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</i>
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</i>	<i>Hon Michael Danby MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Education	Hon Kate Ellis MP
Shadow Minister for Early Childhood	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</i>	<i>Julie Owens MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Agriculture	Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP
Shadow Minister for Resources	Hon Gary Gray AO MP
Shadow Minister for Northern Australia	
Shadow Special Minister of State	
<i>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</i>	<i>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Health	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>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Families and Payments	Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Shadow Minister for Disability Reform	
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>
Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection	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>
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs	Hon Shayne Neumann MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing	
<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>
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP
Shadow Minister for Employment Services	Hon Julie Collins MP

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TUESDAY, 24 JUNE 2014

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Tuesday, 24 June 2014

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. John Hogg) took the chair at 12:30, read prayers and made an acknowledgement of country.

BILLS

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (12:31): The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014, which we are debating today, is part of a commitment to a more streamlined and efficient environmental assessment process. That is a well-documented thing and it is part of Labor's election commitments, so we are supporting this bill that is before us. But it is important in this context, because of how the government has framed this debate, to note that Labor on the other hand does not support in any way the other processes put in train by this government to delegate the approval of environmental powers to both state and local governments.

We acknowledge that the principle of this bill—in terms of cost recovery—is sound, because it allows for proponents of developments to contribute to the cost of assessment and to the development of the application process by the Commonwealth. We think that is a good thing. What we do object to, though, is the fact that the minister has presented this bill as part of the government's overall agenda to hand over the Commonwealth's important responsibility to protect matters of national environmental significance to state governments. As we have recently discovered, this also includes local councils.

As we know, the government has begun the process of handing over environmental approval powers to the states. I really object to the fact that this will give people like Campbell Newman control over the Great Barrier Reef, and, indeed, it will give Colin Barnett control over our wonderful Ningaloo Reef. It is important today that I emphasise that our attitude to this bill is very separate to our overall attitude to those ministerial intentions, even though the government has sought to present them together as a package. That is, the government wants to broadly hand over our responsibilities under the EPBC Act to the states. We believe that these should be packaged very separately.

The delineation between us and the coalition on these matters should be very clear from the outset. We should be able to do streamlining, as this bill does, and save taxpayer money without attacking standards. Environmental standards have been under demonstrable attack right around the country time and time again. I will highlight some of those attacks for the chamber today. The government went against all reason in handing over—quite sneakily, in my view—the world's largest marine reserve system by reproclaiming it and undoing the very management plans that gave those marine protections effect.

The government has also, in my view, all but abandoned efforts to have Queensland's Cape York added to the World Heritage List. It has also approved every request for development in

the Great Barrier Reef that has landed on the minister's desk. This is despite the fact that UNESCO has threatened to list the reef as endangered. We have seen some of those issues play out before the World Heritage Committee this week.

Sharks have been on the hit list, with the minister approving an exemption to the WA government to allow drum lining to take place off the WA coast. That is a completely illogical process, because it has been reeling in shark species that are not even the ones that are implicated in the shark attacks that have been taking place against West Australians. There is a huge amount of environmental damage being wreaked against animals that actually have not been implicated in any of the shark attacks that have taken place.

We know that this government has also been taking us backwards on climate change. We are the laughing stock on the world stage. In Warsaw this year, during the last climate change talks, we were awarded an unprecedented five Fossil Awards. As we have seen just today, the attempt of the government to approach the World Heritage Committee to delist 74,000 hectares of Tasmanian wilderness has very fortunately been completely rejected by the World Heritage Committee. I cannot begin to tell you how relieved I am that that is the case. We are now resorting to international fora to protect our important World Heritage listed sites, as the government itself has abandoned them. All these issues truly expose the government's lack of environmental credentials, which has been on display time and time again. These kinds of environmental standards are under attack in the other bill that is before this place, which the government claims is packaged up with this one. The EPBC Act deals with bilateral assessments and approvals, but that other bill would allow state and local governments to approve developments in what are, in my view, some of the nation's most iconic and significant environmental assets.

I want to reflect very briefly on the parts of this bill which are important and which we do not object to. There is a fee structure for cost recovery within this bill for environmental assessments. This fee structure will be put within regulation and ministerial determinations and will have a formula to ensure appropriate cost recovery for the assessments. Environmental assessment activities are, in Labor's view, appropriate for cost recovery as the activities provide a clear benefit for particular proponents to undertake developments that may impact on the environment. I think this is a clear and important objective. We note that exemptions and waivers are also going to be part of this system, which will ensure that public entities providing a public benefit will not be burdened by additional fees. You can see where cost recovery is appropriate. Where we have resources that are going to be economically exploited, the cost recovery for those environmental assessments should take place but we should distinguish them from things that require assessment for the public benefit. We want to see cost recovery encourage proponents to think about engaging early and in a very strategic way in how to manage their costs within the environmental assessment process. We have seen in the past that there can be a cost blow-out for government as these processes drag on. So this measure is a good thing, because we think it will contribute to a more streamlined assessment process as proponents seek to manage their costs in the most efficient way possible.

To conclude, Labor support the streamlining of environmental assessments for major projects but final approval of matters of national environmental significance should, in our view, remain with the national government—but that is a separate issue to the matters before

us in this bill which pertain to cost recovery for environmental assessment and which we are prepared to support.

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (12:40): I rise to speak against the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014, and I do so for several reasons. The crux of this bill is to say that the Department of the Environment can only get properly funded if it is prepared to tick off on myriad destructive proposals. I think that is perverse logic. Sadly, we have seen over many years a consistent imposition of an efficiency dividend. We have seen staff cut after staff cut at the environment department. The department is chronically underresourced, such that it is not able to perform its functions adequately. Now we have this dangerous proposal to say: 'That's all right. You can take money from the developers because you won't have your independence compromised. It's not like you're starved of funds and you need to approve these development applications to get the money that you need!' So this is a very dangerous course of action. The inability to manage those risks is the very reason why the Greens are opposing this bill.

There is obviously well-documented literature on regulatory capture, and I raised this issue in Senate estimates. Much to my surprise, the department had not engaged very deeply with the concept and nor were they able to reassure me that they had these mechanisms in place to manage the inappropriate influence that was being put on them by the industries which they are meant to be regulating as opposed to facilitating. Sadly, what we see is that there is no political will to ever refuse development. There have been literally 10 refusals in the 14 years that we have had the EPBC on foot. This just makes a mockery of our environmental approval system. It just makes it a tick-and-flick process—which brings me to the ANAO audit that was issued last week in which this point was highlighted.

The ANAO report said, in fact, that chronic underresourcing of the department is why it has an inability or perhaps a lack of political will to enforce conditions. The ANAO report was incredibly damning. It found that the staffing in the department was so low that compliance was simply not happening to the level that the public would expect it to happen. This has been an open secret for a long time. Everybody knows that the developers can get away with blue murder because the department is simply not enforcing its own conditions. Evidently from this government there is no political will to do that, but certainly those public servants themselves do not lack the political will; they lack the resources to do their jobs properly. Despite this and despite the regular reports finding that compliance is poor—we had the Gladstone inquiry report just a few weeks and the ANAO report last week—this government is going to increase the staff cuts to that department and to many others. There are going to be 129 staff cut from the section that includes compliance. Again, in estimates, I asked: 'Are you serious? Are you really going to cut more people from compliance?' They were not able to give me the figures for how many will come from that subset, but 129 people will be sacked from the division that includes compliance. This is incredibly concerning to the Greens. This is just the latest assault on the environment from this government.

Sadly, in the short period that this government has been at the helm, we have seen a litany of attacks and assaults on Australia's environment. We have this crazy and dangerous proposal to give away the Commonwealth's powers to protect the environment to state governments. That is obviously coming to us in a separate bill, which I hope this place kicks out on its rear end for the dangerous and dodgy proposal that it is.

This plan to say that the Commonwealth could no longer stop development in World Heritage areas, that it could no longer save the last remaining habitat of a federally threatened species—what planet are we on? We have had 30 years of increasing involvement of the Commonwealth government in protecting the environment, and rightly so. The national environment is not just nationally significant; we have told the world that it is internationally significant when we protect it with something like a World Heritage listing. The notion that you could put the state governments in charge of that—and even, as this government wants, the local governments in charge of that—just boggles the mind. You seriously could not think of a worse proposal for the environment. And it comes at the worst possible time in history, when we are in a climate crisis, when we are in a biodiversity crisis and when all of our environmental indicators on soil health, land health and marine are going down.

Sadly, that is just the first assault. There have been so many others. We do not have a minister for science anymore. We do not have a stand-alone minister for climate change, because of course climate change is crap, according to this Prime Minister. We do not have funding for the Environmental Defender's Offices anymore—the only independent, public-interest community legal centre that helps the community enforce environmental laws. Senator George Brandis decides that, no, he does not like the fact that the community can enforce the law, so he has abolished the funding to the EDO.

We have got the attempt to roll back our climate laws, which, again, I hope this place stands firm on and sends packing, because we desperately need to do something about climate change. The system we have got in place is the best system that we can have. It is designed to be improved and it is designed to set this country and our grandchildren up for a liveable future. This government is trying to abolish the Climate Commission, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and ARENA. Again, it is economic lunacy to not invest in renewable energy, to not invest in the future, with the clean energy and the job creation those bodies have facilitated, along with the fact that the CEFC is making us money when we are in this so-called budget crisis. Where on earth is the rationale for abolishing that body?

The approval of the world's largest coal port in the Great Barrier Reef comes in at No. 7 on my list of the Abbott government's assault on the environment. I do not know in what universe that is considered acceptable, given the hundreds of scientists and the many thousands of community members who have spoken out about it, along with the international condemnation of the World Heritage Committee. They have come out saying not only that climate change is a huge threat to the reef on top of crown-of-thorns and water quality from run-off but that dredging and dumping is the latest threat to the reef. Yet we have the world's biggest coal port approved by the Abbott government at Abbot Point. Perhaps he just liked the synergy there with his name.

Reef Rescue is a fantastic program where work has been going on with farmers. Sadly, \$40 million has been cut out of that successful program. The Water Commission too has been abolished. Again, that was an independent body that was doing excellent work and providing independent scientific advice. This government is not so keen on science; it prefers to listen to—I don't know—the IPA.

There has been an attempt to delist the Tassie forests. Thank goodness overnight that was roundly rejected by the international community and the World Heritage Committee, with one country even calling the attempt feeble. Thank heavens we still have protection for those

beautiful and important forests. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister thinks we have got too much forest locked up in national parks. Apparently he does not realise that, actually, half of Australians like to visit national parks on a regular basis and that tourists kind of like to visit them too. So it is not just good for biodiversity; it is actually also good for our economy. But, no, we have got too much forest locked up. The government is dismantling world-leading marine protection laws. Again, these are not only attacks on the environment but an assault on economic profitability and the tourism sector.

All of the megamines proposed for the Galilee Basin in my home state of Queensland would be a climate disaster should they proceed, including for the likes of Mr Clive Palmer and Ms Gina Rinehart. If we open up the Galilee Basin and mine all of that coal it would make that region, that basin, the seventh largest carbon emitter in the world—right when we are in a climate emergency and right when we should be, at every moment, thinking of the lives that we will leave for our grandchildren.

The list goes on, unfortunately. The government is refusing to give landholders the right to say no to coal seam gas or coal on their land because of the huge threats to groundwater—and to surface water, for that matter—and to the very farming operations themselves. So much for standing up for the farmers. I have brought bills and motions before this place. We have not received support for those actions to try to protect land and water from the rapacious fossil fuel industry, which is thankfully coming to its end. Do we want to fix the mining tax and raise some revenue in this so-called budget crisis? Nah. We just want to give the big miners what they want, so this government wants to abolish the mining tax.

The government are already seeking to abolish the Biodiversity Fund, one of the few measures that has actually been helping to rehabilitate land and has been available to land managers to access support for the good land management that they do and could have been funded to do. No—they want to abolish that as well. Cape York World Heritage nomination: where did that go? It got delayed and now we find out in estimates that the staff have been slashed to progress that nomination. There used to be 5.7 people and now there are only 1½ people progressing that. The traditional owners want that listing. They were so close to finalising the consultation—they were about to put the lines on the maps—and the government have pulled the rug out from underneath them because they are not committed to World Heritage. And almost half a billion dollars has been slashed from Landcare over five years.

It is against that backdrop and against that most heinous assault of giving the powers to protect Australia's national environment to states or councils—they don't care who; anyone will do—that we have this bill to seek to recover the costs of assessing development applications that would have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance. It is somewhat ironic that we are seeing this bill now given that the Abbott government soon will not have many applications to assess anyway, precisely because they are giving away those powers to the states and local councils. Frankly, one wonders why they are bothering. Indeed, one wonders why they are bothering when they have not set up a structure that will enable the conflict of interest to be managed.

A year or more ago we saw a similar proposal mooted for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority so that they would be able to increase their fees for offshore dumping. We opposed that as well, because you simply cannot have a regulator hooked on funds from the

damaging activity that they are meant to be regulating rather than facilitating. So there is no mechanism to manage the conflict of interest there, nor to manage the threat to the independence of the department. Given the chronic under-resourcing and chronic understaffing, it is a slap in the face to say, 'The department does not deserve to be funded and well resourced; we are going to make the developers do the work that the government should be doing.'

The Department of the Environment needs to be properly resourced to do its job independently without scrimping and saving, and ticking and flicking. They should not be in a position where they do not have the people, the expertise, the time or the money to properly scrutinise these most damaging of applications. They are not assessing people's carports or a house going up; they are assessing significant impacts on matters of national environmental significance. This is the worst of the worst, and we are chronically underfunding and understaffing the regulatory folk who are meant to be doing that job. It simply demonstrates that there is no political will in the government to stand up for the environment, and there is simply a mentality of tick and flick, and of continuing to slash staff.

That is why the Greens will be opposing this bill, as we will oppose those other assaults on the environment that I mentioned earlier, and as we will oppose, with every fibre of our being, this plan to put state governments or local councils—anyone will do—in charge of the national environment. It is a recipe for destruction, and we will fight it with everything we have.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (12:53): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014. On this side we have been asked to confine our remarks because we are keen to get these bills through, but it is important to enter the debate, particularly after hearing a Greens political party speaker speak. Some people do listen to these broadcasts, and if you listened to the previous speech you would be appalled at where it said Australia is going. The Greens political party and their friends—the Wilderness Society, the WWF, I regret to say, and the Marine Conservation Society—work on the basis that any lie, any misrepresentation, will justify the means. That is why the Greens and all those other groups are spending literally tens of millions of dollars on a glossy brochure campaign full of misrepresentations and inconsistencies to try and shut down the Australian coal industry that gives this country the standard of living it currently has and many of the jobs that are currently provided for fellow Australians.

I am conscious of time, but I cannot let the previous speech go without addressing some of outrageous claims the previous speaker made. For example, we are being told that the Commonwealth EPBC Act is being thrown out the door and that the laws will no longer apply because we are getting a one-stop shop for the states to administer. The same laws will apply. Nothing is happening with the EPBC Act except having something instead of the process of the state governments assessing a project and then, when they have finished, having another group of Commonwealth bureaucrats going through the same process, doubling the time to obtain an environmental approval.

I have not had a chance to get the figures—if someone wants to correct me they can—but as I recall under Labor, when someone made an application for an EPBC Act approval, the average number of days to get an approval, subject to conditions, or a knock-back was over

700 days. Under the current government, as I recall, the same applications are averaging something like 87 days. Those figures may not be accurate, but they are in the ballpark. That is because the Labor Party has always relied on the Greens in order to retain government. The Labor Party knows that the Greens want to stop every development in Australia, so they have a deliberate go-slow policy federally and they do that on top of the state regimes, who have already assessed most applications.

What this range of bills will do is ensure that all of the applications can be dealt with by one set of bureaucrats, using two sets of laws, Commonwealth and state, but assessing almost the same things. If you listened to the previous speaker, you would think that the Commonwealth EPBC Act has been thrown away. I often say to my friend Robert Hill, who introduced that act—a Liberal minister—'Look, a lot of people are unhappy about the way that act delays everything.' He says to me, quite rightly, 'It is not the act that is the problem; it is the way it is administered.' Under Liberal governments it is administered properly, efficiently and quickly, and you either get a no or a yes, and away you go. Under Labor you have to wait something like years to get these approvals.

I relate an instance up my way in North Queensland: an aquaculture prawn farm—we like aquaculture as it saves the wild-caught fishing industry—spent something like \$15 million over about five years trying to get approval for one prawn farm. They eventually got the state approval but they then had to turn around and start all over again for a federal approval. No wonder we cannot afford the price of prawns in Australia at the present time.

Senator Walters complained that we had stopped funding for certain purposes only for the Environmental Defender's Offices. She says that that means now the public cannot stop anything and cannot enter into any contest with the Commonwealth. Yes, they can, Senator Walters. If they feel so strongly about it, some of these groups that are spending millions on this glossy brochure campaign to stop the coal industry could actually put some of that funding into paying their own lawyers.

If you listened to Senator Walters, you would think we have taken away the ability to contest these things. What we have done is redirect funding for much-needed legal aid to those places where legal aid is desperately needed. The senator could not resist her ongoing campaign on global warming. I recommend that she read a very thoughtful and well-developed argument in the papers recently from Maurice Newman, who, unfortunately for the senator and her cohorts, points out that, on any evidence at all, there has been no global warming for more than 20 years. But I will not enter into that. She then said the Abbot Point decision was an assault on the environment and an assault on the Barrier Reef. Senator Walters is always very careful with the words she chooses, but the dredging at Abbot Point is nowhere near the Great Barrier Reef—nowhere near it; 40 or 50 kilometres away. She talked about the dredging and dumping on the Great Barrier Reef. As she knows, it is nowhere near the Great Barrier Reef; Abbot Point is in the lagoon a little way out from the mainland. It is near where I live and I enjoy that part of the Barrier Reef. I am not worried about it, and neither is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority—the scientific, well-funded group that looks at these things. The Institute of Marine Science does not get directly involved but lends support to various elements.

Then we got on to the World Heritage Commission. What an outrageous decision it was last night on the Tasmanian forest! Why do we bother being directed by this foreign group?

Have a look who is on that, Senator Walters, and have a look at the environmental significance of the countries they come from. And yet they are sitting in judgement of us. As Senator Colbeck has said many a time, this World Heritage forest they are talking about is a forest that has been logged for years. So how come it is a pristine heritage forest, when it has already been logged? For the World Heritage Commission to enter into that is an absolute disgrace; and I might say the same about their deliberations on the Great Barrier Reef. They have given it a temporary reprieve, but the Great Barrier Reef is there; it will continue to exist forever; it will continue to attract tourists from all over the world; and it will continue to do that no matter what the World Heritage Commission says. As an Australian and a Queenslander, I get disgusted when people like the Greens political party and this foreign body try to diminish or shut down Australia's tourism industry by making false accusations on the Great Barrier Reef. There is some recent science which shows—as I have always said, nature is a wonderful thing, Senator Walters—the reef will regenerate itself.

Senator Hanson-Young: On a point of order, Mr Acting Deputy President, I would like to remind Senator Macdonald that the senator's name is Senator Waters, not Walters.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I apologise to Senator Waters if I have been mispronouncing her name. I do wish that you would also get your facts correct before you enter into these debates. Senator Waters also talked about the marine protected zones which the Abbott government has changed so that decisions are now made on the basis of—heaven forbid—science and scientific advice. That is rather different to relying on some American conservation agency that was set up, I might say, on the back of the profits of the oil industry decades ago. That group was embarrassed by what it had done to the American environment and now it pours millions of dollars into the Pugh Foundation, which then roams the world lecturing everyone else in the world about proper management of marine parks. Fortunately, under the Abbott government, marine parks will be managed according to science.

I am sorry that I have not even got onto my speech yet, but this is a debate and I cannot let the Greens continue to mislead the Australian public. Senator Waters laments the passing of the mining tax, but it was tax that did not make any money. It was a tax that cost more to implement than it ever recovered. Why wouldn't you get rid of it? Senator Waters also talked about the abolition of the Biodiversity Fund. She does not remember that it was the Howard government's Natural Heritage Trust that put all that money into the protection of biodiversity. Senator Waters also laments that a group of Canberra bureaucrats will lose their jobs because they will no longer have work to do in the Commonwealth Department of the Environment. That is because the work they were doing was duplicating work that another set of bureaucrats had done in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth. Why should you employ a group of people to do exactly the same work as another set of bureaucrats? Of course we will reduce the numbers, because they are not needed. The Commonwealth laws will be addressed by the state bureaucrats when they are doing the state environmental assessments.

The final comment of Senator Waters that I recorded was that local councils would make decisions on the EPBC Act. I would like you to show me where that is provided for, Senator Waters. It sounds good. It will frighten some people who have Labor councils, I guess, in Sydney and elsewhere, to think that they would be left in charge of EPBC Act applications, but the state governments will be administering things, as they should.

I have extended my time to speak but I have not even got on to my speech. The second reading speech does clearly indicate what it is all about. I will not repeat that, except to say: the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014 will amend the act to allow for cost recovery for environmental impact assessments and approvals. And who could argue with that? That is the way things are these days. Cost recovery will help to ensure that the Department of the Environment is adequately resourced to undertake efficient environmental assessments.

In a nutshell, that is what this bill is all about. I welcome the support of the Labor Party for the bill. It would be too much to expect that the Greens would support anything that the Howard or Abbott governments brought forward, and so I, to a degree, disregard their mismatch of reasons for not supporting this. But this is an appropriate step on the way through to bring some sense and good process to the protection of our environment, which this government is so keen to do and enhance.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (13:08): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2014. I note that this bill was referred to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee together with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bilateral Agreement Implementation) Bill 2014, and the committee reported yesterday. That inquiry found serious shortcomings with the bilateral agreement amendment bill and, unfortunately, that bill has not yet been brought on for debate.

The cost recovery amendment bill before us is supported by the opposition. I note from the inquiry that there are only two groups opposed to the bill: the Greens, and the mining industry together with the Business Council of Australia—an unlikely alliance, of course, for very different reasons.

At the hearing we had the opportunity to question representatives from the Minerals Council and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies. Despite being the champions of the one-stop shop reform, and despite the hearing being held in their home town of Melbourne, the Business Council refused the committee's offer to appear at the hearing.

At the hearing, when asking the miners about cost recovery, I noted from their submissions that they were opposed for two general reasons: they wanted general government revenue to finance the environmental approvals process, and they did not like that the cost recovery hit a mining company at the early stage of a project. I then put it to the miners that there was currently a superprofits tax in place that contributes to general government revenue and only taxes a miner when they are making a superprofit, not when they are in the exploration or investment phases. Based on this logic, I put to the miners this question: would this superprofits tax be a fairer way of paying for the management of regulations than cost recovery? The answers were entirely predictable. Both organisations did not like cost recovery because it hit their members' bottom line and they already pay enough tax—those were their words. Both organisations were supportive of the abolition of the superprofits tax, with the AMEC noting that it does not affect its members as they are exploration companies, but still noting its opposition. The answer was that general government revenue rather than cost recovery should be used to finance the environmental approvals.

What is striking is that almost no-one else agrees. The Liberal and National parties are in support of cost recovery, through their moving of this bill here today. But the Greens political party are opposed to cost recovery. The Greens' brief dissenting report on the bill highlights the principle of 'regulatory capture' where a regulator which is supposed to act in the public interest is compromised because of relationships developed with those it is charged with regulating. In this case, they refer to the regulator relying on the cost recovery fees to sustain their operations. However, I do not believe this principle holds in this instance because no-one is proposing that cost recovery cover all of the costs of running environmental regulation in the Department of the Environment. For a start, the fees have not been set yet, and the fee structure will be specified in regulation and ministerial determinations. Further, a range of exemptions and waivers will be available for small business in particular, and also for other bodies at the discretion of the minister. Of course, we will need to assess this fee structure and formula once it has been developed, to ensure appropriate cost recovery. At that point, it would be appropriate to compare the resources of the department in environmental regulation with the proposed fee intake to ensure that there are sufficient funds for the management of the output.

At this point I just want to note that I am appalled by the job cuts proposed by Minister Hunt for his department and the broken promises of Mr Hunt and Mr Abbott on a range of environmental protection measures.

I urge the Greens to support the bill and work with the opposition when the ministerial determinations and regulations are handed down, to ensure that they are appropriate.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (13:12): I thank senators who have contributed to this debate. Cost recovery for environmental assessment activities under the EPBC Act is an important initiative. The introduction of cost recovery is in line with past and present government policy and guidelines on cost recovery. Incredibly, the decision to introduce cost recovery for environmental assessments was taken by the previous government and was included as a measure in the 2012-13 budget—that is, two budgets ago—and of course it comes down yet again to this government to actually progress legislation for the parliament to give effect to a measure that the previous government had banked in their budget two budgets ago.

This bill will allow for the effective implementation of cost recovery for Commonwealth environmental assessment activities, including strategic assessments, by allowing regulations to set fees for environmental assessments and make provision for fee waivers, exemptions and refunds. Cost recovery will provide incentives to industry to undertake early engagement and incorporate the most environmentally acceptable outcomes into their business planning in order to reduce costs.

The Australian government is committed to delivering a one-stop shop for environmental approvals. That was one of the commitments that we took to the last election. Cost recovery complements the government's commitment to streamlining environmental approvals under the one-stop shop arrangement. It will improve the Department of the Environment's ability to meet statutory time frames by providing a sustainable source of resources to improve the efficiency of the assessment process. Cost recovery arrangements under the EPBC Act will apply only to Commonwealth assessment activities and not to state assessment activities. When an action is covered by the one-stop shop a person will not have to pay any fees to the

Commonwealth for the state assessment. It will be up to the states and territories to decide whether to cost recover for their own environmental impact assessment activities.

In conclusion, the implementation of cost recovery will assist with the government's streamlining agenda by helping to ensure that Commonwealth government environmental assessment activities are carried out as efficiently and as effectively as possible. The bill demonstrates the government's commitment to implementing genuine reform to deliver more effective and efficient regulatory processes while maintaining high environmental standards. I commend the bill to the Senate.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Gallacher): The question is that the bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Gallacher) (13:15): As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (13:15): I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that the bill now be read a third time.

The Senate divided. [13:20]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Gallacher)

Ayes	40
Noes	8
Majority.....	32

AYES

Back, CJ
Bilyk, CL
Bushby, DC
Carr, KJ
Collins, JMA
Dastyari, S
Farrell, D
Furner, ML
Kroger, H
Ludwig, JW
Marshall, GM
McKenzie, B (teller)
Moore, CM
O'Sullivan, B
Peris, N
Ronaldson, M
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Sterle, G

Bernardi, C
Boyce, SK
Cameron, DN
Colbeck, R
Cormann, M
Edwards, S
Faulkner, J
Gallacher, AM
Lines, S
Lundy, KA
McEwen, A
McLucas, J
O'Neill, DM
Payne, MA
Pratt, LC
Ruston, A
Singh, LM
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE

AYES

Tillem, M

Urquhart, AE

NOES

Di Natale, R
Ludlam, S
Siewert, R (teller)
Whish-Wilson, PS

Hanson-Young, SC
Rhiannon, L
Waters, LJ
Wright, PL

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency Repeal Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (13:24): I move the second reading amendment standing in the name of Senator Carr:

At the end of the motion, add "but the Senate notes that the Government has failed to guarantee that the critical independent research to Government and industry in relation to Australia's current, emerging and future skills and workforce development needs will continue to be carried out and made public".

The Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency is one of those interesting agencies for which there does not seem to be solid reason to abolish it. We are somewhat perplexed as to why the government would abolish an agency which, for all intents and purposes, is doing a really good job. Amazingly, on 9 June—and perhaps all the arms of government were not speaking to one another—the Hon. Andrew Robb and Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash put out a media release in which they talked about the Skilled Occupations List and referred to the great work that the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency does in providing annual recommendations on the Skilled Occupations List. Minister Robb went on to say:

The AWP analyses evidence such as the labour market, education and training, migration and general economic and demographic data to make sure we get the balance right.

So perhaps whoever made the wise decision to abolish this agency had not told either Minister Robb or Senator Cash because as late as 9 June they were certainly extolling the virtues and the values of the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency.

Indeed, earlier this year, during the TAFE Senate inquiry, we heard surprise at this decision from Senator O'Sullivan. At the conclusion of the evidence given by the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, Mr Robin Shreeve, the CEO, told us that it was to be abolished. I asked Mr Shreeve:

Finally, can you tell us what is happening to your board?

Mr Shreeve said:

We anticipate that from 1 July the functions of AWP will be folded into the Department of Industry.

I asked:

So you will not exist?

Mr Shreeve said:

As a board, no.

Senator O'Sullivan then asked the question:

What is the thinking there? Has the board model proved not to be successful enough?

So here we again had a government senator expressing surprise that a board which had done the amazing work that AWPA has done was for the chopping block.

The abolition of this board does not even go to the issue of red tape. I do not think there is any green tape, but it certainly does not go to red tape. And it certainly does not contribute as a savings measure to the government. Indeed, the folding of the board was announced long before the budget. There is a very low degree of financial saving to be achieved from this measure. That measure is really primarily abolishing the AWPA board, so it is not a budget savings measure. The announcement was made around 3 April. If we have a look at the AWPA's annual report, the agency's budget allocation for 2012-13 was \$8.77 million but, as many of the functions of the AWPA will be undertaken by the Department of Industry, including the retention of between 30 and 35 staff, the savings presumably would be somewhat less than that. So it does not appear there is red tape and there is certainly not a huge saving to be found by abolishing the board other than from board fees and some travel costs. So it continues to be quite perplexing as to why the government would repeal the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency. More perplexing is that on 9 June two ministers of the government seemed to be extolling the virtues of AWPA.

Where did this measure come from and what does it do? The agency was established by Labor, and that may be one of the reasons it is being repealed. That seems to be the unwritten reason as to why lots of things are being repealed in this place. Certainly it was part of the Building Australia's Future Workforce package. The Abbott government has been talking about the million jobs, I think it is, that it wants to create—although at the moment it just seems to be abolishing jobs rather than creating them. It would need to create a lot more than a million jobs to catch up with the jobs it has lost to date. Nevertheless, if the Abbott government's stated intention is to be a government that creates jobs, why would it abolish an agency that really does focus on the sorts of skills needed and the future Australian workforce?

The AWPA was to provide the Australian government with ways of improving the productivity of the Australian workforce; the allocation of Commonwealth funding to address Australia's workforce skills and workforce development; the assessment of research relating to improving the productivity of the Australian workforce; and the analysis of funding available to address Australia's workforce skills, productivity needs and development. This was looking at research and how we develop into the future the sorts of skills that Australia needs to be a country where we can have full employment and decent jobs for all those Australians who work. Again, it is questionable that we would get the same benefit by folding the work of the AWPA into the Department of Industry.

Mr Robin Shreeve, the Chief Executive Officer of the AWPA, at the Senate inquiry into the TAFE matter presented insightful, independent evidence that helped those senators—and

particularly the Labor senators—shape their report. I believe it was essential information, but unfortunately, with the abolition of the AWPA, that information will no longer be available. As I understand it, the minister did not even bother to announce that he was abolishing the AWPA. The announcement is yet to appear on their website, and indeed Mr Shreeve was the first to break the news to the committee that morning.

In introducing the repeal bill, the minister took just two minutes—two minutes!—to introduce a bill to abolish the AWPA. It is obvious—and we know from a host of other examples in this place, whether it is the environment or the Clean Energy Finance Corporation or whatever it is—that the Abbott government clearly is quite averse to independent advice. It likes to run on myths and made-up kinds of advice. It does not particularly like independent advice, and it does not seem to care for a body that properly shapes this advice and brings together all sides of Australian industry. This is something that I think the Department of Industry will probably struggle to do, even though its endeavours will be first class. It is not an independent agency with a specific focus; it is a department with a whole range of pressing issues. We will lose that independence and that ability of a small board to pull together all of Australian industry. Even in its short history, the AWPA has provided essential information in shaping policy, as we heard from Minister Cash and Minister Robb, who utilised its information just a few weeks ago.

As I said earlier, Labor established the AWPA to directly and constructively engage with industry on current and future skill demands. I believe that a small agency is well placed to do that. It can absolutely focus down on its key issues and can draw in those industry partners. The AWPA's task was to look at the future skill needs across a number of key sectors in the Australian economy—for example, manufacturing, where we have seen the closure of our car-manufacturing plants. There is certainly a very big question mark over shipbuilding. We need to focus on manufacturing, because one of the things that we heard time and time again at the TAFE inquiry was that we do not want to see a dumbing down of Australian jobs. Traditionally, the role that manufacturing has played is to really increase our skill levels, to really push our skill and IT development forward in a way that other industries cannot do. The sorts of skill development and innovative technologies that we see in manufacturing are readily transferable to other parts of our economy.

Demand in manufacturing is a critical area to be looking at, as is our trades. We know that we have a skill deficit in future trades. The numbers in our apprenticeships are getting fewer and fewer each year, so we do need a specific focus on apprenticeships that will lead to the sorts of trades that we need in our skilled workforce into the future.

The AWPA also looked at white-collar industries such as accounting and IT. They—particularly accounting—are areas where we really do not see a focus on skill development, so for the AWPA to have an interest and focus in that area is really important. That area, along with IT, is part of the growing areas of our economy. They deserve to be treated with respect and to have the greatest skill innovation that we can possibly bring to bear across those areas.

A unique task for the AWPA was to provide quality research and strategic advice to government on how best to meet the challenges of the future. We know that coalition ministers agree that this was—and is, for as long as it continues—useful, independent advice. Yet they believe in scrapping that body and rolling it into a large, unwieldy government

department that, despite its best endeavours, will not be able to provide that really pointy-end strategic advice that we need in developing jobs of the future.

The AWPA are the body which briefs ministers on how to shape policies. They may not always give universally popular decisions but the decisions and the advice are widely researched; they are not at the whim of a particular point of view. They are independent. A key feature of this agency is independent advice to government and they are invaluable, I believe, as an agency. All governments need this sort of advice.

The Abbott government has made a lot of claims that it wants input from industry, yet it seeks to disband the key national policy and research body on skills which brings those very stakeholders together. AWPA brings together peak national bodies such as ACCI, Ai Group and the ACTU to achieve industry leadership. It takes an independent body to do this, to get industry leaders in the room all at one time, to put their often quite different points of view.

We have example after example and here is another one: the Abbott government is again showing how out of touch it is with other countries. Even in the UK, AWPA-equivalent bodies have escaped the Conservative Cameron government's attack on the so-called red tape. Disbanding the key national policy and research body on skills while we have jobs being lost across the country just does not make sense. When we brought in the AWPA, the coalition supported us. Sussan Ley, an opposition spokesperson at the time, said on 22 May 2012 the AWPA's predecessor, Skills Australia:

... had done a very good job and provided comprehensive advice to government.

She said it was a Labor government which did not want to 'heed the advice' of the agency. Now, her government is looking to cull it for the sake of a comparatively low degree of financial savings—in the name of red tape! In government, Labor made a record \$19 billion investment in skills and training for smarter jobs—not dumbed down jobs—because smarter jobs will lead our economy. If we have those smarter jobs we will build a stronger nation. It is somewhat sad to note that the new jobs in the Australian economy, while critically important, are in low-paid areas—aged care, disability services and so on. These are important jobs and people should be paid a lot more for the sort of work they do. That is the job development going on in our country—important, should be better paid. We also need jobs that really push us in IT development, really push us in manufacturing. Those are the jobs which are being lost.

Labor recognises that skills are the bedrock of innovative workplaces. Surely no-one would disagree with that. Proper investment in skills is how we stay ahead and position ourselves in a globalised world. When Labor was in government, we put skills and innovation among the five key policy pillars underpinning our agenda. We entrusted the AWPA to provide us with honest information about our plans. Perhaps we did not always agree with that honest information but it was honest and it was independent; it did not come from a department or from any other government agency. It came from the sector, it came from the industries, it came from business and it came from trade unions, underpinned by solid research. Ultimately, that advice came from an independent board. Unfortunately, that advice will be no longer.

We need a guarantee from the government that this independent advice on workforce and productivity issues will continue to be provided. We need a clear statement from government about just how the Department of Industry is going to give that independent advice. What underpinning research can we rely on and how will it undertake that industry stakeholder

engagement, which has been so much a success of the AWPAs board? If we want a visionary approach to the Australian workforce development strategies, we need a critical, independent agency to assist us. Perhaps it is not too late for the government to rethink this one. The dollars are not there. There are not massive savings to be had by abolishing the AWPAs. There will be a little bit of money saved by not paying board fees and travel, but the independence that the board has been so good at providing government with—that stakeholder engagement, that research—is what Labor believes will be lost if the board is simply folded into the Department of Industry. That is to take nothing away from the public servants, but it is a very big department with a very big focus. We do not want to lose the unique advice we got from AWPAs.

Finally, as a Labor senator, I want to thank the AWPAs board and its staff—in particular, Mr Robin Shreeve—for the hard work and for their commitment to providing quality research and strategic policy advice to government.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (13:43): I indicate that I do have some real concerns about the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency Repeal Bill 2014 and I would like to hear from the government as to how they propose to deal with some of the issues in respect of the bill in the context of the government's response. I do have concerns about it. I think that it is important that if this bill is passed we maintain a watching brief on how the Department of Industry anticipates and plans for Australia's workforce needs following the closure of the Australian Workforce Productivity Agency. I acknowledge the intention of the bill is to streamline the government's advice-giving process and to provide stronger links between the skills and industry sectors; however, planning for Australia's future workforce needs is undoubtedly a complex task. There is a very real danger that by removing the Australian Workforce Productivity Agency Board we will lose the independent voice it has provided. For this reason, I will be supporting Senator Kim Carr's second reading amendment to this bill. Independence in the advice provided and transparency in the findings of research conducted by the Department of Industry must be upheld in order for there to be public confidence in the government's ability to properly manage Australia's workforce needs.

Functions that this agency performs are absolutely critical, Mr Deputy President Gallacher. We both come from the great state of South Australia where the manufacturing industry has taken body blow after body blow, the most recent and most significant being the decision of General Motors in Detroit to cease regional automotive manufacturing with the Holden brand by the end of 2017. That is significant for the thousands of workers at the Holden plant, but it is also most significant in respect of the 12,000 jobs, direct jobs, of people that are employed in South Australia in the new automotive components sector, plus even more in Victoria. There is something like 33,000 jobs in the automotive components sector, mostly in Victoria and in my home state of South Australia. The sort of work that this agency has been doing is going to be more important than ever if we are indeed the clever country in terms of dealing with these huge challenges with respect to manufacturing and advanced manufacturing.

I do commend the Weatherill government. There are many things that I will not commend them for, but in respect of their role in advanced manufacturing the work Professor Goran Roos has undertaken has been unambiguously good work on the part of the government. It has been praised to me privately and publicly by many in industry who believe that the government of South Australia has been very active in relation to these issues.

We have had a massive decline in our manufacturing sector, particularly our automotive sector. The government must ensure that training and upskilling opportunities are available to the thousands of workers who will lose their jobs in the coming years. This is a real challenge in Australia right now and one that will have lasting economic and social consequences and, dare I say, devastating social consequences if we do not get it right.

That is why I am so passionate about maintaining, albeit in a slightly amended form, the Automotive Transformation Scheme. This government has gutted that scheme on the pretext that there will not be an original automotive manufacturing sector in terms of car manufacturing in this country after 2017. On the contrary, it is more important than ever that we allow that huge components sector—33,000 direct employees and something like 140 companies, many of them from about 50 to 500 or 600 employees, small and medium-sized enterprises—to be able to transition, to transform themselves in other sectors of the economy. One of them I spoke to, for instance, is looking at producing solar mirrors for renewable energy, and that is a terrific transformation that we need in that sector. So I think that the government has made a fundamentally big mistake in terms of slashing and burning the Automotive Transformation Scheme. We need to alter that scheme to allow for what has occurred with the impending departure of Holden, Toyota and Ford as original manufacturers, but we actually need to work very hard on this.

A critical function of the Australian Workforce Productivity Agency has been the administration of the Skilled Occupations List, the list which identifies certain occupations which skilled migrants can fill in order to meet Australia's medium- and long-term skill needs. I think that the agency has done a lot of good work, but I have to say that the agency has not done the greatest of jobs when it comes to some of the occupations included on the Skilled Occupations List.

Some of the occupations put on that list beggar belief. I may stand corrected, but I understand from the Senate estimates process that on the Skilled Occupations List was flight attendant, a very good and worthy occupation but for the life of me I do not understand why you would want to put flight attendants on a Skilled Occupations List for 457 visas, for instance, because whenever Qantas or Virgin or Tiger or Jetstar advertise for flight attendants they are flooded with applications from many keen and eager generally younger people who want a chance to be able to work in the aviation sector as flight attendants. So I have some serious concerns about the way that the Skilled Occupations List has been developed and administered by the agency in the past.

For example, five separate teaching jobs appear on the Skilled Occupations List, including early childhood teachers and secondary schoolteachers. Any teaching graduate could tell you how difficult it is to obtain a teaching position in Australia, particularly in the cities and other metropolitan areas. To represent to skilled migrants that teachers are in demand here is misleading and, in fact, cruel both to those who plan to come in from overseas and those who have graduated from an Australian university. I am personally aware of teachers who packed up their lives and moved here from overseas to further their careers on the understanding that Australia is in desperate need of teachers as this occupation appears on the SOL. Upon arriving here, however, they face the same challenges as local teachers—too many candidates and too few positions. This is a disservice to local and overseas teachers alike. When the Department of Industry takes that responsibility for developing the Skilled Occupations List,

if that is what occurs as is being proposed in this bill, it must ensure that it is not inadvertently increasing competition in the local job market to the detriment of local workers—and the flight attendants example I gave you was a classic example. There is something quite absurd about that—that you would want to bring in flight attendants on 457 visas when there is such a great supply, particularly amongst eager, keen young people who want to become flight attendants.

As with the case of teachers, questions remain as to how the flight attendant occupation appeared on the Consolidated Sponsored Occupations List in the first place. The former Department of Immigration and Citizenship was responsible for compiling the principles and methodology of the Consolidated Sponsored Occupations List, which was amended in 2012 to include flight attendants. During supplementary budget estimates in 2012, I asked and it was revealed that the immigration department did not seek advice from the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations about the labour market status of these occupations. It remains unclear what advice the immigration department relied on when flight attendants were added to the list. Clearly, there was a breakdown in communication—at least, I like to think it was some benign reason rather than anything malevolent—between government departments in this case. The department of infrastructure should be mindful of this if it is going to have responsibility for the Skilled Occupations List as proposed in this bill.

There are also concerns about the motive for including pilots and flight attendants in the consolidated Skilled Occupations List. I understand that those in the industry are concerned that these occupations appear on the list not due to a shortage of pilots or flight attendants in Australia but for industrial relations purposes.

I should just say cheerio to my friends at Qantas. I understand that Mr Andrew Parker, one of the chief lobbyists from Qantas, is in the building today. He is busy lobbying others, but for some reason he has not contacted me. My door is always open to my friends at Qantas, but the sooner that Mr Joyce and the board resign the better for a great Australian airline.

There is the impression that, should industrial action commence, Qantas, for instance, would have a safety net in the form of 457 visa holders who could take the place of Australian pilots and Australian flight attendants involved in any such action. Now, I have to emphasise there is no such industrial action on the horizon. But it just worries me that the Skilled Occupations List and 457 visas could be used as an industrial tool in such circumstances. That concerns me, as I expect it also concerns Senator Doug Cameron.

This is seen by some as a poorly disguised threat to pilots and flight attendants not to engage in industrial action. Australia's prosperity is underpinned by a flexible, responsible and dynamic workforce. I have real concerns about this bill. If this bill is eventually passed, it is very important that the department provide robust and independent advice in terms of our skilled occupation and labour force needs in this country. At this stage, I have a real reluctance to support this bill. I will wait to see what safeguards the government is proposing. But I also think it is important that the government undertake to provide the independence and robustness contained in Senator Carr's second reading amendment.

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (13:54): I will take on notice some of those matters from Senator Xenophon, particularly the arrival of Mr

Parker in his office. But, in relation to some of these other matters, I think it is really important to stress that the Australian Public Service is a source of independent advice, and I hope that there is a reflection on its professionalism in none of the contributions we have heard today, particularly from Senator Lines. I presume there is no reflection on the independence of the Australian Public Service. I know we want to get this through quickly, but I say to Senator Xenophon, in particular, that what we desperately need to have is industry responding to changing scenarios. The issue has been, all the way through, in relation to AWPA and other measures, that industry is not engaged.

What this government has quite clearly said is that it is going to engage with industry. They are very, very important partners in the way forward. My understanding is that at the last AWPA scenario day, where a number of research projects were planned, there was little, if any, industry attendance. That is just crazy, and the government have moved very quickly since we were elected to actively engage with industry. There has been very widespread and extensive consultation, including a ministerial roundtable in January, national face-to-face and online stakeholder workshops from February to April and written feedback from stakeholders. I commend the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency Repeal Bill 2014 to the Senate, and the government will not be supporting the second reading amendment.

The PRESIDENT (14:05): The question is that the second reading amendment moved by Senator Lines be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [14:01]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes36
 Noes30
 Majority.....6

AYES

Bilyk, CL
 Carr, KJ
 Dastyari, S
 Farrell, D
 Furner, ML
 Hanson-Young, SC
 Lines, S
 Ludwig, JW
 McEwen, A (teller)
 Milne, C
 O'Neill, DM
 Polley, H
 Rhiannon, L
 Singh, LM
 Sterle, G
 Tillem, M
 Waters, LJ
 Wright, PL

Cameron, DN
 Conroy, SM
 Di Natale, R
 Faulkner, J
 Gallacher, AM
 Hogg, JJ
 Ludlam, S
 Marshall, GM
 McLucas, J
 Moore, CM
 Peris, N
 Pratt, LC
 Siewert, R
 Stephens, U
 Thorp, LE
 Urquhart, AE
 Whish-Wilson, PS
 Xenophon, N

NOES

Abetz, E
 Bernardi, C

Back, CJ
 Birmingham, SJ

NOES

Boswell, RLD
 Brandis, GH
 Cash, MC
 Cormann, M
 Eggleston, A
 Fifield, MP
 Kroger, H (teller)
 McKenzie, B
 Parry, S
 Ronaldson, M
 Ryan, SM
 Seselja, Z
 Smith, D

Boyce, SK
 Bushby, DC
 Colbeck, R
 Edwards, S
 Fierravanti-Wells, C
 Johnston, D
 Macdonald, ID
 O'Sullivan, B
 Payne, MA
 Ruston, A
 Scullion, NG
 Sinodinos, A
 Williams, JR

Question agreed to.

The PRESIDENT (14:05): The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

[The Senate divided. [14:05]
 (The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes59
 Noes10
 Majority.....49

AYES

Abetz, E
 Bernardi, C
 Birmingham, SJ
 Boyce, SK
 Bushby, DC
 Carr, KJ
 Colbeck, R
 Conroy, SM
 Dastyari, S
 Eggleston, A
 Faulkner, J
 Fifield, MP
 Gallacher, AM
 Johnston, D
 Lines, S
 Lundy, KA
 Marshall, GM
 McKenzie, B
 Moore, CM
 O'Sullivan, B
 Payne, MA
 Polley, H
 Ronaldson, M
 Ryan, SM
 Seselja, Z
 Sinodinos, A
 Stephens, U

Back, CJ
 Bilyk, CL
 Boswell, RLD
 Brandis, GH
 Cameron, DN
 Cash, MC
 Collins, JMA
 Cormann, M
 Edwards, S
 Farrell, D
 Fierravanti-Wells, C
 Furner, ML
 Hogg, JJ
 Kroger, H (teller)
 Ludwig, JW
 Macdonald, ID
 McEwen, A
 McLucas, J
 O'Neill, DM
 Parry, S
 Peris, N
 Pratt, LC
 Ruston, A
 Scullion, NG
 Singh, LM
 Smith, D
 Sterle, G

AYES

Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE
Wong, P

Tillem, M
Williams, JR

NOES

Di Natale, R
Ludlam, S
Rhiannon, L
Waters, LJ
Wright, PL

Hanson-Young, SC
Milne, C
Siewert, R (teller)
Whish-Wilson, PS
Xenophon, N

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

The PRESIDENT (14:09): As no amendments to the bill have been circulated, I shall call the minister to move the third reading unless any senator requires that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:09): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:09): by leave—Senator Nash, the Assistant Minister for Health, will be absent from question time today owing to a flight delay. For the purposes of question time Senator Payne will represent the Assistant Minister for Health, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Sport.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Environment: Heritage Listing**

Senator THORP (Tasmania) (14:10): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Abetz. I refer the minister to the overnight decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee rejecting the government's proposal to delist 74,000 hectares of the Tasmanian World Heritage area. Can the minister confirm that the government's justifications were described as 'feeble'—

Senator Ian Macdonald: By who?

Senator THORP: Portugal—and that, if successful, Australia would have become the third country, after Oman and Tanzania, to delist one of its own natural World Heritage areas in the past 40 years.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:10): The Labor Party seem to be revelling in a decision that was taken overnight, in another part of the world, determining what will happen in Senator Thorp's home state and my home state of Tasmania. It is a matter on which her party was absolutely decimated not once but twice—once at the federal election on 7 September and then later on in March this year.

So I would simply remind Senator Thorp that, as she leaves this place, she might like to reflect on the reason why she is leaving this place: that the Australian Labor Party—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On my left. Wait a minute, Senator Thorp; you are entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator Thorp: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on relevance. My question was that, given the government's submission was described as 'feeble,' would the minister confirm that?

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order at this stage. The minister still has one minute 16 seconds remaining. I am listening closely to the minister's response.

Senator ABETZ: As I was indicating to the honourable senator, the Australian Labor Party misread the constituency in Tasmania not once but twice. The Australian people and the Tasmanian people will be able to make their own determination whether it is feeble to claim that a network of roads, a network of high-transmission lines—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! If you wish to debate it, the time is after the end of question time. You are entitled to be heard in silence, Senator Abetz.

Senator ABETZ: I think the Australian people will come to their own conclusion that it is somewhat feeble to claim World Heritage protection for a network of roads, disused quarries, a network of high-voltage lines, pine plantations, eucalypt plantations et cetera. I understand that one person from Portugal used the term that the honourable senator referred to. But can I say that the responses in the Tasmanian ballot boxes were not feeble in any way, shape or form. Having said all that, unlike the Greens and Labor, we do abide by the determinations that are made.

Senator THORP (Tasmania) (14:14): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the minister to comments by the Prime Minister this morning, who said:

We will be carefully looking at the decision and deciding what's best now ...

I also refer to comments by Parliamentary Secretary Senator Colbeck, who said, 'We're accepting this decision.'

Who is right? The Prime Minister or Senator Colbeck?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:14): The Prime Minister is always very rigorous and robust and Senator Colbeck is always very rigorous and robust—there is no inconsistency in the statements made by either the Prime Minister or my very distinguished colleague Senator Colbeck.

Senator THORP (Tasmania) (14:15): Mr President, I wish to ask a second supplementary question. Why did the government present a case not supported by the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania, not supported by scientific evidence, but simply supported by Senator Colbeck's holiday snapshots?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:15): I think I know who will be enjoying holidays very shortly. Having said that, can I indicate that the forest industry—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator ABETZ: Mr President, are you ever going to protect me from the threat of industrial deafness caused by Senator Wong?

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator Abetz! You have been very well protected over time. There will be order on my right and on my left.

Senator ABETZ: Those of us on this side firmly believe that two interest groups stitching up a deal behind closed doors is not necessarily indicative of the national or state interest being served. I am on record as indicating that I disagree with the Forest Industries Association on this, and I make no apologies for saying so. I believe they have sold out the long-term interests of their industry and their state. That is my personal view—I have said it and I will continue to repeat it.

Environment: Heritage Listing

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:17): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Abetz, and refers to the World Heritage Committee decision last night which described Australia's bid as feeble and an unacceptable precedent. Does the government now commit to unreservedly accepting the World Heritage Committee decision and reject any proposal for logging of any kind in the area, and will it rule out any new bid to reduce the boundaries?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:18): We will accept this decision as unreservedly as the Greens and the green groups accept the decisions of court cases. The Leader of the Australian Greens might like to reflect on that—like when her former leader, Senator Brown, lost the Federal Court appeal in relation to Wielangta. I remember the hissy fit—

Senator Milne: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on relevance. Senator Abetz is attempting to distract from his embarrassment with irrelevant information.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order at this stage.

Senator ABETZ: Mr President, I was seeking to point out to the Australian Greens that we might adopt their approach of accepting these sorts of decisions and determinations. Of course, if we were to accept the Greens approach on this, we would be holding demonstrations and doing all sorts of things in contradiction of the decision that has been made. Having not read every single word of the decision, I am not prepared at this stage to say that we unreservedly accept everything in it—but we are responsible world citizens and we will acknowledge and accept the decision and abide by it. However, one can still be

critical of the decision as not necessarily reflecting all the objective evidence, the overwhelming majority of which relates to areas of pine plantations, eucalypt plantations, roads, electricity grid wires and old quarries—apparently, now, all somehow World Heritage. That is the determination that has been made, and so be it. Unlike the Australian Greens, we will respect the arbiter in this matter, and that is the big product differentiation between the Australian Greens and this government.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:20): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Will the government now commit to funding a cultural assessment of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area involving the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, as requested by the World Heritage Committee? How much money will the government commit to that cultural assessment?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:21): If I recall correctly, there has already been an announcement by the Minister for the Environment and my good friend and colleague Senator Colbeck in relation to that. I understand that the commitment is to do so. The amount of money that will be committed to that is still to be determined.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:21): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister confirm that the Australian government was advised early on that the bid was doomed to fail but the government proceeded to embarrass Australia in this way to satisfy ill-considered election promises made by Tasmanian Liberal Party senators?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:22): So ill-considered were these Liberal Party promises that the Liberal Party won 60 per cent of the House of Representatives seats and won one of the biggest majorities ever, which saw Senator Milne's own party lose 40 per cent of its representation in the state parliament. I am one of these old-fashioned people who believe in the ballot box, in people having a say about their own bit of land and in having these decisions made locally rather than having an international body overseas determining our future. That seems to be the way of the world these days. As I have said, we accept the decision.

Grete, Mr Peter

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (14:22): My question is to the Attorney-General, representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Brandis. Can the Attorney-General advise the Senate of the Australian government's reaction to the conviction and sentencing of Peter Grete overnight and the reaction of the international community?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:23): Can I begin by acknowledging the close interest that Senator Kroger has taken in this matter in recent months. As senators will be aware, last night the Cairo Criminal Court sentenced Mr Grete to seven years imprisonment on charges of 'spreading false news' and 'supporting the banned Muslim Brotherhood'. The Australian government and people are dismayed and

appalled that an internationally respected journalist such as Mr Grete should have been convicted in such circumstances and should have imposed upon him such a severe sentence.

The government understands that Egypt has been through some very difficult times in recent years, but this kind of verdict and sentence does nothing to support Egypt's claims to be transitioning to democracy. The Australian government urges the new Egyptian government to reflect on what messages this sentence is sending to the international community.

On behalf of the government I want to acknowledge the swift and widespread outpouring of international sentiment after the verdict from governments, the United Nations, the European Union, NGOs, press associations and individuals. They include the comments of the United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, who described the sentence as 'chilling and draconian'; the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillai, who described the charges as 'alarming' and the proceedings as 'a breach of international human rights law'; and the United Kingdom, Dutch and Latvian foreign ministers, among others. The common thread of all their remarks, which the Australian government joins with, is that freedom—in this case particularly freedom of the press—is fundamental to a democracy and that Mr Grete has suffered a grievous injustice.

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (14:25): Can the Attorney-General advise the Senate what the Australian government is doing to assist Mr Grete?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:25): Senior ministers have made numerous representations to their counterpart ministers in the Egyptian government. Representations were made by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and me, as well as at ambassadorial level. Within minutes of hearing of the sentence, the foreign minister spoke to Mr Grete's parents and reassured them that the government would continue direct representations to the Egyptian government, its neighbours and our partners. The foreign minister spoke to our ambassador in Cairo last night to request that he arrange for an urgent call to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr Shoukry, with whom she had spoken as recently as last weekend. This morning the acting secretary of DFAT called in Egypt's acting ambassador to express the strong concerns of Australia about the verdict, and the acting ambassador gave an undertaking that those concerns would be conveyed to Cairo. Consular officials will continue to provide all appropriate consular assistance to Mr Grete and support to his family.

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (14:26): I want to thank the minister for that advice. Can the Attorney-General inform the Senate what the options are for Mr Peter Grete following the verdict?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:26): We will leave comment to Mr Grete's family and his legal team on the question of an appeal against the conviction and sentence. It is unclear how long any process of appeal might take. The Australian government will be lodging a formal request imminently with President el-Sisi, seeking his intervention in the matter. Might I say—and I am sure I say so on behalf of all honourable senators—that our thoughts and prayers are with Mr Grete, his family, his friends and his colleagues at this most distressing time.

Sharrouf, Mr Khaled

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (14:27): My question today is also to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. I refer to the case of convicted jihadi terrorist Khaled Sharrouf, who, despite being under surveillance—his passport was cancelled and he was on airport watch-lists around the country—on 6 December last year, walked straight past Customs officials at Sydney Airport and onto a flight out of Australia. I refer to the recent allegations that Mr Sharrouf is fighting with the terrorist organisation ISIL in Iraq. Can the Attorney-General explain how Mr Sharrouf was able to leave the country and join up with one of the most extreme terrorist organisations in the world?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:28): Thank you very much indeed for that question, Senator Stephens. The Australian government can confirm that Mr Sharrouf departed Australia in December of last year using his brother's passport. It is assumed that he departed Australia with the intention of travelling to Syria. Mr Sharrouf is currently being investigated by Australian authorities, including state and federal police, regarding both his departure under a false identity and his alleged involvement in offences against the Australian Criminal Code and the Foreign Incursions and Recruitment Act. It would not be appropriate for me to comment any further on the matter.

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (14:28): Thank you for that response, Minister. Can the minister advise how the Australian public can actually have any confidence that Mr Sharrouf will not return to Australia as easily as he left?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:29): The Australian public can have entire confidence that this government is absolutely determined to take whatever steps are necessary to protect Australia's national security. As I have said in this chamber on several occasions in response to questions from both sides, it is a serious crime against Australian law, punishable by up to 25 years imprisonment, for a person to participate in a foreign civil war, including participating as a war fighter in the Syrian civil war or in the conflict in northern Iraq. As well, there are other provisions of the Criminal Code that have an extraterritorial operation and which apply to Australian citizens participating in violence in foreign lands. The Australian government will be vigilant and it will give the agencies the resources they need to ensure that our national security is protected and that any Australians who breach these laws are brought to justice. (*Time expired*)

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (14:30): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is the minister aware that the details of this bungle were actually confirmed in the final report of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor? How can the government justify abolishing the monitor, which has demonstrated its value in reviewing the operation, effectiveness and implications of Australia's counterterrorism and national security legislation?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:30): I hate to sound a discordant note to my friend Senator Stephens, but I am surprised to hear a Labor Party politician spring to that defence of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor. When the Labor Party was in power, the Labor Party did not respond to a single

report produced by the national security monitor. When the coalition came into government in September last year, we were left with a backlog of unresponded-to reports, which we are in the process of responding to. There are a suite of measures in place whereby legislation, including national security legislation, is kept under review, including by the PJCIS; the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee; and, ultimately, the Australian Law Reform Commission. *(Time expired)*

Asylum Seekers

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (14:31): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator Cash. Can the minister update the Senate on the number of illegal maritime arrivals who have entered Australia since the commencement of Operation Sovereign Borders and how this compares with the number of those who have voluntarily departed?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:32): I thank Senator Smith for the question. The government's actions to stop the boats from arriving recently passed a significant milestone, with more illegal arrivals having left Australia and offshore processing centres since the commencement of Operation Sovereign Borders than have arrived. While 1,111 people arrived illegally by boat from 18 September until 19 December last year—before our full suite of border protection policies was introduced—over 1,120 people have now either voluntarily returned home from offshore processing centres or have departed Australia.

In other words, what we are now seeing, with the coalition government's border protection policies, is a very significant increase in the number of people who are voluntarily going back—particularly among those who are on bridging visas. The facts show that, when illegal maritime arrivals discover they are not going to get a permanent protection visa from this government, they are voluntarily putting their hands up to return home. When you take off the table the promise of the people smugglers—that a government will encourage people to come here and will reward those people with permanent protection—and you say, 'No, the only thing you will get if you come to Australia is a temporary protection visa,' the fact that people are now putting their hands up and saying, 'I want to return home,' shows that our policies work.

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (14:34): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Given the monsoon season ended some time ago—and in recent years this has heralded a dramatic increase in illegal boat arrivals—can the minister advise the Senate of the number of successful people-smuggling operations this year compared with 2013?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:34): Yes. I can advise the Senate that the number of successful people-smuggling ventures to Australia in 2014 remains at zero. I remind senators that the last successful people-smuggling venture to Australia was on 19 December 2013. Of course, we are aware that there will always be those who seek to test us, but we remain vigilant and we remain determined. In answer to Senator Smith's question about how this compares with 2013, I advise the Senate that on this day exactly one year ago, 24 June 2013, Labor's disastrous border protection policies saw 214 IMAs arriving on several boats.

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (14:36): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Given that a vital component of the coalition government's border protection policies is the reintroduction of temporary protection visas, can the minister advise the Senate what impediments are preventing their introduction?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:36): We all know what those impediments are. They are those on the other side, teaming up yet again in this place with their coalition partners, the Greens, to block the reintroduction of temporary protection visas—which we were given a very clear mandate to reinstitute at the last election. It is interesting to note the words of the former immigration minister Mr O'Connor, who—again just one year ago, on 23 June 2013—said:

... the Parliament has to act in the national interest, and also, quite frankly, in the interest of those people that are in great danger on the high seas because they're being lured on to these vessels. Now it seems to me we should be putting those interests first ...

Perhaps those on the other side, given that they created this mess, may take Mr O'Connor's words to heart. They also may take a leaf out of former senator Bob Carr's book, where he said:

Get out of the way and basically let the Abbott government do the job it does, which is stop the boats.

Unemployment Benefits

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann. Last week in this chamber I asked about the emergency relief for young people who will be left without income support for six months under the 'earn or learn' measure. The Assistant Minister for Social Services said that this government makes no apologies for directing \$229 million to ER, because it is adding to the social security safety net. Then, this government has cut \$240 million out of the discretionary grants program in social security, not because of clear duplication, but because it was 'a decision of government'. Is it correct that the program savings, which are now largely being redirected to ER to offset the government's cruel budget measures, were found by simply pulling the existing funding and cutting an arbitrary amount from those discretionary grants? And how does the minister justify cutting this discretionary grants program, and with it a wide range of preventative programs, that would in fact help young people get a better start in life.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:38): I thank Senator Siewert for her question. The first thing I would say is that when we came into government we inherited from the Labor-Greens administration that preceded us a debt and deficit disaster that needed fixing. When we went to the last election we said we would fix the budget mess left behind by the Labor-Greens administration, and we are doing exactly that. Labor and the Greens left behind \$191 billion of cumulative deficits after their first five budgets, and they left behind another \$123 billion in projected deficits in their last budget. They were taking us to a government debt of \$667 billion within the decade and rising beyond that. They left a situation where we have to pay \$1 billion a month just in interest to service the debt that Labor and the Greens accumulated over six years in government.

What we have done is transparently there for all to see in the budget. We have ensured that our spending growth trajectory is more sustainable, more affordable and more realistic—

Senator Siewert: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. I have left it until half-way through the minister's answer to see if he was going to get to my question, and he has not. Mr President, could you please remind the minister that the question I asked was specifically about the discretionary grants program.

The PRESIDENT: I draw the minister's attention to the question. The minister has 56 seconds remaining.

Senator CORMANN: As always with these questions it is important to provide appropriate context for the answer. The context of course is that we inherited from Labor and the Greens a debt and deficit disaster that in the national interest needs to be fixed.

When it comes to young people under 30, we unashamedly have a policy position that it is not appropriate for young people who are able to work, are capable of working, and are healthy and fit, to walk straight out of school onto the dole. We happen to think that if you are able and fit and you are capable of working you should work, you should earn or learn. Our policies in the budget provide for that. We have put appropriate safety nets around that to ensure that people in genuine need of support continue to have that support.

In relation to the specific question that was asked about grants programs, as always this government is committed to ensuring that all government spending is as efficient, as effective and as well targeted as possible. *(Time expired)*

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (14:41): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. The Australia Institute today has released a new report highlighting the billions of dollars worth of state government subsidies going to the mining industry. This is on top of the very significant billions of dollars that are handed over to the mining industry from this government. When is this government going to end welfare to the corporate sector?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:42): I completely reject the assertion about subsidies to the mining industry. What I would say, though, is that we on this side of the chamber understand the importance of a strong mining industry in order to generate the sorts of jobs that we want young people under 30 to be able to get into. We on this side understand that we need to continue to build a stronger, more prosperous economy where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead. We understand that a strong mining sector, with an appropriately competitive taxation arrangement to support economic growth across the whole economy, but also in relation to the mining industry, is in our national interest. I do not ever expect the Greens to understand this, but we actually want businesses across Australia to be successful so that young people and indeed all Australians have the opportunity to get fulfilling jobs where they are able to reach their full potential and make a productive contribution to a growing, more prosperous economy into the future.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (14:43): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I notice that the minister did not answer my question about ending corporate welfare. The question is this: when are you going to end the billions of dollars worth of subsidies you are handing out to the mining industry—that you are cooperating with the states to hand out to the mining industry—and how can you not do that and justify dumping young people onto no income support for six months?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:44): I very warmly welcome Senator Siewert into the family of those supporting and promoting the free market. Those of us on this side of the chamber understand that it is very important to ensure that in an economy like Australia's we continue to be an open, competitive economy—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator Cameron: Put a price on carbon, then.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann, resume your seat. You are entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator CORMANN: I thought that this might get a rise out of Senator Cameron, and it is very good that he has risen to the occasion. On this side of the chamber we make absolutely no apology for the fact that, having inherited an economy growing below trend, having inherited an economy with rising unemployment and having inherited an economy with low consumer confidence and business investment that had plateaued, we will continue to pursue policies to build a stronger, more prosperous and more resilient economy where everyone across Australia has the opportunity to get ahead.

Budget

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (14:45): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health, Senator Payne. Is the minister aware that even a low-risk pregnant woman normally requires seven to 10 visits to the doctor for antenatal care during her pregnancy? Can the minister confirm that a woman will be hit with a \$7 GP tax each time she attends the doctor over this nine-month period?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:45): I thank the senator for her question. The question relates to the government's planned introduction of a co-payment. The government are quite clear that this is a move on our part to make Medicare a sustainable system.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Payne is entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator PAYNE: For example, MBS expenditure has been growing for many years now at an unsustainable rate. Ten years ago—

Senator Wong: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on relevance. I do appreciate that the minister is a minister representing today. It was a very specific question in relation to a pregnant woman in the low-risk category and the payments that she would face for antenatal visits. I would ask the minister to return to the substance of the question.

The PRESIDENT: I am listening closely to the minister's answer. The minister still has a minute and 22 seconds. There is no point of order at this stage.

Senator PAYNE: As I understood it, the senator's question related to the introduction of a co-payment and the payment of that sum by individuals such as the one that the senator evidenced. What I was saying was that 10 years ago we were spending \$8 billion on the MBS. That is a significant amount. Today it is \$19 billion and in a decade it will be \$34 billion. The government's decision to introduce the co-payment to which the senator refers—

Senator Urquhart: Mr President, on a point of order in relation to relevance, my question was: can the minister confirm that a woman will be hit with a \$7 GP tax each time she attends

a doctor over that nine-month period? That was my question. I would ask the minister to answer it.

The PRESIDENT: I now do draw the minister's attention to the question. There are 47 seconds remaining.

Senator PAYNE: As I said, that is a modest contribution which we are asking Australians to pay for the cost of their own health care. It is a contribution which people like Dr Andrew Leigh, the shadow Assistant Treasurer, have said previously in writing that they support. I quote from Dr Leigh:

As economists have shown, the ideal model involves a small co-payment—not enough to put a dent in your weekly budget, but enough to make you think twice before you call the doc. And the idea is hardly radical.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (14:49): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I still do not have an answer to my first question, but I will try another question. Can the minister confirm that Australian parents will have to pay a GP tax for all vaccinations for their children in their first year?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:49): The sorts of comments that I made in answer to the senator's first question apply similarly here. Australians will be asked to make a modest contribution to the cost of their own health care. It was good enough for a previous Labor Prime Minister, Mr Hawke. The approach that doctors take is, of course, a matter for them. The request, on the part of the government, in introducing this policy is that we recognise that the MBS is absolutely unsustainable and that in a decade it will be at \$34 billion. If we do not ask Australians to make this small contribution, then that will be—

Senator Urquhart: Mr President, again I rise on a point of order on relevance. I will repeat my question: can the minister confirm that Australian parents will have to pay a GP tax for all vaccinations for their children in their first year? Yes or no?

The PRESIDENT: I cannot instruct the minister how to answer the question. The minister has 16 seconds remaining to address the question.

Senator PAYNE: I have completed my answer.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (14:51): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question to the minister. Won't imposing a \$7 GP tax create a barrier to antenatal health care and place a price on life-saving vaccinations?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:51): In the absence of a phone call from Senator Urquhart to Dr Leigh, where he might wish to advise her of his views on this matter, let me reassure the chamber that the government is absolutely committed to improving immunisation coverage rates. This government provides around \$400 million annually through the National Immunisation Program. We continue to supply the National Immunisation Program vaccines free of charge to eligible cohorts in line with the NIP schedule. NIP vaccines are provided by a variety of immunisation providers, including GPs, local councils, community based clinics and through schools. It remains, as I said, at the discretion of the doctor whether the \$7 patient contribution applies; but what is worth noting is that, in 2012, in a savings measure, the Labor government abolished the General Practice

Immunisation Incentive, as well as the maternity immunisation incentive. We all know it was a savings measure.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator PAYNE: And your track record on this is a disgrace. (*Time expired*)

Child Care

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Human Services and Minister representing the Minister for Education, Senator Payne. Will the minister explain to the Senate what the Department of Education's recent *Child Care and Early Learning in Summary* report for the September quarter revealed about the growth in childcare fees?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:53): I would like to thank the senator for his question in deference to Senator Fifield's linguistic skills. Of course, members of the chamber will recall Labor's apparently ironclad 2007 election promise, I think it was, that they would make child care more affordable. 'More affordable'—what an interesting concept! When the Department of Education's *Child Care and Early Learning in Summary* report for the September quarter was released earlier this month, it showed quite clearly that childcare fees had skyrocketed by 53 per cent across the six years of the Labor government. The findings of that report were confirmed by the NATSEM report released earlier this week. For an average family using long day care, that equates to \$75 extra in fees per week or more than \$3,500 a year.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! When there is silence on my left we will proceed. Senator Payne.

Senator PAYNE: I was saying, Mr President, for families with children in full-time care, that rise works out to be more than \$130 a week and \$6,300 a year in additional fees. It is a damning indictment of those opposite and demonstrates their complete misunderstanding of the childcare sector. When they took office, in September 2007, the average long day care fee was \$5 an hour; by the time they left, in September 2013, it was \$7.65. Outside-school-hours care fees rose by 52 per cent during the same period. Family day care fees were up by 50 per cent and occasional care fees by 50 per cent. It is a shameful legacy. They promised 260 new childcare centres; they built 38 and then said in 2010, 'Oh, we won't build the extra 222.' You should be embarrassed. You should be ashamed of that broken promise—222 childcare centres that you just did not bother to build. (*Time expired*)

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Honourable senators, if you wish to debate it, the time to debate it is after the end of question time.

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:56): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for that excellent answer. Can the minister further explain to the Senate how increases in childcare fees have impacted on families out-of-pocket costs?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:57): Again, I thank the senator for the question, because it is a very good question. I think a number of

senators might be asking themselves what the real impact of these fee increases is on families' out-of-pocket expenses. As everyone in the chamber realises, the government assists families with out-of-pocket childcare expenses through the childcare rebate and the childcare benefit. Senators will also recall that, during Labor's term in office, childcare fee assistance to families did increase significantly over their last four years in government. Between 2008-09 and 2012-13 government investment in that assistance increased by 45 per cent, from \$3.3 billion to \$4.8 billion. But, despite that substantial increase in fee assistance, families' out-of-pocket expenses still increased by up to almost 40 per cent over that same period. It is cold, hard proof that just topping up payments on the national credit card does not work, and it makes the payments totally unsustainable. *(Time expired)*

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:58): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate what the government is doing to slow the growth in childcare fees and how this differs from previous approaches?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:58): We understand that just throwing money at a problem and racking up debt on the nation's credit card does not work. After the six full years in office that they had to deal with this problem, they just sat on their hands and watched those childcare fees go through the roof. Not only did they sit on their hands; they added to the problem by dramatically increasing regulation. For instance, the ACECQA report into the regulatory burden of their NQF showed that the new regulations added an average of \$145,000 per year to a long day care centre with 75 places and 15 educators.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Payne, resume your seat. You are entitled to be heard in silence.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator Lines interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: On my left! Senator Lines!

Senator PAYNE: We made a promise at the last election to task the Productivity Commission with a once-in-a-generation inquiry into this sector, which would look at ways of making childcare more flexible—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Payne, resume your seat. When there is silence on my left we will proceed. Senator Payne.

Senator PAYNE: Thank you, Mr President. This is the problem when you have got no vision, when you had no plan and when you just tried to destroy the sector. You have nothing except this sort of response, which is completely ineffectual, because you know that you left it in a shambles. *(Time expired)*

Higher Education

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (15:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Education, Senator Payne. I refer to the government's extreme higher education changes. Is the minister aware of the comments by the architect of the HECS system, Professor Bruce Chapman—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Interjecting across the chamber does not help. Continue, Senator Brown.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Is the minister aware of the comments by the architect of the HECS system, Professor Bruce Chapman, that an unintended consequence of greater unpaid debt will be 40 per cent of female graduates unable to pay their debt in full? Why is the government unfairly shifting the cost burden of a degree onto those who will never earn enough to repay that debt?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (15:01): I thank Senator Brown for her question. It is lovely to hear from Senator Brown. We are making some very important changes in these education reforms, as the chamber would be aware. I have spoken about them before in terms of making Australia internationally competitive—in fact, a world leader in higher education—making sure that we open up the sector to competition and to quality providers, making sure that students who are perhaps challenged in entering bachelor degrees have a pathway into tertiary education, maybe through a sub-bachelor degree or a diploma or something like that. All of those positions, for the first time ever, will be funded by the Commonwealth government, as I have said before.

In relation to HECS and the loans scheme, a number of targeted decisions have been taken by the government to secure the scheme into the future, both through the budget process and the identification by the Commission of Audit of the need to reduce the cost to the Commonwealth of HELP through changes to the interest rate and the repayment thresholds applying to HELP loans. This will be particularly important given this budget's historic extension of funding to all higher education students for the first time ever. I referred to that earlier.

There are two important changes which will make HELP more financially sustainable. There will be a fair interest rate on HECS. The interest rate applied to HELP loans will be, as we know, the 10-year bond rate. This rate reflects the costs to government of borrowing to fund the loan and is less than for a loan that anyone is able to obtain from a banking institution, of course. The new interest rate will apply to all HELP debts from 1 June 2016. A fair repayment— (*Time expired*)

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (15:03): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer again to Professor Chapman's comments that outstanding student debt under a deregulated fee system would substantially exceed the budget estimate. Why has the government understated the amount of student debt arising from its extreme higher education changes?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (15:04): What Senator Brown does not acknowledge in both of her questions is that we believe that, in opening up the system in the way in which these reforms are cast, the higher education institutions, not governments, will be the best judges of how to run their own business and also of how we are able to maintain and promote a world-class higher education system.

Senator Kim Carr: Mr President, I raise a point of order under relevance. Both these questions to the minister go to the issue of HECS debt. The first went to the question of

female graduates and HECS debt and the second to the government's underestimation of the HECS debt. The minister has refused to deal with those matters.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order at this stage. I am listening to the minister's answer. The minister has 35 seconds remaining to answer the question.

Senator PAYNE: I did want to move on to the question of the repayment threshold. We have made it very clear that graduates will begin to repay—

Senator Kim Carr: HECS debt—that's what the question's about.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator Kim Carr: Why don't you try to answer it?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Debating it across the chamber does not help at this stage. The minister has the right to be heard in silence. Senator Payne, continue.

Senator PAYNE: What I was going to say—if I could just finish the next two words in the sentence—is that graduates will begin to repay their HECS debt when they start earning over approximately \$50,000 in 2016-17, from 1 July 2016. *(Time expired)*

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (15:07): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister confirm that university degrees would cost up to three times as much under a deregulated fee system and leave graduates with debts of more than \$120,000? Why is the government mortgaging the future of young Australians?

Senator Cormann interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: When there is silence we will proceed. The time to debate this is after question time, Senator Cormann.

Senator Carol Brown interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Brown, I am waiting to give the call to the minister so your question can be answered.

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (15:08): I thank Senator Brown for the supplementary. The problem with the approach that is being taken by those on the other side to this question is that they can only deal in hyperbole and exaggeration. They have no facts with which to deal. We have Australian universities dropping in world rankings, we have limited choice, and we have every student not being funded by the Commonwealth. What we want to do, Mr President—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I raise a point of order as to relevance. The specific question referred to the increase in university fees and asked the minister to confirm whether university degrees would cost up to three times as much. That was the specific question, Mr President, and I ask you to draw the attention of the minister to that question.

The PRESIDENT: I do draw the minister's attention to the question. The minister has 33 seconds remaining.

Senator PAYNE: Let me make it very clear for Senator Moore and Senator Brown: I do not actually agree with the premise of Senator Brown's question and I responded by saying it was based entirely in exaggeration and hyperbole. So I do not agree with the question; therefore, that is my answer to that part of the question.

I advise the chamber that we are giving higher education institutions and students in Australia the capacity to be internationally competitive and to engage in thousands and thousands more courses, which should see 80,000 more students in our institutions by 2018. *(Time expired)*

Defence

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Defence, Senator Johnston. Can the minister outline to the Senate how the government has met its election commitment to fix the Defence budget? In particular, has the government honoured its commitment to make no more cuts to Defence?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (15:10): I thank Senator Eggleston not just for the question but also for his contribution to 18 years of the public policy debate in this country. The Abbott government has already met a number of commitments made in our policy for stronger Defence announced in the 2013 election campaign. We are building on our commitment to Australians that we would build a strong and capable Defence Force. The first Abbott government budget set about triaging the haemorrhage of Defence funding caused by Labor, through our commitment to ensure, firstly, no further cuts to Defence spending.

We are doing the hard methodical costing and funding work that Labor never did, to complete the recovery with our commitment to boost spending to two per cent of GDP within a decade. This has been welcomed by our allies. During the Prime Minister's recent visit to the United States, President Obama himself noted:

I should note that Australia, under the Prime Minister's leadership, is increasing its defence budget, even under tough times, recognising that we all have to make sure that we're doing our fair share to help maintain global order and security.

This is in stark contrast to what our allies said about Labor's reckless cuts to the Defence budget to the tune of \$16 billion. Former Deputy Secretary of State under the Bush administration, Richard Armitage, commented in 2013 that Labor was free-riding off US taxpayers and did not want to pull its fair share of weight when it comes to Defence spending. Senior US senator and former presidential candidate, John McCain, also noted at the time that it was not prudent for Canberra to cut its Defence budget so heavily. The constant and repeated cuts and deferrals under the shameful last six years have left Defence reeling and our allies concerned. *(Time expired)*

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (15:12): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate whether the government has delivered on other election commitments in the Defence portfolio?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (15:12): I am pleased to confirm we have announced a number of important Defence commitments over the last nine months. The coalition will ensure that Australia has the military capability to deter threats and to project force into our neighbourhood. We would never—as Labor has—unfairly and irresponsibly gamble with the security of future Australians by underfunding Defence investment over the long term.

The Abbott government has announced decisions relating to acquiring 58 fabulous Joint Strike Fighters, acquiring the Triton broad area maritime unmanned surveillance aerial

vehicle, acquiring P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, bringing forward preliminary engineering and design work necessary to keep open the option of building the Future Frigate in Australia, bringing forward the Pacific Patrol Boat Program, restarting the ADF Gap Year program, indexing military superannuation and providing free basic health care to all ADF family members. We are getting on with the job of fixing this portfolio. *(Time expired)*

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (15:13): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question.

Senator Conroy: Where are the subs?

Senator EGGLESTON: Sup-plementary! Can the minister say how the government's approach to the Defence portfolio compares to other approaches?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (15:14): In 2009, the previous government published a Defence white paper which outlined the way forward for Defence out to 2030. Labor then immediately began to backpedal on all of the commitments it contained and cut, as I say, \$16 billion over the next four years. Labor's Defence white paper of 2009 had a shorter shelf life than a loaf of bread. Under Labor the share of GDP spent on Defence fell to 1.56 per cent.

Senator Conroy: For a hundred bucks you won't give us a white paper.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Johnston is entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator JOHNSTON: Under the Labor government the share of GDP spent on Defence fell to 1.56 per cent, the lowest level since 1938. In 2012-13, Labor cut 10.5 per cent from the budget—the largest single cut Defence has endured since the Korean conflict. On Labor's watch the Australian Defence Industries shed more than 10 per cent of its workforce. Of course, we heard nothing from South Australian senators. Labor's careless disregard for Defence funding saw 119 projects delayed, 43 reduced and eight cancelled altogether. This is the level of mess that we inherited—no plans for Pacific patrol boats, frigates or submarines. *(Time expired)*

Senator Abetz: I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Environment: Heritage Listing

Senator THORP (Tasmania) (15:16): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Employment (Senator Abetz) to a question without notice asked by Senator Thorp today relating to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Today Australians can be in no doubt that we cannot trust this government to look after our environment. Since it gained power, the Abbott government has systematically tried to dismantle Australia's strong environmental protections and attempted to open up Australia's precious World Heritage spaces to loggers and big polluters, but overnight in Doha, common sense has prevailed. The World Heritage Committee took just seven minutes to reach agreement that the Abbott government's attempt to delist 74,000 hectares of World Heritage forest in my home state of Tasmania should not proceed. The committee saw what was clear to anyone who had even a passing acquaintance with the facts: that the delisting was completely unjustified and, if approved, would have set a dangerous global precedent.

Ironically, the very area in question is the very area the World Heritage Commission itself requested Australia to include in our World Heritage listings in 2007, 2008, 2010 and again in 2012. Really, the government were asking the World Heritage Committee to say that it was wrong when it repeatedly asked for the extensions in these years and wrong again when it supported the extension application in 2013. Not only that, but in preparing its submission for the excision, the government relied on exactly the same data that convinced the World Heritage Committee to list the area only a year ago. No extra information was sourced, no field trips were undertaken by the department, no further mapping was done and no experts were consulted. Instead, in its submission to the World Heritage Committee, the government simply jotted down a few words next to each of the 13 areas they wanted to excise. In fact, 10 of these areas only had the words 'contained logs/degraded areas' as the single justification for their excision. It is almost as though the government thought they did not need to provide any sort of evidence to support their claims—as if their very words alone would make it so. Well, it is not so.

It seems the World Heritage Committee agrees; one member nation referred to the Abbott government's application as 'feeble'. And feeble is exactly what it is. Recently I chaired an inquiry into the delisting which found that the vast majority of the proposed excision area—unlike the comments from Senator Abetz earlier—is pristine, untouched wilderness. During hearings, expert witnesses described the government's claims to the contrary as 'incorrect', 'grossly overstated' and 'blatantly misleading if not downright dishonest'. Again and again, witnesses asserted that the vast majority of the 74,000 hectares is in no way degraded. Many attested that more than 90 per cent of the excision area has high conservation values and no evidence of logging. Tellingly, the Department of the Environment representatives agreed under questioning that only four per cent of the area could be described as heavily disturbed.

Senator Colbeck: That is not true.

Senator THORP: It is true. In fact, the 748-hectare area to be listed at Dove River near Cradle Mountain has been put forward to be excised despite the fact the environment department has determined the degree of disturbance to be precisely none. Of course, the World Heritage Committee last year found the area to be of outstanding universal environmental and cultural value. This is not surprising when you understand the area is habitat to iconic rare and endangered species such as the Tasmanian devil, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, the spotted-tail quoll, the grey goshawk and the myrtle elbow orchid. It also incorporates pristine tracts of old-growth tall eucalypt forests, rainforests, cave systems and moorlands that are simply too precious to lose.

What made the excision request even more absurd was that it was supposed to deliver economic and social outcomes by invigorating the forest industry. Sadly, and perhaps even a little ironically, it is this government's cavalier excision plan that would have done more damage to the forest industry than they can possibly imagine. The inquiry heard again and again that this excision, if it were to go ahead, would threaten Tasmania's Forest Stewardship Council's certification, which would in turn threaten the viability of our timber industry. Thanks to this government, we are becoming rapidly known as having an aggressive anti-environment agenda which pays scant regard to the impacts on generations to come— (*Time expired*)

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (15:21): I also rise to take note of answers from Minister Abetz. As Minister Abetz noted when he provided the answers to the questions on this matter, the people of Tasmania have spoken on this issue. Both the federal and state elections saw a resounding mandate provided to the Liberal parties at federal and state level for the policies that both those state and federal parties took to the respective elections.

In the federal scenario, we saw massive swings in Braddon and Lyons, those being the electorates in Tasmania most heavily affected by forestry—particularly Lyons, where Eric Hutchinson, the excellent and very strong member for that federal electorate, achieved the largest swing of any winning seat in the country. That, to a large extent, is because of the strong support for him by the people of Lyons because of this issue and the stance that he and the Liberal Party took on it. Similarly, at the state election, Labor received an absolute thumping—the biggest thumping it had received since 1992. And nowhere was that bigger than in Braddon, an area also heavily impacted by decisions to wind back forestry.

The fact is that the boundary adjustments of the year before last occurred as part of a flawed political process. Tasmanian Labor went to the 2010 election on a bipartisan ticket to support forestry, as it had done for decades. But it ended up in minority after the 2010 election, and it did a dirty deal with the Greens. Part of that deal was the so-called forest peace agreement which they put together. Out of that forest peace agreement came the boundary adjustment under which Labor gave in to the longstanding claims of the extreme environmental movement who want nothing more than to shut down the forestry industry in Tasmania completely. They did that by reducing the areas of forest available for harvest to below viable levels. This was achieved through this flawed, rushed process which saw the WHC list these additional small adjustments to the existing World Heritage areas.

It is worth looking for a minute at the truly sustainable state of what the forest industry used to do prior to the IGA being put in place in Tasmania. Back then, only a few years ago, on the rate of harvesting that was occurring at that time, in 100 years time there would have been 103 per cent of the native forests in Tasmania that there were at that time. There was more native forest being replanted than was being harvested. In 100 years time, there would have been 103 per cent of the native forests in Tasmania that then existed.

What, you might ask, was being planted instead? Were we putting in plantation forests or something that was changing the nature of those forests? No. With every coupe that was being harvested through Forestry Tasmania in Tasmania, they would go in beforehand and harvest seeds from all the plants in that very coupe, to maintain the genetic material of that coupe. They would then go off and take those seeds away and start growing them. They would come in and do the harvesting of the forests, and then they would go back and plant the same seeds from the same trees that were harvested in those coupes. Five years down the track, if you were to go back and look at those coupes, you would see that there was lots of healthy growth with a mix of plants that reflected what was there before. In 20 years time, if you were to come back you would not know it from the coupe next door that had not been harvested. And in 100 years time, there would be big trees and everything—and 100 years time is what we are talking about, when there would be 103 per cent of the native forests. That is the standard of the forest practices that were occurring—and what they were trying to stop here.

It is also important to remember this. I think Senator Thorp mentioned eagles and other issues of concern to many people. Well, if there is an eagle's nest found in a forest, I cannot remember exactly but I think they were not allowed to log within five kilometres around it. If there were streams or waterways, there was a buffer of half a kilometre or something similar to that where they could not log. These were the practices that were in place for Tasmanian forests. They were outstanding. They were world's best practice. And they protected all the sorts of environmental values and heritage that Senator Thorp was saying were threatened by our attempted delisting. We do it so well, in fact, that a lot of the areas that were added to the World Heritage area through the boundary adjustment were areas that had been previously forested and had regrown. The environment movement now claims that these are so well regrown that they are now World Heritage in terms of the standard of their forests.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:26): I also rise to speak to the motion to take note of answers given by the Minister for Employment, Senator Abetz, to questions without notice asked today by Senator Thorp on the Abbott government's feeble and failed attempt to have parts of the Tasmanian wilderness removed from the World Heritage list. Senator Abetz's response was a personal attack on Senator Thorp, and showed his resolve to play politics over policy in regard to Tasmanian forests.

I begin by highlighting the remarks of the Portuguese delegation to the World Heritage Committee, who said that the arguments of the Australian government were, to say the least, feeble, and would set an unacceptable precedent. Of course these are just the first comments to come out of Doha, and we will all wait with interest to see what other responsible governments have to say about the Abbott government's almost unprecedented move to seek a delisting.

From the beginning, the rhetoric from the Tasmanian Liberals against a forest peace deal was simple political point-scoring. They saw an opportunity to wedge the community once more, just so that they could get into government. Once in government, of course, everything was out of the window.

Just a few weeks ago, Parliamentary Secretary Colbeck, Premier Hodgman and the member for Braddon, Brett Whitely, were more than happy to turn the sod on a project funded through the Tasmanian forests agreement package at Ta Ann in Smithton—the very agreement that saw industry, unions and environmentalists come together and end the decades-long war in the forests; the very agreement that was conceived by the industry because they knew that if the forest wars were to continue then their markets would continue to look elsewhere.

In December last year, the ABC reported what everyone in this place knows: without the peace deal, Ta Ann would have left Tasmania. Ta Ann's Executive Director, Evan Rolley, said at the time:

I don't think we would be operating the business, frankly ... the Forest Agreement provided the basis on which we could go back in the market, hold the small amount of market that was still there for us ... Interestingly, despite all the huffing and puffing over the past four years, it is reported that, when push came to shove, the Abbott Liberal government did not even put in much of an effort to have the World Heritage listing reversed.

The Advocate newspaper in Burnie reported today that lobbyists at the meeting said there appeared to be little evidence of Australian government lobbying for the wind-back, in contrast to concentrated effort last week to avoid the listing of the Great Barrier Reef as in danger. After all of the rhetoric and all of the negativity, reports are out that the Liberal government barely even lobbied to see through the delisting. I suspect that industry has had a quiet word about how life is now and that there is peace in the forests. I also suspect that industry has had a quiet word to the Liberal state government about its bill to unwind the Tasmanian Forests Agreement. The state Liberals were just as rabid as the federal Liberals in pointing the finger at Labor. And the state Liberals promised to unlock Tasmania. And, as Senator Bushby said, they were rewarded for their campaign at the ballot box. But once they were in government the Tasmanian Liberals put up a bill that will not see one extra log available for harvesting for the next six years.

Tasmanians are waking up to the constant deception of the Abbott and Hodgman governments. The Burnie *Advocate* was running an online poll asking whether people supported the World Heritage Committee's decision. Over 50 per cent of respondents agreed with the World Heritage Committee's decision. We all know how vexed this issue is in Tasmania, yet a poll in the north-west's local newspaper showed that over 50 per cent are in support of the World Heritage Committee's decision. It is just further evidence that the Australian public is wising up to the negative feeble campaigns of the Liberal and National parties.

Senator Colbeck interjecting—

Senator URQUHART: I conclude my contribution by noting that the 'robust and rigorous' Senator Colbeck, as Senator Abetz described him, has suffered from 'bandwidth limit exceeded' on his website today. I wanted to take another look at Senator Colbeck's photos of a so-called degraded area. These are photos that the department assured me in estimates were not included in the submission to the World Heritage Committee, photos that Senator Colbeck, Senator Abetz and the self-titled 'three amigos'—Mr Whitely, Mr Nikolic and Mr Hutchinson—use time and time again in their feeble campaign to unlock this so-called degraded area. The embarrassment to the Australian people on the international stage is the responsibility of Senator Colbeck, Senator Abetz and the three amigos. All Tasmanians—indeed, all Australians—deserve much better from our government.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (15:31): It gives me great pleasure to speak on the motion moved by the Labor Party in respect of questions asked of Senator Abetz by Senator Thorp. What the Labor Party have just demonstrated, yet again, is two things. One is their strong connection with the Greens—and they are arguing now for Greens policy. We know that the Greens want to close down the native forest industry in Australia, and the Labor Party are complicit with them in that process. We have just heard that argument. The second thing is that they have absolutely no understanding of the forest industry. Senator Urquhart talks about the area not being utilised in Tasmania for another six years. It is not needed in an immediate sense, but it is needed for the sustainability of the forest industry in the long term. What the Labor Party do not know—or are not prepared to admit—is that the Tasmanian Forests Agreement was actually a death sentence for the forest industry in Australia. That is why the green group supported it. It was a death sentence for the forest industry in Australia. And I wonder if the Labor Party would

have been prepared to stump up again in 2027-30 to pay out what was left of the industry when their wood supply ran out. That is what the Labor Party and the Greens condemned the forest industry in Tasmania to. But of course they are not prepared to admit it; probably they do not even understand that that is what they did. They keep on trotting around saying that they left a sustainable industry behind. But all you had to do was look at the wood supply figures to know that there was not a sustainable industry left at the scale it is currently at in Tasmania. I would like to make a particular mention of the Ta Ann project. The coalition has delivered for Ta Ann without the disaster of the Tasmanian Forests Agreement. So much for Senator Urquhart's comment that if the TFA goes away so does Ta Ann. They are still there, Senator—and they are expanding, and there is no Tasmanian Forests Agreement; it is being unwound. So the scare tactics of the Labor Party are just not demonstrated.

We are disappointed that the World Heritage Commission did not accept our nomination to remove 74,000 hectares from the wilderness estate that was dishonestly put in through the disastrous TFA process in 2013 by then minister Tony Burke, that was done without consultation, that was done without the opportunity for all Tasmanians to make a contribution, that was done despite then minister Tony Burke saying to our legislative council in Tasmania, 'I don't think I'm going to go ahead with the nomination and then walking out the door and announcing that there would be a nomination. You cannot believe a word this guy says.

It was a disastrous process that left large sections of the community disenfranchised. There are hundreds and hundreds of property owners who now have World Heritage wilderness areas as boundaries, with no understanding that that has come their way, with no consultation, and who now have new planning requirements over their properties that they did not know they had before—hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. The so-called experts who appeared before the Senate inquiry said that there were perhaps one or two. Well, they did not know, or they were not telling the truth. And the so-called experts who appeared before the Senate inquiry said, 'You can discount logging before 1960, because it is not industrial.' That was a lie. You only have to go into the forests of the Styx and the Florentine, which historian Peter MacFie clearly showed in the last fortnight are in fact 60- and 70-year-old regrowth forests, which the Greens and the Labor Party portrayed to the Australian community as old-growth forest. The dishonesty from the Labor Party and the Greens on this issue continues.

As I have said, the coalition—the government—will respect the decision of the World Heritage Commission. We will consider the decision of the World Heritage Commission. But we will do one thing. We will continue to stand up for the forest industry and forest workers in Tasmania. The really sad fact is that the light on the hill for the Labor Party now has a very nasty green tinge to it. It is not the traditional light on the hill for workers. The Labor Party have sold out the forest industry and its workers in Tasmania, and that is why they suffered so badly at the Tasmanian election. That is why they are down to seven members in the House. That is why the Greens lost 40 per cent of their representation and party status in the Tasmanian parliament. We will continue to stand up for the timber industry in Tasmania—*(Time expired)*

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (15:36): I rise to also make a contribution, in this taking-note debate, on responses by Senator Abetz to Senator Thorp. In the contributions this

afternoon we have already heard that the United Nations World Heritage Committee took just seven minutes to reject the Abbott government's application to remove 74,000 hectares—

Senator Conroy: How long?

Senator CAROL BROWN: Seven minutes, Senator Conroy. It took just seven minutes to reject the Abbott government's application to remove 74,000 hectares of the Tasmanian wilderness forest from the World Heritage List.

Yet again, those opposite have been exposed for their anti-environment agenda. In the last few seconds of Senator Colbeck's contribution he really did expose the Abbott government's agenda. It is a political agenda. It is about dividing the Tasmanian community. It is about causing conflict in Tasmania. It is not about industry. It is not about the environment. It is about their own political agenda, at anyone's expense and, particularly, at the expense of Tasmania.

We had a rejection of the Abbott government's application in just seven minutes. It is just another example of the embarrassment that this government agenda has caused Australia on the world stage. World leaders have condemned Mr Abbott's climate inaction. The World Heritage Committee has asked him to reconsider handing over environmental protection powers to the states. Here in this place we have twice rejected attempts to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

The government's proposal to reverse protection of this section of the Tasmanian wilderness forest should never have gone to the World Heritage Committee in the first place. The report of the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee inquiry into the Tasmanian wilderness World Heritage area, which was ably chaired by my Tasmanian colleague Senator Lin Thorp, to quote from recommendation No. 1, said:

The committee recommends that the Government's proposal to the World Heritage Committee to remove 74,000 hectares from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area be withdrawn.

Unfortunately, the Abbott government did not agree with this recommendation, but the World Heritage Committee obviously did. It took seven minutes to chuck out this government's application. That is exactly what it deserved. It deserved that action because it was feeble. It was a feeble application, just like the feeble attempt that Senator Abetz made to answer a very good question by Senator Thorp. Senator Abetz's responses were feeble and the government's application to the World Heritage committee was feeble.

We also heard in Senator Abetz's response today about the area being degraded. The World Heritage Committee and the Senate committee considered the Abbott government's argument that degraded areas, such as previously logged forests and plantations, should be removed from the extended Tasmanian wilderness World Heritage area. The evidence received by the Senate committee was clear. Unlike what Senator Abetz and Senator Colbeck would have you believe, only a small portion of the 74,000 hectares could actually be described as degraded. We heard from experts. Experts and stakeholders alike agree—unlike Senator Abetz's description in here today of extensive road networks, abandoned quarries and other degraded areas—that the degraded areas comprise less than 10 per cent of the area proposed. In those areas where there has previously been logging activities, there are clear signs the forest is recovering. *(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.

Unemployment Benefits

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:42): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann) to a question without notice asked by Senator Siewert today relating to income support arrangements.

I asked Minister Cormann to firstly confirm the source of funding for the emergency relief money. That is the \$229 million that I asked about last week. I asked him to confirm the source of that money because I was very concerned during estimates, when we were trying to find out where the \$240 million worth of cuts would come from, when we heard it would be from discretionary grants in the Department of Social Services. We had to have a spillover estimates hearing last week because during normal budget estimates the government were not able to answer questions on that particular area of funding because they were in the process of developing tender documents. They subsequently released those documents on the day, 19 June, that we had a follow-up estimates hearing last week.

For those listening and those in the chamber who were not involved in those estimates, the documents were about five centimetres high. We were trying to find out where they had collapsed a range of programs into what they called the broadbanding programs of only five or six streams, cutting \$240 million. We as a community affairs committee and as a community need to know where that \$240 million has come from. We cannot ascertain that from the documentation, and the government was unable to answer those questions, but what is obvious is that \$240 million has been cut from Social Services's discretionary grants program.

Then, on the other side of the books, we get a 'new' \$229 million—so-called new money for emergency relief for the young people who are forced to live on nothing. That is absolutely essential funding for those young people, if that measure passes this place. I will do my best to convince people not to support the passing of that cruel, harsh measure for young people. Those young people are going to be expected to live on nothing, so of course they will need some sort of emergency relief. I will remark that last week when I was asking that question the government would not rule out whether that would comprise food vouchers or confirm what other form that emergency relief would take.

This money is not new money. This money is money used to fund community grants programs that are designed to give young people a better start in life, and particularly to help those most vulnerable children in our community who need that sort of support. They are taking money out of those programs that provide that excellent support and putting it into emergency relief for young people who are going to be permanently damaged by those earn and learn measures—they are punitive and they will present so many barriers to young people being able to find work that they just will not work. They will not do what the government wants to do—to help these people find work.

At the same time as the government are railing against the huge amount of money that they are spending on income support and social security, they are pouring out billions of dollars in corporate welfare. We saw in the Australia Institute report today that nearly \$17 billion worth of subsidies and so-called industry assistance is provided to mining companies in particular, but other forms of big business as well, and on top of that the mining sector gets billions of dollars worth of assistance from the federal government. The federal government talk about needing to address the cost of welfare, but they do not include the cost of corporate welfare. It

costs billions and billions of dollars. They do not seem to worry about that. They do talk about leaners and lifters, but with that definition just who is doing the leaning and who is doing the lifting? It seems to me that the big end of town is doing a lot of leaning on the public purse, and where does the government cut most? It cuts assistance for those who are going to be most vulnerable and who need the most support. That is the area where this government has decided to cut. It is an ideological cut—not because of their confected budget crisis but because they want to cut income support to the most vulnerable. These programs carve massive holes in the so-called safety net. The holes are so big that it is not a safety net at all. The government should focus on ending corporate welfare, not cutting help for the most vulnerable. *(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Xenophon to move:

That the following matter be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 October 2014:

The need for a national approach to retail leasing arrangements to create a fairer system and reduce the burden on small to medium businesses with associated benefits to landlords, with particular reference to:

- (a) the first right of refusal for tenants to renew their lease;
- (b) affordable, effective and timely dispute resolution processes;
- (c) a fair form of rent adjustment;
- (d) implications of statutory rent thresholds;
- (e) bank guarantees;
- (f) a need for a national lease register;
- (g) full disclosure of incentives;
- (h) provision of sales results;
- (i) contractual obligations relating to store fit-outs and refits; and
- (j) any related matters.

Senator Whish-Wilson to move:

That the following matter be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 27 October 2014:

The structure and development of forestry managed investment schemes (MIS), including:

- (a) the motivation and drivers that established the framework for the schemes initially;
- (b) the role of governments in administering and regulating forestry MIS;
- (c) the current policy and regulatory framework of forestry MIS;
- (d) the role of some in the financial services industry in promoting and selling forestry MIS;
- (e) compensation arrangements for small investors in forestry MIS who have lost life savings and their homes in the face of the collapse of forestry MIS;
- (f) the burden on farmers and other agricultural producers who have been left with the uncertainty of timber plantations linked to forestry MIS on their land;

- (g) options for reforming forestry MIS to protect investors and rural communities; and
- (h) any other related matters.

Senator Conroy to move:

That the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee be required to convene a supplementary estimates meeting on Thursday, 26 June 2014 from 10 am for a period of no less than one hour for the purpose of asking for explanations from the Managing Director, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and the General Manager Property and Tenancy Services of Defence Housing Australia concerning the performance of the agency and the scoping study investigating options for future ownership.

Senators Wright, Boyce and McLucas to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

- (i) at any point in time, about 1.8 per cent of the general population experiences Borderline Personality Disorder,
 - (ii) the disorder can be characterised by overwhelming emotions, problems with relationships, impulsive and risk-taking behaviour and a fragile sense of self, and
 - (iii) a history of trauma, abuse or deprivation is common among those with the disorder; and
- (b) with the aim of promoting understanding of the disorder in the community and working towards better treatment options and quality of life for those affected by the disorder, acknowledges that 5 October 2014 is Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness Day.

Senator Moore to move:

(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee on Health, be established to inquire into and report on health policy, administration and expenditure, with particular reference to:

(a) the impact of reduced Commonwealth funding for hospital and other health services provided by state and territory governments, in particular, the impact on elective surgery and emergency department waiting times, hospital bed numbers, other hospital related care and cost shifting;

(b) the impact of additional costs on access to affordable healthcare and the sustainability of Medicare;

(c) the impact of reduced Commonwealth funding for health promotion, prevention and early intervention;

(d) the interaction between elements of the health system, including between aged care and health care;

(e) improvements in the provision of health services, including Indigenous health and rural health;

(f) the better integration and coordination of Medicare services, including access to general practice, specialist medical practitioners, pharmaceuticals, optometry, diagnostic, dental and allied health services;

(g) health workforce planning; and

(h) any related matters.

(2) That the committee present its final report on or before 20 June 2016, with interim reports as the committee sees fit.

(3) That the committee consist of 7 senators, as follows:

(a) 3 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate;

(b) 3 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate; and

(c) 1 nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens.

(4) That:

(a) participating members may be appointed to the committee on the nomination of the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate or any minority party or independent senator; and

(b) participating members may participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee, and have all the rights of members of the committee, but may not vote on any questions before the committee.

(5) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee.

(6) That the committee may proceed to the dispatch of business notwithstanding that not all members have been duly nominated and appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy.

(7) That the committee elect as chair one of the members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and, as deputy chair, a member nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens.

(8) That the deputy chair shall act as chair when the chair is absent from a meeting of the committee or the position of chair is temporarily vacant.

(9) That, in the event of an equality of voting, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(10) That the committee and any subcommittee have power to send for and examine persons and documents, to move from place to place, to sit in public or in private, notwithstanding any prorogation of the Parliament or dissolution of the House of Representatives, and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken and such interim recommendations as it may deem fit.

(11) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members, and to refer to any such subcommittee any of the matters which the committee is empowered to consider.

(12) That the committee be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and be empowered to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee with the approval of the President.

(13) That the committee be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public.

Senator Conroy to move:

That the future sustainability of Australia's strategically vital naval ship building industry be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 1 July 2015.

Senator Milne to move:

That the Senate—

(a) applauds the World Heritage Committee's decision in Doha on 23 June 2014 to uphold the current boundaries of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area;

(b) notes the damage to Australia's international reputation and Tasmanian tourism as a result of the Abbott Government's attempt to reduce the World Heritage Area by 74 000 ha so it can be logged; and

(c) calls on the Abbott Government to abide by the requirements of the World Heritage Convention to fund the rehabilitation of degraded areas and a cultural assessment of the area.

Senator Milne to move:

That the Senate—

(a) acknowledges the proposal to build community-scale solar thermal plants and install solar photovoltaic panels in western New South Wales, known as the Solar Energy eXchange Initiative (the

Initiative), has received in-principle support from 22 councils in the target area, including the unincorporated area;

(b) notes the Initiative would boost local economies, create local jobs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce the need for investment in transmission and distribution infrastructure and, in the long run, reduce power bills;

(c) supports those councils involved in the Initiative and the value that such projects can bring to long-term energy security and the economy in New South Wales; and

(d) encourages all levels of government to work cooperatively to see plans such as the Initiative harness the power of the sun in inland New South Wales to the benefit of ratepayers and residents, the economy and the environment.

Senator Wong to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes the frequency with which freedom of information legislation is invoked to withhold information from senators and the Senate, not only by reference to grounds of exemption in the legislation but also apparently on the basis that an answer will not be provided if a Freedom of Information (FOI) request has been lodged for the same information;

(b) recalls the observations of the Procedure Committee in its Third Report of 1992 that:

(i) there is no basis in law for the application of the FOI Act to the production of documents to a House;

(ii) if a minister were to regard all of the exemption provisions in the FOI Act as grounds on which to claim a privilege against disclosure of information to a House, this would considerably expand the grounds of executive privilege hitherto claimed;

(iii) the use of the provisions of the FOI Act as a checklist of grounds for non-disclosure does not relieve a minister of the responsibility of carefully considering whether the minister should seek to withhold documents from a House, or from considering the question in the context of the importance of the matters under examination by the House;

(c) resolves that the same principles apply to the provision of information to committees in response to questions asked by senators, which require the same careful consideration by ministers;

(d) declares that declining to provide documents or answer questions on the basis that an FOI request has been made for the same information is an unacceptable response, is not supported by the FOI Act and shows a profound lack of respect for the Senate and its committees.

Senator Wong to move:

That—

(1) There be laid on the table, by each minister in the Senate, in respect of each department or agency administered by that minister, or by a minister in the House of Representatives represented by that minister, by not later than 10 days before the commencement of the budget estimates, supplementary budget estimates and additional estimates hearings, a statement showing:

(a) the number of questions taken on notice at the previous round of estimates hearings;

(b) the number of answers provided to the committee by the date set by the committee for answers; and

(c) of those answers not provided to the committee by the due date, the dates on which answers were provided to the approving minister's office.

(2) If the Senate is not sitting when a statement is ready for presentation, the statement is to be presented to the President under standing order 166.

(3) This order is of continuing effect.

Senator Wong to move:

That standing order 74(5) be amended as follows, with effect from the first sitting day in July 2014:

Omit paragraph 74(5), substitute:

(5) If a minister does not answer a question on notice asked by a senator within 30 days of the asking of that question, or if a question taken on notice during a hearing of a legislative and general purpose standing committee considering estimates remains unanswered after the day set for answering the question, and a minister does not, within that period, provide to the senator who asked the question an explanation satisfactory to that senator of why an answer has not yet been provided:

(a) at the conclusion of question time on any day after that period, the senator may ask the relevant minister for such an explanation; and

(b) the senator may, at the conclusion of the explanation, move without notice—That the Senate take note of the explanation; or

(c) in the event that the minister does not provide an explanation, the senator may, without notice, move a motion with regard to the minister's failure to provide either an answer or an explanation.

Senator Wong to move:

(1) That, for the purposes of any order setting out a schedule of estimates hearings by legislation committees:

(a) if the order provides for hearings, if required, on a designated Friday, an additional hearing of a committee is taken to be required on that Friday if any 3 members of the committee notify the chair in writing of a requirement for the committee to meet, including for a specified period of time;

(b) if the order does not provide for hearings, if required, on a designated Friday, an additional hearing of a committee is taken to be required on a relevant Friday if any 3 members of the committee notify the chair in writing of a requirement for the committee to meet, including for a specified period of time.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), a **relevant Friday** means any of the following, as the case requires:

(a) for additional estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Groups A and B are scheduled to meet;

(b) for Budget estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Group A are scheduled to meet;

(c) for Budget estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Group B are scheduled to meet;

(d) for supplementary Budget estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Groups A and B are scheduled to meet.

(3) The operation of this order is subject to the restriction in standing order 26(3) that not more than 4 committees shall hear evidence on the estimates simultaneously.

(4) This order is of continuing effect.

Senator Wong to move:

(1) That an additional hearing of a legislation committee considering estimates is taken to be required if any 3 members of the committee notify the chair in writing of a requirement for the committee to meet for that purpose, including for a specified period of time.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), an **additional hearing** means a hearing in addition to any hearing required by, or pursuant to, an order of the Senate setting out days for legislation committees to meet to consider estimates or providing for such meetings to be held on spill-over days.

(3) The operation of this order is subject to the restriction in standing order 26(3) that not more than 4 committees shall hear evidence on the estimates simultaneously.

(4) This order is of continuing effect.

Senator Wong to move:

That the order of the Senate of 4 December 2013, as amended on 13 February 2014, providing for estimates hearings for 2014, be further amended as follows:

After paragraph (2), insert:

(2A) On the specified Mondays to Thursdays, committees shall meet from 9 am till 11 pm unless a committee completes its examination of items of proposed expenditure earlier and no senator has further explanations to seek.

Senator Wong to move:

That the Senate—

(a) reaffirms:

(i) the principle, stated previously in resolutions of 9 December 1971, 23 October 1974, 18 September 1980, 4 June 1984, 29 May 1997 and 25 June 1998, that there are no areas in connection with the expenditure of public funds where any person has a discretion to withhold details or explanations from the Parliament or its committees unless the Parliament has expressly provided otherwise;

(ii) its expectation that officers, including agency heads, will appear before committees in fulfilment of their accountability obligations, whenever their presence is requested by committees;

(b) in relation to the provision of exceptions to the general principle reaffirmed in paragraph (a), notes and reaffirms:

(i) Privilege Resolution 1(16) which provides that an officer of a department of the Commonwealth or of a state shall not be asked to give opinions on matters of policy, and shall be given reasonable opportunity to refer questions asked of the officer to superior officers or to a minister;

(ii) the resolution of 16 July 1975, relating to the powers of the Senate and the accountability of witnesses, and requiring any claim to withhold information from the Senate to be based on an established ground; and

(iii) the order of 13 May 2009 setting out the proper process for raising public interest immunity claims;

(c) notes that:

(i) the statutory values which Australian Public Service agency heads and employees are required to uphold include a requirement to be open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of ministerial responsibility; and

(ii) the Constitutional framework of checks and balances under a separation of powers places the Parliament in prime position as the agent of accountability, representing the Australian people;

(d) calls on the Government to issue a general instruction to all public service agency heads and employees about their duty to cooperate with parliamentary committee inquiries, including by formalising the revised guidelines for official witnesses appearing before parliamentary committees (last issued in 1989), a revised draft of which was provided to the Committee of Privileges in 2012 and considered in its 153rd Report; and

(e) requires:

(i) the chairs of legislation committees considering estimates to draw the provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this resolution to the attention of any witness who declines to provide information to a committee on any basis other than those specified; and

(ii) the Clerk to draw this resolution, and the resolutions referred to in paragraph (b), to the attention of the heads of all agencies appearing before legislation committees, prior to each round of estimates.

Senator Wong to move:

That standing order 26 be amended as follows:

At the end of paragraph (4), add:

If a senator has further explanations to seek, items of expenditure shall not be closed for examination unless the senator has agreed to submit written questions or the committee has agreed to schedule additional hearings for that purpose.

Senator Boyce to move:

That the Senate acknowledges that:

(a) the week beginning 21 June 2014 is Motor Neurone Disease Global Week of Action when the International Association of ALS/MND highlights research and action seeking a world free from Motor Neurone Disease (MND);

(b) MND Week began with the winter solstice on Saturday, 21 June, a turning point when the global MND community comes together to express their hope that there will be a turning point in the search for the causes, effective treatments and ultimately a cure;

(c) MND is a rapidly progressive, terminal neurological disease for which there is no known cure and no effective treatment and that two Australians are diagnosed with the disease every day;

(d) the average life expectancy from diagnosis is 27 months;

(e) about 1 900 Australians have MND and thousands more families and carers live daily with the effects of MND;

(f) the International Association of ALS/MND seeks support for the five rights of people with MND:

(i) the right to an early diagnosis and information,

(ii) the right to access quality care and treatment,

(iii) the right to be treated as individuals with dignity and respect,

(iv) the right to maximise their quality of life, and

(v) that their carers have the right to be valued, respected, listened to and well supported; and

(g) today Members of Parliament and others wear cornflowers as a symbol of the courage of those with MND and their carers.

Assistant Minister for Social Services (**Senator Fifield**) to move:

That the hours of meeting for Wednesday, 25 June 2014 be from 9.30 am to 10.30 pm, and that:

(a) the routine of business from 7.20 pm shall be consideration of the following bills:

Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2013-2014

Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2013-2014

Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill 2014

Asset Recycling Fund Bill 2014

Asset Recycling Fund (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014

Trade Support Loans Bill 2014

Trade Support Loans (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2014

Textile, Clothing and Footwear Investment and Innovation Programs Amendment Bill 2014

Tax Laws Amendment (Research and Development) Bill 2013

Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013

Building and Construction Industry (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013; and

(b) the question for the adjournment of the Senate shall be proposed at 10.30 pm.

Senator Waters to move:

That the following matters be referred to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 27 October 2014:

(a) the prevalence and impact of domestic violence in Australia as it affects all Australians and, in particular, as it affects:

(i) women living with a disability, and

(ii) women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds;

(b) the factors contributing to the present levels of domestic violence;

(c) the adequacy of government and societal responses to domestic violence;

(c) the effects of the budget and policy decisions regarding housing, legal services, and women's economic independence on the ability of women to escape domestic violence;

(d) how the Federal Government can best support, contribute to and drive the social, cultural and behavioural shifts required to eliminate violence against women and their children; and

(e) any other related matters.

Senator Ludlam to move:

That—

(a) the Senate notes:

(i) the budget provides for payment to the Western Australian Government of \$925 million for the Perth Freight Link which includes the Roe Highway extension,

(ii) Infrastructure Australia has not assessed this project despite the promise by the Prime Minister (Mr Abbott) that all Commonwealth-funded infrastructure projects worth more than \$100 million would undergo a cost-benefit analysis by Infrastructure Australia,

(iii) the Minister has not received a full business case for this project, and

(iv) the modelling for the Roe 8 extension by the proponent, the Western Australian Government, demonstrates negligible impact on passenger traffic or heavy vehicle traffic on local roads; and

(b) there be laid on the table, by the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, no later than noon on Monday, 7 July 2014:

(a) all communications between Western Australia's Minister for Transport, Assistant Minister, Treasurer and Premier and the Federal Government in relation to the project being included in the budget, and

(ii) the cost benefit analysis submitted to the Government that demonstrates a 5:1 benefit to cost ratio and underlies the decision for Commonwealth funding.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:48): by leave—I move:

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

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Withdrawal

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:48): I withdraw general business notice of motion No. 191, standing in the name of Senator Urquhart for today.

Postponement

The following item of business was postponed:

General business notice of motion no. 271 standing in the name of Senator Di Natale for today, proposing the establishment of a select committee into the Abbott Government's budget cuts, postponed till 25 June 2014.

COMMITTEES

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Reporting Date

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:49): At the request of Senator Williams, I move:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee on the National Broadband Network Companies Amendment (Tasmania) Bill 2014 be extended to 16 July 2014.

Question agreed to

NOTICES

Withdrawal

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (15:49): I wish to withdraw notice of motion No. 250, standing in my name for today.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It stands in your name for tomorrow, but you can withdraw it now.

MOTIONS

Standing Orders

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:50): At the request of Senator Parry, I move:

That standing order 72 be amended, with effect from the next day of sitting, as follows:

Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

(3) (a) The asking of each primary question shall not exceed one minute and answers to them shall not exceed two minutes.

(b) Two supplementary questions shall be allowed to each questioner, each supplementary question shall be limited to thirty seconds and the answers to them shall be limited to one minute each.

(c) Answers shall be directly relevant to each question.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Senate Temporary Orders

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:50): At the request of Senator Parry, I move:

(1) That:

(a) standing orders 55(1), 57(1)(d) and 59 be modified as follows to provide for the consideration of general business orders of the day relating to bills on Thursdays from 9.30 am for not more than 2 hours and 20 minutes; and

(b) this order operate as a temporary order until 30 June 2015 with effect from 7 July 2014.

55 Times of meetings

(1) The days and times of meeting of the Senate in each sitting week shall be:

Monday 10 am – 6.30 pm, 7.30 pm – 10.30 pm

Tuesday 12.30 pm – adjournment

Wednesday 9.30 am – 8 pm

Thursday 9.30 am – 8.40 pm

57 Routine of business

(1) The routine of business shall be:

(d) On Thursday:

(ia) General business orders of the day for consideration of bills only for up to 2 hours 20 minutes

(i) Petitions

(ii) Notices of motion

(iii) Postponement and rearrangement of business

(iv) Formal motions – discovery of formal business

(v) Consideration of committee reports under standing order 62(4)

(vi) Government business

(vii) At 12.45 pm, non-controversial government business only

(viii) At 2 pm, questions

(ix) Motions to take note of answers

(x) Any proposal to debate a matter of public importance or urgency

(xi) Not later than 4.30 pm, general business

(xii) Not later than 6 pm, consideration of government documents under general business

(xiii) Not later than 7 pm, consideration of committee reports and government responses under standing order 62(1)

(xiv) At 8 pm, adjournment proposed

(xv) At 8.40 pm, adjournment.

59 Government and general business

Government business shall take precedence over general business, except that general business shall take precedence over government business on Thursday as follows:

(a) from 9.30 am, for a period not exceeding 2 hours and 20 minutes, general business orders of the day for the consideration of bills shall be considered; and

(b) from not later than 4.30 pm, for a period not exceeding 2½ hours, and general business orders of the day shall take precedence over general business notices of motion on alternate Thursdays.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:50): As Chair of the Procedure Committee, I wish to inform the Senate that there is one important difference in the temporary order proposed compared to the current temporary order which is not readily evident when you read the temporary order. There will no longer be a prohibition on divisions taking place before 12.30 pm. In other words, divisions may take place from the commencement of the Senate at 10 am on each Monday. The Procedure Committee agreed that the postponement of divisions called between these times was no longer appropriate and that the Senate should be able to conduct its business on the presumption that divisions could occur in all but the most limited of circumstances.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Amendment (A Stronger Land Account) Bill 2014

First Reading

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:52): by leave—I move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator SIEWERT: I present the bill and move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:52): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to table an explanatory memorandum relating to the bill and to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AMENDMENT (A STRONGER LAND ACCOUNT) BILL 2014

I am pleased to introduce this Bill to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Account. Land is central to the spiritual, economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Land Account and the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) were part of the ‘grand bargain’ that followed the High Court’s recognition of native title in the Mabo judgment in 1992. This was a watershed moment in the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ struggle towards recognition in this nation.

In 1993, after intense negotiations, the Keating Government legislated the Native Title Act – the first part of this bargain. This provided a process for claiming native title. It was an historic moment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At the time, then Prime Minister Paul Keating noted that despite its historic significance, the Mabo decision would “give little more than a sense of justice to those Aboriginal communities whose native title has been extinguished or lost ... their dispossession being total, their loss complete. While these communities remain dispossessed of land, their economic marginalisation and their sense of injury continue.”

So the Land Account was established to provide recognition and partial compensation for the fact that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were unlikely to benefit from the Native Title Act. For those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Land Account provided them with an opportunity to be—at least in part—compensated for what had been taken from them.

The ILC was set up with the Land Account for one purpose: ‘to enable Indigenous people to acquire land and maintain it in a sustainable way to provide economic, social and cultural benefits for themselves and for future generations of their people’. But it wasn’t just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were to benefit from this bargain. Through these negotiations, Aboriginal people gave up significant rights in order to give non-Indigenous Australians certainty over their land title, and the Land Account recognised this fact.

The deal that was brokered after Mabo must go on being respected and the Land Account must be protected.

This Bill makes it clear that it is the Commonwealth’s responsibility to manage the Land Account for the sole benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It reinforces the nature and purpose of the Land Account as being partial acknowledgement for the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ lands. It gives Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders an assurance that the Land Account will be protected for the benefit of future generations.

The Bill prevents Land Account funds from being utilised for any purpose other than the original intended purpose of acquiring and managing land for the environmental, social, cultural and economic benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Bill also includes provisions to enable the Land Account to grow over time, to ensure that future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can continue to benefit from the opportunities it provides to strengthen their links to the land.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Amendment (A Stronger Land Account) Bill 2014 emphasises the importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of having an independent and Indigenous controlled ILC Board to manage the way Land Account funds are used. It strengthens appointment processes to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have input into who runs the ILC and makes decisions about the way Land Account funds are used on their behalf. It strengthens the provisions that are currently in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act which prevent the Minister from directing the ILC and reinforces the ILC’s independence. The Bill also implements very

strong corporate governance and transparency measures to give Australians, and especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the confidence that the ILC and Land Account funds are being managed in accordance with the highest standards.

The Minister for Indigenous Affairs has indicated he is considering a 'major overhaul' of both the ILC and Indigenous Business Australia. It is unclear why Government would consider significant change that has the potential to weaken the ILC and put the Land Account at risk.

On 2 December 2013, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs initiated a review of the ILC and Indigenous Business Australia by Ernst & Young. The terms of reference asked the reviewers to consider an amalgamation of the two agencies, under greater ministerial control. The Minister publicly released the report on 4 May 2014. While this report recommended that the ILC and IBA remain separate organisations, the Government's Commission of Audit report released on 3 May 2014 recommended a merger of the two agencies. The Government has not yet indicated if it will be acting on the recommendations of either report.

Any new arrangement proposed for the ILC comes with a risk that funds from the Land Account will be diverted to non-land commercial purposes. The beneficial owners of the Land Account are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The intention of the first legislation setting up the Land Account and the ILC was that the government of the day would always ensure Land Account funds were used for their original purpose: to provide land acquisition and management assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

Rather than weakening Indigenous rights, there is a need to strengthen legislative recognition of the unique status of the Land Account, to prohibit ministerial or departmental involvement in re-allocating funds derived from the Land Account and to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' involvement in land management.

This Prime Minister needs to demonstrate that his rhetoric before taking office that he would "place Aboriginal people at the heart" of his new Government, in "word and deed", is not just that – rhetoric.

As we move towards another watershed moment in the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' struggle for recognition in this nation – the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution – we must ensure that we build on what has already been achieved.

That is what this Bill does.

I commend this Bill to the Senate.

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

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee

Reference

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (15:53): I seek leave to amend business of the Senate notice of motion No. 1 standing in my name for today.

Leave granted.

Senator DI NATALE: I move the motion as amended:

That the following matter be referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 27 October 2014:

The exposure draft of the Medical Services (Dying with Dignity) Bill 2014, with particular reference to the rights of terminally ill people to seek assistance in ending their lives, and an appropriate framework and safeguards with which to do so.

Question agreed to.

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (15:54): I seek leave to table a document relating to the inquiry.

Leave granted.

Senator DI NATALE: I table the Medical Services (Dying with Dignity) Exposure Draft Bill 2014.

Select Committee on School Funding

Reporting Date

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:54): At the request of Senator Collins, I move:

That the time for the presentation of the final report of the Select Committee on School Funding be extended to 9 July 2014.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Marshall Islands: Nuclear Disarmament

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (15:55): I ask that general business notice of motion No. 292, standing in my name for today, relating to nuclear disarmament and action brought by the Marshall Islands, be taken as a formal motion.

Leave not granted.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation to Republic of Cyprus and Russian Federation

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:56): I present the report of the Australian parliamentary delegation to the Republic of Cyprus and the Russian Federation, which took place 6 to 18 July 2013.

DOCUMENTS

President of the Senate

Tabling

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:56): I present four reports on the official visits by the President of the Senate as listed at item 10 on today's Order of Business.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

Reports Nos 49 and 50 of 2013-14

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:57): In accordance with the provisions of the Auditor-General Act 1997, I present the following reports of the Auditor-General:

No. 49—*Performance audit—The management of physical security: Australian Crime Commission; Geoscience Australia; Royal Australian Mint*

No. 50—*Performance audit—Cyber attacks: securing agencies' ICT systems: across agencies*

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS**Trade in Services Agreement**

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:57): I table a document relating to a question without notice asked by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Wong, during question time on 23 June 2014, concerning the trade in services agreement.

COMMITTEES**Public Works Committee****Report**

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:57): Pursuant to order and at the request of the chairs of the respective committees, I present report No. 4, 2014, *Referrals made March 2014*.

Treaties Committee**Report**

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:57): I present the 140th report of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, *Treaty tabled on 13 May 2014*, and seek leave to incorporate the tabling statement in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The statement read as follows—

Mr President, today I present the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties' Report 140, an Interim Report on the Committee's inquiry into the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America to Improve International Tax Compliance and Implement FATCA.

The Agreement is an unusual treaty action in that it has been negotiated to assist Australian business in complying with an United States tax law, the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, or FATCA.

Mr President, FATCA comes into effect on 1 July 2014.

To ensure the Agreement and its related legislation is in place by that date, the Treasurer, the Hon Joe Hockey MP, wrote to the Committee to request that the Committee expedite its consideration of the Agreement.

If the 1 July deadline is not met, Australian financial institutions with interests in the United States will be faced with either significant compliance costs associated with FATCA or a withholding tax of 30 per cent on income derived in the United States.

Mr President, the Committee, despite reservations about the Agreement, appreciates that it makes the best of a less than satisfactory situation.

Accordingly, the Committee resolved to support the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America to Improve International Tax Compliance and Implement FATCA and recommend that binding treaty action be taken.

The Committee will table a final report on its inquiry into this Agreement in due course.

Mr President, on behalf of the Committee, I commend the Report to the Senate.

Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Additional Information

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:58): I present additional information received by the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee on its inquiry into the provisions of the asset recycling fund bill 2014 and a related bill.

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights

Report

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (15:58): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, I present the eighth report of the 44th Parliament, *Examination of legislation in accordance with the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011*.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Senator SMITH: I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I rise to speak to the tabling of the eighth report of the 44th Parliament's Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. This report covers 18 bills introduced in the period 2 to 19 June; nine bills have been deferred for further consideration, and 51 legislative instruments have been received during the period 31 May and 6 June. The report also includes the committee's consideration of 11 responses to matters raised in previous committee reports.

Of the bills considered in this report I note that the following bills are scheduled for debate in the parliament this week: Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015, Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015, Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015, Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2013-2014, and Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2013-2014. The report outlines the committee's assessment of the compatibility of these bills with human rights, and I encourage my fellow senators to look to the committee's report to inform your deliberations on the merits of the proposed legislation. I would like to draw senators' attention to two bills in this report which are of particular interest and relevance to the committee's task of assessing legislation for compatibility with human rights.

The Australian Citizenship (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 seeks to amend the Australian Citizenship Act to facilitate intercountry adoptions in accordance with a bilateral agreement where the country of the child's birth is not a party to the Hague Convention. These 'fast track' arrangements for citizenship are currently only available where the birth country is a party to the Hague Convention.

The report notes that children have special rights under human rights law taking into account their particular vulnerabilities. Of particular relevance to the bill, article 21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides special protection in relation to intercountry adoption, seeking to ensure that it is performed in the best interests of the child. The Hague Convention implements these obligations.

The report notes that, by providing for the grant of Australian citizenship (and the issue of passports) to children adopted by Australian citizens, the bill provides for the exercise of Australian jurisdiction over any such children. Accordingly, in exercising that jurisdiction, decision makers must act in the best interests of the child.

In accordance with this analysis, the committee has sought more information from the minister on the standards or safeguards that will apply to intercountry adoptions under a bilateral agreement where the country is not a signatory to the Hague Convention. More information on this question will enable the committee to better assess whether the bill is compatible with Australia's human rights obligation to consider the best interests of the child.

I would also like to draw senators' attention to a feature of the committee's work that is often overlooked. While the committee's work is generally concerned with identifying potential limitations on human rights, the committee's analysis of legislation also identifies bills and instruments that promote human rights. In this regard, I note that the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendments (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill seeks to reintroduce the right to not incriminate oneself to the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994. The committee notes that this measure promotes the right to a fair trial consistent with international human rights law.

I encourage senators to consult the full discussion of these bills in the report, which provides a more detailed account of the issues raised.

Finally, in relation to responses to matters previously raised by the committee, the report contains consideration of 11 such responses and the committee's concluding remarks on these matters.

With these comments, I commend the committee's eighth report of the 44th Parliament to the Senate and congratulate the secretary and members of the committee for their continuing work and diligence.

Question agreed to.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation to Vanuatu and New Zealand

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (16:03): by leave—I table and present the report of the Australian parliamentary delegation to Vanuatu and New Zealand by the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, which took place from 30 April to 9 May 2014. I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator STEPHENS: I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

This report outlines the activities, observations and conclusions arising from the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee exchange visit to Vanuatu and New Zealand between 30 April and 9 May 2014. I was honoured to lead the delegation. The other delegation members were Senator David Fawcett from South Australia, Senator Helen Kroger from Victoria and Senator Anne McEwen from South Australia. We were accompanied by Mr David Sullivan as the delegation secretary.

The Australian and New Zealand national parliaments have, for a number of years, operated an annual parliamentary committee exchange program. The purpose is to enable Australian and New Zealand parliamentarians working on committees to explore issues of common interest that are the subject of consideration by their committees.

Each year, one New Zealand parliamentary committee visits Australia and one Australian parliamentary committee visits New Zealand. As the Australian parliament has Senate, House of Representatives and joint committees, with joint committees comprising both senators and members, the Australian parliament conducts the exchange program on a rotational basis over a three-year cycle, with a Senate committee selected one year, a House committee the second year and a joint committee in the third year.

Each visit is focused on the particular subject field of the committee selected for the visit. Meetings, roundtables and inspections are arranged that allow the committee members to exchange views and information with their parliamentary counterparts, as well as with public servants, senior private enterprise personnel, academics and experts working in the subject field of the committee.

For Australia, each year the Presiding Officers call for nominations from committees to participate in the program, with committees required to outline the reasons they wish to be considered in that particular year. The Presiding Officers select the committee they consider has put forward the most compelling reasons for undertaking the visit.

In 2014, the committee visit to New Zealand was adjusted to include a visit to one other Pacific region country. Another annual committee visit, the parliamentary committee visit to the Asia-Pacific, was adjusted at the same time to simply become a parliamentary committee visit to Asia. Of course it was the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee which put forward an excellent proposal and was therefore selected by the Presiding Officers to participate in that 2014 committee exchange program. The committee nominated Vanuatu as the Pacific country of its choice.

The committee's visit to Vanuatu and New Zealand was timely in the light of its inquiry into Australia's overseas development assistance program, the report of which was tabled here in March 2014. The inquiry's terms of reference focused on the broad policy settings for the delivery of Australia's overseas aid, including its international development priorities and the integration of AusAID into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and including the freeze in international development assistance funding.

A number of aspects of the inquiry's report are relevant to the committee's visit to Vanuatu and New Zealand. For example, the report noted that more than 80 per cent of Australia's ODA is directed to its nearest neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region. Indonesia and Papua New Guinea are the two largest beneficiaries of Australia's support. It noted, too, that the allocation of development priorities in the Australian aid program for 2013-14 was education, 22 per cent; economic development, 20 per cent; health, 19 per cent; humanitarian, 16 per cent; governance, 16 per cent; and general development support, seven per cent.

Australian aid should be allocated to the most effective mechanism for delivery, including non-government organisations, private-sector contractors, bilateral agreements and multilateral organisations. Finally, the report found that, while integrating AusAID into DFAT has created opportunities to improve Australia's aid program, there are also risks associated with the merger, including that DFAT may lose key personnel, skills, procedures and specialist staff needed to effectively administer Australia's aid program.

However, the main objective of the visit was for the committee to investigate three key issues within the committee's portfolio responsibility: defence partnerships, tourism and

overseas aid. The committee was particularly interested in exploring the priorities, effectiveness and delivery of Australian aid to Vanuatu, as well as Australia's contribution to Vanuatu's tourism sector and infrastructure projects. The committee also explored the reforms to New Zealand's aid program that paralleled recent developments in Australia, including the reintegration of aid into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in 2009; New Zealand's tourism sector and its contribution to the national economy, focusing on Queenstown as a national and international tourism hot spot; and the reconstruction of Christchurch following the devastating 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, including the city's economy and tourism prospects. Finally, the committee also explored Australia's defence and security cooperation with Vanuatu and New Zealand, and the current and emerging security environment in the Asia-Pacific region.

Many people assisted the committee's visit to Vanuatu and New Zealand. The committee expresses its appreciation to all those involved in making the visit a success. In particular, the committee would really like to thank the International and Community Relations Office, which facilitated the committee's travelling arrangements and development of the program for the official visits; the officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Defence who briefed the committee before and after the official visit; the officers from the Australian high commission in Vanuatu and New Zealand who met with the committee; and particularly Ms Tanya Parkin, the deputy high commissioner at the Australian high commission in Vanuatu, the staff at the Australian high commission, and Mr Remo Moretta, the deputy high commissioner at the Australian high commission in New Zealand; Ms Liz Kitto, of the Department of Internal Affairs of New Zealand; Mr Darryl Stevens, of the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives of New Zealand, for facilitating all aspects of the New Zealand program. The committee also records its appreciation to everyone who took the time to discuss their work and for the hospitality and courtesy extended to the committee during its visit to Vanuatu and New Zealand. The committee would particularly like to thank the Hon. Philip Boedoro, Speaker of the parliament of Vanuatu; the Hon. Moana Carcasses Kalosil, the former Prime Minister of Vanuatu and now leader of the opposition; and the Hon. David Carter, Speaker of the House of Representatives in the parliament of New Zealand.

The report is well worth reading. I mention two brief chapters, one of which provides an introduction to Vanuatu and outlines the key issues that were canvassed by the committee during its two-day program there, and the other that goes to issues in New Zealand, following an outline of the key issues canvassed by the committee during its five-day program.

In conclusion can I say that what really impressed the committee most on our trip to New Zealand was the extraordinary resilience in the recovery efforts that have been going on in Christchurch around the earthquake recovery. We had only great feedback from New Zealand officials about the contribution of Australia in all facets of the recovery, from the immediate disaster relief response, to continuing support with skilled personnel and advisers. It was an amazing challenge for New Zealand. The committee was overwhelmed by what they are facing. We are good friends with New Zealand. Our relationship is very close. Australia's response to the disaster they experienced is deeply appreciated and has gone a long way to strengthening the relationship between our two countries.

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:12): I, too, would like to make some comments about this report of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's recent delegation to Vanuatu and New Zealand. Before I get to the details of that delegation, of which I was privileged to be part, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the departing members of the Senate foreign affairs, defence and trade committees, in particular Senator Stephens, who was and still is the Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee; Senator Alan Eggleston, who is the Chair of the Senator Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee; and Senator Helen Kroger, who, like me, is a member of those committees. I also acknowledge Senator Mark Bishop, who was a long-term member of the foreign affairs, defence and trade committees of this parliament and who is also retiring.

It is one of the most interesting committees of the federal parliament. In my few years on that committee I have been involved, as have those retiring senators, in numerous inquiries into aspects of Australia's foreign affairs and defence portfolios. Some of those areas of investigation have included monitoring Australia's engagement in Iraq—a topical issue right at this moment—and also our engagement in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of our troops from that country.

We have been involved, as well, in numerous inquiries into allegations and findings of sexual and other abuse in Australia's Defence forces. There were some harrowing inquiries and evidence there that the parliament has had to deal with. The flow-on effects from those inquiries have seen substantial changes to the way Defence handles the issues that arise not just from ADFA but from deployments overseas and activities on naval ships et cetera. It has been one of the more interesting things for the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee to be part of that change of culture, if you like, within the Defence forces.

The committee has also been engaged in military justice and the implementation of military justice. That is a very significant inquiry that was undertaken with significant outcomes. That committee deals with the Defence Materiel Organisation, which is an organisation that plans, budgets for and schedules replacement or refurbishment of Australia's Defence estate and capabilities. Again, it is a committee that has to grapple with significant issues, as that is one of the biggest budget spends in the Australian government budget every year. The committee pays careful attention to where Australian governments, of all persuasions, are spending money in the area of Defence materiel.

The committee has dealt a lot with recruitment in the Defence forces. Over a number of years, they have worked with the ADF to ensure that there is some focus on the recruitment of women into the Australian Defence Force. A number of senators on the committee have paid particular attention to that. This committee also deals with the Australian War Memorial, an iconic institution much loved by most Australians. At every Senate estimates, we are always pleased to hear about the plans for that institution from whoever the director of the War Memorial is at the time.

The committee deals with the Foreign Affairs portfolio of the federal parliament. One of the more current issues that has been dealt with in the Foreign Affairs portfolio is the rolling of what was AusAID into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. A significant difference to the way that overseas development aid is rolled out in Australia is being

monitored and considered by that committee. Overseas development aid is very topical at the moment with the Minister for Foreign Affairs' recent statement on the delivery of overseas development aid. What would be an appropriate funding allocation for the overseas development aid budget is something that we probably disagree about a fair bit on the committee. Overall, I would have to say there is a commitment on that committee to continue our overseas development aid and, in particular, to ensure that overseas development aid in our nearby regions goes to support women in developing countries.

Those are just some of the many things that the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee has dealt with. I would like to commend Senators Kroger, Eggleston, Stephens and Bishop for their extraordinary work. It is a very hardworking committee with a lot of responsibilities. I have been privileged to work with all of those retiring senators on those issues that I have just outlined. In terms of the most recent delegation that I was privileged to be on with Senators Kroger, Fawcett and Stephens, it was and always is inspiring to go to the Pacific Islands and the Pacific nations in our region, like Vanuatu, to see the very real benefits of Australia's overseas development aid being rolled out on the ground.

The delegation was given many opportunities to see the value of Australia's overseas development aid. We had a look at numerous projects. One that sticks in my mind is the midwifery course at Port Vila in Vanuatu, where both women and men were being trained in midwifery by Australian doctors so that they could go out—not just into Port Vila but also into regional areas—and assist women to give birth safely. We understand and appreciate the importance of their work. It was great to see the Australian and New Zealand doctors and nurses there in Vanuatu training men and women to become effective midwives.

We were also privileged to visit a training facility that is similar to one of our TAFEs, where there was VET training for people in Vanuatu to work, in particular, in the tourism industry. They learned important skills like how to manage a small business and how to take advantage of the few advantages that there are in Vanuatu. That includes the massive cruise industry, which Australians make great use of. It is really important that the value-add from the cruise industry goes to the people of Vanuatu and not necessarily just to the big cruise liner ships. Again, it is great to see Australian initiatives there, which are assisting the people of Vanuatu to make the most of whatever opportunities come their way.

In New Zealand, we were very privileged to meet with the Ministry of Defence there, as well as the Minister of Defence. I appreciated his frank discussions about issues within their defence force about recruitment and, in particular, the recruitment of women into the defence force. I appreciated his frank comments about the difficulties they have had recruiting women but the important steps that they have taken to ensure that their defence force is a welcoming place for women who see that as a potential career.

As always with New Zealand, there is a lot that we can learn because of our shared histories, let alone our shared tourism opportunities. The people of New Zealand were very welcoming of us. Like Senator Stephens, I too acknowledge the incredible efforts of New Zealanders and, indeed, Australians who went to work in New Zealand on the reconstruction of Christchurch. The devastation of Christchurch from the earthquakes has been phenomenal, but even more phenomenal have been the reconstruction efforts and the way in which that has been coordinated. It was a great lesson for those of us from Australia to learn about disaster response activities and how we can do better in that space. Again, I would like to thank my

departing colleagues for the opportunity to work with them on the Senate Foreign, Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (16:22): Madam Acting Deputy President Stephens, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge your longstanding work on the Senate Foreign, Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee. This afternoon, Senator Stephens, you have earned: you have made a speech, you are now in the chair and you are about to make a final contribution. It is a good chance to say that.

I also want to take this opportunity to make a short statement about the value of the parliamentary delegation program, which celebrates the work of committees in this place and which reinforces the valuable work that parliamentarians do in a committee focus. This program goes out to the committees of the Senate and encourages them to bid for the opportunity to visit other countries and to work with other parliamentarians to develop their skills. Over the years, this has provided amazing value to so many committees in this place. I acknowledge the work that we have heard about this afternoon by the foreign affairs, defence and trade committees. They beat out a very strong bid from the community affairs committee.

In terms of this process, several years ago, as a community affairs committee, we were able to benefit from going to New Zealand and looking at the issues around mental health. The work which we have heard about this afternoon from both you, Senator Stephens, and Senator McEwen looked at what you were able to do as members of the committee, working with parliamentarians in both New Zealand and Vanuatu, through this process. Again, this was reinforcing the sharing of skills and experience and, most particularly, reinforcing the role of committees—parliamentarians across parties looking at issues of value, not just to the Senate but to the wider community. So I felt this was a fine opportunity to say that.

We will hear much more over the years about the way this program operates. I think it is something that must be retained. We learn so much from it. I look forward to other strongly competitive bids amongst the committees of the Senate to ensure that this knowledge is effectively used and that the kinds of issues we have heard about are taken outside parliamentary debate into aspects of learning and working together.

Question agreed to.

BUDGET

Consideration by Estimates Committees

Senator RUSTON (South Australia) (16:24): Pursuant to order and at the request of the chairs of the respective committees, I present reports from legislation committees, except the Community Affairs Legislation Committee, in respect of the 2004-15 budget estimates, together with the *Hansard* record of proceedings and documents presented to the committees.

Budget estimates 2014-15—

Economics Legislation Committee—Report, Hansard record of proceedings, documents presented to the committee and additional information.

Education and Employment Legislation Committee—Report, Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee—Report, Hansard record of proceedings and document presented to the committee.

Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee—Report, Hansard record of proceedings, documents presented to the committee and additional information.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee—Report, Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

Legal and Constitutional Affairs—Report, Hansard record of proceedings, documents presented to the committee and additional information.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport—Report, Hansard record of proceedings, documents presented to the committee and additional information.

Ordered that the reports be printed.

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The Clerk: Documents are tabled pursuant to statute. Details will be recorded in the *Journals* of the Senate and on the Dynamic Red.

Details of the documents also appear at the end of today's Hansard.

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Stephens) (16:24): A message has been received from the House of Representatives inviting senators to attend a meeting of the House for an address by the Hon. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, on 8 July next. Copies of this message have been circulated in the chamber.

BILLS

Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Measures) Bill 2014

Consideration of House of Representatives Message

Message received from the House of Representatives informing the Senate that the House has agreed to the amendment made by the Senate to the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Measures) Bill 2014.

Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (16:26): I move:

That these bills may proceed without formalities, may be taken together and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (16:27): I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speeches incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS) BILL (NO. 1) 2014-2015

The purpose of *Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015* is to provide funding for the operations of:

- the Department of the Senate;
- the Department of the House of Representatives;
- the Department of Parliamentary Services; and
- the Parliamentary Budget Office.

This Bill seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just over \$206 million. Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the Schedule to the Bill and the Portfolio Budget Statements for the Parliamentary Departments.

All the appropriations in *Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015* are for the Parliamentary Departments.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2014-2015

I move that the Bill for the Budget be now read a second time.

Our future depends on what we as a nation do today.

For our children, for our seniors, for individuals, for families, for our disabled and for our frail, for all of us, the Government's solemn duty is to build a stronger Australia.

This Budget will help build a more prosperous nation.

Every generation before us has contributed to the quality of life that we enjoy today.

Prosperity isn't a matter of luck.

Prosperity is not a gift. It needs to be earned.

So now it is our turn to contribute.

Now it is our turn to build.

On the back of five budget deficits in a row we have inherited a further \$123 billion of deficits and debt rising to \$667 billion.

This challenge is not of our making, but we, the women and men behind me, accept responsibility to fix it.

Doing nothing is not an option.

The days of borrow and spend must come to an end.

It is time, for all of us, to contribute and build.

From this effort, there will be benefits for jobs, for higher education, for health and for those in genuine need.

If we all contribute now, we will build a truly world-class higher education system and a workforce that can meet head-on the emerging competition in Asia.

If we all contribute now, we will build a sustainable welfare system that helps the most disadvantaged and supports the most vulnerable.

If we all contribute now, we will build the biggest medical research endowment fund in the world within just six years, a fund that will underpin the health system of the future.

If we all contribute now, we will build a strong defence and security capability, that keeps our nation safe for decades to come.

And, if we all contribute now, we will build the equivalent of eight Snowy Mountains Schemes in new infrastructure over the next decade.

We are a great nation and now is our chance to be even better.

We know that for some in the community this Budget will not be easy.

But this Budget is not about self-interest. This Budget is about the national interest.

The Government's Economic Action Strategy is not about undermining a strong social safety net; it is about making it sustainable.

Our Economic Action Strategy is not about weakening Government; it is about redefining the role of government in people's lives.

Our Economic Action Strategy is not about cutting Government spending; it is about spending less on consumption and more on investment so we can keep making decent, compassionate choices in the future.

The age of entitlement is over. It has to be replaced, not with an age of austerity, but with an age of opportunity.

This is not the time to talk our country down, but it is the time to face the facts.

We understand there are people in the community who are doing it tough because the economy is growing at less than its normal speed.

Unemployment is too high with over 700,000 Australians looking for a job.

Without change, the Budget would never get to surplus and the debt would never be repaid.

So the time to fix the Budget is now.

The time to strengthen the economy is now.

The time for everyone to contribute is now.

I say to the business community we need you to help out.

Rather than corporate welfare, the Government's focus will be on strengthening the overall business environment, so that enterprise, large and small, can create more jobs in Australia.

The Government will start by abolishing a range of industry assistance programmes, saving over \$845 million. We will refocus our effort on innovation and self-reliance.

Businesses should stand or fall on their ability to produce the goods and services that people actually want.

To improve business opportunities, we are cutting company tax by 1.5 percentage points for around 800,000 businesses. We are abolishing the carbon tax and we are abolishing the mining tax.

We are removing \$1 billion a year in red tape because regulation means more staff doing paperwork and fewer staff helping customers.

We are also creating new business opportunities and expanding markets for our farmers, miners and service industries in Asia through new free trade agreements with Korea and Japan.

Tonight we are asking higher-income earners to help repair the Budget.

From 1 July this year and for just three years, we are asking higher-income earners to pay a Temporary Budget Repair Levy that in effect increases the top marginal tax rate by two percentage points, for people earning more than \$180,000 a year.

It is only fair that everyone makes a contribution. This includes members of parliament.

There will be a one-year freeze on MPs and senior public servant salaries. And the Gold Pass entitlements will be wound back for former and current MPs before the scheme is abolished.

As I said, we all must contribute.

Pensions are a significant source of income for almost four million Australians.

We promised at the last election not to change pensions in this term of government and we won't.

But so that we can make pensions sustainable and affordable for decades to come, from September 2017, increases in pensions will be linked twice a year to inflation.

Currently, an individual with a home and almost \$800,000 in assets still qualifies for the age pension; a couple with a home and almost \$1.1 million in assets also qualify for the age pension.

Asset and associated income test thresholds will be indexed between now and 2017, but then remain at fixed levels for three years.

With these changes, pensions will always increase with the cost of living, and the value of the pension will continue to rise, but the system will be much better placed to meet the challenge of a significant increase in demand.

We should celebrate the fact that Australians are living longer but we must prepare for the adjustments in our society.

Building on the move by the former Government to increase the pension age eligibility to 67 by 2023, this Government will gradually increase the age of eligibility to 70 by 2035. That is over two decades away.

To ensure more consistent treatment of senior Australians with similar incomes, untaxed superannuation will be included in the income test for new recipients of the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. And so that we can better target assistance, the annual Seniors Supplement will be abolished from 1 July this year.

Each year, the Government spends more on welfare than we spend on the education of our children, the health of our people or the defence of our nation.

Unlike pensions, which are an income replacement payment, family payments are an income supplement to help with some of the costs of raising a family.

Current family assistance rates will be kept at the same level for two years. Thresholds for the Private Health Insurance Rebate and most Medicare fees will also be paused.

Surprisingly, around three-quarters of families receiving family assistance receive both Part A and Part B payments.

The Family Tax Benefit Part B income threshold will be reduced to \$100,000.

For a typical family receiving the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A, payments will start to reduce when family income exceeds \$94,316 per year.

Families will benefit from the abolition of the carbon tax, saving households, on average, around \$550 next year alone. They will also keep the associated tax cuts.

In addition, families will continue to receive the ongoing Energy Supplement to help with power costs.

These changes will build a more sustainable welfare system, with more household income coming from personal effort rather than from the government.

We must always remember that when one person receives an entitlement from the government it comes out of the pocket of another Australian.

Since coming to office, we have carefully and methodically looked at all areas of government spending.

The Government has decided to reduce the growth in our foreign aid budget to save \$7.9 billion over five years.

The Government has also decided to abolish over 230 bureaucratic programmes.

In addition, we have also methodically reviewed more than 900 government bodies, boards, committees and councils and more than 70 are being abolished to deliver better value for taxpayers.

A smaller, less interfering Government won't need as many public servants. 16,500 staff will leave over the next three years without compromising frontline services.

At the moment, duplication and overlap between the Commonwealth and States blur where the buck stops. Over the next eighteen months, we will work with State and Territory Governments to strengthen the Federation and ensure that the overlap between the layers of government is reduced or removed.

I say to the Australian people, to build a workforce for the future, those who can work, should work.

The benefits of work go far beyond your weekly pay packet.

Work gives people a sense of self, and work helps to build a sense of community.

That is why young people should move into employment before they embark on a life on welfare.

Australians under 30 years of age should be earning or learning.

From next year, unemployed people under 25 will get Youth Allowance, not Newstart.

People under 30 will wait up to six months before getting unemployment benefits, and then will have to participate in Work for the Dole, to be eligible for income support.

From July this year, the Government will also support those learning a trade by providing concessional Trade Support Loans of up to \$20,000 over a four-year apprenticeship.

We give young people loans to help them complete a university course, so it is only right that those completing a trade qualification get the same fair go.

As well, people under 35 on the Disability Support Pension, but with some capacity to work, will have engagement plans to help them participate in the workforce.

For those who leave the workforce to have children, we want you to have every opportunity to return to your career. Our Paid Parental Leave Scheme will help keep mothers engaged with the workforce.

This measure will complement the changes to Family Tax Benefit Part B, a payment that will no longer be available when a family's youngest child turns six and is at school.

Staying at home should be a parent's choice but there are limits on how much support the taxpayer can give.

For Australians over 50, we also want to give you every opportunity to participate in the workforce. But I know how hard it can be for older Australians to find a job.

There needs to be a change in the culture of many businesses towards older workers.

We will help change that culture by providing a payment of up to \$10,000 to a business that employs an Australian over the age of 50 who has been on unemployment benefits or the Disability Support Pension for six months.

Employers can use these funds to assist employees to reskill and play a more active role in the workforce.

We must build an education and training system that becomes the envy of the world.

As a start, and for the first time, the Commonwealth will provide direct financial assistance for all students studying diploma and sub-bachelor degree courses.

This is a watershed.

Along with supporting young people learning a trade, we want to build a country that values all levels of education.

This will deliver the best skills for the task ahead.

Australia should have at least one university in the top 20 in the world, and more in the top 100.

The higher education sector is being held back and cannot compete with the best in the world. We need to set our sights higher.

Our changes to higher education will allow universities to set their own tuition fees from 2016. For students already studying, existing arrangements will remain until the end of 2020.

Through these once-in-a-generation reforms, the Government will help build a sector that is more diverse, more innovative and more responsive to student needs.

With greater autonomy, universities will be free to compete and improve the quality of the courses they offer.

Some course fees may rise and some may fall. To maintain fair access, students will still be eligible for concessional higher education loans.

As is the case at the moment, students will not have to pay a single dollar upfront. Fees will be repayable when students are in the workforce earning over \$50,000 a year.

Importantly, one dollar out of every five dollars in additional tuition revenue will be used to fund scholarships to those from disadvantaged backgrounds who want to attend university.

To build a more prosperous community and a better quality of life we need to build on our strengths.

One of our greatest strengths as a nation is our capacity to innovate and invent.

And our medical researchers have led the way, from Howard Florey to Sir Gustav Nossal and from Fiona Stanley to Ian Frazer.

Australians have, through research and innovation, saved millions of lives, not just here but around the world.

Tonight, I announce the Government's commitment to build with your contributions, a \$20 billion Medical Research Future Fund.

This fund will, within six years, be the biggest medical research endowment fund in the world.

Its funding of research will be in addition to existing levels of funding through the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The Medical Research Future Fund will receive all the savings from the introduction of a \$7 Medicare co-contribution, modest changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and other responsible changes in this Health Budget, until the Fund reaches \$20 billion.

Health services have never been free to taxpayers so patients are being asked to make a modest contribution towards their cost.

Of course safety nets are important, so we are simplifying the Medicare Safety Net with lower thresholds for most people, and we have safety net provisions for concessional patients and children.

Australians are always prepared to make a reasonable contribution if they know their money is not wasted.

I can think of no more significant benefit from community contributions in health than to invest in cure and discovery research by our people for our people.

From next year, funds will start flowing from the Medical Research Future Fund into new medical research.

As a result, it may be an Australian who discovers better treatments and even cures for dementia, Alzheimer's, heart disease or cancer.

If we start investing now, this new and historic commitment in medical research may well save your life, or that of your parents, or your child.

The first duty of a Government is to protect our people and strengthen our borders.

The Government is committed to building defence spending to two per cent of GDP within a decade and by the middle of next year the Government will have a new strategic plan for the defence of the nation.

In the meantime the Government has already taken strong and decisive action to restore the integrity of our borders. People smugglers now understand that the door to our nation is closed.

This year not a single people-smuggling venture has successfully landed in Australia. This has meant savings of \$2.5 billion to the Budget, and the closure of nine detention centres.

To better manage services at Australia's borders, immigration and customs operational responsibilities will be consolidated into a single border control agency, the Australian Border Force.

Everything I have announced tonight helps to build a stronger Budget and a stronger economy.

There is no easy way to repair the Budget.

We have been at pains to reduce government expenditure without hurting the economy.

Taxpayer spending needs to be reprioritised, where possible, into job stimulating investment like roads and rail.

We also need to have more stability in taxation policy.

As a result of the taxation decisions made since coming to office, decisions designed to boost Australia's economic competitiveness, the Government is collecting less taxation than would otherwise have been the case.

The changes to the Budget I have announced tonight will significantly improve the budget bottom line.

The Budget deficit will fall from its current \$49.9 billion to \$29.8 billion next year. It will then fall to a deficit of \$2.8 billion in 2017-18.

Our decisions have contributed \$36 billion towards this improvement.

So I want to emphasise that the Budget we announce tonight is the first word and not the last word on Budget repair. There is much work that still needs to be done.

Even so, over the next ten years we will reduce our expected debt by nearly \$300 billion from \$667 billion to \$389 billion. And that is after we prudently budget for future taxation relief.

This significant reduction in debt reduces our interest bill by around \$16 billion a year in ten years' time. That's more than the amount of money needed to construct 15 new teaching hospitals every year!

With a responsible Budget we can build more national infrastructure, particularly in partnership with the states and the private sector.

Over the last decade we have been blessed with a mining boom and the highest terms of trade in 140 years.

An amazing 80 per cent of all investment in the recent mining and resources boom has come from new foreign investment in Australia.

As the resources industry moves away from its construction phase into its production phase there is an emerging growth gap in our economy.

Mining and resources represent about ten per cent of our economy but two per cent of our employment. It has, however, done much of the heavy lifting over the decade.

So now we need to fire up the rest of the economy.

Tonight, I am announcing a package of measures that will significantly increase investment in infrastructure across Australia.

Over the next six years, the Government will help build new roads, rail, ports and airports.

Our Growth Package will stimulate the construction sector and create thousands of jobs as the economy transitions from resource-led growth to broader-based growth.

This new infrastructure will drive and support the next wave of national prosperity.

Our Growth Package will take the Government's total investment to \$50 billion by the end of the decade—the largest on record.

This money will drive over \$125 billion of spending on new infrastructure across the continent.

Over the longer term this is expected to permanently boost the size of the economy by one per cent.

These projects will mean real activity and real jobs in local communities.

Shovels will start moving within a matter of months.

For example, in New South Wales construction on the \$11 billion WestConnex project will start within 18 months. This means 10,000 new jobs.

The \$18 billion East West Link in Melbourne starts work before Christmas and will create 6,000 new jobs.

And billions of dollars of work will soon start on the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing; the Perth Freight Link; the Midlands Highway upgrade in Tasmania and the North South Road Corridor project in Adelaide. This will create thousands of new jobs across our nation.

And our \$1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund, together with \$200 million of new Black Spot funding, and \$350 million extra for Roads to Recovery will deliver jobs and better roads across regional and rural Australia.

But these projects will do more than create construction jobs. They will inject money into communities, lower business costs and reduce congestion.

This will improve living standards across the country.

And to help pay for this, the Government is re-introducing fuel indexation where every dollar raised by the increases will be linked by law to the road-building budget.

This will ensure that there is a stable and growing source of funds to support long-term investment in Australia's roads.

Budget speeches are often about numbers, and appropriately so, but the Budget must always be about people.

I say to the Australian people, every dollar we spend in this Parliament comes from you.

If we can get on with the job of fixing this Budget, then you and your family will benefit.

We will all share in more jobs, greater wealth and greater prosperity.

But unless we fix the Budget together, we will leave the next generation a legacy of debt, not opportunity.

As Australians, we must not leave our children worse off.

That's not fair.

That is not our way.

We are a nation of lifters, not leaners.

So tonight, we present you with a Budget that delivers a sustainable future for your children, and the generations beyond.

We are a great nation. We are a great people.

By everyone making a contribution now, we will build, together, a better Australia.

I commend the Budget Bill to the Senate.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2014-2015

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015, along with Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015 which was introduced earlier, and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015, are the Budget Appropriation Bills for the 2014-15 financial year.

This Bill seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just over \$8.4 billion.

I now outline the significant items provided for in this Bill.

First, the Department of Communications would receive just over \$3.2 billion once this Bill commences as an Act. This is required to provide funding to NBN Co to continue to rollout the National Broadband Network. This is in line with the Government's updated Statement of Expectations.

Second, this Bill would provide the Department of Defence with just under \$2.5 billion in capital funding. This reflects in part the Budget measure Defence funding profile, which brings forward funding from 2017-18 and distributes it over the period 2013-14 to 2016-17, including \$300 million in this Bill. This funding will support important capabilities, including in the Approved Major Capital Investment Programme. The remaining \$2.2 billion included in this Bill provides funding for existing investment commitments.

Third, the Bill would provide the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development just over \$564 million, reflecting four matters. Those are: to incorporate the Government's new Bridges Renewal Programme; the Roads to Recovery programme; fund to Local Councils for non-network road projects and funding for Latrobe Valley economic diversification.

Fourth, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would be provided with just under \$294 million. This reflects a \$200 million capital injection to the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation as well as \$10.3 million in capital expenditure for Australian Embassies in Kabul and Baghdad.

The Bill would also increase the general drawing rights limit for general purpose financial assistance payments to \$5 billion and the general drawing rights limit for national partnership payments to \$25 billion. These limits are being increased in prudent anticipation of forward expenditure in priority policy areas such as infrastructure, and will give the Commonwealth capacity to respond to changing circumstances.

Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the Schedules to the Bill and the Portfolio Budget Statements tabled in the Parliament.

Debate adjourned.

Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2013-2014

Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2013-2014

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (16:28): I move:

That these bills may proceed without formalities, may be taken together and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (16:28): I table a revised explanatory memorandum relating to Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2013-2014 and move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speeches incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 5) 2013-2014

Today, the Government introduces the Supplementary Additional Estimates Appropriations Bills. These Bills are:

- Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2013-2014; and
- Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2013-2014.

These Bills underpin the Government's expenditure decisions.

Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2013-2014 seeks approval for additional appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just over \$337 million.

I now outline the significant items provided for in this Bill.

First, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet would receive just over \$169 million in funding to enable the Department to undertake the functions and activities that were transferred as a result of the Machinery of Government changes in September and amended in December 2013. The Government transferred responsibility for over 150 Indigenous programmes and activities to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to enable a consistent approach to Indigenous policy and provide an opportunity to eliminate duplication in these programmes. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet now also has responsibility for the Offices of Women, Deregulation and Best Practice Regulation.

Second, this Bill would provide the Department of Defence with just over \$58 million, reflecting three matters. Those are: supplementation for Operation Southern Indian Ocean; Defence real estate sales and foreign exchange movements.

On more general matters, this Bill reflects the current names of Government Departments, consistent with the Administrative Arrangements Order of 18 September 2013. For example, the Bill proposes appropriations for the Department of Industry, instead of the former Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.

Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the Schedule to the Bill and the Portfolio Supplementary Additional Estimates Statements tabled in the Parliament.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 6) 2013-2014

Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2013-2014, along with *Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2013-2014* which I introduced earlier, are the Supplementary Additional Estimates Appropriation Bills for this financial year.

This Bill seeks further approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just over \$972 million.

The majority of the amount in the Bill relates to the Department of Defence. This Bill would provide the Department with just over \$603 million, reflecting three matters. Those are: expenditure brought forward into 2013-14 from the forward estimates to assist with the purchase of foreign military assets;

supplementation for foreign exchange movements; and the re-appropriation of amounts between Appropriation Acts to better align with Defence's current work programmes.

The Bill would also provide the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development with just under \$295 million for off-network roads projects, where milestones have been reached earlier than anticipated.

Another \$40 million relates to amounts for the Department of Agriculture for drought concessional loans under the drought support for farmers package.

Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the Schedules to the Bill and the Portfolio Supplementary Additional Estimates Statements tabled in the Parliament.

Debate adjourned.

Health Insurance Amendment (Extended Medicare Safety Net) Bill 2014 Regulatory Powers (Standard Provisions) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (16:29): These bills are being introduced together. After debate on the motion for the second reading has been adjourned, I will be moving a motion to have the bills listed separately on the *Notice Paper*. I move:

That these bills may proceed without formalities, may be taken together and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (16:29): I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speeches incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT (EXTENDED MEDICARE SAFETY NET) BILL 2014

This Bill amends the Health Insurance Act 1973 to increase the general Extended Medicare Safety Net threshold and introduces a minor administrative change in seeking confirmation of family composition.

The Extended Medicare Safety Net provides individuals and families with an additional rebate for their out-of-hospital Medicare services once an annual threshold of out of pocket costs for out-of-hospital services is reached.

Out-of-hospital services include GP and specialist attendances and services provided in private clinics and private emergency departments.

Once the relevant annual threshold has been met, Medicare will pay for 80 per cent of any future out-of-pocket costs for Medicare eligible out of hospital services for the remainder of the calendar year.

There are two Extended Medicare Safety Net thresholds: the concessional (lower) threshold for Commonwealth concession card holders; and the general (upper) threshold for all other Australians.

From 1 January 2006, the concessional threshold increased to \$500 and the general threshold increased to \$1,000. The thresholds are indexed to the Consumer Price Index at the start of each calendar year. In 2014, the Concessional threshold is \$624.10 and the general threshold is \$1,248.70.

As announced by the previous Government in the 2013-14 Budget, the general threshold of the Extended Medicare Safety Net will be increased to \$2,000 from 1 January 2015. The concessional Extended Medicare Safety Net threshold will be indexed as usual and will not be impacted by this Bill. This Bill contributes to a more sustainable Medicare system.

These measures are a significant change to the Medicare system. It is important to note that they were a commitment taken by the previous Government in their last Budget. They will save \$105.6 million and are included in the Forward Estimates. Because of the fiscal situation bequeathed by the former Government we must continue with these changes.

Other provision—confirm family composition for the EMSN

This improves the efficiency of Government service delivery and the timeliness of payment of benefits to patients. This Bill removes the requirement for the Chief Executive of Medicare to request the confirmation of family composition (for Extended Medicare Safety Net purposes) only in writing.

Currently, to ensure that the correct out-of-pocket costs have been attributed to the Extended Medicare Safety Net threshold, if a registered family is identified to be approaching the Extended Medicare Safety Net threshold and will soon be entitled to receive Extended Medicare Safety Net benefits, the Chief Executive of Medicare must, in writing, request confirmation of their family composition.

Receiving confirmation in writing increases the time families must wait to receive their Extended Medicare Safety Net benefits. This amendment allows the Chief Executive of Medicare to determine how they would like to contact a family to confirm their family composition to allow a more streamlined process and ensure faster payment to patients.

This Bill will allow the Government to responsibly manage expenditure on Extended Medicare Safety Net and reduce the administrative burden on the Department of Human Services. This is important for supporting the sustainability of the Extended Medicare Safety Net while singles and families can continue to receive additional assistance with their out-of-pocket costs.

REGULATORY POWERS (STANDARD PROVISIONS) BILL 2014

The Regulatory Powers (Standard Provisions) Bill 2014 is an important reform to achieve improved regulatory outcomes and enhance access to justice.

This Government is determined to reduce regulation and make Commonwealth laws clear and accessible. This Bill will significantly simplify and streamline Commonwealth regulatory powers across the statute book over time, and improve the accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the federal justice system.

The Bill will make it easier for businesses that are subject to regulatory regimes to understand and comply with the law. It will also provide greater clarity to those agencies currently exercising regulatory powers under multiple regimes.

The Bill provides a framework of powers for general application across regulatory schemes for monitoring compliance with, investigating breaches of, and enforcing, Commonwealth laws.

These powers will only be available in relation to a regulatory scheme if the governing legislation triggers or engages the powers provided in this Bill. These powers can be triggered in whole or in part, depending on the requirements of the particular scheme.

The monitoring provisions provide a framework for agencies to monitor whether legislation is being complied with. They also provide agencies with the power to monitor whether information given in compliance, or purported compliance, with a law, is correct.

The investigation provisions provide a framework for gathering evidence that relates to the contravention of offences and civil penalty provisions. These powers include the power to search premises and seize evidential material, and to inspect, test, or copy evidential material.

There are also monitoring and investigation powers for operating electronic equipment and securing electronic equipment to obtain expert assistance.

The Bill also provides a framework for the use of civil penalties, infringement notices, enforceable understandings and injunctions.

Over the last 20 years there has been an enormous proliferation of regulatory powers and associated provisions, across the Commonwealth statute book. These powers and provisions vary in their breadth and detail, resulting in inconsistency or unnecessary duplication across regimes.

This creates an unnecessary compliance burden for businesses subject to scrutiny or supervision by multiple regulatory regimes. Current inconsistent regulatory regimes require businesses to incur legal costs and face increased risk as they struggle to understand the applicable regime, let alone differences between them.

Further, the inconsistency and duplication of powers makes it difficult for agencies to perform their regulatory functions where they may exercise powers across several regulatory regimes with different governing legislation.

Provisions relating to the enforcement of a regulatory regime can easily increase the length of legislation by 30 pages, and by up to 80 pages for some regimes.

The Bill will be rolled out in three stages. In Stage One, new laws that require monitoring, investigation or enforcement powers of the kinds available under the Regulatory Powers Bill will be drafted to trigger the relevant provisions.

In Stage Two, laws that have been drafted over recent years using precedents based on the Regulatory Powers Bill will be amended to remove those provisions and instead trigger the relevant provisions of this Bill.

In Stage Three, monitoring, investigation and enforcement regimes in current laws may be reviewed and amended to instead trigger the relevant provisions in the Regulatory Powers Bill.

Over time, the amount of duplication between these laws will be significantly reduced.

The powers contained in this Bill will not be suitable for all regulatory regimes. Specialised powers will continue to be needed, for example, by law enforcement and security agencies which deal with national security or serious and organised crime.

Importantly, the key safeguards of Parliamentary scrutiny will be maintained, as the powers in the Bill are rolled out across regulatory regimes. The primary legislation which governs a regulatory scheme will need to trigger the powers in this Bill. These legislative amendments will provide Parliament with the opportunity to scrutinise the suitability of powers in the particular context in which it is proposed that they be exercised.

This also means that an assessment of the human rights implications will be undertaken each time a Bill proposes to apply provisions of the Regulatory Powers Bill. This will require consideration based on the context of the particular regulatory scheme and the specific regulatory provisions that are triggered.

There are also operational safeguards included in the Bill.

Entry to premises can only be authorised by informed and voluntary consent, or by judicial authorisation. If entry has been granted by consent, and that consent is subsequently withdrawn, the agency must leave the premises.

If entry is authorised by warrant, the agency must make a copy of the warrant available to the occupier of the premises, and provide them with written notification of their rights and responsibilities. This includes the right for the occupier to observe the execution of the warrant.

The Bill also provides for the Courts to have sufficient oversight to ensure against the risk of abuse or the arbitrary exercise of power by an agency.

Where an infringement notice is issued, a person may elect to have a matter heard by a Court rather than pay an infringement notice. This right must be set out in the infringement notice issued to the person.

Significantly, the Bill also preserves fundamental common law privileges. Individuals who are subject to these powers must be informed of their rights and responsibilities, and will continue to have the right to refuse to answer a question or produce documents if doing so would tend to incriminate them or waive legal professional privilege.

The Regulatory Powers Bill is an important step in simplifying and streamlining the Commonwealth's regulatory frameworks, and in doing so, improving the accessibility and consistency of these laws.

This will make it easier for individuals and businesses to know and understand their rights and responsibilities and be able to more readily comply with the law. This will reduce legal costs and risks, promote greater access to justice and reduce the regulatory burden on businesses that are subject to multiple regimes.

The Bill will also ensure that Commonwealth regulatory powers are sufficiently certain and predictable, while being flexible, to ensure that agencies with specialised functions can operate effectively.

Debate adjourned.

Ordered that the bills be listed on the *Notice Paper* as separate orders of the day.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Valedictory

Senator TILLEM (Victoria) (16:30): In keeping with the trend of making short statements, I too will be making one today. I would like to begin by acknowledging those retiring senators: Senators Furner, Farrell, Thorp, Pratt, Bishop, Stephens, Boswell, Kroger, Eggleston and Boyce. And, Mr President, I would like to acknowledge your retirement after many years of service to the Senate. I congratulate you on the way that you have, in an even-handed way, managed the operations of this chamber. I wish all those retiring senators well for whatever comes beyond 30 June and congratulate them on their contributions.

It has been a steep learning curve, and I feel that I have only just found my feet in this place. Although this stint has been short, I am truly honoured to have been able to represent the great state of Victoria.

To my colleagues: it has been a privilege and an honour working with all of you. Where I have sought advice and counsel, you have without hesitation provided it, and for that I thank you. There has also been a great deal of unsolicited advice, which was also appreciated.

The time I have spent here has given me an opportunity to represent the views of those from my home state and Australians across the country. I have seen and heard and listened and learned. I do not plan on speaking for long, because this is a statement rather than a valedictory speech. But, in the spirit of counsel that I have received, I would also like to provide some counsel to those on the other side.

The Treasurer, in the budget speech, said Australia is a nation of lifters. I must congratulate those across the chamber, the Liberal and National parties, because they have provided leadership in that sense. They have lifted the retirement age, they have lifted consumer protection, they have lifted the protection against being a bigot, they have lifted the cost of going to the doctor and they have lifted the cost of education. Whether they choose to take the counsel is their choice, but what the Australian people would like is some honesty. I am sure those opposite will get support from the community if they are up-front with what they are doing.

This is an opportunity for me to go back to the first time I spoke in this chamber. I spoke about a couple of things, one of which was housing affordability and the other of which was organ donation. I would like to add a third point which I feel strongly about.

I have no doubt the Australian community do not want to see people dying on the high seas in coming to Australia and looking for a better life. But they also do not want to see our fellow human beings treated harshly and inhumanely. I call upon those in this place to look within their hearts for a better solution.

I would like to thank some people, because my time here would not have been what it is without them. First and foremost is my family. For their unwavering support, I sincerely thank them from the deepest corners of my heart. I would like to thank the Senate leadership team, Senator Wong and Senator Conroy, for the support and advice they have provided in my time here. I acknowledge the hard work of the whip, her office and the deputy whips in everything they do.

It is a sombre moment but one which has, on reflection, provided me with an opportunity that not many people get to experience, and it is truly an honour—and I know that every single one of you feels the same way. I am grateful for the opportunity afforded to me to be in this place by the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party, without whose support I would not be here.

What is often forgotten is the hard work that goes into what we do by the staff that work for us and keep us going. In my time here, and in a previous life, I have had the opportunity to work with some wonderful people who I hope I have brought along with me for the ride. I am grateful for the hard work they have put in. They roll up every day without raising an eyebrow and they do what is required. We often do not appreciate enough what a burden we place on them.

I will briefly mention a few of them: Ella George and Sam Rae, who have been there for a while with me, and for them I am grateful, Cesar Piperno, Steve Le, Susan Yildiz, Hashem Ouaida, Bassell Tallal, Michael Berthelsen, Bridget Bourke, Simon Miller, Alfred Acquaro, Hayley Clarke, Kellie Macnaughtan, Patrick Wingrove, Ridvan Kilic, Emma Henderson, Adam Carr, Idris Muslu, Sophie Westland and Stephanie Elaine Makhlot. I am truly grateful for all the support they have provided. Without their contribution, my contribution would not have been what it has.

In keeping this short, I intend to wrap up, Mr President. I see Senator Cormann in the chamber. My inclination and temptation is to say, 'I'll be back'; however, I shall not. I will leave the chamber by saying, 'Till we meet again.' Thank you, Mr President.

Senator Cormann: Well said.

Senator THORP (Tasmania) (16:41): I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Ngunawal and Ngambri people, and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I would like to thank the chamber for the opportunity today to rise during my last few days in this place and put on the record my appreciation for the incredible opportunity I have been afforded in being a senator for Tasmania.

I entered the Senate a short two years ago. I say short because the time has flown—as I have flown more times than I care to remember. As senators would be aware, I came here to serve the remainder of the term of the highly respected Nick Sherry. I was very proud and pleased that I won that privilege as a result of a ballot of the rank-and-file members in which I received 89 per cent of the vote. I sincerely hope I have warranted the trust that they put in me.

The good men and women of the Australian Labor Party in general, and my state in particular, have very clear expectations of their elected representatives. They expect hard work, dedication to the principles of our party, social justice and equity. At this point in our history, fighting for social justice and equity has never been more vital. This budget we are dealing with here in this place attacks the very fabric of the Australian social contract—the contract that has long formed the backbone of our national identity. If it passes, I am afraid we will see the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This is not the Australia I know and it is not the Australia I want future generations to grow up in, but in a cruel and ironic way it may be exactly what Australians need to remind us that nothing is a given and that politics actually matter.

I believe this government has severely underestimated the intelligence of the Australian people and the unwillingness of the Australian people to blindly believe what they are told and to meekly accept what is offered in this place. Again, ironically, it may be this budget that galvanises people to mobilise and fight for the Australia they want for the future. We need to remember that the principles of equality, fairness, transparency, accountability and a fair go that we hold dear are stitched together by individual choices that we need to make again, just as they have been made decade after decade before us. We need to stand strong in the face of those who wish to sow the seeds of fear and division by fabricating crises and demonising certain groups in society—especially those groups that do not have the resources or communication access to argue their own case. We need to be wise to the tactics that would turn us against each other by fuelling jealousy, contempt and hatred for some of our fellow Australians. If we accept this framing of the world and if we buy into the simplistic view of them versus us, where we clearly mark out the territory of the two and jealously guard the intervening borders, there is little doubt we will all lose.

The truth is that the vast majority of us want to live in a peaceful, caring and, above all, fair world, where people get the support they need to get through tough times and the opportunity they need to contribute productively to Australia's future. We need to be willing to unite with our fellow Australians to ensure that we do not stray from that path. Now more than ever, Australia needs to recognise that growing inequality is one of the greatest threats that we face. A recent Forbes and Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook study found that the wealthiest one per cent of Australians have more money than 60 per cent of the population. It also found that the nine richest people in Australia have a fortune equal to the net worth of the 4.5 million Australians in the poorest 20 per cent. In Australia since 1975, real wages for the

bottom 10th of earners have risen by 15 per cent, while the top 10th have seen wage increases of 59 per cent. At the same time the income share of the top one per cent has doubled and the income share of the top 0.1 per cent has tripled. Globally, it is staggering that the top 85 richest people now own half the entire world's wealth. A recent Oxfam report outlines the problem very clearly when it says:

...inequality threatens to further entrap poor and marginalised people and undermine efforts to tackle extreme poverty. By concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the few, inequality robs the poorest people of the support they need to improve their lives, and means that their voices go unheard.

But there are still those who think it is okay for some individuals to have more than they could spend even if they lived a hundred lifetimes, while hundreds of thousands wonder where their next meal is coming from. Others believe there is nothing wrong with multinational companies hiding an estimated \$21 trillion in tax havens globally, while thousands of Australians struggle to keep a roof over their heads.

I do not believe this is okay. In fact, I believe one of the strongest obligations in the Australian social contract is that we look after each other and strive for fairness wherever possible. We have a responsibility to provide support to help our fellow Australians overcome their challenges and to acknowledge that greater equality leads to better outcomes for all of us. Let's be clear: these are not just warm fuzzy platitudes about how nice it is to do nice things for people from lefties like myself. No, scholars have confirmed that more equal societies achieve better outcomes for all their citizens. British epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett analysed hundreds of peer reviewed research papers on the spirit of inequality in their groundbreaking book, *The Spirit Level*. They looked at 11 different health and social problems, including: physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, social mobility, trust and community life, violence, teenage pregnancies and child wellbeing. In doing so, they found that, for each and every one of these issues, outcomes are significantly worse in countries that are more unequal. This stands in stark contrast to the idea sometimes peddled by the conservative side of politics. Using naive metaphors like 'All boats will rise', they attempt to justify inequality and the failed mantra of trickle-down economics, which has been referred to in the *Guardian* as 'the greatest broken promise of our lifetime'.

Despite the evidence, there are still some who assert that inequality is actually a good thing—people like Canadian millionaire Kevin O'Leary, who said that is fantastic that the world's 85 richest people have wealth that equals that held by 3.5 billion poorest people on the planet. He justifies this outrageous statement by saying that the one per cent provide inspiration and motivation for the 99 per cent to work harder. While this is a ridiculous argument that verges on caricature, it has some things in common with the untruths that get hauled out in our national debate to rationalise a tax on some of the most vulnerable Australians. Reading some media outlets, you may be fooled into thinking that poverty is just the result of a lack of will on behalf of the poor—if poor people just tried a little, they too could rise to the ranks of the ridiculously rich—and that the problem is not one of fairness, but one of laziness.

Of course, the simplistic argument is completely blind to the reality of human circumstance. The truth is that not all people start equally—not all are blessed with loving families, adequate food or stable housing. This means that some people cannot even see the

starting line, let alone win the race. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that those who are not blessed are given the resources and pathways they need to rise above difficult circumstances. All Australians need to get the chance to achieve their full potential and we need to develop the right pathways, policies and resources to help them do this. Unfortunately, many would have us believe that we inhabit an economy rather than a society. In doing so they place the ultimate worth on the figures on the balance sheet at the expense of our health, our environment, our educational achievements, our cohesiveness and our unity as a people. But the irony is that this very balance sheet is also at risk if we let our country slide into a sea of 'have-nots', topped up by a sparse sprinkling of very rich 'haves'.

In fact, there is a growing body of research that shows this very inequality leads to reduced economic outcomes for the country as a whole. Only a few months ago, the IMF warned that inequality seriously damages economic growth. It found that countries with high levels of inequality achieve lower growth compared to nations with more evenly distributed incomes. Similarly, Nobel-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz has warned that inequality can make growth more volatile and create the unstable conditions for sudden slowdowns. But it is not just our financial stability at risk from growing inequality; our social and political stability is at risk too. In its annual assessment of global dangers, the World Economic Forum found that the chronic gap between rich and poor to be the biggest single risk to the world in 2014. It warns of a lost generation of young people unable to work, and this could easily boil over into very serious social upheaval.

But this is not a foregone conclusion. Finance chief at Swiss Re, David Cole, who worked on the World Economic Forum report, said:

... there are moments in time when capitalism can go into overdrive and it is important to have measures in place—whether regulatory, government or tax measures—that ensure we avoid excesses in terms of income and wealth distribution.

Similarly, the IMF has pointed out that governments can turn things around. Over the last year, it has published two major papers on inequality which explain its effect on growth and how tax and spending policies can be designed to help achieve redistribution at a minimal cost to economic efficiency. By investing in fairness through policy, we also create an environment where people can contribute to a more productive, prosperous society for us all.

I stand today proud to have been part of a long history of a party that is inclusive—a party that stands up for the most vulnerable members of our society and a party that seeks to allow Australians to be the very best they can, but, most importantly, a party that will fight for a fair go for all of us. That is why I am Labor.

In the words of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, Labor has always aimed to promote equality, to involve the people of Australia in the decision-making processes of our land and to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people. We have held true to this philosophy over the years in a range of policy areas.

We know that health outcomes can have a huge impact on the ability of people to achieve their potential. This is why the Whitlam government established universal health care, to ensure that all Australians would have access to quality health care regardless of income or background. So it is with education. Labor's landmark Gonski review of education found that achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds were larger than in any comparable nation and the situation would only worsen without urgent action. The Labor

government listened, and set in train the nation-building reforms to address inequality within our education system by funding schools according to the needs of individual students. Similarly, the National Disability Insurance Scheme will go some way to addressing inequality for many Australians. The NDIS will mean more choice and control, more independence and more opportunities for people with disability to be involved in school, work and community life. The Rudd government's move to increase pensions in 2009 actually served to reduce relative poverty by one-fifth, while Labor's low-income super contribution allowed 3.6 million low-income earners to better save for their retirement.

We also cannot forget that the union movement has been a steadfast force for the working people of Australia, consistently and determinedly fighting for a fair go, especially for lower-paid workers. Now more than ever we need to recognise that nothing is a given. We need to understand that if we want a fairer, better world for our children and grandchildren, we must be prepared to fight for it. And now more than ever we need to rail against the gaping chasm of inequality that threatens to grow ever wider if we do not act. This is a challenge for all of us in this place, and I wish you all strong arms and stout hearts in your efforts.

I have tried to do my best over my personal and political life to fight for the most vulnerable in our community, as a teacher, and as a state minister for education and skills, children, child protection, housing, disability, police and emergency services—and you wonder why I look this old!—and, more recently, in this place. I hope my efforts have progressed our efforts in caring for people living with dementia and custodial grandparents and in support for children and young people. I have tried to ensure Tasmania's future as a place of unique beauty and lifestyle through my efforts in regard to the GMO moratorium, protecting our fisheries from the ravages of supertrawlers and attacks on our World Heritage areas. Whether I have succeeded, of course, is for others to judge.

All through this time I have enjoyed the support of remarkable friendships with Senator Carol Brown and Julie Collins. Oxley Court is seared into my memory forever. I know they both will continue to do wonderful things for Tasmania in my absence. I hope to continue to enjoy the friendship of Anne Urquhart and the rest of the Tasmanian Senate team, along with that of Anne McEwen, Gavin Marshall, Claire Moore, Doug Cameron and Louise Pratt, amongst others.

Throughout my time here, I have been supported by wonderful staff: Rebecca Willetts, Steve Best, Adam Clarke, Natalie Jones and Darren Clark. You are the best. My heartfelt thanks for your hard work, dedication and companionship.

Thanks, too, to the good people of the Tasmanian branch of Labor—too many to list here, but I can't not mention John Dowling, Chris Brown, Tim Jacobson, Helen Gibbons and John Short. You are the bedrock the party depends on.

My thanks to all the great people who work in this place and make sure that as senators we are able to do our work to the best of our ability: the Clerk and her staff, Hansard, the committee secretariats, the library staff, catering staff and cleaners, and last but certainly not least, Ian and Peter and their shuttle team.

I wish all in this place the best. Regardless of our political differences, you are all here to serve your fellow Australians. I may not agree with your beliefs and values, but I do know

you hold them sincerely. I know the sacrifices you make to do your jobs, and I thank you for them.

I am looking forward to being back in my beloved Tassie and spending time with my family and friends, particularly my husband of 31 years, the wonderful Toby Thorp. And believe me, we have plans. Thank you.

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (17:02): I commence by acknowledging the traditional owners, the Ngunawal and Ngambri people, and paying my respects to elders past and present. It has been, for me, a great privilege and a considerable pleasure to serve the state of Western Australia in this place since 2008. There is no greater honour, in my view—no greater responsibility in our democracy—than for us to be entrusted by our fellow citizens with the duty to represent them, the opportunity to contribute to the legislation that protects their needs, serves their interests and shapes our great nation.

I thank my fellow Western Australians for their trust and the opportunity given to me to serve them in both the state Legislative Council and the Senate. Today I pay tribute to the great many community, social justice, disability, local government, LGBTI, women's, environment and Indigenous organisations and advocates I have had the great pleasure of working with and supporting over the last six years. It has also been a great honour to work with Indigenous custodians who have welcomed me to their country around my state and around the nation. I have seen too much poverty, too much hardship in WA's Indigenous communities but also extraordinary resilience and leadership and great vision. I particularly want to thank all those Indigenous leaders and elders who have taught me so much about the Indigenous cultural economies that they have been working so hard to build and develop. In particular, I wish the ranger programs around our country well.

I want to thank the Australian Labor Party for the honour of representing our party and advancing our values. All of us in this place know that we owe our capacity to make a contribution to a great many other people. So, first and foremost, I want to thank the members of the WA Labor Party and our affiliated unions for our shared values, our commitment and the many tireless hours spent together over many election campaigns. I thank EMILY's List, I thank Young Labor Women's Network, and I thank Rainbow Labor for their support. I thank the ALP branches around my state of WA and their members. I know how hard all the members of the party work to contribute and uphold our mutual values.

I have some wonderful friends and comrades who have made my parliamentary career possible, and I want to pause to remember and thank the late Jock Ferguson. I thank Steve McCartney, Sally Talbot, Jon Ford, Geoff Gallop, Joan Kirner, Mick Buchan, Christy Cain, Sue Bowers, Penny Sharpe, Jo Tilley, Ashley Hogan, Philip O'Donoghue, the Dawson family, the Comries, Shane Hill, Linda Whatman, Feyi Akindoyeni, Erik Locke, Owen Whittle and many others who have gone out of their way to give me great support over the years.

I want to thank my own union, the AMWU, for their never-ending and never-yielding support. I thank the MUA, the CFMEU, the CPSU, the ETU, the CEPU and all of their officials and members. For me today it is incredibly important to recognise that unions play a vital role not only in upholding workplace rights but in defending and promoting the broad egalitarian values of our nation. Unions have been at the core of those values and they are needed in our country now more than ever.

I want to thank my family. I thank Greg, Fleur, Jammo, Nicholas, Alyce and, in particular, my mother, Sandra, who has always gone above and beyond to support me, including many weeks of handing out how-to-vote cards at remote and early polling places. I want to thank Dennis Liddelow and Stephen Dawson. And I want to pause to thank all of my wonderful colleagues in this place on both sides and in the other chamber. Your friendship, support and shared values have meant the world to me. I want to thank all of the parliamentary staff and officers who keep this amazing organisation moving.

It has been for me in the time I have been here an enormous privilege to work with people who, like me, are absolutely bursting with the conviction that they want to better the fabric of our great nation. I pay tribute, on that note, to my staff, current and past, for their time, talent, loyalty, fun and humour—their humour is not always in good taste, but never mind!—Justine Parker, Alanna Clohesy, Kate Deverall, Tania McCartney, Nicky McKimmie, Michael Hyde, Tony O'Gorman, David Scaife and a great many others who have volunteered their time and skills to me.

I want to thank my wonderful partner, Aram Hosie, for his love, care and support and for sharing what has been a demanding journey. Your own commitment to fighting for progressive and inclusive values has always been a wonderful inspiration to me.

I wish, of course, that I had had the opportunity to serve longer and to contribute more in this place, but it was not to be. The events surrounding the 2013 election—the recount and the re-run—brought home to me very clearly, as I am sure it did for many others in this place and throughout our community, how vitally important the integrity of our democratic processes really is and how vitally important it is to be able to have absolute confidence in the operation of the institutions and organisations that safeguard our democratic process in this nation and, indeed, the laws and regulations which govern it. Very often they have served us very well.

Unfortunately, last year that was not the case. My own personal disappointment is a minor thing, in my view, when set beside the potential for those events to undermine the trust and confidence in the electoral process which underpins the legitimacy of our parliament and our government. I will not be here in this place to be part of the discussions and debates about what steps need to be taken to ensure that what happened in Western Australia in 2013 never happens again, but I urge all of you, my soon-to-be former colleagues, and all of our colleagues in the other place to remember that the right of any government to enact any policies and of any parliament to legislate rests entirely on their democratic nature. As such, the highest priority must be that the election of governments and parliaments is fair and, indeed, is known to be fair.

I would also say, on that note, to members of my own party, whether parliamentarians or not, that fair, transparent and democratic processes within political parties are as important to the integrity of our system as are fair and transparent democratic elections. This is true not only for Labor, of course, but I have had very much a front row seat to the recent public failures of Labor in my own state of Western Australia to meet that important standard. I will be part of the state Labor conference in early July and I really hope that the prospect of reform is made a reality. It is a challenge that we simply must meet.

Again, my own personal disappointment is insignificant beside the consequences for our party, our members and, most importantly, the men and women around Australia who depend on us, on Labor, to defend their right to health care, to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work

and for their children to get a quality education. There are consequences for all those who depend on Labor to defend all those rights which together make up the Australian 'fair go'. Too often, those who resist the democratic reform of our party characterise it as a distraction, a sideshow or us focusing on ourselves. As we have seen in Western Australia, that damages more than the party itself. It damages the hopes, aspirations and chances of those whom it is Labor's purpose to serve.

In Western Australia, those people are now facing the double impact of vicious cuts at both the state and federal levels. So when we look to the issue of electoral legitimacy we must also look to the fact that before both WA Senate elections our Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, promised no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, no cuts to the ABC or SBS and no new taxes. But every one of these promises was broken in the first Hockey-Abbott budget. In other words, there is no mandate for these attacks and they have no democratic legitimacy.

Labor left government with low inflation; a million new jobs were created in the five years before the last election; there were low interest rates; net debt peaked at one-seventh of the level of other advanced economies; we have a AAA credit rating; and we have superannuation savings that are larger than the size of our economy. But the budget before this parliament is simply the Abbott government's ideological blueprint for a less fair Australia—an Australia that has dismantled egalitarian values so the rich can grow richer and leave the rest of our country behind.

But these are not social or economic principles that work. Labor knows that squeezing the spending power of those on low and middle incomes means lower demand, which in turn is bad for growth in our economy. We also know that unequal access to education shuts people out of the Labor market and stops them from reaching their potential. We know that is bad, in turn, for economic efficiency. The existence of extreme disparities between rich and poor undermines social cohesion, it erodes cooperation and trust and it has grave negative consequences for productivity in our country. In my view, the abandonment of egalitarian values is not good for people and nor is it good for our economy. Egalitarian values have always underpinned Labor's approach to work, income, superannuation, retirement, health, education and more. There are hidden in the budget papers massive cuts to many of the NGOs that support community services in Western Australia. Hidden in the budget papers there is an \$80 billion cut to our schools and hospitals—a cut for which there has been no consultation; not a shred of consultation and no forewarning or discussion. These cuts will compound what have already been devastating losses for the schools and hospitals of my state; they will hit household budgets, along with increased taxes and charges on a great many fronts.

It is, to me, an absolute disgrace that Colin Barnett has been so profoundly missing from the deep criticism directed at the Abbott government by state premiers about the impact of these cuts on our nation. Colin Barnett, as you can see from the cuts he has already made, is in lockstep ideologically with the federal coalition's abandonment of egalitarian values. The scale of the betrayal of these values is in my view unprecedented. It is a budget that will see the worst off in our community hit harder, not just in proportional terms but in absolute terms, than the best off. For example, low-income families with children are suffering reductions of between 10 and 15 per cent of their disposable income. A couple with two school-aged children earning \$60,000 will stand to lose just over \$6,000 while for those on \$200,000 the

impact is just \$400. Think about that. In Joe Hockey's Australia, in Tony Abbott's Australia, the harder you are doing it the harder the coalition will slug you. That is why we have seen such anger in the Australian community over the unfairness of this budget. The issue is immediate and it remains white-hot.

This just goes to show how out of touch the Abbott government is in completely failing to realise that the fair go is a mainstream Australian value. They completely fail to realise that their hatred of Medicare is a minority view in our country, and they fail to realise that despite the best efforts of successive Liberal governments Australians care for their neighbours; they care for their workmates and their friends and not just for themselves. The government underestimates the innate Australian ethos of mateship, and it underestimates the capacity of Australians to extend that mateship beyond traditional limitations. It has been, in my opinion, an all too frequent failure of those who wish to imagine that others share their own narrow view of community—a view curtailed by income, by race, by gender or by sexual orientation.

I am proudly on the left of my party. Those with my views are often characterised, kindly, as progressives or, less kindly, as radicals. Either term is used to marginalise us, to imply we are extreme or to suggest we are a minority. I have always found it ironic that the very views that led to my being labelled like that are exactly those views which are shared by the majority of the Australian population—although not by the majority of the Australian parliament. I support the end of discrimination in the Marriage Act—not because it affects me, although it does affect me, but because equal rights for all Australians has always been a touchstone for me, in all aspects of my political involvement. I can assure you that that will remain the case in the future. More than 65 per cent of Australians agree with me. If this parliament truly reflected the views of those who elect us, marriage equality would be a reality.

I support the right of women to make their own reproductive choices and not have government make those choices for them—and 80 per cent of Australians agree with me. I have been equally opposed to laws that force women to bear children when they do not want to and laws intended to prevent women from bearing children when they wish to. Pro choice means the right to choose, and I am profoundly grateful that I have been able to choose motherhood. I participated in amending laws intended to prevent women like me from accessing the same medical care as married women. I did that back in 2001 in the state parliament. Laws were finally changed in Victoria in 2010, finally giving women like me, regardless of their marital status, regardless of the gender of our partners or whether we have partners at all, access to the same legal rights to treatment as married women in this country. Despite attempts to characterise views such as mine as radical, every piece of research in this country demonstrates that these views are shared by a majority of Australians. They are mainstream views, and it is those who deny them that are the extremists in our country. It remains a great disappointment to me that my party still contains a small rump of those extremists who exercise, in my view, power far in excess of their number, and most certainly in excess of their support among our party's members and among our party's unions.

I have spent my time in this place—indeed, my whole involvement in the Labor Party—working to fulfil my commitment to making this country a better place. It is a long-held and never-finished task, as a great Labor Prime Minister once said:

To promote equality, involve the people of Australia in the decision-making processes of our land; and liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people.

For me, motherhood will not change that. In fact, as I anticipate parenthood I feel more commitment, more dedication and more urgency about the task of making this country one where all of us enjoy equal rights and equal protection before the law, where a helping hand and a fair go are for all, regardless of where you live or who your parents are. As I think of the country that my child will live in—the future they will see—I am more certain than ever that we cannot argue anymore that the problems that affect the rest of the world can be stopped at our borders. We are more interconnected than at any time in human history; surely the global financial crisis taught us that. Surely the challenge of our changing climate shows us that. And surely the plight of refugees who have made their way to our shores also shows us that.

If we want a better Australia, we must do our part as global citizens to build and create a better world, and we must appreciate that we cannot do it alone, either. Our national interest demands that we be engaged global citizens, that we take part in genuine international cooperation and that we take our share of responsibility for addressing climate change and for addressing inequality both in and outside our nation's borders. And it demands that we learn as well as teach.

In the months and years ahead, this place will see these and other great challenges for our country and our community discussed and debated. I have to say that my faith in our democracy is strong enough for me to say that perhaps they will even be resolved. I leave those endeavours in your hands, my friends, and in the hands of those who are soon to join this chamber. I wish you well, I wish you success, and I wish you to see clearly the real needs and aspirations of those who should be the highest aim of our parliament. That is the Australian people. My own efforts to this end will be in other places in the months and years ahead, but I promise you that they will not cease.

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (17:31): I thank everyone for their patience this afternoon. It has been a long afternoon.

The art of oratory is to be concise and precise—and we have excellent models to follow. The Lord's Prayer is a mere 69 words long, the Declaration of Independence is but 297 words and the apology to our stolen people is 360 words long. I will do my best to emulate these great examples and the words of President Franklin D Roosevelt: 'Be sincere. Be brief. Be seated.'

I acknowledge all of my colleagues who are retiring on 30 June and thank them for their friendship and support. We work very closely together as a team here. People outside of parliament do not perhaps understand the friendships we develop. I wish you all good luck in your future endeavours.

When I was elected to the Senate in 2001, I knew my work was going to be challenging and exciting, but I did not for one minute anticipate that it was going to be so much fun. The truth is that I have thoroughly enjoyed the long hours—believe it or not—the intellectual challenges, the hard-fought battles, the small victories and the many friendships that, as I said, have defined my time here.

We have heard from others today and during the week about their mixed feelings in leaving this place, their relief at having the chance to pursue other interests and opportunities being tempered by their sense of loss at the chance to continue contributing to the national debate. As you might expect, I agree with that ambivalence.

But my overwhelming feeling, like that of many colleagues we have heard from today, about my political term coming to an end is one of gratitude—to the Australian Labor Party of course and to the people of New South Wales—that I have had the good fortune to spend the past 12 years devoted to advancing the quality of life of all Australians. Not only is this a great cause, but where else would I work on a daily basis with such a diverse group of bright, highly motivated people and where else would I get to measure my accomplishments by the success of my colleagues and by the work that they do to create a better world for everyone?

We hear almost daily the most cynical remarks about political life and about how disengaged the younger generations are. But I would like to take this opportunity to recommend a life of political leadership to young Australians, especially to young women—and, more especially still, to young Labor women. I remind them of the wise words of Pericles:

Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.

Although I must warn you, colleagues, that the young are getting younger—as we can hear from up there in the gallery.

I was talking to some young school leaders recently and I asked them what the most significant event in their life thus far had been. I was quite taken aback when they said, 'Facebook, smartphones and wi-fi'. When I asked, 'What about September 11?', they said, 'We would only have been three or four at the time, so we don't really remember that.'

We need to remember that fact—that what shapes future policy will be the needs and the aspirations of these generations—those whose memories are not embedded in stories of war and constitutional or economic crises. At one or two generations removed from the formative influences of our lives, they have very different expectations and aspirations. I want to assure them, though, that politics is the most fulfilling and satisfying endeavour—and we need them to be involved.

But a politician can only do so much. We quickly realise that, however much any one individual can achieve, it cannot compare with the power and the passion of a band of willing, public-spirited people determined to bring about change. Several such people are here with us this evening and they represent the sector of our society that works in the hardest and darkest places: dealing with refugees and asylum seekers, with poverty, homelessness, addiction and mental illness, both here and abroad. We need to cherish and encourage these people who spend their lives in the service of the most needy. I am very grateful that I have had the opportunity to work with all of you and I salute you all for your dedication and commitment.

The poor may always be with us, but I have no patience with the idea of dividing those in need into 'deserving' and 'undeserving' categories. One thing is clear to me: however tough the challenge, we have no choice but to look after each other. On the way to work last week, the traffic was delayed because a duck had been hit and injured by a car—it could only happen in Canberra. What held us up was not the wounded duck; it was its companion. Despite all the

traffic and the fog and the danger, the duck hovered over its fellow creature, concerned for its wellbeing. I thought to myself: yes, even a duck looks after its mate.

Last week's report from the UNHCR found that for the first time since 1945, at the end of World War II, there are now more than 51.2 million people displaced from their homes across the world. In other words, the number of people forcibly displaced today is almost double the entire population of Australia. On top of refugees, last year 1.1 million people applied for asylum in developed countries, and a record 25,300 of these asylum applications were for children who were separated from or unaccompanied by parents. We simply cannot be apathetic in the face of the mass suffering that is reflected in these figures. It is playing out on our television screens every day as we witness the unspeakable abuses around the world—in Iraq, in Syria, in Nigeria and in the Central African Republic, to name a few. While we debate, lives are being systematically and brutally destroyed.

Here in Australia we are hiding serious human rights violations of refugees and asylum seekers at our offshore processing centres. We are not the only country falling short of our human rights obligations. The USA, with all its resources and wealth, resettled only 36 Syrian refugees last year. In contrast, Germany took 25,500 people from Syria. Neither China nor Russia resettled even one refugee last year.

So how on earth did we get to this? Dame Mary Gilmore, in her poem called *Nationality*, which many of us learnt at school, puts her finger on the nub of the problem. Let me remind you of it:

I have grown past hate and bitterness,
I see the world as one;
But though I can no longer hate,
My son is still my son.
All men at God's round table sit,
and all men must be fed;
But this loaf in my hand,
This loaf is my son's bread.

The truth is that we are at a point now where we must find a way, somehow, to feed our own son and also look after our fellow human beings in need.

Of course, intervention always has its consequences, but we need to remember that inaction has consequences, too. This is as important for me in my post-political life as it is for all of you, my parliamentary colleagues, and indeed for all Australians. It is a mark of our dignity as human beings not to turn our faces away from the challenges that lie before us, but to go ahead and meet them.

I have always believed that most people want to and need to contribute to making a better world, and that an essential part of my political responsibility was to help remove whatever barriers might be preventing them from achieving their aspirations. I know that when barriers are removed and people succeed and thrive the rewards are immense, for them and for all of us. I know, too, that for programs and services to be more efficient and more effective in public policy terms they need to fit the people we are, rather than expect people to mould themselves to structures that comprise what is an inflexible service system. That is the

underpinning principle of citizen-centred service delivery and social inclusion best encapsulated in our vision for the NDIS.

Mr President, you know that I have never been an adversarial politician. Instead, I believe in the power and potential of respectful negotiation, collaboration and relationship building. Even in defeat everything worth working for takes time, effort, commitment and the determination not to give up simply because it is a long, hard road.

I recently met a doctor who reminded me that in fact we had met before, over 20 years ago. That was when he was a young Indigenous lad facing a bleak future. I had enrolled him in a program that blended academic skills with life skills, fitness and driver training. As a result of his efforts he gained entry into the police academy. He rose to the rank of senior sergeant before deciding a few years ago to train as a psychiatrist. He is now completing his medical registrar's course. I am telling this story because I am so proud of his efforts, and because I am glad that I was able to play a small part in helping to remove the barriers so likely to prevent him from realising his potential—his Aboriginality, his poverty, his upbringing in a remote part of Australia and his low level of education. But there is still so much work to be done, both inside parliament and in the wider world, to protect the interests of people just like that young man.

I believe that the key to meeting these challenges is education. I have an unshakable belief in its intrinsic value in helping each individual to sustain a rich inner life, its value in opening up opportunities to people whose existence might otherwise be severely curtailed, and, on a broader scale, of course, its value to the fabric of our society. Indeed, education has been the common thread in all I have done in my own life, here, in teaching children and adults, in consulting, in the public service and in undertaking research—and that will continue.

As a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security, I have loved the complexity, the intellectual rigour and the privilege of working in areas of national security, and also the perennial debate we have here about balancing national security interests with the privacy of individuals. But I have to say I was caught off guard, literally, when I bumped into the Director of the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation in a local coffee shop in Goulburn last weekend. However, he reassured me my secret was safe with him.

We do not have many chances in our political life to be at the beginning of something and to see it through. So I am also very proud of the work done in establishing the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, and to have been part of that committee since its inception, shaping the way in which it would work, would educate you as our colleagues and would consider our national legislation through the new lens of international human rights.

Unfortunately, that cannot be said for the work that I have been involved in over many years in the space of charity law reform and strengthening the not-for-profit sector, because the Abbott government identified early that it would abolish the ACNC—the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. I cannot understand why, given that it emerged from the original calls across the board in the Industry Commission of the 1990s, repeated again in a series of parliamentary inquiries and the 2010 Australian Productivity Commission. For the sector, the abolition of the ACNC represents a backward step, unravelling the reform that provided greater transparency and better administration. Frankly, this is one election promise that the government could break with good grace.

So I am leaving some unfinished business for the new Senate: how best to meet the structural challenges of the social economy; how to invest in the workforce; and how to strengthen the financial capacity of the sector. These are important policy and service challenges for the future.

Australia's place in the world is reflected through our foreign policy. My work on the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade have taken me to all corners of the world, physically and metaphorically. None of us here underestimates the importance of our committee work.

The foreign affairs committees and their subcommittees are charged with strengthening our interactions with the diplomatic corps, and dealing with issues that underpin Australia's relationships with the rest of the world. The current inquiry by the Foreign Affairs and Aid Sub-Committee is a case in point, bringing us into close contact with multinational organisations, businesses and global initiatives. It highlights too the interaction and interdependence of our foreign policy and the role of our Defence services.

We have so much to be proud of, but we also have a responsibility. We have a responsibility to shine a light into the dark corners that have been the behaviours of our government agencies and our institutions, and we should not shy away from that and what it reveals.

Friends and colleagues, some of my memories that will endure from my time here include: my first Senate hearing of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, not here but on Elcho Island; the Bali Memorial Service in the Great Hall that brought so many of us to tears; the apology to the stolen generations and the subsequent apology to the forgotten Australians; and our most recent work on the joint committee on the NDIS.

I leave knowing that everything that I have done here I have tried to do on the basis of principle. There are constant and ongoing efforts to sway, to duress and to compromise us as politicians. But as others have said—in their own way—the only worthwhile contributions we can make to this place are by being true to our beliefs, not by wavering in the breeze or being for sale to the highest bidder.

Of course, our work is not confined to Canberra. And the thrill of meeting popes or poets, presidents or princesses goes nowhere near the enduring satisfaction of working hard for a constituent to resolve an intractable issue, like the recent success of my year-long advocacy in unravelling the poorly managed family reunion application of a Somali constituent. He had not seen his eight-year-old son since he was a baby, but finally, through the persistence of my staff and the support of departmental officials, the family was reunited in Sydney.

Friends, it was Barack Obama who reminded us that 'all of us share this world for but a brief moment in time.' The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart or whether we commit ourselves to an effort, a sustained effort, to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children and to respect the dignity of all human beings. Well, our work in this place is meaningful because, like the ducks, we are not meant to go it alone—we need each other. And certainly I have enjoyed generous support and wise counsel from my political colleagues and I thank you all. Thank you too, to my staff, collaborators,

mentors, friends and family, and the extended NSW Labor family for helping to make my Senate career both memorable and rewarding.

So what next for citizen Stephens? Well, it is home to the country for me for a while. I love country life and feel very much a part of my Goulburn community. I will continue to be involved in Labor politics because I have always believed that conservative governments have to be held to account. That is the role for us in Labor in opposition at the moment: to embrace change without ever compromising our values or diluting our principles. This is true not just for our elected representatives but also for the rank-and-file members whose lives are conducted far from this lovely building.

So, I plan to use my experience to continue working for the cause of justice both here in Australia and internationally through contributions to the work of the United Nations Development Programme and as a member of the Advisory Board of the International Humanitarian Centre. I still derive enjoyment from teaching, mentoring and writing, and plan to do all these from time to time; however, I promise there is no political memoir in the pipeline.

I want make sure that the next chapter of my life allows me plenty of time to spend with the ever-patient Bob—who is here tonight—our children and our wonderful, noisy, boisterous grandchildren, Gabriel—who is up there—Xavier, Adele, beautiful baby James and No. 5, who is about to arrive very soon.

My sincere thanks and farewell to everyone who supports the work we do here: from Tim and the staff in the Members and Guests Dining Room, to the hardworking Broadcasting staff beavering in the basement and everyone in between, Ian and Peter in Senate transport and the crazy troupe of Comcar drivers, the attendants, librarians, cleaners, Hansard, security, mail, committees and, of course, the officers of the Senate. You all provide extraordinary service to this place and, don't forget, through your work to the Australian people. Thank you—or as the Irish would say, as a tip to the Irish ambassador: Go raibh mile maith agaibh.

Mr President, as you know, it is the gift of the Irish to always have a snatch of poetry or the fragment of a song running in our heads for every occasion. We are all familiar with the lovely Irish blessing, 'May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back.' That is not the one I have chosen for today. Today I have chosen a personal favourite:

Of all the comrades e'er I had
They are sorry for my going away
And for all the comrades e'er I had
They would wish me one more day to stay
But since it falls unto my lot
That I should go and you should not
So fill to me the parting glass
Goodnight and joy be to you all.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (17:58): Tonight the Senate farewells a quadrella of very different but very proud Labor warriors. All have enhanced the reputation of the noble pursuit of being involved in public life. All four of them have fallen on the battlefield of the public ideals in which they believe—not a pleasant

experience but, if I might say, very honourable. People fall on both sides courtesy of the ballot box. I have been there in failed attempts to get into this place and have some understanding of what it is like. The willingness to put yourself up and to argue for a cause with your fellow Australians is a most noble cause. On behalf of the coalition, I acknowledge the four senators' contributions.

Can I also say that it was an absolute treat to be able to sit in this place for about 1½ hours and listen to speeches without a single interjection from Senator Wong, Senator Carr, Senator Conroy or Senator Lines. It was absolutely a treat.

Can I turn quickly to the four individual senators in order of their presentation this evening. Senator Tillem has not been with us for very long and I confess I did not get to know him very well. He has been with us, one could say, for only eight months but, interestingly, that is by no means the shortest term a senator has served. I am reliably informed that a senator came in on a casual vacancy and served less than half of that time. We wish Senator Tillem all the best in the next chapter of his life and in politics. I think that he hinted we might not know what is around the corner but, whatever he endeavours to do, we on this side wish him well.

I turn to the Senator Lin Thorp, a fellow Tasmanian. She did lose me when she was starting to extol the virtues of the Whitlam government. But she won me back again when she talked about the wonders of Tasmania and her love for our home state of Tasmania. Senator Thorp, as she showed at question time and take note of answers today, is feisty to the very end in the cause in which she believes. Personally, but also on behalf of the coalition, I wish Senator Thorp well.

Senator Thorp, like Senator Pratt, served in the upper house of her state, I understand, before coming to the Senate, so both of these senators have the great credit of not having sullied themselves by being involved in the lower houses of the parliaments in the state or federally. Senator Pratt—you will not be surprised to know—there was not much that I could identify with in your comments. But I think the underlying point that you made, which is vitally important irrespective of what our beliefs might be, is that we need absolute integrity in the electoral system and, if I might say, you made that point exceptionally well. Having had the experience that you did and the trauma of living through that and the uncertainty of an election night, a recount and then a re-election, really, I think you are qualified to make comments about those matters. For the sake of our parliament and our democracy everybody, irrespective of what their views are, has to be able to have confidence that the result that is delivered is a fair one and reflective of the vote, and you advocated that point exceptionally well.

Last but by no means least, can I turn to Senator Ursula Stevens. She has had a particular interest in social inclusion and the voluntary sector and, I note, she has served as parliamentary secretary in that area assisting the former Prime Minister Rudd. She has been an effective committee member and has stood up for strong, sound social values, and that has certainly been noted by me and by many others in this place.

I had some prepared notes here which said: Senator Stephens has also brought poetry into the pages of *Hansard*. She did not disappoint tonight, but I do confess that we were not expecting her to break out into song! Can I simply say, thank goodness you have got an excellent singing voice because, if I were to try to emulate you, it would not be half as melodic as your contribution. Your poetry did lighten the debates from time to time and you

brought that special characteristic to many a parliamentary comment. You were a great advocate for the regional areas of Australia and you have indicated that you look forward to going back to country life after your retirement from this place.

Can I also acknowledge on a personal basis that there are many people in both houses that are very appreciative of your presidency of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship and the work that you undertook for the church service that commences the parliamentary year and also the National Prayer Breakfast. These are vitally important for the maintenance of the rich heritage and the social fabric of our society, and those values and beliefs are in fact the bedrock of our society. I close by wishing all four senators, on behalf of the coalition, all the very best for the future. We wish you good health and happiness as you go forward in whatever life may hold for you. All the best.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (18:05): I rise as Leader of the Opposition to regretfully farewell four of my colleagues, four of our Labor team who we will all miss greatly. It is not possible in the time frame to do justice to the length and quality of service that is departing at the conclusion this term, nor is it possible to follow up Senator Stephens's contribution and look reasonable, so I shall just add a few notes of comment.

First to Senator Tillem. As others have said Senator Tillem was appointed to the Senate in August last year. I do want to say that he has made an extremely valuable contribution even in the short time he has served in this place. I was struck by Senator Tillem's first speech, which I thought was both thoughtful and moving. He spoke very movingly of multiculturalism and diversity, a great contribution to this chamber but also to public debate. In a place like Parliament House, Canberra, which is not unknown for people having a bit of ego, he is also a senator who is often unassuming and quiet, and he has demonstrated a real professionalism and willingness to learn and apply himself in the time he has been here. He also has been an enrichment to the cultural diversity of this chamber and this parliament, which is always welcome.

As he said, he claims his place in history as the first person of Turkish origin to serve in the Australian parliament and the first Muslim member of the Senate. His is a story that should be at home in today's Australia—certainly at home in the Australian Labor Party—given his background of his family's migration from Turkey, his parents' working in factories and living in public accommodation in Melbourne. A man from such humble origins who has risen to become a member of the Australian Senate is a testament to the aspiration of egalitarianism in the Australian democracy. I hope he returns one day to this place, and I say to my colleagues in Victoria that, if the Victorian branch of the ALP and the Victorian people re-endorse him in any capacity, I certainly would look forward to welcoming him back to Labor's parliamentary team.

I turn now to Senator Thorp, who also has only been in this place a short time but has had a much longer career representing Tasmanians. She has, as she said in her speech, substantial prior service, having served in the Tasmanian Legislative Council from 1999 to 2011. This is a substantial period of service, both on the back bench and, of course, as a minister. She brought important experience to the Australian Senate from that work. But what I want to emphasise is that Senator Thorp's life experiences, coming from a working-class family and as a high school teacher and a teacher of young women from disadvantaged backgrounds,

ensured that she came to this chamber not only as an advocate for Tasmania—and we heard some of that in her speech—but also as someone who understands the role that poverty, disadvantage and family dysfunction play in preventing people from reaching their potential.

She spoke in her speech about those who are not blessed and about the need for government to do what we must do to ensure people can rise above their circumstances. She is a passionate advocate for social justice and a passionate advocate and worker against inequality, and she spoke in her contribution tonight about the effect of inequality on community, on society and, of course, on our economy. It is disappointing for us that we lose her experience at a time when we are fighting a budget which, I think, has inequality at its heart. We certainly thank her for her contribution to the Senate and we wish her well for the future.

I turn now to my friend and colleague Louise Pratt, who enjoys the distinction of having arrived here to find Labor in government. As she said, she took her place here from 1 July 2008, bringing with her her experience as a member of the Legislative Council in Western Australia. I understand—I did not know this until I looked in more detail at her career—that she was one of the youngest members of the Legislative Council in Western Australian history. She was 29 years old when she was elected. We have talked previously about how hard life is for Western Australian politicians, and you have to say that, given the travel and stresses and strains, some might look at Senator Pratt's decision to leave the Western Australian parliament to come to Canberra as being a pretty tough decision, but we are very glad that she did. In the term that Senator Pratt has served, she has made a deeply valued contribution to the work of the ALP and to the Senate. She currently serves on the front bench. She has performed valuable work in committees. Her reflections tonight on democracy, on the economy and on egalitarianism reflect her values.

But perhaps the most significant area of her advocacy has been in the area of discrimination, particularly where it concerns LGBTI Australians. She reminded us again tonight of the powerful principle of equality, and I want to say this in this place: we all know that being different is never easy, but being gay in this parliament and open about it is certainly not easy; it takes a degree of courage, and I thank her for that. As I said, she made an enormous contribution in her advocacy for equality. I would commend those who wish to look at her contribution on the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Bill 2013 in this place last year, where she spoke of the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex Australians and the fact that it was unbelievable that those Australians could still be legally discriminated against under Commonwealth law. She also spoke about the important reforms that the Labor government had introduced, in which she played a part. The achievements of Labor in removing inequality when it comes to LGBTI Australians would not have been possible without the advocacy, support and courage of Senator Pratt. We thank her for that, and we wish her well as she prepares for the new arrival. I am sure that in the months ahead she will not have time to think about us at all.

Finally, Senator Stephens and I came into this place together. We were probably a little thinner and less grey—yes? I suspect she actually looks a lot better than I do, compared to when we came in. It is quite difficult to farewell someone with whom you were elected. I was thinking as you were speaking, Senator Stephens, about the training day that we had. I think

you probably had been here before and I had not. I was thinking about how overwhelming it felt to learn about what it meant to be a senator and to stand up and be given a little motion to read and to learn all about that. So we have certainly, some would say, come a long way in that time.

Senator Stephens, at the conclusion of her speech, spoke about loving her life in the country and feeling part of the Goulburn community. If you look at her first speech in the chamber, she reminded us then that she was the only member of the parliament formally elected under the banner of Country Labor and how determined she was to give a voice to the many regional and rural communities that had been abandoned by the National Party—forgive me; I am quoting of course! Senator Stephens certainly has provided a direct voice for her community. Labor is poorer for her departure, and so is the Senate.

There are a number of things about Senator Stephens that I would like to remark upon, some of which were referenced in her speech. First, there is the work she has done over so many years, and in such depth, in relation to the third sector, the voluntary sector, which I think she described as 'those who work in the deepest, darkest places'. She has made a great contribution to the nation and to Labor. She is a woman of compassion, as was demonstrated again tonight in her discussion of the situation confronting so many of the world's refugees. Markedly, she chose to speak to young women in her speech and invite and encourage more young women to seek a career in politics.

Senator Stephens is known for her love of literature and poetry. Her speech tonight went from Pericles to Dame Mary Gilmore and many others—I do not know that there are many members of the Senate who could give such a speech—and she ended in song, which was a lovely touch. She is a woman of principle and a woman of belief. She has real generosity of spirit and has brought real graciousness to her service in the Senate. I thank her for a service.

In closing, I thank my departing colleagues for their contribution. With apologies to Senator Tillem, we are saying goodbye to three feisty Labor women and we are a party that takes very seriously the importance of ensuring that we reflect the community in our representation. It is sad to see three strong women leaving these seats. Every senator who spoke tonight talked about the enormous privilege they have been given in serving as a Labor senator in this place. I think that says something about our party and about all of you. Thank you.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (18:17): I rise on behalf of the National Party to respond to the valedictory speeches of four senators who are leaving this place. Given the number of colleagues who want to make a contribution, I will speak only in relation to Senator Stephens. I have chosen to speak about Senator Stephens because we both came to this place in 2001. Senators Tillem, Pratt and Thorp, I hope you will understand. I seek leave to incorporate into *Hansard* three valedictory speeches in relation to Senators Tillem, Pratt and Thorp.

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

Senator Mehmet Tillem

While Senator Tillem's time in the Senate has only been brief, as he was chosen by the Parliament of Victoria on 21 August 2013 to represent that State in the Senate, his inclusion in this place is noteworthy.

Senator Tillem is the first Turkish born Member of Parliament. His work in the Senate must be a source of much pride to him and his family, having come to Australia at a young age.

The multicultural nature of the Australian Parliament is something that Senator Tillem has always praised.

In December 2013, in pointing to the diversity of immigrant backgrounds in the Parliament, Senator Tillem stated, "yet we are all Australians, sharing common Australian values, sharing common civic responsibilities, and all working for the benefit of our common homeland". And he added, "That's one of the things that give me faith in the future of this country"; focusing on the things that unite us all as Australians.

He has also had a strong interest in other issues such as boosting organ donations in Australia and the wider issue of housing affordability.

It is with regret that we see a champion for those with immigrant backgrounds and their ability to make a difference, leave the Senate but on behalf of the National Party, we all wish you well in your new endeavours and congratulate on your achievements.

Senator Louise Pratt

Senator Louise Pratt was elected as Senator for Western Australia in 2007 and prior to that served as a member of the Western Australian Legislative Council from 2001 to 2007; and at the time was the youngest woman ever elected to the Legislative Council.

A member of the Legislative Council she made an enormous contribution as part of her appointment to a Ministerial committee on gay and lesbian reform to make recommendations regarding the elimination of discrimination in state law.

After being elected to the Senate, she has always been a strong voice of support for diversity, including for marriage equality.

In the face of intrusions into her personal life, Senator Pratt has always maintained a dignified stance, and instead of taking offence, has demonstrated an admirable tolerance — tolerance being what she has fought hard for, regardless of a person's sexuality— and regardless of those whose views she does not share.

I do believe she has assisted to generate greater awareness of the importance of respecting diversity in Australian society.

I would also like to highlight the breadth of Senator Pratt's contribution via her Committee service in the Parliament, including being a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, the Standing Committee on Economics, and the Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts, among others. She has also had a strong interest in policy issues involving foreign aid, immigration, social inclusion and workforce participation.

In her maiden speech in the Senate, Senator Pratt spoke of her experience in being struck by the deep disadvantage she saw facing Indigenous people in communities in the Land north of Kalgoorlie from where Senator Pratt hails. And she acknowledged that real leadership

would be needed to address the inequality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Aboriginal Australians.

While she has not always supported Conservative governments' approach to disadvantage in Indigenous communities, I know that her concern with issues of substance abuse, violence and reconciliation are genuine.

Senator Pratt, I wish you well in your new life. I congratulate you and your partner, Aram Hosie, on the impending birth of your much wanted child later this year. We all wish you and your family all the very best.

Senator the Hon Lin Thorp

Senator Thorp was first elected to the Tasmanian Legislative Council for Rumney in 1999 and served in key portfolios as Minister for Education and Skills; Minister for Children; and Minister for Police and Emergency Management. Prior to entering politics she served as a Teacher for 22 years, as well as working as a Health Research Consultant and a Medical School Consultant.

She was chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania on 20 June 2012 to represent that State in the Senate. Since that time she has served on several Committees.

There is no doubting Senator Thorp's commitment to the State of Tasmania, even if we on this side see some of her efforts regarding Tasmania's World Heritage Area, misguided.

In addition, Senator Thorp has been a proponent of those suffering with dementia — an illness that is having an increasing impact on families and communities across society.

Senator Thorp I wish you, on behalf of the National Party, all the very best for your future.

Senator SCULLION: Senator Stephens, I think we are all surprised that the vagaries of democracy now see you leaving this place. If the people across New South Wales had known that their scribblings on a ballot paper would lead to this, they might have put the mark in a different place. Regardless of our different political views, you have always conducted yourself in a dignified manner in this chamber and to great effect. This has seen people actively pursue some of the philosophies that you do. You have been engaging and you have demonstrated qualities that we should all aspire to—not being adversarial but seeking to negotiate and find a compromise.

You have been actively engaged in grassroots politics. I was surprised in 2001 when I asked you if you were in the Labor Party and you said, 'No; I'm in Country Labor.' I thought there was perhaps an additional party here! Parliamentarians who come from the country are judged every day; there are not many trees and buildings to hide behind; you are very visible in your own community. A lot of your work relates to community development in some of your own communities—adult and community education, social justice and environment issues—and I think that goes back some 30 years.

Senator Stephens served on numerous committees in the parliament. She has been a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights since its formation; in fact, she was the substantial driving force behind its formation. I think in acknowledging the work of former member Alby Schultz you graciously said, 'To give him credit, he is a very experienced, connected parish-pump politician.' Those very same words aptly describe the kind of politician that you yourself are—a tireless worker for your constituents. Under the

former government, you served as Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector. You were involved in the national compact, a national volunteering strategy and a program of regulatory reform leading to the establishment of Australia's first national charities register—the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission—which came into effect in 2012. And prior to 2007 you served in a number of roles, including shadow parliamentary secretary for science and water and shadow parliamentary secretary for regional development.

Senator Stephens, we were all a bit confused when you were not a part of the frontbench line-up in the Gillard government—and I know that was met with some regret and sadness by the not-for-profit sector. You had invested a lot of effort in this important area, and clearly you had become their champion in the parliament. Your engagement with community organisations and your skills in ensuring that diverse voices are heard, has clearly been identified as second to none. You have a genuine concern for anyone excluded from society. Senator Stephens's interest in community service also extended to mental health, and she helped form Parliamentary Friends of Schizophrenia to raise awareness of the disease.

Senator Stephens, you have been a delightful colleague. The teaching profession lost a gifted educator when you came to the Senate. But it was our gain, and indeed Australia's gain, and I know you will be missed from across the political divide. I am sure you will continue to make a valuable contribution to the community, because that is who you are.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (18:22): I just want to concur with so many of the remarks that have been made tonight, particularly in relation to my four colleagues who are leaving. Senator Tillem, as people have noted, has only been here for a short time. But he has certainly left his mark on this chamber, and particularly on his colleagues on this side of the chamber.

To Senator Pratt and Senator Thorp: we do not always see eye to eye on some issues, but I respect your views. I respect the fact that you have come to this place and made an outstanding contribution to the Australian Senate and, more importantly, you have made a great contribution to our community.

Senator Thorp, as a fellow Tasmanian, your passion has always been evident and I thank you for that. I particularly thank you for the work that you did on the supertrawler and the stopping of that. As a recreational fishing person, as well as your Labor colleague, I have to say that that was an important issue and, unfortunately, I do not think that fight is over yet.

Not only have you made that contribution here in the Senate, but I acknowledge the work that you did in the Tasmanian Legislative Council. I know that you will always be there as a Labor person, who will be there to support not only young women coming forward but other young people as they enter our parliament. So thank you and I pay you my respects.

I will not tell the whole story about Senator Stephens, but she was my chamber buddy when I first came to this place. I will leave it at that! Your passion, your enthusiasm and your friendship helped me in those early days and I want to thank you for that. We shared some good times and we have shared some very passionate discussions about issues that are important to the Australian community. I want to thank you, too, because you do enter every debate and you respect those people who have a different view. I think we in this chamber must always remember, whether you are on the other side, on the crossbenches or here, that

we are all here to do the very best we can for the Australian community. We must always value and respect other people's points of view. That is what a tolerant Australia is all about.

I know other colleagues here want to touch more on the contributions that each and every one of you has made to the Australian community, but I want to thank you for your friendship. Tasmania's doors are always open, so our hospitality is extended to you. I appreciate your friendship. You particularly, Ursula, have been a good friend and I wish you and Bob good health and a good life going forward.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (18:25): I would also like to make a short contribution to the departing senators in this valedictory speech. Many of you know—I am not sure if you all know—that Senator Lin Thorp and I are friends. We have been friends since 1992, when she stood for the Labor Party at the state election. She was unsuccessful at that time and we went on to work together as part of former senator Sue Mackay's first intake of staff.

We were also lucky enough to form a club at that time, the Thunderbirds. I would love to be able to tell you what the Thunderbirds is all about, but it is a very exclusive club. One thing that binds the Thunderbirds together is their deep commitment to one another and their support for one another. I think that Lin's speech today—and what could be her last speech to the Senate—said exactly what Lin Thorp is all about. Her speech today was all about putting on record her desires for the world and Australia, those desires being for a fair, just and equitable Australia and world. Those are the principles that Lin has always stood by.

Lin has never been in parliamentary life for herself. She has always been in parliamentary life for what she can do for others, what she can do for her community. And that is what I have always loved about Lin. You always know, from whatever position she is coming from, that it is a position she has thought deeply about and it is a position that she has taken that she believes will benefit our country and Tasmania. She loves Tasmania, as all Tasmanian senators do, and anyone who has been privileged enough to visit Tasmania would know that we are indeed the best state in the Commonwealth.

Lin is also a very even-tempered senator. I would say that there would not be many in here who would have ever seen Lin riled. It would be a rare occasion. In fact, it is hard for me to remember an occasion. She is very even tempered and very respectful of other people's views. But I did see her quite riled once and this was when she was one of the very first people to be chucked out of the state parliament—by none other than Senator Polley's brother, Michael Polley! Senator Thorp at that time asked the former Speaker, Michael Polley, whether he actually had the right to do that. Unfortunately, he does and he did. Lin also talked about the fact that she has only been here in the Senate for a short time, unfortunately.

I have to say, I feel that a large majority of the community and the media do not acknowledge the work of the Senate committee system or understand it. There is a lot of work that is done by all the senators in this place on committees that go on to provide valuable work and valuable recommendations that inform the policies and decision making of governments. Only today, we saw Lin's work as the chair of the Environment and Communications References Committee actually have an effect. It not only had an effect here in Australia but also internationally when we saw the World Heritage Committee rejecting the application of the government in terms of their efforts to delist the World Heritage Area in Tasmania. There are not many senators who have had their work and their reports quoted as a

part of the World Heritage Committee's reasoning to reject this delisting, an important issue for Australia and Tasmania.

I thank you, Lin, for that, and I thank you for your friendship. Also, Lin mentioned that we lived together up here. For the majority of the time, we lived together with Julie Collins, the member for Franklin, in Oxley Court. On the very first day we lived together in that two-bedroom apartment, with two single beds and a double bed, Lin and I got buddied up together. It was a terrible night from me, because of the noises! She talks in her sleep, she argues and she has a clock that tick-tocks. The next day, Lin was unceremoniously chucked out of my bedroom. We put her in the double and Julie had to come and sleep with me. We had fun there. We had fun together and we had many times when we would go home and talk about what had happened in the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

Lin also gave me my first shock, as I suppose I should call it. Lin has now only been here for two years. Quite frankly, since at that point in time she crossed the floor and voted with the then opposition, I am actually surprised she lasted that long! Lin accidentally crossed the floor and voted with the opposition. That was when I was acting whip. I was never acting whip ever again. I am very proud to have served with Lin Thorp in the Senate. I am very proud to have been her friend for so many years, and I wish Lin all the best. I wish her, Toby and her family all the best. She has done a great job. She should be proud. She should be proud of the work she has done here and the work she did in the upper house in Tasmania both as a member and as a state minister. We will miss you. I will miss you and I am sure many others of your colleagues will.

I would like to say a few words about Senator Pratt, who is my buddy here.

Senator Pratt: We do not have to share a bed, fortunately!

Senator CAROL BROWN: She is not a very good buddy, I have to say! She is right into technology, so she does not really talk very much. I just want to put on record that from the very first moment I met Louise she was right into pushing for those issues and for those groups that were marginalised in the community. She never stopped. I do not expect her to ever stop until we have achieved what we have set out to achieve. Louise has been heavily involved in social justice issues, LGBTI issues, community groups and Indigenous groups. She is passionate, as she said in her contribution here today, about equal rights. That, of course, comes to marriage equality.

We have had some ups and downs in terms of the Labor Party when we come to marriage equality. We have had some downs in terms of the legislation that has been introduced in the parliament on marriage equality, of which Louise was a sponsoring senator. As Senator Penny Wong said at the time, 'We might not win the vote here today, but we are on the side of right.' I can assure Louise—and I know that Louise will be there with us—that we will pursue this issue until the right thing is done and there is true equality in Australia regardless of one's sexuality. I would also like to wish Louise and Aram well into the future. I wish her well with the impending birth of her child. I know that when her baby arrives, that is when the joy will commence. It has been a privilege knowing you as Senator Louise Pratt, but I also look forward to knowing you as Louise my friend into the future.

Before I finish, I would like to just touch on Ursula Stephens. I was tempted to do a little limerick, but Ursula is such a hard name to rhyme. All I would like to say to Ursula is that I

have really appreciated her friendship and advice. She is a truly remarkable woman. She gives of herself willingly. She has achieved such a lot in her time in the Senate. As Ursula herself has said and also as Penny Wong has said, the work that she has done in the voluntary sector has been remarkable. She works hard. She is always respectful of other people's points of view. I will miss her as well, and I wish her the very best into the future.

I would also like to put on record my appreciation of Senator Tillem's term here in the Senate. I did not work with Senator Tillem on any committees but, as anyone who has known Mehmet for very long would know, he is a truly genuine person. He has a very wicked sense of humour, and I wish him and his family well into the future.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (18:38): I just want to make a short contribution in this debate. I will start with Senator Tillem, given that he has been here for only a short time. Since Senator Tillem has been here, I have found him to be a very gentle person. He is very softly spoken. He is just a lovely person. I have sat on a committee with him and enjoyed his questioning immensely when we were at a number of hearings for that committee.

I only met Senator Stephens when I came into this place a few years ago, but I just echo the thoughts and sentiments that have been expressed around the chamber tonight in terms of the nature of Senator Stephens. She has a very generous nature. I am in the same hallway as her, a couple of doors down. There is a big learning curve when you come here, and Senator Stephens assisted me and my office in a number of things. I remember the first committee report that we wrote—it was actually a dissenting report because we were in government and it was for a select committee—and Senator Stephens's office was very helpful with that. I really appreciate all that. It will be sad to see her go. I had no idea that she had such a beautiful voice, otherwise I would have asked her to sing a lot more often in her office and maybe I could have heard it from mine.

I have known Senator Thorpe for a number of years, from the early nineties. I remember when she was a fresh-faced member, prior to her becoming a politician. I was working at the AMWU and Tom Harding from the AMWU said that we had this fantastic woman who we needed to assist in getting her a seat on the Legislative Council. I have to say that there was no-one in the room that day who stood back and said that we would not help, because we had seen that she had a lot of potential and a lot of ability. She had those core, grassroots values that we needed so badly in there. She successfully went on to win the seat of Pembroke and represented Tasmania enormously well, until, unfortunately, she lost that seat. It was with great pleasure that I was able to be part of the rank-and-file vote to get Senator Thorpe here, when Senator Nick Sherry retired. It was great to be involved in that.

I do not have the same stories as Senator Brown has about Senator Thorpe, but I have a number of them. However, I am probably limited with time and I also think it is best that some of those things are kept within the confines of some areas. Senator Brown knows what I am talking about and is nodding furiously, so I will just leave it at that. I do wish Senator Thorpe and Toby all the best for their future. I know that they are heading off shortly to relax a little bit after a busy time. I hope they have a wonderful time. I also hope that when she gets back to Tasmania she will enjoy it as much as she says she does—and I know that she will. She lives in one of the most beautiful parts of Tasmania—well, the second most beautiful part. I actually live in the most beautiful part of Tasmania and she lives in the second most

beautiful part. I do wish her well. I know that I will continue to see her around the labour movement, and I am sure that when I am in Hobart we will catch up over a coffee and maybe a glass of wine every now and then.

I met Senator Pratt back in the late nineties, if my memory serves me right, at a national Labor Party conference in Hobart, when we actually used to bring people to Hobart. The best conferences we ever had were when people came to Hobart. I was introduced to her by the late Jock Ferguson, whom Senator Pratt talked about in her speech. He was a wild Scottish character, I must say, whom I had the pleasure of working with in the AMWU for many, many years. I also had the pleasure of working with Jock in WA for a short period of time when he was the assistant state secretary of the AMWU. Jock had spoken about Louise many times before I met her. I know that he respected her. He thought very, very highly of her. When I met Senator Pratt at that conference, she was a feisty young woman. Her values and contributions have grown since that time, but she was very feisty then and stood up for the values that she espouses today.

I will miss her as an AMWU comrade. I know that she will go on to do wonderful things. I do wish her and Aram the very best for their future, and I also wish her the very best with her impending motherhood. She will make a fantastic mother. I am sure that the child that they bring into the world will espouse the wonderful values that their mother teaches them. I do wish you all the best, Louise. We will miss you in this house. Good luck.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: All of Tasmania is beautiful, Senator Urquhart.

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (18:44): I wish to make a couple of very brief observations, because I think it would be remiss of me not to, having worked so closely with one of the senators in particular who is leaving. If I could firstly thank all four senators who have given their speeches tonight for their contribution to the Senate in their different times here.

I have not had the opportunity to work with Senator Pratt on any committees, which is actually quite unique in this place. The unique character of the Senate is one where you work so closely with those who you may never normally, in the scheme of things, have anything to do with, because you come from very different philosophical backgrounds. If I can just say one thing to you, Senator Pratt—that is, motherhood is the greatest gift that you can possibly have, and just go and enjoy it. It is something that those of us who have been blessed to be mothers really enjoy.

Senator Tillem and I are members of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. Senator Tillem has been a very active participant in that committee. As two outgoing senators from Victoria, in many instances we have had very similar views on some matters, and it has been really good to have the opportunity to get to know him a bit more.

Senator Thorp's first so-called crossing of the floor was mentioned. I remember it well because I was whip at the time and I was the one who called out, 'The doors are locked—you are not allowed to go back to the other side of the chamber.' We learn lessons very quickly here, and that was one mistake Senator Thorp did not make again.

I would like to make a couple of cautious observations about Senator Stephens. I say 'cautious' because she reminded me that I am giving my valedictory speech tomorrow night and she will have the last opportunity to respond. I have to say how wonderful Ursula's

speech was tonight. Regardless of what your partisan political views are, Ursula is one of those people who I hold with high regard and with the deepest level of respect. She is clearly a very intelligent woman, she is a very decent woman and she is a very compassionate woman. She seeks to engage with everybody she comes across. Most of all—which is what I love about her—she has the most irreverent sense of humour. Having travelled with her, I know that if you get back in one piece you have done really well! Ursula has a wonderful family, and I wish her all the very best in what I know will be a very, very rewarding future that lies ahead for her.

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (18:47): There is much said about the collegiality of the Senate. I would like to reflect on and add my own perspectives to the valedictory speeches that have been made. Senator Thorp from Tasmania and Senator Stephens from New South Wales have demonstrated great collegiality in the work that I have done with them. I have worked on the Community Affairs References Committee with Senator Thorp, and I thank her for her great enthusiasm in the inquiry on grandparents rearing grandchildren, which we are currently undertaking. She has been a most enjoyable participant as we have travelled around the country. Can I also add my comments in relation to the great work that Senator Stephens did in being a significant driving force in the work of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. I congratulate her on her great early stewardship of that.

I might leave my most significant contribution to remarking on the work that Senator Pratt has done as a Western Australian senator. I think it is fair to say, Senator Pratt, that there is not much that we agree on. You could not by any extent of the imagination call me a comrade without having a broad smile on your face. Despite that, you have been a very, very powerful champion for LGBTI issues in this place, in our national parliament—indeed, across our country—and most particularly you have been a very strong community advocate for LGBTI issues back home in Western Australia. I think you should be applauded for the great courage and conviction you have shown for the LGBTI community. I know that our views on certain issues differ, but we are united in our view that people are deserving of dignity and respect, irrespective of various issues, and most particularly if they are gay, lesbian, transgender or intersex people. I congratulate you on that. I extend my very warmest wishes to you and Aram as you begin on the path of experiencing for yourself the joys of raising a family. I congratulate you on what has been a very stellar contribution to important issues in our community.

DOCUMENTS

Consideration

The government documents tabled today and general business orders of the day Nos 1 and 2 relating to government documents were called on but no motion was moved.

ADJOURNMENT

The PRESIDENT (18:50): Order! I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Wanachote, Mr Khun Kanit, OAM

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (18:50): I rise to speak about a good friend who passed away recently. His name is Khun Kanit Wanachote, a Thai bloke. He was born on 15 February 1928 in Surat Thani Province, Thailand.

Khun Kanit's association with Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop commenced when ex-POWs and Thai-Burma Railway survivors Keith Flanagan OAM and Bill Haskell OAM decided in 1985 to organise the Weary Dunlop Tour, a tour retracing the course of surgeon and force commander, Colonel—later Sir—Edward Dunlop and his force from Java through to Thailand in World War II, and having his exploits recognised.

A chance meeting occurred between Weary Dunlop and Khun Kanit when the touring party of Aussies met Khun Kanit whilst traveling up the Khwae Noi River, commonly known to all of us as the River Kwai, hoping to locate the Kannyu and Hintok river camps—old prisoner of war camps from the Second World War and the infamous Thai-Burma railway project—which were in the region of Hellfire Pass.

Khun Kanit was developing his Home Phutoey River Kwai Resort down river from the camps. With the proximity of Hellfire Pass to his development, Khun Kanit had constantly thought of there being some association between the Thai-Burma Railway and his project, and here were a group of Australian ex-POWs who had actually been in the area, including the revered Weary Dunlop, who was already well known. Weary Dunlop and Khun Kanit struck a chord which was the genesis of an enduring association. Khun Kanit dedicated a large section of his resort to a Weary Dunlop park, which includes the Weary Dunlop pavilion. He was nominated for an OAM as he had served the Australian community through his contribution to the preservation of Australian-Thailand history. He assisted significantly in preserving the memory of the sacrifices of Australian military personnel. Khun Kanit was awarded the OAM in 2010.

These days, Quiet Lion Tours travel to Thailand, and Khun Kanit's Home Phu Toey Resort is a central focus at Anzac cup. Some of Weary Dunlop's ashes were spread in Hellfire Pass, and the balance were floated down the Khwae Noi after being blessed by some of Weary's Buddhist medical colleagues. The dominant feature of Home Phu Toey resort is the peace park, and Weary's statue has pride of place. Perched on rails on a ledge on the side of the hill and floodlit, an old locomotive and wagon overlook the scene. There is also a replica of a prisoner of war camp. The Weary Dunlop Museum, dedicated by Khun Kanit to his friend Weary, overlooks the park guarded by a huge carved wooden statue of Weary Dunlop. Sir Edward's son and other relatives formally opened the Dunlop museum on 24 April 1997.

It is not only the history of the Thai-Burma Railway that can be taught to Australian youth by the generosity of Khun Kanit. Ex-POWs are able to revisit areas where they were imprisoned, and the relatives of deceased POWs can visit graves and participate in ceremonies. All Australians should attempt to attend a dawn service at Hellfire Pass, which I have done several times, and a wreath-laying ceremony at Kanchanaburi. All this is possible because of the foresight and friendship of Sir Weary Dunlop and Khun Kanit.

Our dear friend passed away in Bangkok on 1 April this year, and next month a series of funeral functions will be held in Thailand, concluding with a Loy Unkarn ceremony where his ashes will be floated down the River Kwai from Home Phu Toey.

I would like to thank Eric Wilson from Western Australia, who every year takes groups of students across to Thailand and to the Thai-Burma Railway for Anzac Day in order to educate the young about how these prisoners of war suffered so much. I also know that former prisoners of war that I have met, such as Neil Macpherson and Snow Fairclough, have fond memories of Khun Kanit and of what he did for the preservation of the war history of so many who suffered so much—not only Australians, but British, Dutch and others—on the Thai-Burma Railway. I am sorry I cannot be in Thailand around 20 and 21 July, but I know Eric Wilson will represent Australia well as they float the ashes of Khun Kanit down the River Kwai and thank a great man.

In conclusion, I think it is quite amazing that someone in Thailand received an OAM from Australia. That clearly shows his contribution and his dedication to those Aussie prisoners of war and to preserving their history.

Tobacco Plain Packaging

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales) (18:55): According to the Department of Health, each year smoking kills an estimated 15,000 Australians. It is widely recognised as the single largest preventable cause of illness and premature death in Australia. It results in \$31.5 billion of social and economic costs to Australia every year. That includes healthcare costs, subsidies for drugs and, of course, absence from work. These costs are borne by households, by businesses and by government.

I am a strong supporter of tobacco plain packaging. It is a good Labor policy. It is one of a comprehensive suite of progressive tobacco control measures that aim to eliminate these insidious products and improve the health of Australians. Tobacco plain packaging aims to reduce smoking rates by removing the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products to consumers and particularly to young consumers. Plain packaging also aims to reduce smoking rates by increasing the noticeability and effectiveness of mandated health warnings and reducing the ability of retail packaging of tobacco products to mislead consumers about the harm of smoking.

I am pleased that recent figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Commonwealth Treasury demonstrate the positive impact tobacco plain packaging and other measures are having in terms of reducing the prevalence of smoking in our community. The ABS have advised that sales of tobacco and cigarettes in the March quarter 2014, as measured by estimated expenditure on tobacco products, is the lowest ever recorded, at \$3.405 billion. Encouragingly, Treasury advice supports this downward trend. That advice reveals tobacco clearance rates, which are an indicator of tobacco volumes in the Australian market, fell 3.4 per cent in 2013 relative to 2012, when tobacco plain packaging was introduced.

I have seen recent reports in the media, backed by industry-supplied figures, that plain packaging has led to an increase in smoking rates. If plain packaging is so ineffective, if it has been such a failure, and if cigarette consumption is increasing, why all the hysteria from big tobacco and their friends about plain packaging? Why spend all this time and money opposing plain packaging? The truth is tobacco plain packaging works, and the broader war on smoking is working. Plain packaging is a world-leading policy, with many other countries now considering following the lead of Australia, and it has the big tobacco interests really concerned.

If tobacco companies attempt to counter plain packaging by reducing the price of tobacco products, I for one believe that the government would be well within its rights to respond with stronger and more frequent increases in the excise on tobacco products. I say that the sooner we get rid of these insidious and deadly products from our lives and the lives of the community the better.

Managed Investment Schemes

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:00): The Greens want an inquiry to look at whether government has any case to answer in the systemic failure of the forestry managed investment scheme industry in this country. These schemes, supported by the coalition's Plantations 2020 policy, have had a calamitous impact on many rural communities and mum and dad investors across the country, some of whom have lost their life savings and their homes.

It is time to make sure that this never happens again and to look at what support the victims of these schemes may be entitled to. The Greens want the government to consider a moratorium on new forestry managed investment schemes until this inquiry has concluded. Managed investment schemes are the signature economic failure of recent coalition governments.

The inquiry would aim to investigate the role successive governments have played in forestry managed investment schemes. The terms of reference are to examine: (1) the motivation and drivers that established the framework for the schemes initially; (2) the role of governments in administering and regulating forestry MIS; (3) the current policy and regulatory framework of forestry MIS; (4) the role of some in the financial services industry in promoting and selling forestry MIS; (5) compensation arrangements for small investors in forestry MIS who have lost life savings and their homes in the face of the collapse of these schemes; (6) the burden on farmers and other agricultural producers who have been left with the uncertainty of timber plantations linked to a forestry MIS on their land; and (7) options for reforming forestry MIS to protect investors and rural communities.

In July 1996 the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture endorsed the plantation industry's stated aim to increase Australia's plantation estate and agreed to the setting of national goals aimed at trebling Australia's plantation forestry estate by 2020. An implementation committee, made up of government and industry figures, developed a strategy which was launched in October 1997. The principal aim was a threefold increase in Australia's forest plantation estate by 2020. In 1996 there was 1.1 million hectares of forest plantation—964,000 hectares of softwood and 155,000 hectares of hardwood. Therefore the 2020 target was set at 3.3 million hectares, requiring plantings of 90,000 hectares per year. The vision document argued that global market conditions appeared favourable to this goal and that global market assessments pointed to faster wood demand growth relative to supply over the next 25 years.

Critics of the document argued that its economic reasoning was incomplete. One said: 'Although various economic advantages were listed such as the creation of new rural jobs and the invigoration of rural communities, no details of prices, costs or markets were set out.' The vision document was revised in 2000, by which time managed investment schemes had been in operation for a couple of years, but the revised document, unlike the 1997 version, failed to sound a warning about the previous bad reputation of plantation investment schemes. The

2000 version noted that no attempt was made to critically analyse whether the then burgeoning schemes were consistent with the goals of the original statement.

Tax incentives for MIS were central to attracting the investment capital required to complete the 2020 vision objective. It was the major policy instrument used by the government to meet that objective. In 2007, taxation incentive arrangements for non-forestry MIS were scaled back by the government. Taxation incentives for plantations were on the chopping block, but it appeared Senator Abetz and the industry directly lobbied Prime Minister Howard to ensure the tax incentives for forestry MIS remained in place. The lobbying efforts of Senator Abetz and the industry were rewarded; tax incentives for timber plantations remained in place. The Howard government could have stemmed the MIS bleeding, but they failed.

In 2009 Timbercorp and Great Southern, two companies that offered MIS investments, went into administration. We have met with their victims in parliament in recent weeks. Many small investors failed to understand the products, and some lost large amounts of money. Some regional and rural communities were left with massive changes to their landscapes and local economies. I have seen farmers left with unwanted plantations which, at this stage, due to ongoing court proceedings, they are unable to remove or even appropriately manage.

We need to make sure we learn the lessons from the failure of these schemes. Politicians should never repeat the mistakes that led to the creation of this policy. We also need to look at what role the government can play to assist the people and communities that have been affected.

Tax Evasion

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (19:05): Today, I met with representatives from the Christian activist group the Micah Challenge, as part of their 'Shine the light on tax dodging and corruption' campaign. It was an absolute pleasure to meet them. This group of tireless advocates needs to be thanked for their excellent work reducing the scourge of global poverty and living out their commitment to justice and peace.

In the same way, I would like to highlight the work of the Reverend Tim Costello in the lead-up to the C20, which will be held at the same time as the G20 in Brisbane. Of course, there was a C20 meeting in Melbourne just recently.

There are some one billion people that live their lives in extreme poverty—roughly one in seven humans on the planet. This sad fact is despite significant reductions in poverty rates arising from advancements in economic, medical, sanitary and technological areas and in standard of living for vast numbers of people across the world. Now the Micah Challenge and Reverend Tim Costello have raised a very important issue—the potential development of impoverished communities is undermined by tax avoidance. Tax avoidance robs from future generations and is unfair on the current generation. It is estimated by Christian Aid that US \$160 billion is lost by developing economies each year in multinational corporate tax dodging. This figure dwarfs the US\$120 billion a year that developing countries receive in foreign aid.

The poorly resourced tax offices of developing countries—and indeed, I might say, of developed countries as well, given the job losses that the ATO will be hit with—are no match

for the sharp business practices of multinational corporations. Clearly, steps must be taken to ensure that developing economies are not being robbed of their rightful tax income.

Successive Australian governments have sought to improve the efficiency of our foreign aid, but I do not countenance the cuts that we have seen to our foreign aid budget. While foreign aid makes up just 1.2 per cent of the federal budget, it has had to bear the burden of 20 per cent of the budget cuts, and I think that is completely and utterly unfair. We need to ensure that those big corporations which, through tax transfers, are doing corporate tax-dodging on a multinational level are made to pay their fair share of tax.

It is an issue here in Australia, where there is a question mark about some companies which, through transfer pricing, through some very clever tax deals, can shift profits overseas in the tens of billions of dollars each year. It was something in the order of \$130 billion just a couple of years ago, from figures that were reported in a recent *Australian Financial Review* article on the ATO's efforts to try and tackle this. There are, potentially, tens of billions of dollars of tax that ought to be paid in our nation that are not being paid because of this.

This is why the Micah Challenge project is so important. I think we need to look at the key objectives of the Micah Challenge. There ought to be, firstly, automatic exchange of information between tax authorities; that must happen. There ought to be, secondly, a beneficial ownership disclosure through a public register that lists the true owners and beneficiaries of companies, trusts and foundations. And there ought to be, thirdly, country-by-country reporting for multinational corporations. They are three simple objectives of the Micah Challenge, and they ought to be embraced by this parliament. That is why I will be working with the Micah Challenge to introduce legislation to effect these objectives and to ensure that this issue is at the forefront of public debate. These are matters that need to be tackled as a matter of urgency.

I should thank, also, Daniel Neuhaus from the 6:8 Coffee Project in Yass. He was one of the delegates from the group. He runs a coffee-roasting business, and I wish him very well with that; it is fair-trade coffee. The point was made that he pays his tax, but the irony is that there are some multinational corporations that would pay a much, much lower rate of tax than he does, even as a very small business.

We also need to be mindful of the cuts to the Australian Taxation Office and whether they will be able to tackle these issues. My fear is that they will not be able to. There are literally billions of dollars in revenue there, from corporations that can well afford to pay it, and that is why I support the Micah Challenge in respect of this. This has the potential to not only alleviate global poverty but also to do the right thing in terms of people paying their fair share of tax.

Budget

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (19:10): Tonight I rise to speak once more about why this government's budget of broken promises represents such a clear breach of trust. A little over a year ago in this chamber, I warned about what an Abbott government would mean for Australia. When speaking about the completely unfair criticism being levelled at the leadership of our former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, I said the following:

Governments should be held to account for decisions made, policies pursued and legislation passed—our democratic process depends on it. But the process begins to crack and fail when an

opposition ... cynically exploit simple mantras like 'great big new tax' without putting forward any new ideas for how to ensure Australia's future prosperity and safety. I believe this country deserves better. I believe this country deserves better than an opposition that pursues radical Tea Party style political tactics at the expense of informed debate. I believe this country deserves better than an opposition that ignores expert opinion and evidence-based decision making on policy in favour of simplistic slogans, fearmongering and shrill opposition to any reform on the basis of shallow, predetermined political calculus. I believe this country deserves better than an opposition leader who is motivated by attaining power rather than examining the merits of government's reforms.

But of course Tony Abbott did win the election and is exhibiting just the sort of decision making that I feared. His first budget shows that he is indeed the George W Bush of Australian politics—a man who is not here to lead, to inspire and to govern for the downtrodden and hard of luck as well as the elite and the wealthy; a man who is doing the bidding of big businesses, dismantling the integrity of university funding, cutting vital programs and refusing to properly fund sectors such as renewable energy, which is vital to the future prosperity of the country and, indeed, the integrity of our environment. He is a man who smirks and winks through interview performances; a man who refuses to admit that his views on climate change and how to lower emissions belong in another century; a man who never fails to disappoint; a man who is absolutely embarrassing us on the world stage; a man who is lowering the tone of political debate without shame; and a man who is delivering a budget that is quite simply an affront to those struggling to get by.

Some of these changes will have impacts that I do not believe this government has properly thought through. Take my home state of Tasmania. Whilst PSG Russell Smith fell and the Australian tax office shed jobs in locations across the state, the government sought to introduce higher education reforms which will see \$30 million worth of funding cut from the University of Tasmania, the biggest employer in Launceston and down south. It hardly inspires confidence, does it?

As my Labor colleagues will tell you, we know that when people lose their jobs it means uncertainty for families and less money circulating in the community. But this government has committed a series of errors which will do nothing to get more Tasmanians back into work. I ask them to explain how decreasing payments to low-income families and job seekers, and implementing a range of measures which will pull the rug out from under the disadvantaged, will create jobs and boost economic development.

The plan to cut Newstart payments to young people under 30 who do not have a job and cannot find one is just cruel. What does the Abbott government honestly envisage these young people will do for six months without any form of income or support? It will actually push people into poverty and put them in a position where they are unable to find work and become more reliant on community and homelessness services. I really hope that those opposite realise what their budget will actually do and that it will have an enormous impact on our communities.

We remember on this side the sanctimonious lectures from those opposite about broken promises. The price on carbon, we were told every day, constituted a breach of trust. Well, look what has happened now. Before the election we were promised no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no changes to the pension, no new taxes and no tax increases. Yet this budget means that families will pay every time they see the doctor. They will pay even more when they go to fill up their cars. We know there will be Australians who will not go to the

pharmacy to fill their prescriptions, and we know there are going to be Australians who will not have the pathology tests they need. Australia deserves a government with vision that is working towards building a nation with a resilient economy and one that also provides for our most vulnerable citizens. *(Time expired)*

G20: Policing

Senator FURNER (Queensland) (19:15): Recently I was invited to the Queensland Police Union employees' conference by the president of the union, Ian Levers. As you would know, Mr Deputy President, I am the deputy chair of the Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity and also a member of the Joint Committee on Law Enforcement, and I was previously an employee of the Queensland Police Union in the capacity of an industrial officer. You would also know that I am the son of a police officer who retired as a 3IC with the Queensland police force.

Police put their own lives on the line every day, and I for one, as a Queensland senator, hope that the Queensland government has done everything in its capacity to protect the honest hardworking men and women of the Queensland police force in regard to workplace health and safety leading up to the G20 meeting. That was the nature of the part of a conference I was privileged to attend, where I heard representatives from the Toronto Police Association raise training issues that confronted them back in 2012. Police were in effect receiving training online. I do not necessarily agree with the effectiveness of that type of delivery. The police confronted legislative issues concerning arrests and jurisdictions. They confronted logistics problems with radios with different broadbands. They also identified concerns over social media used by protesters that police did not have the resources to deal with.

Overall, what confronted me most about what the Toronto Police Association said—and certainly those police who had to deal with this issue—was the cultural shock for police who saw police cars being set on fire in their own capital city by these protesters. Some 97 officers were injured in the G20 protests in Toronto, and that led to 1,118 persons being arrested. On 26 June the riots and vandalism reached a hiatus when protesters dispersed to damage buildings and vehicles. The intent, naturally—and as interpreted by some media—was to distract the police from the security zone so that other protesters could break in. But police maintained their blockades, as they would. We know that that is their role and their duty. Vandals smashed the windows of various office buildings and stalls using hammers, flagpoles, umbrellas, chunks of pavement and mailboxes. Conflicts also erupted between purported anarchists and journalists who were recording property destruction. After a few hours, many Black Bloc demonstrators changed into civilian clothes and dissolved into the larger crowd as security forces began to increase in presence. Police later maintained that some protest organisers were complicit in providing cover for the vandals. As I indicated, 1,118 people were arrested in relation to the G20 summit protests—the largest mass arrest in Canadian history. While nearly 800 of them were released without charge, the remaining 231 remained with charges before the courts, and 58 had their charges withdrawn or stayed.

As a former industrial officer of the Queensland Police Union, I can reflect on the concerns that police would have. I would argue that I have police running through the veins of my body, having some background and history, with my father having been a police officer and having worked for that police union. I can reflect on one dispute that I lodged before the industrial commission while an industrial officer in which police raised concerns about being

identified by having a name badge. Incidental to that were concerns about the way the badge was attached to their uniform with a pin. Some officers were injured as a result of some protests back in the mid-1990s when I was serving with the union as an industrial officer. So, they were legitimate concerns that police officers held then, and I believe that police officers hold legitimate concerns now leading up to the G20 meeting. I only make the point that I hope the Queensland government has done its homework, has considered the health and safety of those honest men and women who serve our state very well and make sure that they are protected from those sorts of incidents.

Hockey

Senator PERIS (Northern Territory) (19:20): I rise tonight to congratulate the Australian hockey team on their recent incredible success at the World Cup held in the Netherlands earlier this month. The hockey World Cup finals featured both of the Australian teams, the Kookaburras and the Hockeyroos. Unfortunately the Hockeyroos went down 2-0 in the final against the Dutch. The Kookaburras got up 6-1, which was a huge victory, and they retained the World Cup, winning back-to-back victories. It was a huge effort also for the Hockeyroos, given that they went into the World Cup ranked No. 5 in the world.

Many people when they think of success in sport in the Northern Territory look to AFL football. That is true. However, the great number of champions who have come out of the Northern Territory are around hockey. Hockey in the Northern Territory has a very long and distinguished history—

Senator Farrell: What about Aussie rules?

Senator PERIS: No, it is hockey; I will get to that. From Alice Springs to Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Darwin, the game of hockey has been enjoyed—rightly so—by the community throughout the Northern Territory. It has been great for individual achievement far beyond any expectations held by the hockey community in the Northern Territory. As a sport for girls, boys, men and women, hockey is a great family sport. I know that for a fact given that I started playing hockey when I was four years old and both my parents and all of my family played. I remember going to the old Alawa hockey fields on Lakeside Drive and waking up on those cold dry season mornings.

The friendships that I made through the sport have been have been long and lasting, and I still catch up with my hockey team mates from my junior playing years and we quite often reminisce about the great times we had playing this fantastic sport. I was once told by one of my Australian coaches, 'You won't make a lot of money playing sport; however, you will make lifelong friendships.' That was very true.

Going back to Senator Farrell's point, I want to talk about the achievements of Territorians. I was the first Territorian to go to the Olympics, in 1996—the Atlanta Olympics. Stephen Halt followed. He got a bronze medal at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Mark Hickman won gold at the 2004 Olympics in Athens. Des Abbott won bronze in 2008 in Beijing. His cousin Joel Carroll won bronze in 2012 in London.

I mentioned earlier the recent successes of the Kookaburras. The Northern Territory was represented by 21-year-old Jeremy Hayward. Jeremy was also named as the young player of the tournament. I congratulate Jeremy on a fantastic achievement. He was also voted the best young player at the World Cup, which is a huge achievement.

I congratulate my fellow Hockeyroos, Adam Commens and his staff. The recent performances of the Hockeyroos demonstrate the commitment to hockey at a world-class level.

I want to conclude by passing on my personal congratulations to an old friend and mentor of mine, Australian sporting icon and former coach, Dr Ric Charlesworth. He was also a federal MP for the Labor Party from 1983 to 1993. Charlesworth once said that he retired from politics because he never became a minister. But they often say that when one door closes another opens. Thank God that door closed and the one that opened was that he became my coach at the Hockeyroos. Dr Charlesworth played in 47 first-class cricket matches for Western Australia, scoring 2,327 runs. He was a member of four Sheffield Shield winning teams. He represented Australia at five Olympic Games, winning silver at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. He won a hockey World Cup Gold medal in 1986. He retired from hockey after the 1988 Seoul Olympics. He played 227 games for Australia. He is a bit of an overachiever and five of those years he played sport for Australia were while he was an MP!

I personally want to thank Ric Charlesworth for his service, love, dedication and commitment to Australian hockey and for his philosophy of the game. I am sure I speak for all Australians who have been coached, mentored and inspired by him. I thank you, Ric Charlesworth, for the three mantras you taught me about life that I still carry with me every day. They are: 'Poco a poco'—which is Spanish for 'little by little you can achieve big things'—'Expect the unexpected' and 'Take nothing for granted.' Those are wise words from a legendary Australian. I wish you well, Dr Ric Charlesworth, wherever your journey in life leads you.

Assyrian Community

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS (New South Wales—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services) (19:25): I rise this evening to speak in relation to the Assyrian community, both those people who have settled in Australia and those affected by the very serious situation in Iraq. In March it was a time of celebration for the Assyrian community in Australia. I joined the community to celebrate the Assyrian new year, as I had done for the past eight years, this year to celebrate the beginning of the year 6764. The festival is a very special occasion for the Assyrian community both in Australia and around the world, marking the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. It is an ancient tradition passed on from earliest Assyrians, who lived in Mesopotamia, present-day Iraq. The Assyrian community provides a direct link between ancient times and longstanding traditions. Their rich culture is embedded with the evolution of humanity and it has helped to influence many forms of modern Christianity. Their language of Aramaic was the language of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Regrettably, the oppression of the Assyrians, often because of their faith, is also testament to their resilience. Understandably, this persecution has meant that increasingly in past decades thousands have sought refuge elsewhere. Indeed, Iraqis are the largest national group that have been resettled under our Humanitarian Program over the last 10 years, and we remain committed to the resettlement of vulnerable Iraqi minorities. It appears that this will not change with the latest developments in Iraq.

Unlike that day in March, it is now not a time for celebration among the Assyrian community, as the eyes of Australia and the world turn to the serious situation unfolding in Iraq. Much has been said about the sectarian nature of this conflict. It is a difficult and

complex issue. But what many in the chamber might not appreciate is the plight of the Christian Assyrians in Iraq who remain in the city of Mosul and nearby towns and villages. Assyrians have already suffered greatly since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. They have faced kidnappings, threats and even deaths due to their ethnicity and religious beliefs. If the Nineveh Plain is subject to military attack, this will have devastating consequences for the indigenous Assyrians and other ethnic groups in the region.

This explains why the Assyrians have proposed the creation of a new province with regional autonomy to develop a lasting solution to the Assyrian refugee problem. In January 2014, the Iraqi Council of Ministers in fact gave in-principle approval for the creation of several new provinces, including the Nineveh Plain. When or if that will happen will depend on some consensus emerging out of the conflict, together with a resolution on both the current humanitarian disaster and potential security uncertainty within the region.

In terms of the current very volatile situation in Iraq, I am proud to be part of a government that is responding to the unfolding humanitarian crisis. As announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs last Friday, Australia will provide \$5 million in assistance to support the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing violence in north and north-west Iraq. The Australian government strongly condemns the actions of the terrorist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which continues its campaign of violence in Iraq. We express our deepest condolences for the loss of life in recent attacks and our grave concern at the widespread displacement of Iraqis and damage to property. I can only hope and pray that what emerges in the battle for Iraq is an appreciation of cultural diversity and that freedom to practice religion has some toehold in Iraq.

For now, I would particularly like to acknowledge those community representatives dedicated to raising awareness of the Assyrian issue, including Hermiz Shahen, Deputy Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, David David, President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation, and Paul Azzo—and there are others. It is important that we continue to give our ongoing support for an inclusive, united, federal Iraq that promotes security for all its diverse religious and ethnic groups. The systemic purge of the Assyrian community in their traditional homeland must stop, and the strong voice of Australian and international condemnation can help address this urgent issue. It is important that the plight of the religious minorities in Iraq, including the Assyrian Christians, be raised and continue to be raised at international forums such as the United Nations. I conclude by congratulating the contribution that the Australian-Assyrian community have made to our great multicultural country—for sharing their culture, for sharing their history and for contributing their unique gifts to a vibrant and diverse Australia.

Daytime Running Lights

Senator PARRY (Tasmania—Deputy President of the Senate and Chairman of Committees) (19:30): Tonight I want to speak about daytime running lights. It might not seem like much of a topic, but they are creeping into the motor vehicle industry. Daytime running lights are provided for under Australian Design Rules for Road Vehicles No. 76/00 of 2006, which then Minister Lloyd signed off. They also come under the auspices of the Motor Vehicle Standards Act of 1989. The reason I raise this matter this evening is that daytime running lights are designed to be safety features on vehicles so they are more recognisable from the front. These lights are not compulsory, but they could be compulsory one day. I raise

several questions, and the first one is: what happens when every motor vehicle has lights shining at the front? What do we do then to make these motor vehicles more recognisable? I am highlighting the fact that this could be a perpetuating issue—do we then put flashing lights on the front of motor vehicles, and do we then make them a different colour? I wonder how far we need to go before we stop and say that surely drivers should be aware of their surroundings and pedestrians should be aware of vehicles when they are near roads. Whether daytime running lights are a good thing or a bad thing I do not know, but I do not want us to rush in and make sure every vehicle has them fitted to start with.

The design rules set out the brightness, the luminosity, of the lights and issues to do with power consumption and things like that. One motor vehicle company in Australia, Toyota—I have had discussions with various people in Toyota—have taken a shortcut. I use the word 'cheated': I suppose they have cheated, slightly, because they have a computer chip in their vehicles now which enables the headlights to come on permanently of a daytime—you cannot switch them off. That includes the tail lights and, if you are towing a trailer, the trailer lights. That adds to fuel consumption over a long period of time. The LED lights designed for daytime running lights that are specifically fitted to vehicles are designed for low power consumption and the draw on the alternator is not affected much. They are designed only to shine at the front and they are designed to be different. If motor vehicle companies are going to introduce daytime running lights, they should do it in accordance with the standard and not just reconfigure their motor vehicles so the headlights come on and all the other lights come on and you cannot switch them off.

I also note the concerns of some motoring organisations that by having headlights on permanently—the path that Toyota has chosen—it does weaken the recognition of motorcycles that have headlights on, and that could be more of a safety issue than having them on the motor vehicles themselves. I have already mentioned that power consumption and therefore fuel consumption is increased. I want senators to be aware of this because things creep into standards, and a number of people have expressed their concerns to me about having to have these devices fitted to their vehicles. Then I started to examine the issue. I am concerned that things do slowly creep in, and are they really necessary? Has someone just designed this thinking it is a safety measure and not thought about the end consequence when every motor vehicle has them fitted if it does become compulsory?

Motor Neurone Disease

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (19:34): Given that I am retiring as a senator on 30 June, there have been lots of 'lasts' in recent months—and this is the last opportunity I will have to speak on motor neurone disease in this place. Saturday, 21 June was the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, which, for many, is a symbolic turning point in our culture. Each year, on and around this day, the global community for motor neurone disease comes together to express their hope that there will be a turning point for them in the search for the causes, effective treatments and, ultimately, a cure for motor neurone disease. Motor neurone disease is a rapidly progressive, terminal neurological disease. It is also known as ALS—amyotrophic lateral sclerosis—or Lou Gehrig's disease, as it is more commonly known in the US. There is no known cure and no effective treatment. MND is also a global problem—it does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity or demographics. In Australia, an estimated 1,900 people have MND and thousands more families and carers live daily with the effects of MND.

Each day in Australia, two people are diagnosed with the disease, and their average life expectancy from the point of diagnosis is 27 months.

This year, the Motor Neurone Disease Association of Australia is seeking support for what the organisation outlines as the five rights of those with MND and their carers. The first of these five rights is the right to early diagnosis and information; the second is the right to access quality care and treatments; the third is the right to be treated as individuals and with dignity and respect; the fourth is the right of people with MND to maximise their quality of life; and the fifth is the right of carers to be valued, respected, listened to and well supported. People who want to support these goals can sign up on the website of the Motor Neurone Disease Australia—the address is mndaust.asn.au. I encourage everyone to do so.

I have mentioned in past speeches that my younger brother died of motor neurone disease only 2½ years from the time of his diagnosis. In fact, he was not able to attend my first speech in this place because he had motor neurone disease too badly to travel. Diagnosis of motor neurone disease is often clinically difficult, and sometimes it is necessary to review a person for some time before the diagnosis becomes relatively certain. In my brother's case it was the fact that he was initially tripping a little with his left foot which caused him to seek a diagnosis. A general practitioner may suspect a neurological problem and organise a referral to a neurologist, but several other neurological conditions resemble motor neurone disease, especially in the early stages, and need careful exclusion. The diagnosis can be assisted through a range of tests, including some which eliminate other conditions, but in fact motor neurone disease is generally still diagnosed because other diseases have been excluded, not because there is a good test for motor neurone disease.

MND is in fact a group of diseases where the motor neurones—the nerve cells that control the movement of your voluntary muscles—progressively die. These are the muscles that are under your conscious control. I would ask anyone to think about losing the ability to control your muscles, and how you would feel about that. It gradually involves the muscles in your arms, legs, back, neck and, eventually, the muscles involved with speech, swallowing and breathing. In most cases, the senses are not affected, which means that intellect and memory are usually completely intact. There are very few cases of cognitive change—so not only is your body gradually shutting down, but you are acutely aware that it is doing so. In the meantime, those with the disease usually experience muscle twitching, cramps, emotional changeability, fatigue and weight loss. Eventually, MND results in paralysis. For most diagnosed with the disease, it is a cruel prolonged death sentence.

The causes of motor neurone disease are not known, but research throughout the world is looking for those causes. There are many theories, including exposure to environmental toxins and chemicals, infection by viral agents, immune-mediated damage, premature ageing of motor neurones, and the loss of growth factors required to maintain motor neurone survival and genetic susceptibility. Most cases of MND occur spontaneously. These are said to be sporadic—meaning that they happen in isolated instances without any clearly identifiable cause. However, there is a familial, or hereditary, MND—and that accounts for about 10 per cent of cases—where a congenital condition is inherited.

Motor neurone disease really requires a global response. Throughout the world, various countries—and, I am pleased to say, these include Australia—are researching the cause, the treatments and the cures for MND. Australia has several world-class research hubs, including

the Queensland Brain Institute, the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and the University of Queensland in my own state. In fact, at the weekend, on MND Global Day—21 June—a brand-new Queensland MND Centre was opened in Coorparoo. For the past 20 years, the only support services in Queensland have operated out of a suburban house in Inala, more than 20 kilometres from the CBD and the central hospitals district. For the cause of MND to grow within Queensland, a centrally located, professional property such as the one that opened on Saturday is essential, and it is a tribute to the supporters of MND in Queensland that they have been able to deliver this outcome. This centre, operated by the MND and Me Foundation, is very much for the MND community. It is for engaging and educating the community, for empowering volunteers and hopefully for inspiring researchers.

In fact, my last senatorial engagement—that is, my last formal engagement as a senator—this weekend will be to attend the Ross Maclean Fellowship Caloundra Cup, a race meeting held on Queensland's Sunshine Coast by the Ross Maclean Fellowship that supports and sponsors the Queensland Brain Institute. This is one of the few research places in Australia dedicated to looking at the underlying neurological factors behind motor neurone disease. To date, the only intervention for MND is the antiglutamatergic medication Riluzole, which slows the progression of the disease and is available on the PBS. But the research continues for the cause and a cure. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the number of deaths from MND in Australia is actually increasing. In 2011, 790 Australians died from the disease—that is an increase of 200 deaths over the annual rate from 10 years previously.

Australian researchers are at the forefront of research in this area. Their work covers many categories, including genetics, the study of proteins, cell biology, metabolism, immunology, environment, epidemiology and more. Reading the latest newsletter of the Motor Neurone Disease Research Institute of Australia can give us cause for hope. There are so many Australians researching so many different aspects and who are dedicated to finding a cure and to providing comfort for those who live with MND now. And that is what MND Global Day is primarily about. MND Australia is providing all senators with a cornflower to wear on Thursday, as a symbol of hope. I am wearing mine tonight, but I will be wearing it again on Thursday. The blue cornflower is the international flower of hope for motor neurone disease. It symbolises courage. It can withstand both frost and drought, and its strong blue colour never fades, no matter what it faces. Like the cornflower, people with MND show tremendous courage and strength of character to cope with this challenging disease. I would hope that people would wear their cornflower next Thursday as a symbol of their support for Motor Neurone Disease Global Day. There will also be a morning tea held by Motor Neurone Disease Australia here on Thursday, and I would encourage members to attend that.

Small Steps

Cybersafety Book Launch

Senator BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (19:44): Tonight I want to talk about two events I attended recently in my home state of Tasmania, both organised and supported by welfare organisations and both promoting causes that are of a great deal of importance to me. These events were of particular interest to me because of the common theme—supporting children. Prior to entering this place, a substantial part of my professional life was spent as an early childhood educator. My work with children has

instilled in me a strong belief in the importance of supporting the education, welfare and development of children. In fact, while the phrase 'our children are our future' is somewhat cliched, it captures the fact that the way we nurture and raise our children can have a dramatic impact on the kind of adult society we end up with.

The first of the two events was the launch of Hobart City Mission's Small Steps program. It is unfortunate but true that my home state of Tasmania has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Australia. A study conducted by Tasmania's Department of Health and Human Services on selected outcomes for Tasmanian children led to the release of the report *Kids come first*. The report revealed that areas of low birth weight, high rates of smoking in pregnancy and low rates of breastfeeding correlate with areas of high teenage fertility rates. This supports anecdotal evidence that babies born to teenage mothers have a significantly increased risk of poor health and development. Unfortunately, some babies are taken into state care because their mothers do not have the accommodation, support or skills to ensure their children's safety.

The Small Steps program offers a solution to this problem. The Small Steps program supports young mothers up to the age of 25 who have children up to the age of five and who are at risk of homelessness or having their children taken into state care because of a lack of appropriate accommodation and support. Program participants are provided with secure accommodation and tailored support services. An individualised case management plan is developed for each resident and services are provided through referral agencies.

The case management plan will support and coordinate the work of clinicians and other allied health professionals who are working with the young mums and their infants around issues relating to physical, emotional and mental health; provide advocacy for young mothers and their infants; provide access to allied health professionals, education providers and community groups to educate and improve the quality of life of both the mothers and their infants; provide access to recreational, lifestyle and vocational activities that will enhance their socialisation and improve self-confidence; and provide young mothers and their infants with qualified staff to support them to attain the best possible outcomes. The referral agencies currently supporting Small Steps clients include Child Protection Services, hospitals, Youth Justice Services, child health nurses, Centrelink, the Tasmanian Department of Education, Tasmania Police, youth workers, Mara House, Annie Kenney Young Women's Refuge, Hobart Women's Shelter, Colony 47, Mission Australia Youth Beat and other community service organisations.

The launch itself was well attended and it was great to see so much community support being demonstrated for this program, despite it being a cold, wet and windy Hobart evening. I am sure any residents of Canberra listening this evening will be able to appreciate the kind of weather Tasmanians have to endure in winter. I was pleased to meet the CEO of Hobart City Mission, John Stubleby, and his hardworking team.

I also had a chance to tour the facility, which was originally a facility for backpackers. The facility has 14 self-contained units equipped with beds, cots and ensembles, as well as shared laundry facilities and shared community spaces for the residents. Although the units are small, they are quite suitable and very nicely renovated. The common area is used for parenting classes and other learning activities. There is also a common kitchen facility that will encourage shared participation in cooking. A recent donation from the Commonwealth Bank

has helped Hobart City Mission to furnish the units. The mothers have to pay rent and sign a tenancy contract with Hobart City Mission. This is an important step in developing their tenancy skills and making the transition to private rental.

I believe Small Steps is a vital program for young mothers and their children. Growing up in state care can have various negative impacts on a child's development and it is much better that the child remain with their mother—with appropriate support. Small Steps will give young mothers at risk the skills and self-confidence to become independent, successful parents as well as healthy role models for other mothers and for their children. Small Steps is just one of the many ways in which Hobart City Mission supports people in need—not only in the City of Hobart but in the broader area.

Just before I move on, I would like to thank my parents, who are active volunteers with Hobart City Mission. They are in their mid-eighties. My dad has been very unwell over the past couple of years, but they still put in their regular two or three days for Hobart City Mission. At the event, I was very proud to receive accolades on their behalf.

The other event I wish to mention was the launch of three books for children—addressing cybersafety, cyberbullying and sibling bullying—which was held last Friday morning at the Brighton Civic Centre. This is about 30 or 35 minutes north of Hobart. The book launch was organised by the Salvation Army and the books will be contributing to their Communities for Children program. Funded by the Australian government's Department of Social Services, the Salvation Army's Communities for Children program aims to improve the development, health and wellbeing of children up to the age of 12—and to help their families—through innovative early intervention and prevention programs. As co-convenor of Parliamentarians Against Child Abuse and Neglect and the former chair of parliament's Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, I have a strong interest in child safety and child protection, including the protection of children in the online environment.

The three books were launched by the founders of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation, Bruce and Denise Morcombe. The Daniel Morcombe Foundation is, of course, named after Queensland teenager Daniel Morcombe, who was abducted and murdered in 2003. Bruce and Denise are his parents. It was an absolute pleasure to meet Bruce and Denise Morcombe. While no parents should have to experience the tragedy or the suffering that they have had to go through, I am pleased that, with the excellent work they are doing with the Daniel Morcombe Foundation, they have been able to channel their experience into something positive. They have become inspiring advocates for child safety and child protection, causes that I passionately support.

The three books that were launched were written by Mary Koolhof, a Tasmanian psychology teacher. Ms Koolhof has written books for other Salvation Army programs and is a passionate believer in the power of stories to motivate young people to change their lives for the better. The books were illustrated by another Tasmanian, Kyan O'Rourke. The three books are *Tom and Jamal speak up—A story about cybersafety*, *Alicia helps Bec take a stand—A story about cyberbullying* and *My brother Sam—A story about bullying*. The first two books are suitable for children aged between nine and 12. The third one is suitable for children under the age of about seven. While the books cover slightly different topics—bullying, cyberbullying and cybersafety—each one uses the medium of storytelling to convey the same common messages. Those messages are about encouraging children to discuss their feelings

with someone they trust. In particular, they encourage discussion between children and trusted adults, such as parents, carers, teachers and anyone else who works with young people, or who the young people feel they can trust.

The launch was attended by students from the Jordan River Learning Federation Gagebrook Primary School Campus, the Campania District School and schools located within the Salvation Army - Communities for Children South-East district. Activities were provided for the children. A copy of the book will be provided to every primary school student in the South-East district and copies of the book can be purchased in other districts. I am very pleased that books such as these are being published to help educate children about how to deal with bullying, cyberbullying and other cyber threats, in a way that is understandable and accessible to them.

Having served as the chair of the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, I understand that, while there are roles for government, parents, schools and the broader community in protecting children from cyber threats, educating children about how to deal with cybersafety and cyberbullying is one of the most powerful ways we can help them to stay safe online.

I would like to thank the Salvation Army, Hobart City Mission and all the other amazing welfare organisations for the great work they do supporting people and communities across Tasmania. One of the great privileges of being an elected representative in any parliament is being able to support the keenness of organisations like these to showcase their programs and to witness first-hand the excellent work they do.

Budget

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (19:53): I begin my contribution tonight by quoting Treasurer Joe Hockey from the weekend's *Financial Review*:

I'm sure people will be wary of becoming part of the coalition of the irrelevant where they just say 'no' and there's nowhere for us to go. That just makes them all irrelevant, they will not have any influence on policy and on legislation.

The coalition of the irrelevant—is this how the coalition negotiates the budget? Is this how our Treasurer wins the battles for hearts and minds in the Senate and amongst the Australian people—with abuse and derision and threats of a double dissolution? What Treasurer Hockey apparently does not understand is that those of us on the crossbenches, and those new senators who will join us, have been working tirelessly on this family-bashing budget that he and his cohorts put together.

On 29 May I met with the Prime Minister, after having initiated costings to be undertaken by the Parliamentary Budget Office. The aim of this was to formulate a number of preliminary budget strategies on which to base any future negotiations. These included increasing the deficit levy by one per cent, as well as changes to budgetary issues surrounding education, health, family and welfare—these are palatable.

I have met with Minister Hunt regarding the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and other matters related to the carbon tax. I have met with other ministers in their respective portfolios to discuss election promises and budget measures. Every time my message has been the same: I want to find the best result for Australians and for Australia's future.

I am reluctant to make policy announcements tonight. I am still working through the details. But what I will say is that I am not prepared to horse trade. I am prepared to negotiate

with the government to find the savings needed to get the budget back in the black. But I will not be bludgeoned into selling out those people who can least afford cuts. I am not going to sell out the most vulnerable in our society.

So far I have a clear impression of the government's approach to this budget. It is not interested in finding workable solutions and it is not interested in compromise. Only a few hours ago I received briefing information on several bills that will be introduced into the parliament. All up, they equate to around 650 pages, and this is just four bills out of more than a dozen that will come across the Senate in ensuing weeks. This should really shine a light on how impractical their approach is to consultation and negotiation.

On 29 May Minister Dutton was quoted in the *Medical Observer* on the topic of the need for Senate crossbenchers to work with the government to find a workable solution to this bad budget. He gave two options:

The first option is the Greens option, which is to block everything and negotiate on nothing, essentially to be an obstructionist.

The second model is ... somebody who is willing to add to or improve in their eyes the policy that's before them.

The irony here is, it seems that the government themselves have chosen option 1—that is, not to negotiate and to block any attempt at improvement. I do not understand how Mr Dutton can be so confident that the Medicare co-payments will go through, considering that over 25 per cent of Australians have one federal concession card or another. How can he think the co-payments in their current form are reasonable and affordable?

I do not understand how Mr Hockey and Senator Cormann think a two per cent deficit levy is high enough for those on incomes over \$180,000. When I first heard I would be paying two per cent, I thought I would be paying \$4,000. It turns out it will be closer to \$200. This is a joke.

I do not understand how Senator Abetz thinks it is reasonable, when calculating the Newstart waiting period, not to recognise formal study in higher education as work. I do not understand how they expect some people to live for six months without payment, even when they want to work.

I do not understand how Mr Pyne thinks now is a good time to be introducing his ideologically driven education policy. I do not understand how asking students to pay more for courses and then telling them the interest rate will be increased is a good idea.

I do not understand how the government is prepared to rip out thousands of dollars from families at a time when families are doing it tough. The government wants families to pay more for fuel and more for visiting the doctor, all the while expecting an economic downturn with huge predicted job losses across so many sectors. This is impractical, illogical and bizarre. I could go on all night with examples of how the government confuses me. However, it will do little good.

I challenge the government tonight: if you are serious about getting the nation back on track, then begin dialogue with the crossbench. Stop using families as a punching bag. Let's have a meeting. Let's sit down and discuss common ground more than just a couple of days out from when we are expected to vote on legislation. I am not going to horse trade. The

Australian people deserve better than that. The DLP calls on the government to man up and get real. We will not be bludgeoned. We will not be hijacked. We will not be taken for fools.

Child Abuse

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (20:00): I rise tonight not to reflect on my highs and lows as an outgoing senator but to talk about a topic that is and has been very close to my heart in the time that I have served in the Senate. That is the issue of child abuse. Together with former Senator Arbib and Senator Bilyk, I have sought to raise awareness of all the complexities and legal difficulties that surround this issue. Child abuse and neglect are regrettably far too prevalent around the world. The incidence of child abuse and neglect is certainly too prevalent here in Australia.

Since February 2009, Parliamentarians Against Child Abuse and Neglect—or PACAN, as we affectionately refer to it—has shone a light on issues that may make us uncomfortable or distressed. We have seen that as our mandate: to raise the issues and confronting facts that people choose not to deal with because of the nature of it. One of the issues that we have dealt with in PACAN is under-age marriage and its occurrence within our very own borders.

I am a big supporter of multiculturalism, and I am fortunate to live in the cosmopolitan city of Melbourne. I would suggest that it is the best city in Australia. Certainly it has been recognised as being the world's most livable city. It is also one of the richest and most diverse communities in Australia. I have not only seen but also enjoyed the vast benefits of residing in a cultural melting pot. But we should look at some of the issues that are in that melting pot and we should not ignore illegal, unlawful and completely abhorrent customs and conventions just because they are the norm for some of a certain cultural or ethnic group.

Under-age marriage or forced marriage—which I recognise is illegal here in Australia—is something that is very much subterranean. It exists, but we do not actually know too much about it. What we do know is that it does take place here in Australia. I would like to commend the New South Wales Minister for Women, Pru Goward, and her work on this issue. She has been quite vocal on her concerns and how this is affecting many who reside in New South Wales. Minister Goward only in February warned that forced under-age marriage may in fact be commonplace for certain communities in Sydney.

I cannot say that I am surprised. I say that with enormous regret. Only this year, we heard that a 62-year-old man had allowed his 12-year-old daughter to partake in a so-called marriage ceremony to a man more than double her age. That was right here in Australia, in the inner suburbs of Sydney. Since then, I have been musing over whether I would raise this in this chamber or not. I really cannot leave this place without saying that there is no place for that in Australia. Yes, it is illegal. But these people thought that it was okay because it was part of their culture.

It sickens me that this 62-year-old man took it upon himself to instruct his daughter on how to sexually please her husband and to demand she never encourage her so-called husband to use a condom or any other form of contraceptive device. This man even went to the extent of buying a queen-sized bed for the so-called newlyweds. The cleric who conducted this illegal ceremony has been fined \$500. That is what the law provides for, but is that adequate? His religious visa, I have to note, has been cancelled and he is currently awaiting deportation. The so-called husband of this child has been charged with 25 counts of sexual intercourse with a

child. He was here on a student visa. His student visa has been cancelled and he has been granted bail.

With four minutes and 30 seconds to go, can I say: let's call a spade a spade here. Let's call this out for what it is. It is an act of paedophilia, plain and simple. That is what it is. It is yet another example of child abuse. It is a demonstration of child abuse, mistreatment, neglect, exploitation and molestation of the highest order. Whatever you want to call it, it is an absolute disgrace. However, what we seem to do is apply different standards to people who come from different cultural backgrounds. It is not to suggest that we should be intolerant to people of different cultural backgrounds, but we must advance what it is—for people who come to Australia—that is acceptable here in Australia.

The same day that the media broke the story on this shocking crime, which had happened in the suburbs of Sydney, there were also reports in the paper from London, where Rolf Harris is facing trial over allegations of child molestation and sexual assault. I do not want to canvass the details of that case, but I do want to canvass the difference in the way in which the media dealt with that story day after day, whereas what we seem to have had here was a one-day story of a 62-year-old father who set up his 12-year-old daughter to be abused. The different standards in dealing with these two cases I think reflects very poorly on us. I ask those in the media to consider whether in fact they think they may have handled the reporting of these two situations differently. I do not know how else to say this, but unless we call out without fear or favour the different standards that we are applying to different people within our community it will reflect very poorly on us and very poorly on who we represent when we come to this place.

I would like to put on the record my best wishes to Senator Bilyk, who will continue as the co-convenor of PACAN. She has been a fabulous co-convenor. We work really well together. As I have said before, a sense of humour goes a long way in this place. We do take ourselves very seriously at times. We are here to do a serious job—but, as long as we do not take ourselves too seriously, that is the important thing. Senator Bilyk has been terrific.

I would like to advise the chamber that Mr Ken Wyatt in the other place has agreed to take over the convening of PACAN with Senator Bilyk. He has enormous background and work experience in this area. He has been involved in so many programs and has a great deal of interest in this area; but, in particular, he has the expertise and will be a great advocate for PACAN. I am giving it a plug. Whilst I am not here, make sure you get to the next session, because it really is a very good group and it seeks to advance a very worthwhile cause.

Environment

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (20:09): Following an announcement earlier today by the Leader of the Opposition, I am pleased to say that I have been appointed shadow parliamentary secretary for the environment, climate change and water. Tasmania is the jewel in Australia's environmental crown. As someone who is a proud product of the Apple Isle, who was born in Hobart and educated there and who has raised their children on this beautiful island, I am very honoured to be entering into this portfolio on a day when the future of Tasmania's environment has been at the centre of global attention and when the coalition government's attempt to remove protections over large areas of it has been rejected by the international community, following campaigns around Australia and the successful advocacy by Labor activists and members of parliament. I look forward to working with shadow

minister, Mark Butler, to ensure that we continue to hold up the environmental policies of the Abbott government, or, indeed, the lack of them, to public scrutiny and to fight for the ecological future of the nation in the interests of all Australians and our children and grandchildren to come.

I thank and acknowledge the work of Senator Louise Pratt—a remarkable woman and a valuable advocate for Labor principles, whose loss in this place is deeply felt. I also thank Mark Dreyfus for working with me whilst I was shadow parliamentary secretary in the Attorney-General's portfolio. I look forward to the new challenges and the continued fight against the Abbott government's attempt to destroy the advances in environmental policy undertaken by Labor, from climate change measures such as the implementation of the emissions trading scheme to the protection of our national heritage. It is an important moment in the politics of the environment, both here in Australia and around the world, and I am honoured to be entrusted with responsibility in this portfolio at such a time

As global attention focused on our country with the meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Doha last week and its rejection of the Abbott government's application to remove World Heritage protection from 74,000 hectares of Tasmanian wilderness, the importance of Labor's opposition to the environmental destruction by the coalition government and its misguided priorities became even more apparent. Given Minister Greg Hunt's actions in attempting to remove such an important heritage area from the UNESCO World Heritage List, it would be more accurate to describe him not so much as a minister for the environment but more as a minister against the environment.

We should also remember the importance of the role that many of my Labor colleagues played in opposing this legislation. In May, the shadow environment minister, Mark Butler, and the shadow minister for foreign affairs, Tanya Plibersek, wrote to all signatories of the World Heritage Convention to reject Tony Abbott's proposal, citing the potential to cause irreparable damage to the outstanding universal values of the Tasmanian wilderness. While Tony Abbott was telling people around the globe, wrongly, that the area was degraded and not worthy of World Heritage status, in an attempt to demean the value of this outstanding piece of wilderness and beauty in the eyes of the international community, it was Labor who defended Australia's ecological reputation and argued for the importance of protecting this jewel in our green heritage.

The government's application lacked any logical basis to the claim that the listing criteria did not apply to the area in question. The assertion that it was degraded was disproved by the report from the Department of the Environment—a report which only came to light after the application had gone in. Perhaps the most damning statement about the weakness of the government's application—international intervention which has cost the Australian taxpayer large amounts of government money to engage in—came from the Portuguese delegation to the committee, which stated:

The justifications presented to the reduction are to say the least feeble.

Accepting this de-listing today would be setting an unacceptable precedent impossible to deny in similar circumstances in the future.

If this committee cares for conservation according to responsible engagement of states parties to the convention when they submit their nominations, we cannot accept these requests to de-list.

Some might say that the recklessness which has marked the Abbott regime's approach to government was present in Minister Hunt's strategic folly. But it is a recklessness which not only threatens Australia's international credentials but also inflicts irreparable damage on the outstanding universal values of the Tasmanian wilderness. What message does it send if the Abbott government delists a World Heritage area in Tasmania? It says, 'This area has been trashed—why come here?' That has no economic benefit for Tasmania. It is actually selling down our state at a time when we know that it is the wilderness, the environment of Tasmania, that has such an economic benefit, a tourism benefit, to our state. Yet here was a government willing to go out to the international community, to the Australian community, and talk it down on a false premise.

Minister Hunt's attitude, putting forward a rather careless defence of his actions, seems very curious. He asserted that he had fulfilled the promise he had made at the election for the delisting simply by making the application and attempting to get the committee to change its position. 'The committee has not approved the Australian government's request—Australia accepts and will consider the decision of the World Heritage Committee,' he said.

So now, in the wake of the countless breaches of trust with the Australian electorate, it is good enough for a minister of the Crown to 'attempt' to implement an election promise in order for the coalition to consider their commitments fulfilled. At a time when new consensus is emerging around the world that opens up the possibility for us to address the challenges of climate change, at a time when emissions trading schemes are being implemented in more and more nations, it is deeply concerning that the reactionary principles of the Abbott government are threatening to turn Australia back and remove us from playing our role and indeed leading the way in this important historical development. Moving on from the successful protection of the Tasmanian World Heritage area today, there is still so much for Labor to do and to fight for against the coalition's attacks on the environment in the years ahead.

Although the coalition tried to downgrade the World Heritage area status that Tasmania's wilderness forests rightly deserve, we know that the commercial sector is recognising the value of Tasmania's wilderness. There was another remarkable achievement today. Virgin Australia, a major commercial company in Australia, today announced an expansion of its carbon offset program, launching a new partnership with the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. Virgin Australia's carbon offset program, Fly Carbon Neutral, is a voluntary option for all domestic and international customers, which involves paying a small fee in the online booking process. That will be another benefit for Tasmania's wilderness.

We know so much about the value of Tasmania's wilderness and how much it means to Tasmanians and indeed the rest of Australia. It is the jewel in Australia's crown. I encourage Minister Greg Hunt to actually come and visit some of our beautiful forests to see for himself what it was that he was trying to delist. Take the lead that shadow ministers Tony Burke and Mark Butler have both taken in going into these areas and seeing for themselves why it is so important that these areas are protected.

As the People's Republic of China moves its substantial resources towards the creation of emissions trading schemes, joining the European Union, American states as large as California and other countries around the world, Labor will continue to advocate for Australia's environment and for leading policy development and practice in the area.

I am really pleased by today's outcome of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, which agreed to protect Tasmania's World Heritage area forests.

Homelessness

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (20:20): Last week I spoke about a gentleman by the name of Jonathan, who is homeless, living in his car with his son in the beach suburbs of Western Australia. Although I would really like to say he has been given housing, I am pleased to report that this morning on national AM radio, and again at lunchtime, we were successful in getting Jonathan quite a lot of publicity. He talked about his plight and the plight of hundreds of others sleeping rough on Perth beaches. Jonathan makes up one of around 10,000 people that are inadequately housed in Western Australia.

What is really interesting about Jonathan's story going to air today is that the ABC took about a week to prepare that report, and guess what? During that whole week Minister Andrews was unavailable for comment. Isn't it extraordinary that since last week, when we first started talking to the ABC about this story, somehow Minister Andrews has been so terribly busy that his silence on homelessness continues today, with him declining to make any comment on Jonathan's story to ABC radio.

Tonight I want to talk about Perth Registry Week, which is a campaign which aims to identify the most vulnerable homeless people in the inner city area of Perth, who are sleeping rough or perhaps in shelters. They are people who are in dire need of affordable housing.

Perth Registry Week, which is replicated in a number of inner city suburbs across our country, aims to prioritise housing, health and other support services based on the assessed vulnerability of those it surveys. Perth Registry Week is coordinated by Ruah, who also had something to say on the ABC's program today. Ruah said they do not need reviews; they need affordable housing. There is an urgent need for the Abbott government to put its hand into its pocket and really look at affordable housing, not just conduct another review. Ruah coordinates Perth Registry Week in a very broad partnership, so it works with state government departments, local government, the police, the Salvos, Anglicare WA, St Barts, UnitingCare West, Vinnies, the Nyoongar Patrol, and the Perth Mobile GP. Obviously, many of these organisations also provide services to the homeless, and the police generally know where the homeless are, so they all combine to do this work over three nights.

Just a few weeks ago in early May, Perth Registry Week surveyed those people they found living rough in the early hours of the morning in the Perth CBD. One hundred and sixty eight people agreed to be surveyed. What one of the survey tools does—and there are two—is identify how much at risk those who are homeless are of dying if their situation does not change. They are measuring the vulnerability of those living on the streets. The fact is that they will die if they do not have affordable housing. That is what one of the surveys measures. We are conducting that survey in our community in this rich country, and that was the point made by Perth Registry Week just a few weeks ago when they did the survey.

There is another tool that Perth Registry Week uses. That looks at the sort of support that individuals need to remain stably housed. These tools, together, are evidence informed, accurate and rigorously tested. We do not need a review by the Abbott government; we urgently need funds for affordable housing. The vulnerability factors are a measure of community failure. That we should use these sorts of measures, one of which measures

whether or not a person will die if they are not housed, is a disgrace. It says to us as a whole community that we are failing. To be part of this survey you had to have been homeless for more than six months. The survey told us that in Western Australia, if you are over 25 and homeless, you are likely to remain homeless for over six years. If you are under 25, you are likely to remain homeless for more than three years.

Let us look at what this test of whether or not you will die is about: end-stage renal disease, history of cold weather injuries, liver disease or cirrhosis, HIV-AIDS, over 60 years old, three or more emergency room visits or hospitalisations in the past six months, and trimorbidity, which is a combination of having mental health issues, substance abuse issues and medical problems. Other high measures are that you have consumed alcohol every day for the last 30 days or that you are using injectable drugs. On the vulnerability factors of those 168 people sleeping rough in the Perth CBD that agreed to be surveyed, there was strong evidence that many people living rough on the streets of Perth or in homeless shelters were at risk of dying. Most had been homeless for more than six months. Almost half had trimorbidity. Over a third had three or more accident and emergency visits or hospitalisations in the prior six months. Six were over the age of 60. Among those over 25, there were people with liver and renal disease. Almost half of the group had consumed alcohol every day for the past 30 days. And around a quarter were injecting drugs.

Who are these people? Living in the Perth CBD among the mining wealth, the new flash office towers of mining magnates, the consultancies, the labour hire firms, and the high-end shops of King Street lived people who were at risk of dying, living a precarious life with a very urgent need to be housed—men and women, young and old. The youngest person surveyed was just 15—too young to vote, too young to drive, too young to enter into binding contracts, and by law required to be at school, yet living on the streets of Perth. The oldest was 77. Imagine the stories that that person could tell. But they were living alone on the streets of Perth, discarded by society.

Significant numbers of the 168 surveyed were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people: almost half of the adults and 30 per cent of those under 25. What a disgrace! This is a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, when the 2011 census for Western Australia informs us that Aboriginal people represent 3.1 per cent of Western Australian community.

In terms of income support, among those under 25 there was a higher proportion of begging. In the over-25 group, there were higher numbers receiving disability support or unemployment benefits. Of that group, 34 reported they had had a Centrelink breach in the last six months. Of course they had: it is near impossible to comply if you are living rough and do not have a stable address. Violence is an issue. Most respondents had had contact with the justice system. Health and mental health issues were highly prevalent.

There is some good news; some of those people have been housed. But this truly shocking report should make headlines, and it should be something governments not only report on but take action on. But this week once again we have seen absolutely nothing from the Abbott government. Minister Andrews says he wants to conduct a review. These people in Western Australia and right across our country do not need a review. We need money, we need funding for affordable housing and we need it now. We cannot have people dying on our streets.

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Queensland) (20:30): I rise tonight to continue a discussion I started in this place last week, regarding a vulnerable group of Australians who suffer from the medical condition of atypical haemolytic uremic syndrome. This condition is a very aggressive medical condition that promotes organ failure in patients who are exposed—in particular renal failure followed by liver failure and in many cases the patients will go on to suffer brain damage. The condition is often measured in a patient's life in weeks rather than months and certainly not years. For many this condition is ultimately life-threatening and for some fatal.

For those who do not surrender their life to this condition they often confront a lifetime of living with the results of organ failure—many of them not eligible for corresponding live transplant arrangements because of the condition. I said last time—and I will continue to repeat it each time I take to my feet—that I stand here to speak for those who do not have a voice, for the grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties and the patients themselves, who have been engaging with me and other senators and members of the House of Representatives.

There are estimated to be 70 Australians who suffer from the condition, with 22 of them in acute stages of this disease. Not only are their voices silent, but there are very few of them to give momentum for those voices to be heard. Without people like myself and others in this parliament putting forward their case, the condition of their lives will remain in the balance. There is a solution and that has to do with a drug called Soliris. It is a very expensive drug; it costs about half a million dollars a year per patient. The trials are yet to determine whether these patients need to remain on the drug for life or whether exposure to the drug over set periods of time is beneficial. Various time iterations have been presented but up to 12 months may tide them through, protect their organs and their lives until the condition goes into some form of remission. The drug was the subject of an application to the former government, but it was rejected on the basis of clinical trials. Another application was lodged in late 2013 and considered by the PBAC in March 2014. The PBAC have in principle approved the drug for use and have broadly agreed, as I understand it, with the cost impost of the drug, but there are some delays due to negotiations between the health department and the company about the terms and conditions of the managed entry scheme that will apply to Australian patients.

Broad trials for these boutique drugs for rare disorders cannot be conducted and so some trial and error is involved. This particular drug has only been used in the treatment of this condition for 3¼ years internationally and so there is much more to be learnt both about the performance potential of the drug and any long-term negative impacts it might have on patients who are exposed over longer periods. The difficulty is that, whilst the Department of Health has agreed with many of the terms and conditions of the manufacturer from the United States, there is disagreement over the government's resolve to ensure that this drug is accepted on terms that meet the national interest and the requirements of the patients. I think some of the conditions that the department is negotiating are very fair and reasonable in the circumstances, but they are asking the company to enter into arrangements where if the drug proves to be unsuccessful with particular patients—and I understand patients react differently to the performance of this medicine—then Australia reserves the right to withdraw from the arrangements. I think that is perfectly reasonable.

I am satisfied that great progress has been made in these discussions. I think they are at a very advanced stage. The difficulty now rests in convincing the pharmaceutical company to give access to some of these patients—and there are 11 Australians who are in critical, immediate need of this drug to maintain their health. If negotiations with the PBS are to go on, as I anticipate they might, and are measured in months, then indeed we will have young Australians—beautiful young Australians like Bianca Scott of the Gold Coast in my home state of Queensland—who will suffer from organ failure, from which they might not return. It may well—and I hope I do not bring Bianca or her family any distress in saying this—put her life at risk. In fact, it will put her life at risk.

That family has spent \$235,000 with this company to buy the drug, at a personal level, to this date. They have run out of the capacity to do that. I stand here tonight, as I did the other day, and I call upon this pharmaceutical company. This company is engaging with our country, which is giving favourable consideration to entering into arrangements with that company for tens upon tens upon tens of millions of dollars of Australian taxpayers' money to subsidise and fund this important drug. This is a company that has a turnover of \$1.5 billion. This is a company where the CEO has an annual salary of \$14 million and \$168 million in share options. I call on them tonight to give consideration to extending access to this drug to these 11 Australians who are in critical need of it at the moment, until such time as we have properly and sensibly worked through the issues associated with the terms and conditions for access to this drug.

I say to the CEO of Alexion tonight—who is, as we speak, I suspect, lying warm and fair in his bed in the United States: tomorrow morning he should ask himself a question; he should close his eyes and give consideration to what he would want his company to do in these circumstances if this were his daughter who faced this terrible plight in life. I am prepared, if he does that in a fair manner, to live with the decision that he takes. (*Time expired*)

People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (20:40): I have spoken in this place before about my friend Mohammed Sadeghpour, an Australian citizen of Iranian descent who advocates strongly for a group of people who are trapped in Iraq at a place called Camp Liberty—a misnomer if ever there was one. There are about 3,000 Iranian people who are all members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, and they have been trapped at Camp Liberty near Baghdad airport after they transferred from Camp Ashraf in December 2011 through to February 2012. This group of people includes around 1,000 women and children who have all been classified as asylum seekers by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but, while they are trapped in that area, they are subject to regular missile attacks and harassment from the Iraqi government.

The fear of the people at Camp Liberty is that somehow they will be forcibly returned to Iran. They left Iran because they had fallen out with the then government and have lived in Iraq for a number of years, under the protection of the Iraqi government of the time and also under the protection of the UN.

We know about the human rights record of Iran. Amnesty International, who put out regular bulletins, talk about the severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Dissidents and human rights defenders, including minority rights and women's rights activists, are arbitrarily arrested, detained, imprisoned after unfair trials and banned

from travelling abroad. There are scores of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners. Many people do not know where family members have gone after they have been subject to arrest. We know that there is torture and other ill-treatment, and we know that there is a particular focus on stopping freedom of expression in the community. We also know that the judicial punishments of flogging and amputation continue to be used.

But most appalling—and these always horrify me—are the statistics around executions that take place in Iran. We do not even know the absolute figures. The records provided by the Iranian government are clearly inaccurate because we know, from information that is smuggled out of the country and also discussed freely with the community, that the numbers are much higher. The total number of executions in Iran in 2014 up to 5 May was, we believe, around 280, with only about 100 of those being announced publicly by the regime. Most of the people who are executed are political prisoners, and there is a clear policy of rapid execution, including public executions, to instil fear in the society. And we know that the Iranian society is undergoing a severe economic and political crisis.

All that data is publicly known, and sometimes, when you receive information from Amnesty and even from people who come to visit you, it almost begins to be an academic exercise. But the last time that Mohammed came to see me—I had expected him to see me regularly because he comes to talk about what is happening for the people in Camp Liberty—he was talking specifically about one prisoner in Iran for whom he was very fearful. The gentleman about whom he was talking was Mr Gholamreza Khosravi Savadjani, who had been, at that time, transferred from the area in which he had been held to an area which we knew was where people went just before they were executed. Mohammed was telling me about Mr Khosravi. He was 49 and had one child—and we had photographs of him with his kid, playing soccer, and at this time when we are all looking at the World Cup, and many of us are losing sleep at night watching that, somehow seeing that photograph of this father and son together on a soccer field was very familiar. But what we discovered, after we had heard about him being transferred, was that he had been executed.

The reality of just this one case—Mohammad was talking to me about what the background of this gentleman was—is that he had been condemned to death on the charge of moharebeh, which means 'enmity towards God'. He had been condemned to death on 21 April 2012 for making a donation to support the cable TV service of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran. Making a donation to a political group, an enemy of the state, actually caused capital punishment. Amidst all the discussions, the theory, to find out the history of this one man was particularly confronting, and it made all the theories and all the figures very real. We know that this is a daily occurrence in that nation, and we have figures that say that it is increasing, that there are more executions taking place, all at a time when publicly, internationally, we are talking about a more compassionate regime, a new way of operating in Iran. But these horrific human rights attacks continue to occur.

Within this environment, we hear about the group of people who are still trapped in Camp Liberty. They have been assessed by the UNHCR. As I said, there are about 3,000 people in that establishment, but only 300 have been relocated to safe countries—almost 100 to Germany, which has a very strong record in this area, and about 200 to Albania. We have not taken or forwarded any action to take people from the camp to Australia, even though we

know that these people have family friends here who are desperately seeking their safety and to be able to support them.

On 27 June this year there will be a huge rally in Paris to advocate for democracy in Iran. This is an annual event. It will be attended, we believe, by over 120,000, if attendances of recent years can give any indication. Among them will be hundreds of members of parliament, mainly from Europe, North America and the Middle East, and people who are concerned about making sure that there is a public statement about human rights and democracy in Iran.

We know that there are issues. We have people in our community who understand these things, who have friends and family caught up in this horror. We cannot pretend this is not happening. We know there is a massive sentiment for democratic change among Iranian people. And at the international level the president-elect of the Council of Resistance of Iran, Mrs Maryam Rajavi, continues to speak out in Europe calling for democracy in her homeland of Iran.

We are not talking about telling other countries how they should run their business. What we are talking about is understanding the clear principles of democracy and human rights. There is evidence to say that the regime in Iran is not effectively promoting human rights within the community. Simply the stories about the regular executions are enough for us to say that this is not what we expect from a country that has an effective democracy. It concerns me that our country is now beginning to enter into enhanced trade agreements with Iran. I think it is very important that we have interaction. I think it is important for our country to ensure that we can best look after our own primary producers, because most of this is about the live export trade. Nonetheless, within this interchange there should be some space to talk about our expectation that other nations have similar approaches to human rights and democratic practice to ours if we are going to be involved in commercial exchange.

I think Australia has a role to play. We were active in the Iraqi conflict and we know horror is continuing to occur in that nation now. We had this group of people seeking asylum in Iraq, where the situation is degenerating so quickly, even as we speak. So, again, I put the case to our Australian government and our community: we should talk with the people who are in Camp Liberty, as it is well known. We should make sure that our embassy officials visit that camp and talk to the people directly. We should ensure that there is some understanding of their genuine asylum status and that we work towards making sure that no more people like the gentleman who was executed quite recently will be victims of a regime that has very little similarity and very few links with our nation.

Holt, Mr Peter

Senator DASTYARI (New South Wales) (20:50): I rise tonight to speak on a most insidious matter, a disgusting breach of trust and a shameful insult to hardworking Australians who are trying to put some money aside for their future, for their kids' education, for their peace of mind. I speak tonight on behalf of the victims of Peter Holt—on behalf the mechanics, the trade teachers, the office managers, the animal carers, the speech pathologists, the pool installers, the educators, the retirees and the small business owners who put their retirement savings—and, of course, their trust—in this Melbourne accountant turned financial adviser who stitched these folks up and took them to the proverbial cleaners, wiping out not

just their savings and investments but deceiving them into taking out high-interest loans that continue to haunt these folks long after the collapse of their initial investment.

Peter Holt assured his victims that, while their investments had a level of risk, of course their homes would be safe, knowing full well that these families were putting their property, their lives and their livelihoods on the line. He himself has been bankrupted, on paper, but he had rat cunning—some would say the devious foresight—to protect his personal assets from the inevitable collapse—as the media have reiterated, as their attention has once again, thankfully, turned to those who stand to profit from this government's decisions to wind back the consumer protections contained in FoFA. Despite a bankruptcy on paper, Peter Holt still lives in a multimillion dollar home, drives a European sports car, and enjoys the luxury of mid-week rounds of golf. He is a crook, a criminal and a fraudster and, frankly, it is not good enough when a creep like that gets away with it. Yesterday I met with Naomi Halpern, just one of the victims of Peter Holt. I sat down with opposition leader Bill Shorten and shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen to hear her story. Hers is an intelligent and articulate story. As I have said, it is a story of a disgusting breach of trust by Peter Holt. Naomi was a client of Mr Holt, seeking him out for assistance with her taxes and the accounts of her small business. He obviously had a fair idea of her finances and suggested she put some money into a 'government backed' scheme called Timbercorp. He burnished his credentials, assuring her he was a former tax office official and he offered her a chance to support local farmers by investing in avocados, olives and almonds. It all sounds so idyllic. But the government backing Mr Holt claimed was merely a tax credit and, when the then minister responsible, Peter Dutton, ended the credits in early 2007, shares in Timbercorp, which was nothing more than a pyramid scheme, collapsed overnight.

What that collapse had in common with many high-profile investments that predated the FoFA reforms was people like Peter Holt making their money not by giving tailored advice to people like Naomi Halpern but by abusing the trust of hardworking Australians and earning a sales commission for plugging a scheme that was heading for failure. He knew that it was heading for failure. Peter Holt was acting in his own best interests, not in the best interests of Naomi Halpern or the action group that she represents that has dozens, if not hundreds, of members that this one gentleman ripped off.

The changes to FoFA introduced by Senator Cormann and announced on Friday will be putting smiles on the faces of people like Peter Holt and others who plug these shonky schemes that rip off good, hardworking Australians. Senator Cormann is diluting the best-interest test in FoFA, allowing the likes of Peter Holt to raise their hands and claim, deceitfully, that their dishonest documentation, doctored loan agreements and blatant lies were in the best interests of people like Naomi Halpern.

As I have said in this chamber once before, make no mistake: if Minister Cormann is successful in pushing these changes through, he and this government must take full and unambiguous responsibility for the scandals that inevitably lie ahead. This government have once again unravelled basic consumer protections to allow the likes of crooks and criminals such as Peter Holt to abuse a most basic fiduciary duty, once again con their clients under the guise of financial advice and pick the pockets of unsuspecting, honest, trusting Australians.

Peter Holt's case has gone through the bankruptcy courts, and the liquidators have been through his loan documents. Some have the asset, liability and income details left blank.

Victims were told by Peter Holt, 'Don't worry; we'll finalise the details later.' Others showed liability details erased or amended. Peter Holt was aware of what he was doing and he knew he could get away with it.

Peter Holt engaged the services of another disgrace to the Australian financial services industry: crooked lawyer and creep Graeme Watters of law firm Bentley Watters and Associates. That is nothing more than a sham law firm and it should not be allowed to operate in this country. Mr Watters was bragging, assuring Peter Holt that he could provide him with 'legal bulletproofing', telling customers and clients, 'You can't go after this guy. I have bulletproofed him.' The fact that Graeme Watters is still allowed to practise law in Victoria is an indictment of the Victorian legal system. Frankly, if an investigation has not already begun, the Victorian legal system should be investigating a crooked creep like this bloke.

I am passionate about this issue. I am passionate about this issue because I feel that crooks like Peter Holt and Graeme Watters have been allowed to get away with these crimes. We in this parliament have a duty to provide Australians with the protection of the rule of law. The Australian financial advice industry should not be about lawyers, guns and money. Our legislation or, in Minister Cormann's case, regulations cannot permit dodgy lawyers to bulletproof deceptive financial advisers and allow them to skim hard-earned money from ordinary, good Australians and then leave them repaying deceptive loans they did not even know they had.

Senator Cormann's FoFA reforms reopen the loopholes which enabled Peter Holt and others to rip off good Australians. Senator Cormann's changes to the best-interest duty will enable advisers like Peter Holt to narrow the advice they offer to self-serving suggestions, such as Timbercorp. These changes open up the door, once again, for the payment of kickbacks from issuers to advisers and this includes through the winding back of the general advice exemption, the 'execution only' exemption, permissible revenue, volume rebates and incentives to gear investments.

Naomi Halpern, who I spoke about earlier, is just one of many victims. Peter Holt is just one deceitful predator. With the introduction of these FoFA reforms, too many other people will once again be ripped off, conned and taken for a ride. Frankly, we in this parliament and in this Senate have a responsibility to make sure we stand up for Australians against these crooks and their crooked lawyers.

Future of Financial Advice
Hawkesbury River Railway Crossing
Crime Prevention

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (21:00): I am a little breathless—I was in my office listening to Senator Dastyari and I was so caught up in the passion of his concern about the winding back of the FoFA laws that I forgot it was my turn to speak next, and I have had to run to the chamber to make my contribution. I second everything that Senator Dastyari said. In a former role I was the chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, which undertook the work of establishing the legislation that is FoFA. Having met with the victims of Timbercorp in the last week, I think everything Senator Dastyari said is entirely reasonable. We are at a point in time, a significant marker in history, where if the government gets its way we will see the unwinding of protections that are vital

for ordinary Australians who have a right to believe that when they go to seek financial advice they will receive it in their best interests, not in the best interests of the person who is providing the advice.

In contrast to many of the concerned speeches about things of great portent for the country, I would like to put on the record a couple of celebratory things that have been happening around the country as well. It is not all bad news. On the weekend of 3 and 4 May I had the opportunity to meet the community of Dangar Island, who celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Hawkesbury River railway crossing. This was a tremendous event. On the Sunday I was honoured to visit the island with Her Excellency the New South Wales Governor, Marie Bashir, in what will have been one of her final events in New South Wales as she goes to a well-earned retirement. It was a wonderful pleasure to be with her, and she was made very welcome by the island's over 300 visitors on that day who took part in a beautiful afternoon of activities. We were treated to a ferry boat ride from the Brooklyn public wharf to the island on the historic *Banksia* ferry. This was followed by a tour of the exhibitions of art and photography by local artists, as well as historical photographs, maps and memorabilia. Afterwards there was an address by the Governor, colonial music in the park, storytelling and an amazing cake in the shape of the Hawkesbury River railway bridge to celebrate the occasion.

As you cross the current Hawkesbury River bridge you can still see the stanchions of the old bridge, which played a major role by providing a railway crossing. The island was leased to the New York-based Union Bridge Company as a prefabrication site for the bridge. It was the first time that these engineers had attempted a project outside the United States, and Dangar Island was established as a community for the workers and their families. The bridge was considered to be a major technical achievement when it was first completed, and it was the first bridge of its kind in Australia. The piers were 49 metres deep, and they were the deepest bridge footings in the world at the time. That happened right here, on the Hawkesbury River. It was an amazing engineering feat, and it is important that past projects like this inspire us at a time when a visionary project like the NBN is being decried and diminished. Building the things that make a nation takes vision, commitment and a sense of the future that is grander than the small-minded narrative that we see at this time.

The crossing affected the unity of the entire east coast, by connecting the railway systems of the eastern railway lines from Queensland through to South Australia, and it was critical in the sense of being a symbolic formulation of what might be possible with the federation which was to follow shortly. This connection was a vital step towards the united Australia which was the vision of Sir Henry Parkes, who described the crossing as a powerful symbol of Federation. The speech Henry gave to open the bridge is considered to be the first of his Federation speeches. Parkes said:

We have here a representative of the great Government to our south and of the great Government to our north, and why should not this occasion be an emblem of our future relations?

This united eastern railway line was also very important during the Second World War, and the Hawkesbury River railway crossing was vital in creating an allied defence of the east coast. The new railway bridge brought many improvements to the district as it was instrumental in improving passenger transportation and trade, as well as access to emergency

medical care. Previously the majority of transport for this area was undertaken by steamer or ferry, which took an awful lot longer.

Today Dangar Island, a charming island, is accessible only by water and has around 250 permanent residents and a vibrant community of local artists, writers and musicians. Among the people of Dangar Island there is a strong tradition of volunteering and self-reliance and a great sense of community involvement, with children playing on streets that are never traversed by a single vehicle. It is a wonderful experience to go to visit Dangar Island, and I highly recommend it to Australians fascinated with times past. With that sense of community, it can be a great place to go and seek some relaxation.

The 125th anniversary of the Hawkesbury River railway crossing also marks the progress that has taken place for the island and its community over the last 125 years. Exhibitions of photographs, maps and memorabilia demonstrate the changes that took place in the island's rich history, from being a key construction site between 1896 and 1899 to becoming a destination for family vacations and, today, a lively and diverse residential suburb—albeit a suburb accessible only by water.

It was wonderful to see that the event was really embraced by the local community, with many of the islanders taking part in the careful preparation of exhibitions and the running of events on the day. I pay tribute to the Dangar Island Historical Society, who worked tirelessly to pull the anniversary celebrations together, preparing exhibition materials and giving guided tours on the day. My particular thanks go to Dangar Island historians and researchers Rosemary Curtis and Ross Higgins, who played main roles in the preparations for this wonderful event. I would also like to thank Peter Wolfe, the President of the Dangar Island Historical Society, and David Reynolds, a local historian, who gave us the pleasure of his very interesting and particularly well-informed commentary as he showed us around. It was a delight to see him pointing out features of the island, including a sandstone-built turret, and the connections with history from people who had come to the island and yearned for a bit of the old country and tried to recreate a little bit of that.

It was indeed a wonderful day and an absolute privilege to see the Dangar Island community actively coming together in preserving, celebrating and sharing its history. It is clear that this community is looking to the future in order to see growth and change, but it is also clear that this community knows the importance of maintaining the character, environment and uniqueness that was built upon the establishment of the Hawkesbury River railway crossing. It was an honour to be able to take part in this wonderful event, and I had a great time learning about and celebrating such an important part of local history right on the edge of the Central Coast, where it meets with the seat of Hornsby.

I would also like to acknowledge the commitment of Superintendent Commander Daniel Sullivan of the Brisbane Water area, and his commitment to the community's shared goal of achieving a safe and secure community. I am very pleased to report that Superintendent Commander Sullivan, as well as the entire Brisbane Water Local Area Command, has seen a significant reduction in crime rates due to their many initiatives to discourage criminal and antisocial behaviour. The Recorded Crime Statistics annual report released by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has shown a significant crime reduction on the Central Coast. Breaking and entering and theft from residences has gone down by nearly 30 per cent, as has motor vehicle theft, and malicious damage has gone down by nearly 15 per cent.

Brisbane Water Local Area Command has also initiated a number of operations to prevent people from becoming victims of crime. Operation Home Safe and Operation Latitude aim to promote defensive security measures in the home and in the local businesses. Operation 550 is aimed at reducing alcohol-fuelled violence, and there are many other operations targeted at those intent on committing crime in the community. Operation Saber achieved particular success in the period that it was conducted. Aimed at reducing alcohol and drug related crime, it sent a strong message to the community.

I am also mindful of the 2012 visit of Minister Brendan O'Connor, who provided a significant investment of funding to improve security, particularly for older people in the peninsular areas of Umina, Ettalong and Woy Woy. I certainly want to take this moment to commend the Brisbane Water Local Area Command on their community engagement program, which has led to police involvement in 56 community events. This is a critical change that Superintendent Sullivan is driving. Ensuring a place for police in the community is a key way of ensuring that we have confidence in our local police, who are indeed doing a fine job.

Budget

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (21:10): Tonight I rise to make to make some comments on how the government's higher education reform will expand opportunities for regional students. As Sam Seaborn famously said, 'Education is the silver bullet.' It is critical for our economic and social wellbeing as a nation. I am concerned and frustrated that the benefits have been in the shadow of headline-grabbing protests by mainly city based students opposed to the reforms. Far be it from me to critique a good student protest, as my generation was the first of the HECS generation, and many of my fellow students in the late eighties took to the streets en masse. So I would never critique that. I stand here not just as a Nationals senator but also as someone who has taught secondary and university students. I genuinely believe these changes will be good for regional students, universities and the communities they live in. There is a good story to tell about these reforms, because we as a government are committed to sustainable higher education where we balance equity and access—equity between personal and private benefit and access both to excellence internationally with respect to our research and to a wider range of options for students in terms of pathways and support and getting those previously unable to access higher education into the sphere.

I will start with the government's multimillion dollar investment across the higher education sector. We will invest \$371.5 million over three years to expand the current system and to provide support to students completing higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees. We will extend Commonwealth support of \$448.9 million over three years to private universities and non-university higher education institutions. These initiatives mean that universities, colleges and TAFEs in regional areas, which tend to attract local students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and relatively poorer high school achievement, can offer more courses. These qualifications will provide career opportunities and pathways to further qualifications. These reforms will also encourage innovative partnerships, especially in regional areas where universities and TAFEs can work together to offer the skills and knowledge that local employers are looking for. Federation University Australia at Ballarat, for example, has partnerships with a range of TAFEs in regional

Victoria to provide pathways to higher education for people who might not otherwise get the opportunity and is producing graduates with sought-after skills for the regions.

The reforms will ensure students living in rural and regional Australia will have the same world-class higher education opportunities as students living in metropolitan areas and will allow them to contribute to growing their local economies. Students will be supported irrespective of where they choose to study. First-generation students, those who come to higher education without high ATARs, and mature age students will benefit from additional access to supported pathways. More than 80,000 additional students nationally will benefit from these increased opportunities by 2018, many of them from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as confirmed by my coalition colleague and Minister for Human Services, Senator Marise Payne, in this chamber yesterday. This will potentially result in a significant boost to the number of undergraduate students from low-SES backgrounds under Labor's demand-driven system, which reported an increase of more than 21,818 from 2008 to 2012, according to higher education student statistics.

The Secretary of the Department of Education, Lisa Paul, recently told Senate estimates that an important feature of the package for regions is to increase Commonwealth-supported supply of students. This in turn will help improve course completion rates. The Abbott-Truss government will continue to support regional higher education directly through the regional loading that is provided to universities in recognition of the higher cost of operating regional campuses. We will provide \$274 million in regional loading over the next four years.

Fee deregulation, a hot topic at the moment, will see universities able to set their own course fees from 2016. This will enable regional universities to successfully compete to attract more students, potentially leading to lower fees at some universities. We are also continuing to support 24 structural adjustment and infrastructure projects worth \$683 million that are benefiting regional and outer metropolitan areas.

The Abbott-Truss government will introduce new Commonwealth scholarships at Australian universities to ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not miss out. One dollar in every five that universities and other higher education institutions receive in additional revenue raised through student fees will fund these scholarships. The scholarships will provide tailored, individualised support to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. These Commonwealth scholarships have the potential to benefit regional students in particular.

Under the Higher Education Loan Program, students do not need to pay a cent up-front for their education. They only have to start repaying their loan when they start earning a decent income, currently \$53,000 per annum. HELP loan fees, which were as high as 25 per cent of the course fee, have been scrapped. This will level the playing field for students. The only other changes to HECS/HELP are that students will now be asked to pay, over time, 50 per cent of the cost of their course instead of the 40 per cent which applies now, and the interest rate will change from the CPI to the 10-year bond rate. Students will be borrowing at the same rate it costs the government to borrow money. The Department of Education estimates this will mean an extra \$3 to \$5 a week in repayments for the average graduate. Given that graduates will earn around a million dollars more over their lifetime than other school leavers, this does not seem like an unreasonable burden.

Supporting young apprentices is a key component of our program. The Abbott-Truss government is delivering on its commitment to introduce trade support loans for apprentices to encourage more young people to take up a trade and complete their qualification. From 1 July 2014, the government will offer loans of up to \$20,000 over the life of an apprenticeship. Like HELP loans for tertiary students, the loans will be repayable once the apprentices are earning a sustainable income. Again, this will benefit apprentices in rural and regional Australia.

The Abbott-Truss government will invest \$11 billion to build on Australia's world-class research capacity. Research priorities include \$200 million to accelerate research into dementia, \$42 million to expand the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University in North Queensland for research into tropical diseases, and \$24 million to support the Antarctic Gateway Partnership as part of a strategy to enshrine Tasmania's position at the centre of Antarctic research. There will also be \$139.5 million for the Future Fellowships scheme, where we encourage mid-career young researchers to stay and focus their research on national priorities.

In conclusion, it is a fact that the Abbott-Truss government's reforms will benefit regional students and universities. Professor Peter Lee, the chair of the Regional Universities Network, or RUN, said at the time the reforms were announced in the budget that the network was pleased that the importance of equity and participation of students in higher education had been recognised in the higher education measures and that RUN was keen to work with the government on the detail of the reforms. That is a key point to make—that the government is now going out and consulting with the sector to ensure that the details of these programs are bedded down in a way that makes very real and sustainable our commitment to equity and access. Professor Lee said:

We are particularly pleased that the government has decided to keep the demand driven system for bachelor places and extended it to sub-bachelor places. This will assist in providing pathways and lift participation in higher education ...

He, like the Nationals, notes the significant contribution regional Australia makes to our national prosperity and productivity, with a third of the population living in the regions.

Senior education department officials also confirmed at estimates that the new direction for higher education will help regional students and regional universities in a number of ways. The recent report *Review of the demand driven funding system* found people living in regional and remote areas are less likely to go to university than their metropolitan peers. The Bradley review of higher education found that those from remote and regional areas and from low socioeconomic backgrounds are the 'most seriously underrepresented groups' participating in higher education over the last decade. Despite low access rates to higher education—around 16 per cent since 2002—the report says the success rate of low socioeconomic status students is 97 per cent of the pass rates of their medium and high socioeconomic status peers and that this has been very stable over the last five years. We must therefore ensure these students get every opportunity they can, as well as the financial support and the pathways they need to further their education.

Fee deregulation will potentially benefit regional students, with universities now able to price their courses according to market demand in a positive way. Indeed, there may be the opportunity for reverse migration, as low socioeconomic students and those that are more

price sensitive see the opportunity of studying at a regional university. Not only will this provide a boost to regional economies by ensuring there are more skilled workers, but the education institutions themselves will be able to grow, employ more people and invest back into their communities.

Why were regional students left behind by the former government? We are getting the balance right. We are increasing participation for those seeking— *(Time expired)*

Budget

Senator MARSHALL (Victoria) (21:20): This year's Abbott-Truss federal budget is a vicious attack on our community. The cuts to health, education, pensions and family benefits have been widely canvassed; but the cuts in this year's budget go much further. I want to talk about the significant cuts to community legal centres.

This cruel budget delivered a further \$6 million in cuts to Australia's community legal centres on top of the \$43.1 million cut to legal assistance services last December. People who cannot afford a private lawyer rely on their local community legal centre to get the free legal advice they need. It is impossible to plan for when legal issues might arise. People do not plan for marriage breakdown, unfair dismissal, eviction, discrimination, getting ripped off or debt problems. People do not plan for police charges, fines or summonses. When people face such serious problems, they need someone who can help. The federal government cuts announced in the budget will force centres to turn away needy clients. In 2012-13, community legal centres funded under the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program provided 248,970 advices and, in total, assisted 211,896 clients across Australia.

There is a significant demand for legal services in our community, and centres will struggle to meet demand over this year and into the future as the Liberals' budget cuts hit. These cuts will leave vulnerable people without proper legal advice and support when they are in crisis. This could lead to bankruptcy, jail or other significant complications.

But, critically, as well as cutting front-line services, the government also plans to stop community legal centres from working to change unfair laws, policies and practices. Through the thousands of people they see each year, community legal centres are perfectly positioned to see how laws, regulations, policing and the legal system impact upon our community. Working to address wider problems, through submissions to government, test cases and public advocacy is a critical part of the work of community legal centres. Through this work they can help hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people.

Labor foresaw that one of the likely actions of an incoming coalition government would be to insert gag clauses in funding agreements. Last year the federal Labor government passed the Not-for-Profit Sector Freedom to Advocate Bill 2013. Any clauses in Commonwealth agreements that restrict or prevent not-for-profit entities from advocating on Commonwealth law, policy or action will be prohibited by that legislation. The coalition government is trying to get around this piece of legislation and silence community legal centres. After the budget, community legal centres were notified of a new clause to be inserted in their agreements:

The services funded by the Commonwealth will, in the period of the new Agreement, not include law reform or policy advocacy.

This is a blatant attempt to curtail advocacy work.

There is a long history of important legal reforms being initiated by the work of community legal centres. For example, new domestic violence laws introduced in Victoria in 1987 addressed many of the issues that had been raised by local community legal centres, such as Essendon Community Legal Centre. And just recently the Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre helped to transform practices of the Victorian police force toward the African migrant community.

Between October 2005 and August 2009 the Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre received over 50 reports of human rights abuses against African-Australians in Flemington and surrounding suburbs. The centre was so concerned about the sheer number of incidents that they established the Police Accountability Project to track and respond to these incidents. The legal centre made official complaints to the Office of Police Integrity, the OPI, which is the body responsible for reviewing complaints made against police. In 2006 alone the legal centre lodged 17 well-documented complaints to the OPI about the treatment of local African-Australian males by police. In three of those matters, the complainants themselves had been charged with resisting, hindering or assaulting police, charges that were subsequently thrown out by the courts. In every instance, after a long delay, the OPI returned the same verdict: 'not substantiated'.

In 2007, concerned by the number of formal complaints the OPI was receiving about the Flemington police station, senior police commissioned an internal investigation into the Flemington police station. As a result of the internal review the lead officer and another officer were moved from the station. However, the complaints continued.

In 2008, after the continual failure of internal complaints to solve the matter, with the support of the community legal centre and lawyers acting pro bono, 16 young men lodged a complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission. They alleged that they were repeatedly stopped, harassed and abused by members of Victoria Police, sometimes violently. Lawyers detailed 140 incidents constituting a systemic pattern of racial profiling, a breach of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

Nearly two full years passed in delays and conciliation. The commission had no power to decide whether or not discrimination occurred. It could only help parties reach agreement, and these parties could not agree, with police unwilling to accept the basic premise of there being a problem.

Victoria Police's LEAP data, analysed by eminent statistician Professor Ian Gordon, revealed that between 2006 and 2009 Africans in the Flemington and North Melbourne area were 2.5 times more likely to be stopped by police than were other groups, despite having a lower crime rate. All this evidence appeared to confirm the use of racial profiling by Victoria Police. They singled out these individuals due to the colour of their skin, not due to any actual crime.

In 2010 a case was lodged in the Federal Court of Australia. The case, Haile-Michael and Others v Commissioner of Police and Others, concerned the daily treatment of seventeen young men by the local police. The case stemmed from allegations that the young men were regularly stopped by police, mostly in Flemington and North Melbourne, for no legitimate policing reason, and were subjected to racial discrimination, including assaults, racial taunts and abuse, and racial profiling.

Part of the evidence of racial profiling comes from internal police documents themselves. Operation Molto was conducted by the Flemington Police Station in 2006 and, to quote from the Molto operation order:

There have been a spasmodic and yet continual increase in the number of robberies and armed robberies occurring in and around the Flemington Housing Estate.

The as yet unidentified suspects for these serious offences are primarily young African males. Even though they are yet to be identified. It continued:

The increased level of visible police presence will assist in the identification and targeting of offenders.

Individual police reports help reveal the mindset of police officers at the time. One of the individuals in the court case was stopped with a friend late one night in the car park at the flats. The police report noted that they were 'known criminals loitering in the area'. Just downstairs from his own home in the high-rise flats, another individual was checked by police with two friends at 8:30 pm one evening. He was 16 at the time. The police record read:

Checked loitering around park bench near basketball court. High criminal area of robberies and assaults. All wearing 'home boy/gangsta' clothing.

In November 2007, Flemington police station conducted Operation Square, targeting anti-social behaviour. The operational order stated that local police had identified about 30 youths responsible, most of whom:

... identify themselves as the 'Flem Boyz'.

The legal centre again approached senior police about the stream of young African-Australian males being stopped. Senior police advised that:

The station had a multicultural liaison officer and a youth officer, who organised the activities with the local community. One day, the whole station was required to attend a training session about people from the Horn of Africa.

However, this internal police training appeared to actually exacerbate the problem. 'African/Sudanese community cross cultural advice' was delivered to over a thousand members of the force between 2007 and 2010. In this training, police were informed that Sudanese males:

... are typically inducted into a rebel army or warrior tribe as part of their teen years and consequently, develop a strong 'warrior' ethic.

And that they will:

... openly challenge anyone who threatens them regardless of potential consequence.

Among the final words of advice of the police training was:

... despite not even knowing you, they may hate you.

The training was shelved after a complaint from Kot Monoah, an unsworn liaison officer who was born in South Sudan. He had attended a session and described the seminar to senior police as gross professional negligence and not cultural awareness but misinformation and ridicule. Internal police attempts to deal with excessive policing of the African-Australian community were not effective. Police efforts completely missed the mark and the practice continued.

Police were unable to see the fault in their approach to the African-Australian community. As Anthony Kelly, CEO of the Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre said:

Our clients say they were continually trying to explain to police they weren't part of a gang, they were just hanging out.

Complaints properly referred to the OPI and appeals directly to senior police did not change police behaviour. It was the work of the Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre, through the courts, that finally had a result. In February 2013, two weeks before the case was scheduled to begin in the Federal Court, they reached an out-of-court settlement with Victoria Police. The African-Australian males agreed not to go to trial, provided Victoria Police agreed to widespread institutional change. As part of the settlement, Victoria Police launched a three-year action plan to address community concerns about discriminatory policing.

The December 2013 report *Promoting equality in Victoria Police engagement and enforcement* outlined their response to the issue:

It is expected that police members make objective, evidenced-based decision-making in the field, and that this is clearly communicated to the individuals affected by these decisions.

We commit to reviewing our training and education to address unconscious bias and how it can impact police practices.

As part of these reforms, officers will receive clearer guidance on when they can legitimately stop people and definitions of what is meant by grounds of reasonable suspicion and high-crime locations. The force will revise its data collection so it can analyse disparities among the ethnicities of people being stopped. The force agreed to conduct a six-month trial of a receipting policy, where individuals stopped by police are given a written receipt outlining why they were stopped and by whom they were stopped.

Commander Sue Clark is responsible for a new division in the Victoria Police that has been established as part of police's response to the court case. It is called the Priority Communities Division. Clark is renowned for her work on cultural change both in her earlier stint at Victoria Police and then at the AFL, where she was responsible for reshaping the code's attitude to women, vilification and racism. The 20-odd staff members in the Priority Communities Division are tasked with managing reforms of the police force.

This is just one example of how a community legal centre can help change unjust behaviours through advocacy. The work of Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre since 2006 has helped a significant and growing community have their voice heard. The internal police processes failed at every step to address the problem internally. It was not until the Federal Court case, brought on by the community legal centre and lawyers, that the issue was properly addressed by police. Community legal centres have been undertaking advocacy since their inception. Their advocacy is a critical part of our vibrant democracy.

I condemn this mean-spirited government. Their attempts to silence community legal centres are in breach of federal legislation passed in 2013. I call on the government to repeal these clauses and let our community legal centres continue with their work unhindered. I call on the government to reverse their cruel cuts to community legal centre funding.

Radioactive Waste

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (21:35): Tonight I want to pay my respects to the Aboriginal elders of the Muckaty lands in the Barkly region, their families and their

supporters around the country. I understand that only a tiny handful of MPs in this place could even find Muckaty on a map and bear no knowledge of the rich history of the place. For white politicians on the other side of the continent, the Barkly region is essentially regarded as the absolute middle of nowhere. There is nowhere better to park Australia's 60-year inventory of spent nuclear fuel, which is industrial waste that will still be carcinogenic a thousand generations from now, decaying silently away into future geological ages. Everything it touches, for all those future lifetimes of people who will never know our names, becomes not just contaminated but contaminating.

Every country that embarked on the nuclear experiment that lit up the mid-20th century with the light of a thousand suns has its own millennial legacy of spent nuclear fuel and reprocessing wastes. No country has come up with a solution that will keep it isolated for tens of thousands of years. Presently, nearly all of Australia's radioactive waste is banked adjacent to the Lucas Heights reactor on the outskirts of Sydney. A small amount of it is contracted to return to Australia from Europe next year. This impending shipment was the trigger for the process that came to a dramatic end in the Federal Court in Melbourne last week.

Late in 2005, the Howard government used its command of the numbers in both houses of parliament to ram through a bill mandating that Australia's radioactive waste would be trucked into the Northern Territory and dumped at one of three possible defence department sites—in other words, on land stolen from people who had been living and singing that country since before the last ice age. The Greens opposed this bill. The Democrats opposed it. The Labor Party stridently opposed it. But numbers matter in here and, on that night, we didn't have them.

I want to acknowledge the communities of people who spoke up for each of those three sites, the pressure and uncertainty placed on you, the stress on your families, and the leadership you showed in stepping up and saying no. All of you were unfairly targeted in a process with no procedural, scientific or democratic legitimacy.

Within a year, the fatal flaws in this bankrupt proposal were evident even to senior members of the Howard government. An amendment bill was pushed through here late in 2006 to add an illusion of due process to this amoral preamble: communities can now volunteer a site for the dump. Only sites in the Northern Territory, constitutionally weaker than the states, would be considered. Within what seemed like mere hours, a site was nominated by the Northern Land Council, and this place, Muckaty, which no whitefella outside the Barkly Region had ever heard of, was suddenly at the top of the Commonwealth government's target list. The cause and effect, and who really originated the Muckaty nomination, we will probably never know. But we do know that, from day one, this was a process driven from Canberra, not Tennant Creek.

Fourteen years earlier, the High Court had struck down the offensive legal fiction of terra nullius; but, even so, when government bureaucrats and politicians with more immediate things on their minds go looking for somewhere to dump the nation's most poisonous garbage, they go looking for empty lands, places in the middle of nowhere, places like Muckaty Station. And when they climb out of their shiny Land Cruisers, they discover that it is not empty at all. They discover it is a real place, not just a rectangle on their GPS—a place with a history and a story that precedes history and many stories told in languages they will never bother to learn. Imagine their surprise to discover that this terra nullius is inhabited—

inhabited by the formidable Dianne Stokes and her family, by Bunny Ngaparula, an elder who somehow seems to get younger every year, and by the deadly Kylie Sambo. They are confronted by Mark Lane Jangala and Ronald Brown and by Lorna Fejo and Dick Foster. They are challenged by mighty allies from further afield—Mitch from Arrernte country and Donna Jackson from the Larrakia nation, and many, many others. Collectively, these unwelcome strangers are told to pack up their cars, their fancy maps and their 100,000-year-contamination nightmare and go the hell home.

If you are going to be thrown into a campaign like this without warning, you are going to need allies. Profound respect to Nat Wasley, her partner Paddy and up and coming anti-nuclear campaigner, Jalinyba. Natty, you are one of the most kick-ass organisers I have ever had the honour to work with. There is my dear friend Dave Sweeney, who has long been the backbone of the Australian Conservation Foundation's anti-nuclear work and is the author of the best one-liners in the business. There is also Jim Green from Friends of the Earth in Melbourne, one of the country's most dedicated and tenacious campaigners. There are so many others, but to name just a few: Cat Beaton and Lauren Mellor, Hillary Tyler and Justin Tutty, you stepped up when the old people needed your help. Ellie Gilbert and Peter Sutton, Leanne Minshull and Michael Fonda, you saw the need and did not look away. There is Jagath Dheera-Sekara, Rod Lucas and everyone at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, and dear Dimity Hawkins. My Western Australian Anti-Nuclear family—Jo Vallentine and the staunch BUMP crew—is just one powerful piece of a national campaign that finally delivered. And then there is everyone at the Arid Lands Environment Centre and the Environment Centre Northern Territory, FoE Melbourne and ACE campaigners—nearly all of them volunteers. For every demonstration, every banner drop, every early morning occupation of Martin Ferguson's electorate office, it has all been worth it.

There is Felicity Ruby, who worked with me for years. As we discovered, after the 2007 election, those Labor politicians who had been so staunch from opposition turned silent when they actually had a chance to do something about Muckaty from government. They maintained their silence as Minister Martin Ferguson took this piece of procedural abuse designed by Prime Minister John Howard and then stepped up the aggression. We held off the Rudd government's waste dump legislation for two years. But in 2012 the Labor Party took legislative responsibility for driving this obscene theft of country over the raised voices of traditional owners and their supporters—and we will not forget this.

The appalling behaviour of the Labor Party in sliding seamlessly from condemnation to continuity makes recognition of the handful of ALP members who did buck the party line that much more important. I particularly want to acknowledge local MPs Gerry McCarthy and Elliott Macadam, backed by NT Chief Minister Paul Henderson; and, federally, Senator Louise Pratt, who tragically had to give her valedictory speech earlier this evening; Melissa Parke, the member for Fremantle; and, more recently, Senator Nova Peris, who brings heart and history to her opposition to this project. The rest of the Labor caucus stand condemned by your silence and by the votes you cast when you finally combined with the Abbott opposition to defeat the Greens in March 2012.

I also want to acknowledge those in the trade union movement who stood up when it mattered, particularly the ACTU and Unions NT, and also the MUA, the ETU and the Fireys, representing those first on the scene when things go horribly wrong at facilities like this. The

failure of parliament to uphold its obligations to the mob, yet again, left it to the community movement and to a small but focused legal team as the last line of defence. George Newhouse, Mark Cowan, Steven Lennard and David Yarrow, thanks are owed for your generosity and your expertise. Ron Merckel QC, Julian Burnside QC and the brilliant Lizzie O'Shea, lawyer to the people—last week, you did it, and broke the Commonwealth government's resolve in the Federal Court and brought this shameful episode to an end. As a quick aside, you could have followed and supported this whole extraordinary contest if you were listening to the Radioactive Show on radio 3CR. Thank goodness for the community broadcasters.

There is a reason why the nuclear industry seeks high isolation sites for its proposed waste dumps: stable geology, deep groundwater, low seismic activity, no people, no mineral resources. Muckaty actually meets none of these preconditions, but put that down to a jittery government running before an artificial deadline. The reason the industry likes these remote, high isolation sites is that there is no form of engineered barrier that can contain spent nuclear fuel for such immense periods of time. They know this material will burn its way out eventually, and so they want to put it as far from the suburbs in which they live as possible. What the mob in the Barkly want to know is, if it is too dangerous to leave where it is, guarded by a Federal Police detail and ticking away under 24/7 monitoring by technicians with lab coats and PhDs, how does dumping it in a shed surrounded by a chain-link fence on a cattle station somehow make it safe?

The campaign to support Dianne and the Muckaty mob was born out of this dismal injustice; racism, with a 25,000-year half-life. The NLC negotiated for \$12 million for the 300-year head lease. It works out at a little bit over \$800 a week, with the land passing back to the mob sometime in the 24th century. Beads and blankets, laced not with smallpox but with caesium.

We must never do this to an Australian community again. The Muckaty mob won this time, but it cost them, in stress to families, division in the community and time away from home. The Kunkas in South Australia had to go through this trauma a decade earlier. They won too. The mob at Cosmo Newberry were in the firing line when Pangea came calling in 1999 with a proposal to dump 20 per cent of the world's spent nuclear fuel. It took us a year to beat that. The Navajo prevailed over a similar project at Yucca Mountain in Nevada in the United States. What do all these projects have in common? The expectation that it is aboriginal communities that should bear the burden. This has to stop.

The Greens propose a new way forward. Its most important element is that it does not assume, as a foregone conclusion, that it should fall to some remote Aboriginal community to take responsibility for this poisonous time capsule. In fact, the most important thing we could do now would be to admit that there is no scientific or community consensus that a remote shed surrounded by barbed wire is anything like an appropriate management strategy for this material. It is time, as Dave Sweeney would put it, for a process, not a postcode.

We propose therefore an independent commission on radioactive waste management to run an open, deliberative process that acknowledges, as a starting condition, that if material is dangerous in Sutherland Shire, it will still be dangerous in the Barkly. It is time to leave the politics outside the room and bring together the best minds in the country, learning from 60 years of overseas experience, to design a long-term strategy of custodianship and eventually,

perhaps, isolation of radioactive waste. It will confront us with the question of whether we should be producing this material at all.

Yes, it has to go somewhere. Maybe it ends up in Synroc bricks. Maybe it ends up two miles below the surface. Maybe it stays right where it is while smarter people than us work out how to contain it for periods approaching eternity. But, as we have been saying for nearly eight years, it will not be going to Muckaty. You mob were too deadly. You beat them. Take a rest and tell your story, and maybe this time a few more people will be listening.

Malaysia: Rare Earth Refinery

Williams, Mr Chappy

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (21:47): A number of Australians recently travelled to Malaysia to work with the growing mass movement in that country protesting against the construction of an Australian toxic rare earth refinery plant located near a city of 600,000 people. The processing plant, being built by the Australian mining company Lynas Corporation, has met with strong resistance from locals, with protests of as many as 15,000 people. The Australians have joined protests organised by the Malaysian movement Himpunan Hijau—meaning green assembly—which is protesting to shut Lynas. On behalf of the Australian Greens, I congratulate all those involved.

A Sydney based international mining campaigner, Nat Lowrey, is one of 16 people who have been jailed in recent days because of protests they have been involved in. Ms Lowrey spoke to me before she left, explaining that she was going because of her deep concern about Lynas's activity and that they have no social licence to undertake these operations. Ms Lowrey was motivated to go because of the danger this plant poses to the locals.

In Australia no company would get approval for this type of project, let alone a refinery of this scale, which risks both human health and the environment. Lynas's environmental impact assessment is deeply flawed. The company has not produced a safe permanent waste plan for its toxic and radioactive waste. The Greens believe that the Australian government, as a signatory of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, should never have allowed an Australian corporation to export such a toxic legacy to Malaysia.

I remain concerned that the people who have been jailed in this protest are, from the last report I have received, still in jail. The Malaysian government would be wise to respect the right of people to protest and to immediately release Ms Lowrey and all those detained.

With regard to the mining operations and the processing plant, the ore to be processed in this controversial refinery will be mined in Western Australia and shipped out through the port of Fremantle to Malaysia. Australia, interestingly, has refused to take back the toxic and radioactive waste produced in the refinery. Every year, at least 106 tonnes of radioactive thorium and a small quantity of uranium will be dumped amongst this waste, along with an unknown cocktail of other hazardous substances. This is what is driving what are becoming international protests.

According to a statement by the Save Malaysia Stop Lynas coalition, the Lynas rare earth refinery plant was constructed without any prior informed consent from local communities, who will be getting the raw deal of permanent pollution risk whilst Lynas will be obviously working hard to make a hefty profit—a tax-free profit, we hear.

Malaysians will be living under the shadow of radiation contamination. This simply is not acceptable. It is certainly not acceptable for this material to be sent from Australia and for the waste to be dumped in another country. To make matters worse, the refinery is situated in a peat swamp area only 3.5 kilometres from the South China Sea, which is an important source of seafood and a tourism area. There are approximately 700,000 people living within 30 kilometres of the Lynas refinery—another fact that underlines how irresponsible the decision to locate this plant is. Malaysian environmental activists believe that Lynas is building the processing plant in Malaysia instead of Australia to cut costs and avoid having to deal with stringent environmental regulations in Australia for containing the waste. If the waste is safe, as the company claims, many of the locals argue that it should be sent back to Australia, where the mining for the rare earth ore occurs. However, when this option was raised in the Parliament of Western Australia on 5 April 2011 by the WA Greens MLC Robin Chapple, the Western Australian Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Norman Moore, firmly rejected the idea. I do congratulate my Greens colleagues in the Parliament of Western Australia, Robin Chapple and Lynn MacLaren, for their work with the Malaysian community on this, and also Senator Scott Ludlam, who has also given a great deal of support on this issue. When Lynas was granted its licence, Robin Chapple said:

... this approval looks like the sanctioning of an Australian mining company making use of lax environmental controls and governance arrangements in a developing country. To my mind it has not gone through a rigorous environmental process and should not have been issued.

That is certainly something that has been highlighted by many of the people who have looked at these plans in detail.

We know that Malaysia has already had a bitter experience with a rare earth refinery. One was built at Bukit Merah in the state of Perak by the Japanese company Mitsubishi. That plant was forced to close down after drawn-out political and legal battles that lasted over a decade. In that case, unfortunately, some locals suffered serious health effects before the plant did eventually close after many protests. Hopefully, the people around the Lynas plant will not have to go through the same experience. The Lynas plant is at least 10 times bigger, with waste potentially hundreds of times more toxic to be handled—a further reminder of why this operation should not go ahead.

I congratulate the large environmental group Himpunan Hijau. It is one of the largest environmental movements in Malaysia. Apart from feeling very strongly about the issue, I also feel very connected because on my first day as a senator the very first group that I met with were representatives of this organisation. On many occasions, their members have travelled to Australia to protest at annual general meetings of Lynas, to address meetings and to organise events in this country to inform Australians about how wrong the plans of Lynas are. Certainly it is an issue that the Greens will continue to give our support to. Again, I congratulate Natalie Lowrey, the young woman who has been jailed for participating in the protest against the refinery, and the other Australians and tens of thousands of Malaysians who have joined her in protesting against the plans of Lynas.

I would like to move on to another issue. I would like to take this opportunity in the Australian Senate to pay tribute to Neville 'Chappy' Williams, an Aboriginal elder from western New South Wales. He has made an enormous contribution to Australia. As a former bantamweight boxer, Chappy knows a thing or two about a tough fight. After knocking out

the official Australian bantamweight contender, Billy Booth, at the Golden Gloves in New South Wales, he nearly made it to the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. In the end he was not able to travel to Japan, because he was too poor to go, and he did not have the support.

Chappy is an elder of the Wiradjuri people and traditional owner of Lake Cowal and its surrounding land. This is where he has been involved in another tenacious battle, this time against Canadian mining conglomerate Barrick Gold. This is a campaign that has gone on for over a decade. It is in this capacity that I have met Chappy on a number of occasions. It was in 2001 when I first met him, as a Greens New South Wales MP. I remember him talking about mining being the 'death of our dreaming, the death of our law' as he showed me around Lake Cowal during one of my visits to the region to discuss the impacts of mining with him and other representatives of his community.

Chappy's experience with mining operations in his country was not the first time he had seen outsiders impose their values on his community. He spoke very movingly about his early memories of hiding in the long grass when welfare officers came to Lake Cowal. As in other parts of Australia, in this area children were forcibly removed from their families. Chappy felt the pain of the stolen generation and as he relayed the stories you could feel that pain.

Lake Cowal is the largest inland lake in New South Wales and an important wetland for birds who come from all over the world to breed. It is very much valued by the locals. It is also a site of special religious significance for the Wiradjuri people and part of their ancient homeland. You might think that its combined ecological and cultural value would safeguard it from the environmental and social dislocation associated with open-cast mining that Barrick Gold wanted to bring to this area, but you would be wrong. This is what Chappy has devoted so much of his life to stopping and now to dealing with. He has worked so hard to protect this area. For much of the time he has been up against Barrick Gold, a company that describes itself as a disciplined mining multinational. That is its own language: 'disciplined'. This company appears, however, to run rings around state and federal regulators. Maybe that is what it means by 'disciplined'.

Australia is a signatory to the Ramsar convention, a global agreement to protect wetlands. Chappy and his colleagues have worked to have the Ramsar convention respected in Lake Cowal—something which Barrick Gold and the New South Wales government have failed to do. But the 227 species of bird that would be at risk from any cyanide spill at the Barrick Gold mine at Lake Cowal count for little against the profits to be made by a Canadian mining baron. Those are not just my words. From what we have heard about Chappy's meeting with the CEO of Barrick Gold, we understand why those comments are made.

The company itself is happy to advertise its environmental and social credentials. It states: Our success depends on our ability to develop our resources responsibly and share the benefits of our business with local communities, governments and other stakeholders.

Certainly Chappy said to me many times that they did not see any of this sharing. When pressed on the practical application of that statement, this company is evasive. That is what Chappy has found so frustrating. With members of his community and supporters Chappy has taken on this mining company. This is an inspiring story that takes us from western New South Wales to Canada and beyond.

In 2007 Chappy Williams travelled to Canada for the company's annual general meeting. His intention was to confront Barrick Gold's owners and its CEO, Peter Munk. Viewing the YouTube of this work is an instructive illustration of what local communities are up against. You could not imagine two worlds further apart than when you watch what goes on at one of these AGMs compared to a visit to the Aboriginal communities around Lake Cowal. Chappy, a quietly-spoken man, puts his case across simply and succinctly. The response comes straight from the corporate playbook: first, the pleading of ignorance—'I'm only the CEO; I can't possibly know what my company actually does' is a summary of the defence. Peter Munk's actual words were: 'I don't have the knowledge to debate.' Then, 'We're a business; what did you expect?' which is coupled with the 'Don't blame us—we only get away with whatever the government allows us to do.' But then, as the Barrick Gold PR man said: 'We are in for profit, as you know; we are a free enterprise, so please, it's the state authorities that are there to protect you.' In that sentence the corporate responsibility line is exposed for the spin that it is—passing the buck, pushing it back onto the state government—a government that we know is so weak when it comes to dealing with mining companies and enforcing decent standards.

Undeterred, a year after that meeting with the CEO, Chappy took his people's fight to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. That was in 2008. The permanent forum is an interesting body. It was established by the United Nations in response to demands from Indigenous peoples for a high-level permanent body at the UN. The forum provides an opportunity for the world's Indigenous peoples to speak out against the multiple injustices they face and to seek restitution. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was 25 years in the making, bringing Indigenous peoples' organisations and governments together to draw up concrete rights that could be enforced. When it was put to the UN General Assembly in 2007, 144 countries voted in favour, with only four voting against it. Shamefully, Australia was one of those four. Since then a statement has been issued by the Australian government on these issues, and it does go some way to rectifying that quite shameful position when we stood against those 144 countries.

I remember when I was at Lake Cowal Chappy talked to me about the importance of this development at the United Nations, and he was inspired to take the battle of his people at Lake Cowal to this international forum. In 2008 he said:

There is a world of difference between the "free, prior and informed consultation" with communities affected by mining advocated by the World Bank and the "free, prior and informed consent" in the Declaration. Communities are poorly protected by Australian law.

Chappy also said:

As Aboriginal People we have absolutely no power within the colonial legal system to protect [Mother Earth]. We have no right of veto. There is no recognised Aboriginal sovereignty over natural resources. Under the Native Title Act, Traditional Owners can only agree to benefit from the desecration and destruction of our Mother. This is an abuse of our human rights and many of the rights in the Declaration.

That was the theme of many of the speeches that Chappy has given from Lake Cowal to Sydney to Canada and to New York.

Chappy Williams has really been in a David versus Goliath campaign and this has continued, despite Barrick Gold being granted permission to extend the lifetime of the mine to 2024. Chappy describes it as his 'sacred duty to protect Lake Cowal and our ancient cultural

heritage'. He says: 'We will never give up. I will fight to the bitter end.' I must say that, having been to Lake Cowal, having met with Chappy many times, having heard the stories and having heard him speaking at large and small events, I find it moving, but also very sad, because Barrick Gold at the moment does have the upper hand. Chappy gives beautiful poetic speeches, which are very moving, but it is disturbing when you hear him speak about the destruction of Aboriginal artefacts and about the challenges that he sees when it comes to the freedom of his religion and how he feels the cultural connection with his country is being denied. I do thank Chappy for the enormous work he has done for his communities and all of us—sharing those experiences for the natural environment around Lake Cowal and the lessons we can learn from the way he undertakes his work in a very peaceful and respectful and yet very strong way.

Senate adjourned at 22:05

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:

[*Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) number. An explanatory statement is tabled with an instrument unless otherwise indicated by an asterisk.*]

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Act 1998—

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (confidentiality) determination—No. 8 of 2014 [F2014L00779].

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority instrument fixing charges—No. 2 of 2014 [F2014L00776].

Civil Aviation Act 1988—

Civil Aviation Regulations 1988—

Direction — number of cabin attendants (Tiger Airways)—CASA 131/14 [F2014L00790].

Direction — number of cabin attendants (Virgin Australia Airlines)—CASA 128/14 [F2014L00788].

Direction — number of cabin attendants (Virgin Australia International Airlines)—CASA 130/14 [F2014L00789].

Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998—Exemption — carriage of children suffering from a serious medical condition—CASA EX46/14 [F2014L00787].

Export Market Development Grants Act 1997—Export Market Development Grants (Associate and Fit and Proper Person) Amendment Guideline 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00785].

Fair Work Act 2009—Fair Work (State Declarations — employer not to be national system employer) Endorsement 2014 (No. 2) [F2014L00778].

Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards Act 2012—Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards (Computer Monitors) Determination 2014 [F2014L00780].

Health Insurance Act 1973—Health Insurance (Gippsland, Rockhampton and Gladstone Mobile MRI Service) Determination 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00775].

Higher Education Support Act 2003—

Revocation of Approval as a VET provider (State of Queensland as represented by Brisbane North Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00768].

Revocation of Approval as a VET provider (State of Queensland as represented by Gold Coast Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00755].

Revocation of Approval as a VET provider (State of Queensland as represented by Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00764].

Revocation of Approval as a VET provider (State of Queensland as represented by SkillsTech Australia) [F2014L00770].

Revocation of Approval as a VET provider (State of Queensland as represented by Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00772].

Revocation of Approval as a VET Provider (State of Queensland as represented by Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00767].

Revocation of Approval as a VET provider (State of Queensland as represented by The Bremer Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00774].

Revocation of Approval as a VET Provider (State of Queensland as represented by Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00765].

Revocation of Approval as a VET provider (State of Queensland as represented by Wide Bay Institute of TAFE) [F2014L00760].

National Health Act 1953—

National Health Determination under paragraph 98C(1)(b) Amendment 2014 (No. 6)—PB 46 of 2014 [F2014L00761].

National Health (Highly specialised drugs program for hospitals) Special Arrangement Amendment Instrument 2014 (No. 6)—PB 48 of 2014 [F2014L00766].

National Health (Listed drugs on F1 or F2) Amendment Determination 2014 (No. 5)—PB 47 of 2014 [F2014L00762].

National Health (Listing of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Amendment Instrument 2014 (No. 6)—PB 45 of 2014 [F2014L00763].

National Health (Weighted average disclosed price – October 2014 reduction day) Determination 2014—PB 42 of 2014 [F2014L00758].

Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989—Grant of exemptions under section 40—

Hawker Pacific Pty Ltd—No. S40E28535608.

Jetstar Airways Pty Ltd—No. S40E79007098.

Quarantine Act 1908—Quarantine Service Fees Amendment (2014 Measures No. 1) Determination 2014 [F2014L00773].

Radiocommunications Act 1992—Radiocommunications (Field Trial by Corrective Services NSW of PMTS Jamming Devices at Lithgow Correctional Centre) Exemption Amendment Determination 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00771].

Radiocommunications (Transmitter Licence Tax) Act 1983—Radiocommunications (Transmitter Licence Tax) Amendment Determination 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00769].

Social Security Act 1991—

Social Security (Class of Visas – Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period for Special Benefit) Determination 2014 [F2014L00784].

Social Security (Class of Visas – Qualification for Special Benefit) Determination 2014 [F2014L00783].

Social Security (Declaration of Visa in a Class of Visas – Special Benefit Activity Test) Determination 2014 [F2014L00781].

Social Security (Administration) Act 1999—Social Security (Administration) (Declared income management areas — Ceduna and Surrounding Region) Determination 2014 [F2014L00777].

Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999—Telstra Carrier Charges—Price Control Arrangements, Notification and Disallowance Determination No. 1 of 2005 (Amendment No. 1 of 2014) [F2014L00786].

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and *Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2011*—Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011—Work Health and Safety Exemption to Regulation 81 (June 2014) [F2014L00782].

Tabling

The following government documents were tabled:

Medical Training Review Panel—Report for 2012-13.

Productivity Commission—Report No. 69—Tasmanian shipping and freight, dated 7 March 2014.