



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SENATE

Hansard

THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 2026

CORRECTIONS

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

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

PROOF

Ayes.....17
 Noes.....23
 Majority6

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
 Hanson-Young, S. C.
 Payman, F.
 Roberts, M. I.
 Thorpe, L. A.
 Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Bell, S.
 Hodgins-May, S.
 Pocock, B.
 Shoebridge, D. M.
 Tyrrell, T. M.
 Whitten, T.

Faruqi, M.
 McKim, N. J.
 Pocock, D. W. (Teller)
 Steele-John, J. A.
 Waters, L. J.

NOES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
 Brown, C. L.
 Cox, D.
 Dowling, R.
 Grogan, K.
 McCarthy, M.
 Sheldon, A. V.
 Walsh, J. C.

Askew, W. (Teller)
 Chisholm, A. D.
 Darmanin, L.
 Gallagher, K. R.
 Lines, S.
 O'Sullivan, M. A.
 Smith, M. F.
 Watt, M. P.

Ayres, T.
 Ciccone, R.
 Dolega, J.
 Ghosh, V.
 McAllister, J. R.
 Polley, H.
 Stewart, J. N. A.

Question negatived.

NOTICES

Postponement

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (12:14): At the request of Senator Cash, I seek leave to postpone general business notice of motion No. 421.

Leave granted.

BILLS

Royal Commissions Legislation Amendment (Protections for Providing Information) Bill 2026
Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (12:15): I rise to make a contribution to the Royal Commissions Legislation Amendment (Protections for Providing Information) Bill 2026. I will say it at the outset: now that the government, whilst it has been dragged kicking and screaming to set up the royal commission, has finally established the royal commission, it does have a responsibility to ensure that the commission can do its job.

That is why the coalition supports this bill. We support its objectives, and we also support the legal framework it establishes to protect individuals who provide intelligence and operationally sensitive information to a royal commission. These protections are, of course, necessary because, without them, officials within Australia's intelligence and security agencies could themselves face legal risk for disclosing information that is critical to the royal commission's work.

If the royal commission is to uncover the truth—and that is what all Australians want—this royal commission needs to get to the very bottom of the antisemitic behaviour in our great country which got to such a level that 15 people were slaughtered last December on Bondi Beach. If the royal commission is to establish the truth, if it is to properly examine—and this is the key here—the role of Australia's intelligence agencies, then those who come forward must have the legal certainty about the protections available to them. That is what this legislation seeks to provide, so the coalition supports the bill.

In saying that, though, I now need to comment on what Australians woke up to this morning, which is, of course, the bombshell news that Dennis Richardson had quit the royal commission. Prime Minister Albanese had looked the Australian people in the eye and said this man was the best qualified person in the country—and I don't think anybody disputes that—to examine the intelligence and security failures surrounding the Bondi massacre. That's

right. Last night, he issued a statement that he felt 'surplus to requirements' and that he was quitting the royal commission. As I said, he didn't leave quietly. He left with words that should stop every single senator in this chamber cold. He said:

... I was surplus to requirements.

The man in Australia most qualified to get to the bottom of whether or not there were failures within our intelligence agencies that contributed to 15 innocent Australians being slaughtered on Bondi Beach is 'surplus to requirements'. This is the Prime Minister's own, hand picked expert. For those of you who don't know, he is the former director-general of ASIO. He is the former head of both the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

This is a man with decades of national security experience at the highest levels of government, and he has issued a statement. He has been on media this morning—and I'll go to that shortly—saying he felt 'surplus to requirements'. I am very sorry, but that is, quite frankly, an indictment on the royal commission. This is what he also said this morning to media:

I felt it had reached a point where I was adding relatively little value and I wasn't getting a lot of satisfaction out of it, quite frankly.

It gets worse. Dennis Richardson also said this today:

... I felt I was the fifth wheel. It's a very legally driven process. The way it's structured, and the way it proceeds is such that there's not much need for someone like myself.

Again, I go to what the Prime Minister said: 'This man, Dennis Richardson, is the best qualified person in our great country to examine the intelligence and security failures surrounding the Bondi massacre.' He has now stated that (a) he's quit but (b) he felt 'surplus to requirements' and like he was a 'fifth wheel'. That is absolutely incomprehensible. This is not a bureaucratic inconvenience. This goes to the fundamental purpose of this royal commission. Did ASIO have this attacker on a watchlist? Was he removed from that list? Were there failures in the intelligence agencies in the sharing of information? Were there any failures in counterterrorism preparedness?

Again, Dennis Richardson—a former director-general of ASIO, which is the lead intelligence agency in our country; a former head of defence; and a former head of foreign affairs—was the best placed person to get to the bottom of what happened. This is not on behalf of anybody in particular; this is on behalf of the Australian people, who deserve to know why 15 innocent people were slaughtered on Bondi Beach because antisemitism in this country got to such a stage that that was the outcome. As I said, that is exactly why the Prime Minister appointed him. Five weeks ago, he was the best placed of any Australian. This morning, this same man—a man who is respected on both sides of the chamber—says that he was 'surplus to requirements'.

Prime Minister, that is not good enough. The Prime Minister should act today. He should be doing everything within his power. If Dennis Richardson is the best person to do this job, he should be doing everything within his power to bring Dennis Richardson back into this process. If the current structure of the royal commission is the problem—and this is not a structure that the coalition had said it agreed with. We had always said that there needed to be more than one royal commissioner. There is only one royal commissioner. There absolutely needs to be more than one royal commissioner so that evidence can be properly tested. I hope the Prime Minister is in urgent talks with Dennis Richardson about how we can restore him and his involvement in examining the intelligence and law enforcement dimensions of this attack.

In relation to the bill itself—I am part of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, and we had a hearing into this bill. Can I be very clear, though: I was very disappointed, on behalf of coalition members and senators, that we yet again had to provide additional comments to a report. We've also previously provided a dissenting report. Let us be very clear: that is actually not how the PJCIS has worked for many years. The way this government now treats the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security and is wanting to ram legislation through this parliament that has a direct impact on our national security laws with little to no scrutiny is an indictment on how this government treats the PJCIS.

More than that, it is an indictment on the importance that this government puts on national security. The bill we have before us, as I said, is something the coalition supports, but let's be very clear here: it's not a straightforward measure. National security legislation is never really a straightforward measure, but that's how the Attorney-General of Australia sought to characterise the bill we have before us. This bill amends the Royal Commissions Act to create a framework protecting individuals from Commonwealth secrecy offences when providing intelligence or operationally sensitive information to a royal commission because currently they do not have to provide that information because, under the acts under which they work, the secrecy acts, they are able to use those particular acts as a reasonable excuse.

But it also goes a step further and will permanently amend the Criminal Code 1995 to create an additional defence for certain secrecy offences where information is communicated for the purposes of providing it to a royal commission and the person believes that that information is relevant. These changes go directly to the interaction between royal commissions—it's ongoing legislation, so I'm going to say 'royal commissions' because we may well have future royal commissions—and Australia's intelligence community. As I said, it's the effect of secrecy laws that protect some of the most sensitive information held by the Commonwealth. The Attorney-General of Australia said, 'This bill doesn't need a review.' Well, guess what? We on the coalition side said it did, and we said the most appropriate committee to look at it is the committee tasked with doing just that, reviewing any changes to Australia's national security framework.

Lest anybody be in any doubt, the Attorney-General actually said on radio, 'We don't think there is a need for a separate parliamentary inquiry.' Well, guess what? We did. We take very seriously the review of Australia's security laws. There was an inquiry. It's as a result of that inquiry that we have satisfied ourselves in relation to a number of issues in the bill, but we have also made additional recommendations which I hope the government takes on board and actually enacts.

But, sadly, the issue is the contempt that the Prime Minister of Australia, quite frankly, is now showing what has always been considered to be, for the time that I have been in here, the pre-eminent joint committee in this country. It normally works in a bipartisan manner because it is usually treated well by the government of the day, regardless of who is in office. But, unfortunately, the government of the day is currently treating it with contempt. This is a pattern of behaviour by this government.

Sadly, in 2023, in relation to the National Security Legislation Amendment (Comprehensive Review and Other Measures No. 2) Bill, coalition members were, in their comments, forced to describe the government's conduct as: ... irregular, rushed and contrary to the good conduct of a national security inquiry of this importance.

Again, that is an indictment on the way the government tried to push that particular piece of legislation through the PJCIS with little to no scrutiny.

It doesn't stop there, sadly. You would have thought the government would have learned its lesson. In 2024, coalition members noted, sadly, in a dissenting report on a cybersecurity legislative package, that the inquiry timeframe had been so compressed that proper scrutiny of complex national security legislation was actually impossible. National security legislation, laws that go directly to the heart of whether a Commonwealth government is able to properly protect its people, were so quickly rushed through the relevant committee that normally, under previous governments, regardless of their persuasion—coalition or Labor—would work in a bipartisan manner. When it comes to national security, this is something you always hope the two parties of government can actually agree on—but not under the Albanese government.

Worse, it doesn't stop there. In January of this year, the inquiry into the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Bill was so compressed, to less than a week, that it effectively neutralised the PJCIS's ability to test the legislation properly. In fact, partway through that inquiry, the Prime Minister stood up, did a press conference and said, 'I'm pulling the legislation anyway because the people of Australia clearly don't like it.' You've got to be kidding me. Seriously? You try to rush it through the PJCIS, you don't like the evidence that's been received and so you just stand up and pull it? There have been three occasions, and, sadly, in relation to this bill, this is now the fourth occasion where the coalition has had to make comment on the contempt which the Prime Minister of Australia and, in this case, the Attorney-General have shown to what has always been, for years and years, a committee that works in a bipartisan manner. Four separate occasions on which members of this committee have had to warn that parliamentary scrutiny of national security legislation is being curtailed—that is an indictment on the government.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (12:30): Isn't it extraordinary; the coalition is getting up here and complaining that there wasn't sufficient time for an inquiry into and proper scrutiny of the Royal Commissions Legislation Amendment (Protections for Providing Information) Bill 2026. This is the same party that resisted, objected to and voted against a proper inquiry into this bill by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee. They say one thing in their contributions, but the reality is they voted to shut down and prevent a proper public inquiry into this bill. I want to be clear: the Greens supported a proper inquiry into this bill—not some sham, rushed job through the PJCIS, where only the so-called current parties of government sit, but a proper inquiry in a public and open space—so that we could see if these protections work.

What does this bill aim to do? It aims to provide protections to some people who provide information to royal commissions on a voluntary and a compulsory basis, where the information is subject to a limited set of the hundreds and hundreds of security provisions under federal law. The bill partially implements a handful of recommendations for reform from the interim report of the veterans royal commission.

What did the veterans royal commission find? The veterans royal commission found, when it was trying to get evidence from serving members and former members of the Australian Defence Force, that there was incredible reticence amongst the veteran community and the serving members of the Defence Force to come and give evidence to the royal commission because they feared they'd be put in jail for breach of secrecy provisions, just like David McBride has been put in jail for breach of Defence Force secrecy provisions.

The chilling effect of the prosecution of David McBride and other whistleblowers by the Commonwealth government, both by the Labor Party and the coalition, was clearly felt throughout the veterans royal commission. Commissioner Kaldas and his fellow commissioners called that out very early on in their interim report. They said they wouldn't be able to get the cooperation they needed and the evidence they needed to complete the royal commission with the degree of certainty that they would like to have unless two things were done. First of all, it needed to be made clear that anyone giving evidence to a royal commission would be protected from prosecution under any one of the raft of hundreds of Commonwealth secrecy provisions. The royal commission said, 'You'd need to workshop that through the security agencies, and you'd need to ensure you had faith that the royal commission would treat security information with appropriate care.' But the core thing was to ensure no witness could go to jail, be prosecuted or lose their job for giving evidence to a royal commission. What did the government do? Absolutely nothing—nothing to help the veterans royal commission and, until they were pressed and pushed, nothing to help the current royal commission.

The second thing the interim report said was that royal commissions can be limited in what use they can give to parliamentary reports, committee reports and parliamentary reports because the way that the parliamentary privilege is interpreted by the Australian Government Solicitor is that those reports are protected by parliamentary privilege, and, even though they would be incredibly useful and relevant to a royal commission if for no other reason than to point out that issues have been put before the executive government repeatedly and nothing done, the royal commission found itself really bound in how it could use multiple parliamentary reports—in the case of veterans, dozens that had identified the problem going back decades. The Australian Government Solicitor, at the direction of the Albanese Labor government, kept saying to the veterans' royal commission, 'You can't use any of these parliamentary reports, because they're protected by parliamentary privilege.' That's not my understanding of what parliamentary privilege is meant to do. Parliamentary privilege is not meant to stop parliamentary reports and committee reports being used by royal commissions to actually inform positive reforms. That's not my understanding, but that's what the Australian Government Solicitor has been pushing time after time after time.

The veterans' royal commission said: 'Fix these two things. Let people come and give frank evidence without fear of being put in jail under Commonwealth secrecy provisions, and let us use the reports and the recommendations of parliamentary committees and parliamentary inquiries.' As I said, the Labor government did none of that—not one bit of it. Now, they've commenced a royal commission into the security agencies and their response to the appalling antisemitic attacks at Bondi Beach, and, now, Commissioner Bell has said, 'Actually, look at the reports from the interim reports from the veterans royal commission.' Obviously, members of ASIO, of Home Affairs, of the Australian Federal Police and, if it's relevant, of the ADF need protection so that they can come and tell the truth about what went wrong inside those security agencies and between those security agencies. They obviously need protection from the hundreds of Commonwealth secrecy provisions that apply.

Only after pressure was put on them from my party and from commentary in the media—only after pressure has been put on them do they bring this half-baked bill in. This half-baked bill goes nowhere near giving the protections that the veterans royal commission said were necessary for royal commissions. First of all, it does nothing about the parliamentary privilege. The Greens will be supporting amendments drafted by Senator Lambie that go to that core issue. We hope that the government, having read the interim report from the veterans royal commission, will support those amendments to say that royal commissions can have access to parliamentary reports and can use parliamentary reports and committee reports to do the work they need to do. We'll support that amendment. It's well drafted, and I want to thank Senator Lambie for bringing it to the Senate.

What this bill also fails to do is live up to the spirit and the nature of the recommendation from the veterans' royal commission, because the proposal in this bill is—there's a general defence to, I think, six secrecy provisions of the hundreds and hundreds of secrecy provisions under federal statute. I refer members of the chamber to the INSLM report that pointed out so many secrecy provisions and what a danger that was to the free flow of information about the Commonwealth's operations. It provides a general immunity to six general secrecy provisions—it doesn't touch the hundreds of others—and then it says, in relation to security information and a subset of evidence basically wrapped around security and defence information, 'If the heads of different security agencies voluntarily enter into an arrangement with the royal commission that provides what information can be given, how the information can be given and how the information can be used and that if current or former members of those security agencies provide information that fits within those arrangements, then they won't be prosecuted under a number of security

provisions.' What that does is gives a veto to the heads of the security agencies to decide the terms on which information can be given and the use that the royal commission can give to the information.

The security agencies obviously have a dog in this, a stake in this fight. Of course they don't want a royal commission roaming around and having a full and frank view of all of their potentially quite significant failures that led up to the shootings on Bondi Beach. Of course they have an interest to ensure that the information is narrow in scope and that the royal commission has limited basis upon which to use it. They have an interest to, potentially, make it incredibly difficult for current or former members of the security agencies to provide the information. It's almost as though the heads of the security agencies drafted this legislation; it's almost as though that's the case.

I rarely look to what the coalition says for some greater transparency in this space, But even the coalition, in their additional comments to the PJCIS inquiry, pointed out the potential need—I'd say it's the absolute need—for far greater protections for witnesses. Even the coalition can see the potential need for greater protections for witnesses, but the Labor Party seems to be in the pocket of the security agencies and is quite satisfied with giving the security agencies a complete veto over what and how information can be provided. The Labor Party seems to be satisfied not to provide the broad protections suggested by the veterans royal commissioner.

This bill goes a tiny bit—a tiny bit—of the way toward providing the protections that Commissioner Kaldas made clear that royal commissions need. Millions of Australians were horrified about what they saw on Bondi Beach and deeply concerned about potential failures and inadequacies between Home Affairs, the AFP, ASIO and state police. If you want public confidence in the outcomes of this royal commission, you need to make sure that every single current and former member of the security agencies feels absolutely free to come and tell truth to power, to come and tell the royal commission exactly what they knew and exactly what happened or what didn't happen in the lead-up to this. This bill goes nowhere near giving the protections needed.

I'll finish with this. The security agencies need to be under the pump in this royal commission. They need to be absolutely held to account. The coalition has made efforts today to keep Dennis Richardson enmeshed in the royal commission with all of his conflicts of interest as former ASIO head. He's been repeatedly used as the coalition and Labor's go-to man to write reports that remove any kind of criticism of Home Affairs, ASIO or any of those security agencies. The fact that he was appointed in the first place to do a review already creates a trust deficit with much of the public. I know it creates a trust deficit with many people inside the security agencies because it looked like Richardson was going to come in and just perform his usual: protect the government, protect his mates in the security agencies, protect the agencies and move the circus on.

We need to make sure that the royal commission isn't tainted by that, and we need to make sure that Commissioner Bell and the royal commission can see every single piece of evidence that they need. Every current and former member of the security agencies needs to feel confident that they can come and give evidence to the royal commission and not be put in jail, like David McBride, or prosecuted for breaches of security provisions. This bill goes nowhere near giving that level of protection.

Senator GREEN (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Tourism, Assistant Minister for Pacific Island Affairs and Assistant Minister for Northern Australia) (12:44): I thank my parliamentary colleagues for their contributions to this debate. The Royal Commissions Legislation Amendment (Protections for Providing Information) Bill 2026 creates a clear lawful pathway for people to provide intelligence and operationally sensitive information to a royal commission, including to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion. Uncertainty about the operations of secrecy laws, particularly in relation to intelligence and law enforcement material, can deter people from sharing information that is essential to a royal commission's work. It is critical that the current royal commission can obtain and assess the information it needs relating to last year's horrific Bondi terrorist attack. The bill ensures that this is possible, not only for this inquiry but for future royal commissions that need to handle sensitive, classified material.

The bill amends the Royal Commissions Act to establish a pathway for people to safely and lawfully provide information to a royal commission, without fear of criminal or civil liability. It also protects people who disclose intelligence or operationally sensitive information while seeking or providing legal advice in connection with a royal commission, and it ensures that secrecy provisions do not prevent people or agencies from complying with the royal commission's requirement to provide evidence. These are targeted measures. The new protections only apply where disclosures of intelligence and operationally sensitive information are made in line with published arrangements agreed between the royal commission and the Commonwealth, which may cover how sensitive material is obtained, stored, used, disclosed and returned. The commission must also act in accordance with those arrangements when using or communicating that information. In addition, the bill amends the Criminal Code to introduce a new defence to the general Commonwealth agency secrecy offences, where a person provides information to a royal commission. This will apply to all current and future royal commissions. Together, these

reforms complement existing protections in the Royal Commissions Act and reinforce the message that people who cooperate with a royal commission should not face prosecution for doing so.

The government acknowledges the review conducted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, and I thank the committee for its work and for the report that was tabled today. Given the importance of these matters to the royal commission, the government agrees with the sole recommendation of the committee that the bill be passed as soon as possible.

With respect to additional recommendations made by the coalition senators, the government agrees in principle with the first recommendation, noting the responsibility of agencies to manage their own operations. The Attorney-General's Department will liaise with National Intelligence Community agencies to ensure that they are providing sufficient support staff. The government also notes both the second and the third recommendation by coalition senators. The government has indicated publicly that it is progressing broader reform to secrecy provisions, which will be introduced to the parliament in due course. As part of that process, the government will consider whether further review is necessary to assess the effectiveness of these reforms or whether additional amendments are necessary.

I will now go to the amendment proposed by Senator Jacqui Lambie. I thank Senator Lambie for her long interest in royal commissions, particularly the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. It's something that she has discussed on many occasions in this place, and nobody doubts her commitment to prosecuting those matters in here. On parliamentary privilege, though, the government takes a different view than Senator Lambie. The Parliamentary Privileges Act has special significance for the parliament, as the declaration of the powers, privileges and immunities of the parliament and its members. Parliamentary privilege protects the ability of the parliament to carry out its functions and activities. Any changes to parliamentary privilege should be rare and would require careful consideration. The government recognises the important work carried out by royal commissions, including the current Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, but considers that this can be achieved without infringing parliamentary privilege.

To Senator Shoebridge's point, I know he characterised the use of parliamentary reports. Those are publicly available. This really does deal with information that may have been provided to committees in a confidential way or for the purpose of producing a report, and we know that that evidence is collected using parliamentary privilege. That is of concern to the government. We want to thank Senator Lambie, but we won't be supporting her amendment. I'll just make some other comments. I know this has been discussed this morning. It will be traversed later on, but I do want to address the comments of the shadow Attorney-General in regards to Dennis Richardson.

The government has been notified that Dennis Richardson has resigned as advisor to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion. The government thanks Mr Richardson for his efforts to date. This will not stop the work of the royal commission, and they will deliver important work, including an interim report, by 30 April. It has been very disappointing to see the approach of those opposite in regard to this matter, particularly the construing of comments that have been made by the Prime Minister. The most important comments for the opposition to register, to understand and to hopefully repeat in this chamber are these words from Dennis Richardson himself from today. He said that this is 'not anything to do with the government'. He said:

... the government is not responsible in anyway.

He goes on to say:

... the community should have full confidence in the royal commission ...

He went on to make further comments today.

The commentary that has been coming from the opposition was put to him, and it is notable that, when Mr Richardson was asked whether the idea that it's a disaster for the royal commission is an overstatement in his view, he replied, 'Absolutely. It's an overstatement.' We have seen these overstatements from the opposition before in regards to this matter. We have seen overegging and overstatements from those opposite. I would have thought they would have learned from what happened in this place when parliament was recalled, but they obviously haven't. I will make this final comment on this matter. I think the opposition is veering dangerously close to undermining the royal commission that they called for and say they support.

We would welcome a bipartisan approach to these matters. As we have said many times, we believe that the response to this horrific attack and this royal commission should be above politics. It's a matter for the opposition to decide what pathway they take, but we know what the public thought about the opposition's approach and their decision to play politics with this incredibly important matter when parliament was recalled. The government will continue to support the royal commission to deliver its important work, and this bill ensures that the royal commission can access the information that they need to perform its vital functions.

It provides certainty for individuals and protects the integrity of sensitive information. As a result, it strengthens the ability of the royal commission to uncover the truth on matters of national importance. These reforms will support the current Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion to properly examine the tragic events at Bondi while also establishing a lasting framework that will benefit future inquiries dealing with intelligence and operationally sensitive matters. As I've said previously, these are urgent matters, and we thank the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (12:55): On behalf of Senator Lambie, I move amendment (1) on sheet 3664:

(1) Page 12 (after line 29), at the end of the Bill, add:

Schedule 4—Amendment of the Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987

Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987

1 After subsection 16(6)

Insert:

(6A) If a Royal Commission's terms of reference require an examination of government then, despite paragraph (3)(c), neither this section nor the Bill of Rights, 1688 shall be taken to prevent or restrict the admission of evidence before a Royal Commission for the purpose of drawing, or inviting the drawing of, inferences or conclusions wholly or partly from anything forming part of proceedings in Parliament.

I spoke to this in my second reading contribution, and I don't wish to repeat that, but this is the amendment that would allow this royal commission, and other royal commissions, to not only access to public reports but then use public reports of this parliament to craft their recommendations and draft their report. Commissioner Kaldas made the argument, I think, incredibly clearly in the interim report. Again, I want to thank Senator Lambie for bringing this amendment, and I commend it to the chamber.

Question negatived.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (12:56): by leave—Could I have our party's vote in support of that amendment recorded?

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Cox): Noted. Thank you, Senator Shoebridge.

Bill agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Third Reading

Senator GREEN (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Tourism, Assistant Minister for Pacific Island Affairs and Assistant Minister for Northern Australia) (12:57): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (12:58): We had hoped that this could be repaired in committee. If the Lambie amendment had been adopted, we would have supported this bill because it would have done clear good. But for the reasons we made clear, in particular, the veto being given to security agencies—you only get one chance to fix this kind of legislation, and this bill is not doing what's needed, so we won't be supporting the third reading.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Cox): The question before the chair is the third reading of the Royal Commissions Legislation Amendment (Protections for Providing Information) Bill 2026.

The Senate divided. [13:03]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Cox)

Ayes.....34
Noes.....10
Majority24

AYES

Ananda-Rajah, M.
Brown, C. L.
Collins, J.

Ayres, T.
Chisholm, A. D.
Cox, D.

Bell, S.
Ciccione, R.
Darmanin, L. (Teller)

Dolega, J.
Ghosh, V.
Hanson, P. L.
McCarthy, M.
Pocock, D. W.
Sharma, D. N.
Sterle, G.
Walker, C.
Whitten, T.

Dowling, R.
Green, N. L.
Henderson, S. M.
Mulholland, C.
Polley, H.
Sheldon, A. V.
Stewart, J. N. A.
Watt, M. P.

Duniam, J. R.
Grogan, K.
McAllister, J. R.
Payman, F.
Roberts, M. I.
Smith, M. F.
Tyrrell, T. M.
Whiteaker, E.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hodgins-May, S.
Shoebidge, D. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Faruqi, M.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Steele-John, J. A.

Hanson-Young, S. C.
Pocock, B.
Waters, L. J.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Migration Amendment (2026 Measures No. 1) Bill 2026

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (13:05): I rise to speak on the Migration Amendment (2026 Measures No. 1) Bill 2026. This is an important piece of legislation. Yes, I accept that there has been not as much time as one would like to examine this legislation, but, as I think many of the contributors to this debate and certainly the public commentary on this legislation will indicate, it was urgent legislation that needed to be dealt with.

In short, this legislation enables the government of the day to put in place measures to deal with potential issues related to current holders of temporary visa classes who are currently offshore but in an area affected by a significant event or circumstance—measures to have those visas held by those individuals temporarily suspended and to be able to establish that that needs to be the case and that a determination to suspend those visas ought be the outcome. A test is applied by the minister which the opposition agrees is a relevant and appropriate test to be applied.

The simplest way to describe it is that, for example, in a region subject to conflict, if an individual from that region applied for some form of temporary visa, like a visitor or a tourist visa or perhaps a student visa, there is a high likelihood that that visa would be cancelled, the reason being—albeit it's a temporary visa these individuals are applying for—that there is a high likelihood that they would stay beyond the expiry of that visa, potentially to seek asylum and perhaps stay on illegally. So there are issues that need to be dealt with. This legislation goes to the very heart of that.

The opposition was satisfied with the way in which the legislation had been constructed. Yes, we had a short Senate inquiry into this to interrogate how the departmental officials arrived at the structure they put in, how they were able to determine which classes of individuals were not subject to any determination to suspend any visa and, then, any situations where people might be able to apply for an exception to that rule, that determination, enabling them to travel by application to the minister.

The government, of course, will speak to the details of this legislation, but the coalition make the observation that this legislation is all about controlling our borders, our national security, in determining who comes here and how they come here. I think that is an important role for government to have when it comes to preserving and protecting our country and its way of life. It is important that we do have controls in place that manage anything that could have an impact on how people come to this country and, indeed, who comes to this country, especially if there is a risk that, although the permission to enter this country was granted on one set of circumstances, if those circumstances change they may give rise to someone taking a different approach—that is, seeking to stay here permanently when all this country has agreed to is for these people to come in and be here temporarily.

There is nothing wrong with this approach being taken, I believe, and we are pleased the government has taken it, although one must question why there have been so many failings in this government's approach to matters