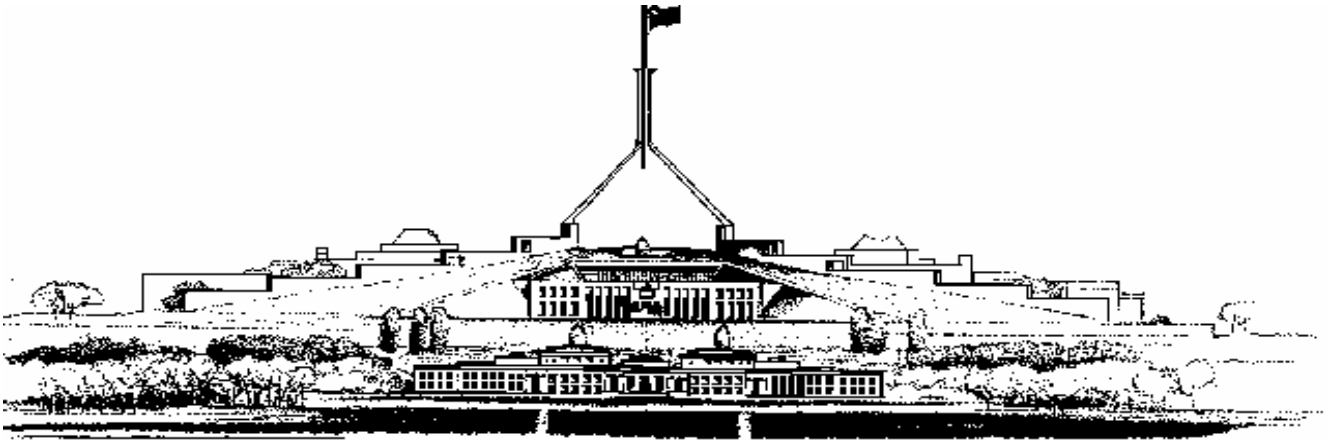




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 3, 2010

Wednesday, 27 October 2010

FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SITTING DAYS—2010

Month	Date
February	2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24, 25
March	9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18
May	11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31
June	1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24
September	28, 29, 30
October	18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28
November	15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25

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

Governor-General

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

House of Representatives Officeholders

Speaker—Mr Harry Alfred Jenkins MP

Deputy Speaker—Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP

Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP, Ms Sharon Leah Bird MP, Mrs Yvette Maree D'Ath MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP, Mr John Paul Murphy MP, Mr Peter Sid Sidebottom MP, Mr Kelvin John Thomson MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP

Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Australian Labor Party

Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Wayne Maxwell Swan MP

Chief Government Whip—Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP

Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP

Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Warren George Entsch MP

Opposition Whips—Mr Patrick Damien Secker MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals

Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP

Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP

Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Abbott, Hon. Anthony John	Warringah, NSW	LP
Adams, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry	Lyons, TAS	ALP
Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Alexander, John Gilbert	Bennelong, NSW	LP
Andrews, Hon. Kevin James	Menzies, VIC	LP
Andrews, Karen Lesley	McPherson, QLD	LP
Baldwin, Hon. Robert Charles	Paterson, NSW	LP
Bandt, Adam Paul	Melbourne, VIC	AG
Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick	Dunkley, VIC	LP
Bird, Sharon Leah	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Bishop, Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen	Mackellar, NSW	LP
Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel	Curtin, WA	LP
Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles	McMahon, NSW	ALP
Bradbury, Hon. David John	Lindsay, NSW	ALP
Briggs, Jamie Edward	Mayo, SA	LP
Broadbent, Russell Evan	McMillan, VIC	LP
Brodthmann, Gai Marie	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Buchholz, Scott Andrew	Wright, QLD	LP
Burke, Anna Elizabeth	Chisholm, VIC	ALP
Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher	Port Adelaide, SA	ALP
Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael	Holt, VIC	ALP
Champion, Nicholas David	Wakefield, SA	ALP
Cheeseman, Darren Leicester	Corangamite, VIC	ALP
Chester, Darren	Gippsland, VIC	Nats
Christensen, George Robert	Dawson, QLD	Nats
Ciobo, Steven Michele	Moncrieff, QLD	LP
Clare, Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Cobb, Hon. John Kenneth	Calare, NSW	Nats
Collins, Hon. Julie Maree	Franklin, TAS	ALP
Combet, Hon. Greg Ivan, AM	Charlton, NSW	ALP
Coulton, Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	Nats
Crean, Hon. Simon Findlay	Hotham, VIC	ALP
Crook, Anthony John	O'Connor, WA	NWA
Danby, Michael David	Melbourne Ports, VIC	ALP
D'Ath, Yvette Maree	Petrie, QLD	ALP
Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC	Isaacs, VIC	ALP
Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, QLD	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Ellis, Hon. Katherine Margaret	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Emerson, Hon. Craig Anthony	Rankin, QLD	ALP
Entsch, Warren George	Leichhardt, QLD	LP
Ferguson, Hon. Laurie Donald Thomas	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Ferguson, Hon. Martin John, AM	Batman, VIC	ALP
Fitzgibbon, Hon. Joel Andrew	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Fletcher, Paul William	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Forrest, John Alexander	Mallee, VIC	Nats
Frydenberg, Joshua Anthony	Kooyong, VIC	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Gambaro, Hon. Teresa	Brisbane, QLD	LP
Garrett, Hon. Peter Robert, AM	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Gash, Joanna	Gilmore, NSW	LP
Georganas, Steve	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP
Gibbons, Stephen William	Bendigo, VIC	ALP
Gillard, Hon. Julia Eileen	Lalor, VIC	ALP
Gray, Hon. Gary, AO	Brand, WA	ALP
Grierson, Sharon Joy	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Griffin, Hon. Alan Peter	Bruce, VIC	ALP
Griggs, Natasha Louise	Solomon, NT	CLP
Haase, Barry Wayne	Durack, WA	LP
Hall, Jill	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Hartsuyker, Luke	Cowper, NSW	Nats
Hawke, Alexander George	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Hayes, Christopher Patrick	Fowler, NSW	ALP
Hockey, Hon. Joseph Benedict	North Sydney, NSW	LP
Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, VIC	LP
Husic, Edham Nurredin	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Irons, Stephen James	Swan, WA	LP
Jenkins, Harry Alfred	Scullin, VIC	ALP
Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey	Tangney, WA	LP
Jones, Stephen Patrick	Throsby, NSW	ALP
Jones, Ewen Thomas	Herbert, QLD	LP
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, QLD	Ind
Keenan, Michael Fayat	Stirling, WA	LP
Kelly, Hon. Michael Joseph, AM	Eden-Monaro, NSW	ALP
Kelly, Craig	Hughes, NSW	LP
King, Hon. Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, VIC	ALP
Laming, Andrew Charles	Bowman, QLD	LP
Leigh, Andrew Keith	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Livermore, Kirsten Fiona	Capricornia, QLD	ALP
Lyons, Geoffrey Raymond	Bass, TAS	ALP
McClelland, Hon. Robert Bruce	Barton, NSW	ALP
Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin	Groom, QLD	LP
Macklin, Hon. Jennifer Louise	Jagajaga, VIC	ALP
Marino, Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Markus, Louise Elizabeth	Macquarie, NSW	LP
Marles, Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, VIC	ALP
Matheson, Russell Glenn	Macarthur, NSW	LP
McCormack, Michael	Riverina, NSW	Nats
Melham, Daryl	Banks, NSW	ALP
Mirabella, Sophie	Indi, VIC	LP
Mitchell, Robert George	McEwen, VIC	ALP
Morrison, Scott John	Cook, NSW	LP
Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor	Pearce, WA	LP
Murphy, Hon. John Paul	Reid, NSW	ALP
Neumann, Shayne Kenneth	Blair, QLD	ALP
Neville, Paul Christopher	Hinkler, QLD	Nats

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Oakeshott, Robert James Murray	Lyne, NSW	Ind
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick	Gorton, VIC	ALP
O'Dowd, Kenneth Desmond	Flynn, QLD	Nats
O'Dwyer, Kelly Megan	Higgins, VIC	LP
O'Neill, Deborah Mary	Robertson, NSW	ALP
Owens, Julie Ann	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Parke, Melissa	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Perrett, Graham Douglas	Moreton, QLD	ALP
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Prentice, Jane	Ryan, QLD	LP
Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice	Sturt, SA	LP
Ramsey, Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Randall, Don James	Canning, WA	LP
Ripoll, Bernard Fernand	Oxley, QLD	ALP
Rishworth, Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Robb, Hon. Andrew John, AO	Goldstein, VIC	LP
Robert, Stuart Rowland	Fadden, QLD	LP
Rowland, Michelle	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Roxon, Hon. Nicola Louise	Gellibrand, VIC	ALP
Roy, Wyatt Beau	Longman, QLD	LP
Rudd, Hon. Kevin Michael	Griffith, QLD	ALP
Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell	Berowra, NSW	LP
Saffin, Janelle Anne	Page, NSW	ALP
Schultz, Albert John	Hume, NSW	LP
Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig	Maranoa, QLD	Nats
Secker, Patrick Damien	Barker, SA	LP
Shorten, Hon. William Richard	Maribyrnong, VIC	ALP
Sidebottom, Peter Sid	Braddon, TAS	ALP
Simpkins, Luke Xavier Linton	Cowan, WA	LP
Slipper, Hon. Peter Neil	Fisher, QLD	LP
Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn	Casey, VIC	LP
Smith, Hon. Stephen Francis	Perth, WA	ALP
Smyth, Laura Mary	La Trobe, VIC	ALP
Snowden, Hon. Warren Edward	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Somlyay, Hon. Alexander Michael	Fairfax, QLD	LP
Southcott, Andrew John	Boothby, SA	LP
Stone, Hon. Sharman Nancy	Murray, VIC	LP
Swan, Hon. Wayne Maxwell	Lilley, QLD	ALP
Symon, Michael Stuart	Deakin, VIC	ALP
Tehan, Daniel Thomas	Wannon, VIC	LP
Thomson, Craig Robert	Dobell, NSW	ALP
Thomson, Kelvin John	Wills, VIC	ALP
Truss, Hon. Warren Errol	Wide Bay, QLD	Nats
Tudge, Alan Edward	Aston, VIC	LP
Turnbull, Hon. Malcom Bligh	Wentworth, NSW	LP
Vamvakinou, Maria	Calwell, VIC	ALP
Van Manen, Albertus Johannes	Forde, QLD	LP
Vasta, Ross Xavier	Bonner, QLD	LP
Washer, Malcom James	Moore, WA	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Wilkie, Andrew Damien	Denison, TAS	Ind
Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties	New England, NSW	Ind
Wyatt, Kenneth George	Hasluck, WA	LP
Zappia, Tony	Makin, SA	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; LNP—Liberal National Party;
CLP—Country Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; NWA—The Nationals WA; Ind—Independent;
AG—Australian Greens

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson

GILLARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister	Hon. Julia Gillard MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Treasurer	Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	Hon. Simon Crean MP
Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations and Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator Hon. Chris Evans
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth	Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate	Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Hon. Kevin Rudd MP
Minister for Trade	Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP
Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House	Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Leader of the House	Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for Health and Ageing	Hon. Nicola Roxon MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	Hon. Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Finance and Deregulation	Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	Senator Hon. Kim Carr
Attorney-General and Vice President of the Executive Council	Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Manager of Government Business in the Senate	Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism	Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP

[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]

GILLARD MINISTRY—*continued*

Minister for the Arts	Hon. Simon Crean MP
Minister for Social Inclusion	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Sport	Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Special Minister of State for the Public Service and Integrity	Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Assistant Minister to the Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare	Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development	Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel	Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Defence Materiel	Hon. Jason Clare MP
Minister for Indigenous Health	Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing	Hon. Mark Butler MP
Minister for the Status of Women	Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness	Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Special Minister of State	Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Minister for Small Business	Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Human Services	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Cabinet Secretary	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	Senator Hon. Kate Lundy
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer	Hon. David Bradbury MP
Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations	Senator Hon. Jacinta Collins
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity	Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Parliamentary Secretary for Trade	Hon. Justine Elliot MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs	Hon. Richard Marles MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence	Senator Hon. David Feeney
Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship	Senator Hon. Kate Lundy
Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing	Hon. Catherine King MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers	Senator Hon. Jan McLucas
Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services	Hon. Julie Collins MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water	Senator Hon. Don Farrell
Minister Assisting on Deregulation	Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP
Minister Assisting the Minister for Tourism	Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP

SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition	Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Shadow Minister for Trade	Hon. Julie Bishop MP
Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport	Hon. Warren Truss MP
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for the Arts	Senator Hon. George Brandis SC
Shadow Treasurer	Hon. Joe Hockey MP
Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training and Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Nationals	Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Water and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate	Senator Barnaby Joyce
Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction and Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee	Hon. Andrew Robb AO, MP
Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources	Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP
Shadow Minister for Defence	Senator Hon. David Johnston
Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband	Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing	Hon. Peter Dutton MP
Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services	Hon. Kevin Andrews MP
Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage	Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	Mr Scott Morrison MP
Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry and Science	Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP
Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security	Hon. John Cobb MP
Shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs	Hon. Bruce Billson MP

[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]

SHADOW MINISTRY—*continued*

Shadow Minister for Employment Participation	Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection	Mr Michael Keenan MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation	Senator Mathias Cormann
Shadow Minister for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning	Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Universities and Research	Senator Hon. Brett Mason
Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House	Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Development and Employment	Senator Marise Payne
Shadow Minister for Regional Development	Hon. Bob Baldwin MP
Shadow Special Minister of State	Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP
Shadow Minister for COAG	Senator Marise Payne
Shadow Minister for Tourism	Hon. Bob Baldwin MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel	Mr Stuart Robert MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson
Shadow Minister for Regional Communications	Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP
Shadow Minister for Ageing and Shadow Minister for Mental Health	Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells
Shadow Minister for Seniors	Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP
Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate	Senator Mitch Fifield
Shadow Minister for Housing	Senator Marise Payne
Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee	Mr Jamie Briggs MP
Shadow Cabinet Secretary	Hon. Philip Ruddock MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition	Senator Cory Bernardi
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance	Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport	Mr Darren Chester MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General	Senator Gary Humphries
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tax Reform and Deputy Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee	Hon. Tony Smith MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education	Senator Fiona Nash
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia	Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government	Mr Don Randall MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin	Senator Simon Birmingham
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Materiel	Senator Gary Humphries
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Defence Force and Defence Support	Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Healthcare	Dr Andrew Southcott MP

SHADOW MINISTRY—*continued*

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services and Indigenous Health	Mr Andrew Laming MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Supporting Families	Senator Cory Bernardi
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women	Senator Michaelia Cash
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment	Senator Simon Birmingham
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement	Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration	Senator Michaelia Cash
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry, and Science	Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry	Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Fair Competition	Senator Scott Ryan

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Wednesday, 27 October 2010

The SPEAKER (Mr Harry Jenkins) took the chair at 9 am, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Asylum Seekers

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (9.01 am)—I seek leave to move a motion to suspend so much of standing and sessional orders as would prevent the member for Cook from having notice No. 21, private members' business standing in the name of the member for Mayo, called on immediately and debated.

Leave not granted.

Mr MORRISON—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Cook from moving that standing orders be suspended to enable the Member for Mayo to move the motion standing in his name, *viz.*—That this House:

(1) notes:

- (a) the announcement on 18 October 2010 by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship about the commissioning of a detention facility at Inverbrackie in South Australia costing \$9.7 million to accommodate 400 people, consisting of family groups who are undergoing refugee status assessment;
- (b) that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship failed to consult with the State Government of SA, the Adelaide Hills Council and the local Woodside community on the commissioning of this facility; and
- (c) that the Prime Minister visited the Adelaide Hills on Sunday 17 October 2010 immediately prior to the announcement and made no mention of the plan to commission the detention facility at Inverbrackie;

(2) provides a reference to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration to undertake the following inquiry:

- (a) that the Joint Standing Committee on Migration inquire into the commissioning of a detention facility for 400 people comprising family groups at Inverbrackie, including:
 - (i) the suitability of the site for locating a detention facility for the purpose of accommodating family groups in comparison with alternative options available to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship;
 - (ii) the impact of the operation of the facility on the local community, including on health, education, recreation, transport, police and other community services;
 - (iii) the impact on defence operations, personnel and family groups based at the Inverbrackie facility;
 - (iv) the impact of the facility on the local economy and small business;
 - (v) the level of community support for the commissioning of the facility;
 - (vi) the level of cost and extent of services and facilities provided to clients at the detention facility; and
 - (vii) potential risks that need to be managed for the successful operation of the facility;
- (b) that the Joint Standing Committee on Migration undertake public hearings in Woodside, SA and Canberra, ACT to facilitate the participation of community members, local service providers, council officers and state and federal departmental officials to assist the Committee with its inquiry; and
- (c) that the Joint Standing Committee on Migration report back no later than the

first sitting week of Parliament in 2011; and

- (3) calls on the Government to postpone commissioning the detention facility for 400 people including family groups at Inverbrackie, until such time as the Committee has reported and the Government has provided a response to that report to the Parliament.

This motion to suspend standing orders is a matter of urgency, to be debated today. This government has failed to consult and it has now asked to simply go ahead without the opportunity for this motion to be considered in the parliament. There is an opportunity today for the standing orders to be suspended to enable the member for Mayo to move this motion, which calls for a parliamentary committee to actually provide the consultation that this government has denied the good people of Woodside. This is a government that decided, without any consultation on this matter with the local community, to proceed with this facility. The parliament has the opportunity today to step up where this government has failed to do so. Where this government has failed to consult, this parliament has an opportunity, through its committee, to consult the people of Woodside, to hear their questions and to seek answers to their questions. This is an urgent motion. It requires consideration today. The opportunity to consider this motion again will not present itself for some weeks, at which time the government will have already proceeded and the horse will have already bolted.

Today we have an opportunity for this parliament to live up to all the huff, all the bluff and all the bluster that has been out there about some new paradigm. If there is a new paradigm operating in this parliament then this parliament would be able, through its committee, to talk to constituents about decisions of this government. And that is the heart of this motion. This motion, to be moved by the member for Mayo to seek con-

sultation with his community, is all about ensuring that this parliament operates effectively to ensure that the views and concerns of his constituents are well known. It is true that this government failed to consult. It has been running around for weeks, if not months, looking at all sorts of potential facilities and myriad options, even undertaking works and spending taxpayers' money on these contingency options and leaving people out there in the community completely in the dark. Even in this place yesterday, and the day before, the Prime Minister was unable to rule out more broadly things that this government may ultimately do when it comes to opening further detention facilities.

The government led people to believe before the election that there was no need to expand onshore detention facilities. They allowed that perception to be there, and fostered in the community, so that they could go ahead with their business on the other side of the election, if elected, and do what they always knew they would have to do—that is, expand their onshore detention network, because they have no answers when it comes to offshore detention and they have absolutely no answers when it comes to stopping the unprecedented, record level of arrivals of people in this country illegally by boat under the soft policies of the government, which they rolled back. They chose to roll these policies back; they chose to soften the policies—and as a result we have had 8½ thousand people turn up, on their watch, because of their soft policies.

Their detention network is in a rolling crisis. The only answer the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship has is to open more beds. The only answer the Prime Minister has is a never-never solution on East Timor, which has been absolutely rejected by the former Prime Minister. He won't touch it with a 50-foot pole as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and it has been hand-passed to the

new Minister for Immigration and Citizenship to carry the can for what is an absolutely dud policy.

This a government where, when it comes to consultation on this matter, the minister has described the use of a parliamentary committee to talk to the people of Woodside, as 'a political organisation'. Such is the disrespect for the committees of this parliament that the mere suggestion that a committee of parliament might go and talk to the people of Woodside is some sort of political act. I remind the minister that there are five members of the government on that committee, there is one member of the Greens on that committee and there are only four members of the opposition. This is a committee controlled by the government, and we are asking this parliament today to go and ask that committee to talk to the people of Woodside, because this minister will not.

This minister will not go and front the people of Woodside. He is happy to sit in an ivory tower—that classic scenario—and make decisions about what is going to happen in people's communities and not front up. He is happy to send officials out there, as human shields for his own decisions, but he will not go down there and talk to them himself. He is happy to sit in his ivory tower, as so many of the ministers are happy to do. Whether it is in the Murray-Darling Basin, or down in Inverbrackie in Woodside, this is a government that will not consult, will not face the music for its own decisions and is happy to use public officials, in good-old New South Wales Labor style—sending out the public servants, corporate affairs people and media spin doctors—to run its line and not face the consequences of its own decisions. This is a minister who has refused to face the community, and this parliament should take the opportunity to step up where this government has so cowardly failed to do so.

This is a government whose members at the most senior levels—senior cabinet ministers—have described the legitimate questions and concerns of the Woodside community as 'hysterical'. Now, I don't know what happened to the rhetoric before the election, where the Prime Minister said, 'Oh, we understand the concerns of Australians about boat arrivals to Australia; we understand there's anxiety'. No, they do not. We knew they never did. And on the other side of the election they are happy to tell Australians who are concerned about this issue that they are 'hysterical'. To use the Minister for Trade's own words: they are 'hysterical'.

So the people of Australia should know that this government consider the communities' concerns about this matter so inconsequential that they are 'hysterical'. They do not warrant consultation before facilities are imposed on communities without the opportunity for consultation. They do not warrant, according to this government, the opportunity for a parliamentary committee, a committee of this parliament comprising members from all quarters of this House and the other chamber, to go and talk to them when the government have failed to do so. They do not think that is appropriate. They do not think consultation is appropriate. The government have no policy when it comes to stopping the unprecedented rate of illegal boat arrivals to Australia. There are a record number of boats and people who have arrived this year. The government hold all the records when it comes to this: there are a record number of people in detention. They have no policy and they have no courage of their convictions when it comes to facing the community, so this parliament should do so on their behalf.

The SPEAKER—Order! Is the motion seconded?

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo) (9.11 am)—I second the motion the member for Cook has moved to suspend standing orders to allow me to move the motion on the *Notice Paper* in relation to the decision by the government to establish a detention facility in Inverbrackie without consultation. The member for Cook is doing a fantastic job and has just done a fantastic job in holding this government to account on this failure to manage Australia's borders.

Last Monday my community was ambushed by a government which has lost control of Australia's borders—so much so that the Prime Minister was actually in the Adelaide Hills the day before the announcement and she failed absolutely to mention a word of the planned facility, which was just 17 kilometres down the road from where she was on the Sunday. Her defence is that she could not ask the community what they thought because she was following cabinet convention. Well, that has not stopped her in the past, it must be said: this is a Prime Minister who sent a staffer to a National Security Committee meeting in the past, as referred to in the *Australian* during the election. This is a Prime Minister who does not care too much about cabinet convention when it suits. The Prime Minister has used this as an excuse for her lack of courage to face my community last Sunday and tell them what her plan was. She is either incompetent or she lacked the courage to do so.

This motion seeks to do what the government should have done in the first place. In fact, it was actually the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship who promised he would do this in that first place. This minister, on Perth radio on 17 December, said, 'I would talk to, and we would talk to, the relevant shire there and the authorities about what we are contemplating there and, if we were to do so, get their feedback.' Well, he did not speak to the Adelaide Hills Council.

He called them an hour before the decision was made—in fact, an official called an hour before the decision was made. The Labor Premier, Mike Rann, got a call an hour before the decision was made. He used parliament in South Australia yesterday to say how angry he was, how disappointed he was, that this minister and this Prime Minister have failed to consult with the South Australian government on this decision.

But the minister went further on Perth radio. He said: 'But I'd be more than happy to talk to local communities.' What a complete and utter fib! You have not been anywhere near the Adelaide Hills, Minister. You were not there last Thursday night.

Mr Albanese—We were sitting!

Mr BRIGGS—Well, I got there! I got to the meeting last Thursday night. Where was the minister? He failed to attend, he failed to consult and he said, 'The cabinet has decided to make this decision; bad luck to the community.' Now, when we try to move for a parliamentary committee, the minister says, 'That's nothing but a political organisation.' What about the climate change committee? What about the Murray-Darling Basin committee? Are they political organisations as well, Minister? You have lost control of this issue, Minister, and you should front up to the Adelaide Hills. You should front up and ask the people's views on what they think of your decision without having consulted them.

This motion should be supported, because my community deserve to have their say. Let the sunshine flow in. Let the committee raise these issues. If this could happen to my community, it could happen to any community represented in this place. We had the member for Hughes yesterday asking very relevant questions of the Prime Minister, and all he got was shrill abuse and no ruling out of the facility at Holsworthy. What about the

member for McEwen? What will happen when Puckapunyal is used as one of these facilities? What will the member for McEwen say to his community? If the government can get away with this today, they can get away with it next week and the week after.

This motion should be debated because my community deserve the right to have their voices heard. They deserve the right to have their concerns raised in this place. Premier Mike Rann raised their concerns in the South Australian parliament yesterday; why can't my community have them raised in the Australian parliament? This government have lost control of Australia's borders. They are all at sea. This minister is all at sea. This decision was known last Sunday. The community should have been told last Sunday by the Prime Minister. They should have had had the opportunity to raise these issues. It was a cowardly thing to do to roll up and use the Adelaide Hills as a photo opportunity but to fail to consult.

Where are the South Australian members of this place today? The Minister for Mental Health and Ageing was here, but he has left because he is ashamed of the way the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship is treating South Australia. How will the member for Hindmarsh explain to his community the way that this community is being treated? How will he explain to members of the community in Hindmarsh how South Australia is being treated by this government?

This parliamentary committee is not a political organisation. Parliamentary committees are not political organisations. They allow a voice for the community. This motion should be supported to give my community a voice. (*Time expired*)

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (9.15 am)—I rise to speak against the suspension of

standing orders. This is a stunt from an opposition that is bereft of ideas and determined to distract attention from their own internal problems. We have seen it writ large today with Peter Costello's op-ed in the *SMH* and the *Age*, taking apart the former Prime Minister, John Howard, on his honesty. But the one thing that Peter Costello and John Howard agree on is that this mob over here are not up to it. This mob over here are not up to the legacy that they left.

This motion today is about taking up the parliament's time with a distraction. This parliament, all of us—Labor, coalition and Independent members—sat down and signed up to a parliamentary reform process that gives record time for private members to raise issues of concern to them in this parliament. The Standing Committee on Selection met last night to determine what would be debated in private members' business. But those opposite did not have this on the agenda and did not want this on the agenda. They have had a range of issues flip-flopping around. They have had private members' business motions and a private member's bill moved by the member for Wentworth. But that has been superseded because, since they moved the private member's bill on broadband last week, they have changed their policy again. So by the time we get to vote on it the policy will be redundant.

This is an inconsistent mob with simply nothing to say about issues of substance. They talk about the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship—he sat here day after day desperate for a question and could not get one from those opposite. They come in here and pretend that this is an issue of urgency. They pretend that they are for consultation. Let us have a look at the previous mainland sites that were opened when they were in office. Curtin opened in September 1999. Woomera opened in November 1999. The Woomera residential housing project was

opened in August 2001. Baxter opened in September 2002. The Port Augusta residential housing project was opened in November 2003. For all of these projects did they come in here and say, 'Let's have a process of public consultation and public meetings'? No, not at all. Hypocrisy, thy name is the Liberal Party when it comes to these issues.

The fact is that, in moving this suspension, those opposite are once again walking away from an understanding of the running of a good parliament. On the running of the parliament, we have established a system in which I think most people who are objective commentators recognise that there has been substantial improvement. We have moved away from the sort of thing where you come in here and say, 'Oh, it's Wednesday; we'll move a suspension at 9 am.' For newer members, this is what they used to do towards the end of the last term. They would come in here on Wednesdays at nine o'clock and say, 'What will we do to take up some of the parliament's time?' Previously, perhaps an argument could be put for it. Now it cannot, because now there is every opportunity to raise issues. Indeed, on Monday this week from 10 am right through to 10 pm in this House and in the Main Committee, with the exception of question time, essentially a majority of that time was taken up with private members' business. This mob over here say that people should be leaving the parliament, not fulfilling their duties in the parliament, to go to meetings outside of the parliament, and yet they will not grant anyone a pair. We had the Business Council of Australia dinner last night with no-one there for the first time. Normally you would have representatives of the government and the opposition there, but those opposite have this attitude.

Mr Keenan—You have got to ask for it.

Mr ALBANESE—Indeed, we have had a debate this week about people attending the

late Ken Wriedt's funeral and being given a pair by those opposite. So let us not get into detail, Michael Keenan, because let me tell you that those on this side will run through the list of the outrageous actions by those opposite.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. I am aware that a lot of latitude is given in these debates about suspension of standing orders, but this is a suspension about whether a motion should be brought on for debate about immigration. It is not a debate about all the things that the Leader of the House is talking about.

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. It is a debate about the suspension of standing orders. Reasons for not suspending or suspending are applicable to the debate. It is not actually open to debate the question proposed to be discussed.

Mr ALBANESE—I am actually speaking to the motion that has been moved, unlike the two speakers on the other side, who spoke about the substance of the motion. This is about the functioning of this parliament and whether we should have a parliament in which it is agreed in terms of the timetable and the discussions that take place or whether we will move back to the old paradigm, the pre-hug paradigm, and we will come in at 9 am on Wednesdays and Thursdays and just think, 'Oh well, it is your turn, shadow minister for immigration, to move the suspension this week.'

I think we should move beyond that. Because of the way we have framed the parliamentary sittings, I think there is no need for us to do that. We could do the same thing. We could come in here and have more of a chance of getting some success in moving a suspension of standing orders to debate the fact that the Leader of the Opposition refused to back in the shadow Treasurer on the doors

this morning when asked about banks. We could come in and ask about that. We could have quite an interesting dialogue about the economic illiteracy of those who have adopted economic Hansonism over there and we could have a debate. We could have the Leader of the Opposition dissociating himself from the shadow Treasurer and then we could allow the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to defend her position—

Mr Morrison—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: the motion was dealing with the suspension of standing orders, not a commentary on the opposition.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Cook will be very careful in coming to the dispatch box to make debating points when he has already contributed to the debate. The Leader of the House has the call.

Mr ALBANESE—We allowed him to speak but they do not want to hear us. We could do that. We could have the shadow Treasurer and the alternative shadow Treasurer commenting on what the shadow Treasurer had to say. Perhaps the shadow Treasurer is in here to make a comment about that. We could move a suspension to talk about whether it is the view of the House that failure in 2007 was all Howard’s doing. We could talk about the contribution of Peter Costello to the House. But we have not done that, because we believe in the agenda that has been determined by this parliament, the framework of parliamentary reform that allows for more than a doubling of private members’ business time. That is why this suspension should not be supported. We should support the good, orderly functioning of this parliament, as has been agreed by the government, by the opposition and by the Independent members.

The SPEAKER—The time allowed by standing order 1 for debate on the motion having expired, the question is that the mo-

tion moved by the member for Cook for the suspension of standing and sessional orders be agreed to.

Question put.

The House divided. [9.31 am]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes.....	68
Noes.....	<u>71</u>
Majority.....	<u>3</u>

AYES

Abbott, A.J.	Alexander, J.
Andrews, K.	Andrews, K.J.
Baldwin, R.C.	Billson, B.F.
Bishop, B.K.	Bishop, J.I.
Briggs, J.E.	Broadbent, R.
Buchholz, S.	Chester, D.
Christensen, G.	Ciobo, S.M.
Cobb, J.K.	Coulton, M. *
Dutton, P.C.	Entsch, W.
Forrest, J.A.	Frydenberg, J.
Gambaro, T.	Gash, J.
Griggs, N.	Haase, B.W.
Hartsuyker, L.	Hawke, A.
Hockey, J.B.	Hunt, G.A.
Jensen, D.	Jones, E.
Katter, R.C.	Keenan, M.
Kelly, C.	Laming, A.
Ley, S.P.	Macfarlane, I.E.
Marino, N.B.	Markus, L.E.
Matheson, R.	McCormack, M.
Mirabella, S.	Morrison, S.J.
Moylan, J.E.	Neville, P.C.
O’Dowd, K.	O’Dwyer, K.
Prentice, J.	Pyne, C.
Ramsey, R.	Randall, D.J.
Robb, A.	Robert, S.R.
Roy, Wyatt	Ruddock, P.M.
Schultz, A.	Scott, B.C.
Secker, P.D. *	Simpkins, L.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Southcott, A.J.	Tehan, D.
Truss, W.E.	Tudge, A.
Turnbull, M.	Van Manen, B.
Vasta, R.	Wyatt, K.

NOES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bandt, A.	Bird, S.

Bowen, C.
 Burke, A.E.
 Butler, M.C.
 Champion, N.
 Clare, J.D.
 Crean, S.F.
 D'Ath, Y.M.
 Dreyfus, M.A.
 Emerson, C.A.
 Ferguson, M.J.
 Garrett, P.
 Gibbons, S.W.
 Gray, G.
 Griffin, A.P.
 Hayes, C.P.
 Jones, S.
 King, C.F.
 Livermore, K.F.
 Macklin, J.L.
 McClelland, R.B.
 Mitchell, R.
 Neumann, S.K.
 Oakeshott, R.J.M.
 Parke, M.
 Ripoll, B.F.
 Rowland, M.
 Rudd, K.M.
 Shorten, W.R.
 Smith, S.F.
 Snowdon, W.E.
 Symon, M.
 Thomson, K.J.
 Wilkie, A.
 Zappia, A.

Brodtmann, G.
 Burke, A.S.
 Byrne, A.M.
 Cheeseman, D.L.
 Combet, G.
 Crook, T.
 Danby, M.
 Elliot, J.
 Ferguson, L.D.T. *
 Fitzgibbon, J.A.
 Georganas, S.
 Gillard, J.E.
 Grierson, S.J.
 Hall, J.G. *
 Husic, E.
 Kelly, M.J.
 Leigh, A.
 Lyons, G.
 Marles, R.D.
 Melham, D.
 Murphy, J.
 O'Neill, D.
 Owens, J.
 Perrett, G.D.
 Rishworth, A.L.
 Roxon, N.L.
 Saffin, J.A.
 Sidebottom, S.
 Smyth, L.
 Swan, W.M.
 Thomson, C.
 Vamvakinou, M.
 Windsor, A.H.C.

PAIRS

Stone, S.N.
 Irons, S.J.
 Washer, M.J.
 Somlyay, A.M.
 Fletcher, P.
 * denotes teller

Plibersek, T.
 Bradbury, D.J.
 Collins, J.M.
 Ellis, K.
 O'Connor, B.P.

Question negatived.

COMMITTEES

Membership

The SPEAKER—I have received messages from the Senate informing the House of the appointment of senators to certain joint committees. Copies of the messages are

on the chamber table and details will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

DOCUMENTS

Mental Health

Consideration of Senate Message

The SPEAKER—I have received a message from the Senate transmitting a resolution agreed to by the Senate on 26 October 2010 relating to mental health. Copies of the message have been placed on the table for the information of honourable members. I do not propose to read its terms which will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings* and *Hansard*. The Senate requests the concurrence of the House in this resolution.

The message read as follows—

That the Senate—

- (a) notes that:
- (i) mental illness afflicts more Australians than almost all other health disorders, only ranking behind cancer and heart disease in prevalence,
 - (ii) 45 per cent of the nation's population will experience a mental health disorder at some point in life,
 - (iii) younger Australians, those between 16 and 24, bear the brunt of mental illness with the prevalence of problems declining with age,
 - (iv) with early and targeted treatment many young people can overcome mental illness or lower the incidence of progression or relapse,
 - (v) expansion of the 'headspace' and Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention (EPPI) centres models could help an estimated 200 000 young Australians and in doing so free up existing services for others with mental illnesses whilst also alleviating pressures on public hospitals and emergency departments, and
 - (vi) the government has moved to cut services in mental healthcare; and
- (b) calls on the government:

- (i) to expand the number of ‘headspace’ centres to a minimum of 90 nationally,
- (ii) to establish a national network of 20 EPPI centres,
- (iii) to provide an additional 800 beds for mental health associated with EPPI centres,
- (iv) to appropriate the funds necessary to provide these critical steps to expanding mental health treatment facilities, and immediately to provide additional funds for existing ‘headspace’ centres.

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide—Minister for Mental Health and Ageing) (9.38 am)—I move:

That consideration of the message be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Question agreed to.

**FEDERAL FINANCIAL RELATIONS
AMENDMENT (NATIONAL HEALTH
AND HOSPITALS NETWORK)
BILL 2010**

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Treasurer) (9.39 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Federal Financial Relations Amendment (National Health and Hospitals Network) Bill 2010 will implement the key financial elements of the National Health and Hospitals Network reforms.

These reforms are among the most substantial improvements to Commonwealth-state relations in memory. They are all about getting better value for all Australians from the money we invest in health.

These changes will recast health funding between the Commonwealth and the states,

making the system more sustainable in the face of rising health spending.

They will dedicate around one-third of GST revenue to health and hospital services and guarantee growth funding to the states of at least \$15.6 billion over the period 2014-15 to 2019-20.

The changes will deliver value for money by creating a new system that provides funding according to efficient prices—what particular health services should cost, not by writing blank cheques.

In April this year, COAG, with the exception of Western Australia, reached a historic agreement on health reform—the establishment of a National Health and Hospitals Network.

This represents the most significant reform to Australia’s health and hospital system since the introduction of Medicare and one of the largest reforms to service delivery since Federation.

We need to reform the health system so that future generations can continue to enjoy world-class, universally accessible and affordable health care.

The truth is that, while Australia has one of the best health systems in the world, it is under significant and growing pressures.

Australia’s health and hospital system faces significant growth in demand as our population ages and as a result of emerging technologies.

On the basis of current trends, health and hospital spending would consume all tax revenues collected directly by state governments by 2045-46.

We need reform to end the blame game and cost shifting.

We want to provide national leadership on health and hospitals, but also allow greater control at the local level.

That is why we are determined to work with state and territory governments to deliver the National Health and Hospitals Network.

Our reforms focus on three key objectives.

First, they will reform the governance of our health and hospital system and ensure funding sustainability for the future.

The Commonwealth will take responsibility for funding the majority of Australia's health and hospital system.

We will implement wide reform to health services across the country. We will strengthen governance, report on performance transparently and put in place our new national standards.

Second, these reforms will deliver better access to high-quality integrated care that is patient-centric.

We will deliver health care that is designed around the needs of patients, not the needs of the health system.

And we will focus on prevention, early intervention and providing care in the community.

Patients should only be in hospital if they need to be there for clinical reasons.

Third, these reforms will provide better care and better access to services for patients right now, through increased investments in hospitals, better infrastructure and more doctors and nurses.

The Commonwealth's \$7.3 billion investment will deliver immediate health and hospital service improvements, as well as supporting the new health network.

This bill deals with the funding elements of the reforms.

Under the National Health and Hospitals Network, the Commonwealth government will provide the majority of funds for Australian public hospitals.

The Commonwealth will fund 60 per cent of the efficient price for all public hospital services, and 60 per cent of capital, research and training in our public hospitals.

We will also take full funding and policy responsibility for general practitioner and primary healthcare services and for aged-care services.

To reduce cost shifting and better integrate hospital and community settings, we will, over time, also move to fund 100 per cent of the efficient price of primary healthcare equivalent outpatient services.

This investment is fully funded over the forward estimates, is wholly consistent with our fiscal strategy and does not add to the budget deficit. Fiscal responsibility is a key component of these reforms.

We will establish an Independent Hospital Pricing Authority to determine how much it will cost to deliver hospital services funded by the Commonwealth efficiently.

Funding paid by the Commonwealth in the future will be based on how much the independent authority says that it should cost.

This will ensure that taxpayers receive the best value from investments in health care and will drive greater efficiency in the delivery of health services.

This bill amends the Federal Financial Relations Act 2009 to implement these major reforms.

The bill creates a National Health and Hospitals Network Fund through which payments will be made to the states or joint intergovernmental funding authorities for the states out of:

- funding sourced from the previous National Healthcare Specific Purpose Payment;

- an agreed amount of GST revenue, retained and dedicated to health and hospital services; and
- additional top-up funding to be paid by the Commonwealth from 1 July 2014. As the Commonwealth takes on greater responsibility for financing growth in health and hospital costs through these reforms, top-up funding will apply when spending growth exceeds the growth in the GST and funding sourced from the existing National Healthcare Specific Purpose Payment.

Each state's dedicated GST revenues will be allocated to health and hospital services in that state.

This will be revenue-neutral for both the Commonwealth and the states over the forward estimates.

The amount of GST to be dedicated to health and hospitals services will then be fixed from 2014-15, based on 2013-14 costs indexed for the GST growth rate.

From 2014-15, an additional Commonwealth top-up payment will be provided, reflecting that hospital costs have been growing at close to 10 per cent per annum in recent years and are expected to grow at around 8 per cent per annum over the medium term.

This means that hospitals costs are expected to outpace growth in GST, of around six per cent per annum over the medium term, as well as growth in the existing National Healthcare Specific Purpose Payment.

Consistent with the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement struck between the Commonwealth and the states, the bill guarantees that Commonwealth top-up funding will be at least \$15.6 billion over the period 2014-15 to 2019-20, provided that all states and territories are participating in the reforms.

States will be no worse off in the short term, and significantly better off over the longer term, under these reforms.

The bill preserves the existing federal financial relations arrangements for Western Australia until it becomes a signatory to the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement.

In addition, the bill introduces a new process to protect Western Australia's existing healthcare funding.

The process includes requiring the Western Australian Premier to agree to any change to the existing financial arrangements which would result in a substantial financial detriment to Western Australia.

Payment arrangements

The bill also deals with payments out of the National Health and Hospitals Network Fund.

The National Health and Hospitals Network Fund, along with the other governance arrangements set out in the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement, will ensure transparency around the services being provided in individual hospitals, the cost of these services, and who is paying.

The price the Commonwealth pays for hospital services will be determined by an Independent Hospital Pricing Authority. This authority will be independent of all levels of government. One of the first tasks for the authority will be to advise the government on appropriate transitional arrangements to new efficient price settings.

Each Local Hospital Network will be funded for the services it provides and the information on the funding provided will be transparent to communities.

All payment flows through the National Health and Hospitals Network Fund will be transparently reported in Commonwealth budget papers.

Impact on federal financial relations

The introduction of the National Health and Hospitals Network represents a significant change to Australia's federal financial relations.

The Commonwealth is becoming a majority funder of the Australian hospital system and taking full funding and policy responsibility for primary health and aged care.

This will improve three broad elements of Australia's federal financial relations.

First, the gap between what the states are currently required to pay and their revenue raising capacities, referred to as vertical fiscal imbalance, will be reduced over time. This will help to secure the funding base for health and hospital services into the future.

Second, roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and the states have been clarified. This will reduce duplication of activities and improve coordination.

Finally, those states experiencing a more rapidly ageing population should receive a greater benefit from the Commonwealth's increased funding responsibilities due to higher growth in demand as their population ages—this will reduce horizontal fiscal imbalance over time.

As a result, these reforms will put Australia's federal financial relations on a more sustainable footing for the future and allow us to better manage health expenditure growth.

These changes will deliver value for money from our spending on important health services.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Morrison**) adjourned.

BUSINESS**Rearrangement**

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (9.49 am)—I move:

That consideration of government business notice No. 2, Criminal Code Amendment (Cluster Munitions Prohibition) Bill 2010, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

**HEALTH INSURANCE (EXTENDED
MEDICARE SAFETY NET)
AMENDMENT DETERMINATION
2010 (No. 2)**

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (9.50 am)—I move:

That, in accordance with section 10B of the Health Insurance Act 1973, the House approves the Health Insurance (Extended Medicare Safety Net) Amendment Determination 2010 (No. 2) made on 12 October 2010 and presented to the House on 25 October 2010.

Question agreed to.

**HEALTH INSURANCE (EXTENDED
MEDICARE SAFETY NET -
MIDWIVES) AMENDMENT
DETERMINATION 2010**

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (9.51 am)—I move:

That, in accordance with section 10B of the Health Insurance Act 1973, the House approves the Health Insurance (Extended Medicare Safety Net—Midwives) Amendment Determination 2010 made on 13 October 2010 and presented to the House on 25 October 2010.

Question agreed to.

**CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT
(CLUSTER MUNITIONS
PROHIBITION) BILL 2010**

First Reading

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

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr McCLELLAND (Barton—Attorney-General) (9.52 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Criminal Code Amendment (Cluster Munitions Prohibition) Bill 2010.

This bill includes the legislative measures necessary to give effect to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Australia is a strong supporter of the convention.

Australia was one of the first countries to sign the convention on 3 December 2008 and, once the appropriate implementing arrangements are in place, we will proceed to ratify the convention.

Australia took an active role in the negotiation of the convention, consistent with Australia's longstanding practice of taking part in international efforts to reduce the humanitarian impact of armed conflict, especially on civilian populations.

Our active participation in the negotiation of this convention ensured a strong humanitarian outcome that also satisfied Australia's national security concerns.

The convention is a remarkable achievement that came about from recognition by the international community that the time had come to address the tragic impact of cluster munitions.

The long- and short-term impacts of cluster munitions on civilian populations are well known.

Cluster munitions are primarily used against large target areas and are used indiscriminately.

As a consequence, large areas of land can become contaminated with unexploded submunitions.

These areas can be left dangerous and unusable long after conflict has ceased. Stories abound about children being attracted to the coloured explosives long after the hostilities have ceased.

The convention bans the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer of cluster munitions, as well as the assisting, encouraging or inducing of any person to do any act prohibited by the convention.

The bill will amend the Criminal Code to include the provisions necessary for ensuring that Australian law is consistent with the convention.

This bill will add to Australia's already strong legal framework regarding weapons that cause indiscriminate harm, such as the Anti-Personnel Mines Convention Act of 1998.

There are three main features to this bill.

First, the bill will create offences that reflect the range of conduct that is prohibited by the convention.

The bill includes a new offence of using, developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, retaining or transferring a cluster munition.

The bill will also create an offence of assisting, encouraging or inducing a person to do any of those acts.

An example of conduct that would fall within this offence is where a person provides financial assistance to, or invests in, a company that develops or produces cluster munitions, but only where that person intends to assist, encourage or induce the development or production of cluster munitions by that company.

These new offences will provide a comprehensive legislative scheme to ban the use of cluster munitions within Australia and by Australians.

These offences will carry a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment for individuals, or \$330,000 for bodies corporate.

This penalty reflects the serious nature of the offences created by the bill.

Second, the bill will create defences to these offences that reflect the range of conduct that is permitted by the convention. In particular, this will allow Australia to maintain and develop its skills and capabilities in detecting and destroying cluster munitions.

The convention permits states parties to acquire or retain a limited number of cluster munitions for the development of, and training in, detection, clearance or destruction techniques, and for the development of countermeasures.

The convention also allows a state party to transfer cluster munitions to another state party so that they can be destroyed.

The bill will create a defence for persons who acquire or retain cluster munitions for these purposes or for the purpose of destruction when authorised by the Minister for Defence.

The bill will also create a defence for persons who transfer cluster munitions to another state party for the purpose of destruction.

In order to encourage individuals to contact the police or Australian Defence Force in order to surrender cluster munitions rather than handling the dangerous explosives themselves, the bill will create a defence for persons who, without delay, notify the police or Australian Defence Force that they wish to surrender cluster munitions.

These defences will enable Australia to maintain its participation in international cooperative efforts to develop and share knowledge on detection, clearance and destruction techniques.

The bill will, however, continue to allow Australia to maintain cooperative military relationships with countries that are not party to the convention. The ability to maintain this capability is a fundamental pillar of international security and essential for Australia's national security.

It is an important part of both the convention and this bill.

Importantly, the convention permits states parties to continue to undertake military cooperation and operations with countries that are not party to the convention, subject to some restrictions.

The bill will create a defence for persons whose conduct is done in the course of the permitted range of military cooperation and operations.

Notwithstanding this defence, it will be an offence for a person to use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile or retain cluster munitions, even in the course of combined operations with countries that are a non-party.

This defence will also not apply if a person expressly requests the use of cluster munitions in a situation where the choice of munitions used is within Australia's exclusive control.

This limitation on the defence will ensure that Australia and Australians will continue to act consistently with the object and purpose of the convention, even when undertaking cooperative activities with countries that are not obliged to comply with the convention.

A separate defence will protect visiting personnel from the armed forces of countries that are not a party to the convention, while such personnel are in Australia.

These individuals are not required to comply with the convention's obligations, and are therefore protected—to that limited

extent—from the criminal offences that will be created in this bill.

Nonetheless, such visiting forces would not be excused from prosecution if they use, develop, produce or acquire cluster munitions when they are in Australia.

The bill forms one part of the measures necessary for Australia to implement its obligations under the convention.

In addition to this proposed legislation, the government will also ensure that doctrine, procedures, rules and directives of the Australian Defence Forces are consistent with our obligations under the convention.

It is now widely recognised that cluster munitions not only create an ever present danger to civilians long after the conflict has ended, but they also present a dangerous impediment to the provision of humanitarian aid as well as postconflict economic and social development.

In recognition of this, the convention seeks not only to ban the use of cluster munitions, but it also requires state parties to destroy stockpiles of cluster munitions, to assist victims of cluster munitions and to clear cluster munitions in affected areas.

The government will comply with the reporting obligations in the convention, which will ensure transparency and act as a confidence-building measure.

And while Australia has no operational stocks of cluster munitions, the government will continue to support international efforts to alleviate the terrible humanitarian impact of cluster munitions.

The Mine Action Strategy for the Australian aid program supports efforts to assist victims internationally, as well as efforts to clear and destroy cluster munitions that are remnant in countries that have been affected by the use of such munitions.

Under the strategy, Australia has pledged \$100 million from 2010 to 2014 to reduce the threat and socioeconomic impact of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. This contribution will help reduce the deaths and injuries from these devices and improve the quality of life for victims, their adversely affected families and, indeed, entire communities.

This bill is a significant step towards Australia meeting its obligations under this important convention, and will strengthen Australia's legal framework regarding weapons that cause significant and indiscriminate harm to civilians.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Morrison**) adjourned.

NATIONAL HEALTH AND HOSPITALS NETWORK BILL 2010

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 26 October, on motion by **Ms Roxon**:

That this bill be now read a second time, upon which **Mr Dutton** moved by way of amendment:

That all the words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"the House declines to give the bill a second reading until the following provisions are presented to the House for its consideration:

- (1) provisions establishing the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, including its full functions and responsibilities; and
- (2) provisions establishing the National Performance Authority, including its full functions and responsibilities".

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (10.03 am)—It gives me pleasure to speak on the National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010 because it gives me an opportunity to talk about some things happening in my electorate. I was a local hospital chairman for seven

years of my life before I entered this place. I must say that, when I look back on that time in local hospital management, the frustration of seeing more and more of the health budget soaked up in administration rather than actually being spent at the coalface of health delivery as it were has been of great concern to me. We extended office space and we created more work stations but we did not build any extra beds. In effect we had more admin and fewer health workers.

This bill unfortunately is more of the same. It is another layer of bureaucracy. It is yet another body devising hoops for the work-stressed health professionals to jump through. Usually these types of bodies are more interested in making themselves an indispensable part of the system, which is protecting their jobs

This bill talks about setting national standards. Unfortunately, what we deal with in my electorate are the loss of standards and the loss of service as a result of the recent state budget. In South Australia we have had eight years of the Rann-Foley government and in that time we have seen an explosion in public service jobs—almost 18,000 in total. The state Treasurer, Kevin Foley, has been telling us for eight years that he is the greatest treasurer in Australia. He has built this reputation upon a AAA credit rating, which has actually been built on the billions of dollars of unbudgeted revenue that have flowed into the state from the GST rivers of gold and the explosion in land tax receipts.

Unfortunately, like their federal counterparts, they have spent it all and then some. In fact, the state is now \$7 billion in debt, and it is worth casting our mind back to the State Bank disaster in South Australia, which left the state \$11 billion in total debt. We are fast approaching that horrific level of debt, which hung like an albatross around the neck of the state for years to follow.

In eight out of the eight budgets Mr Foley has delivered actual outlays have exceeded budgeted outlays. Now he says we are in deep trouble and we need to make drastic cuts. I could give you the whole list, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, but essentially: 3,750 public servants are going to be retired and one would have to ask why on earth they were put on in the first place if we do not need them now; there is a reduction in long service entitlements and a move to abolish leave loadings for public servants; removal of a 3.3c subsidy for country petrol; mining royalties are up; cuts to small school supports; and taxes are to increase over the forward estimates by \$1 billion, meaning a 76 per cent increase since the Rann government came to office.

This is where the issue comes back to this bill. Importantly, in health there is a grand saving of \$1.2 million in support of four community owned not-for-profit private hospitals. There are two in my electorate and they all are in state Liberal-held seats. The two hospitals in question in my electorate are Moonta and Ardrossan and they are both community not-for-profit hospitals. Last Friday, I attended a large angry meeting in the township of Ardrossan and today, as we speak, there is a protest crowd gathering in Adelaide at the Adelaide Oval, and they will be marching upon Parliament House.

Ardrossan is the biggest town in the Yorke Peninsula council area. It has a population of around 1,200 but it services a total population of about 3,000. The hospital was established in 1914 and offers an accident and emergency section, 22 acute-care beds and an attached 25-bed aged-care facility. Mr Foley's budget cut, in which he plans to save this \$1.2 million in support of four hospitals, amounts to \$140,000 at Ardrossan Hospital. It is a piddling amount but that \$140,000 pays about 50 per cent of the costs of the accident and emergency section. But, for a

community that is already raising a significant amount of funds in support of its hospital and has a high rate of private health insurance in support of a private hospital, it is a real obstacle. Fifty per cent of the admissions to the acute-care section of the hospital come through accident and emergency. So you can see that the loss of accident and emergency care at Ardrossan Hospital would lead to a dramatic drop in the admission rates to the acute-care section of the hospital. In effect, if we lose A and E, we are likely to lose the acute-care facility at the hospital as well.

One must then ask what will happen to the 25-bed aged-care facility. A 25-bed aged-care facility, as we know, is well below the optimum size to operate for profit or even to break even. So, if they lose that link with the hospital, their dependency on the hospital for laundry, cleaning and kitchen services will in effect threaten the viability of the aged-care services as well. What will happen then? There is a staff of about 50 involved in the whole operation. I must say that it is not so far in terms of distance to the next public hospital. It is 20 minutes up the road to Maitland, but there is another 20 to 30 minutes on top of that for the catchment area for the Ardrossan Hospital so some people would be looking at periods of 50 minutes to an hour to access accident and emergency services at the hospital.

Additionally, Ardrossan is in fact a fast-growing area, like much of the very beautiful Yorke Peninsula. It is only about 1½ hours from Adelaide and people are looking at this beautiful coastal region of South Australia as a retirement option. There is also a very high probability of mining very close to the town. Rex Minerals' Hillside project is shaping up to be a world-class copper prospect. It is likely that we will see some hundreds of mining jobs come on stream there in the next few years, so there is likely to be a growing

demand in this area. The extra demand caused by the closure of the Ardrossan Hospital and the anticipated expansion in the workforce and in the population will almost undoubtedly lead to the overload of the Maitland facilities, and we have to ask: what then? Are we looking at a substantial rebuild of the Maitland Hospital?

I will turn now to the Moonta community hospital, which is also affected by these budget cuts. Once again we have an acute-care facility, accident and emergency and an aged-care facility. There are 14 acute-care beds and a 64-bed aged-care facility. The state has been providing up to \$280,000 to pay for the provision of eight public bed spaces at the princely rate of \$120 a day. That is a pretty good deal for the taxpayer, I would have to say—\$120 a day for a bed in hospital. That allows the public access. It is a very low fee, there are no capital outlays for the government and they do not pay for unused capacity. If there is no-one in those beds they do not pay the \$120 a day, so it is a pretty good deal for the taxpayer generally. If the Moonta acute care crashes, obviously the accident and emergency would go because there is not much point in having an accident and emergency section at a hospital if you are not going to actually have a hospital, so that would be the end of that service.

Because Moonta has the 64-bed facility we could argue that it would be more than likely to be converted to a full aged-care facility, which actually gives a future for the workforce and facilities. But the patient load would be transferred to the Wallaroo public hospital. It amounts to around 1,400 private bed days a year and 1,800 public bed days. Wallaroo has 21 public beds and six private beds, and I can tell you that it is already under pressure. It is operating at capacity. In fact, the overload from the Wallaroo Hospital gets sent to the aforementioned Maitland, which is about an hour down the road. So

you can see that this is all coming together and we are going to see a great loss of access to acute-care beds in hospitals in this region of the state. The Wallaroo Hospital is not that old but there are already plans for a major rebuild to expand its facilities to 50 public beds.

This is where it links back to talking about the Commonwealth's involvement in this. We have just had a bill tabled by the minister, addressing the new funding arrangements. If the Commonwealth is going to pick up 60 per cent of the responsibility for healthcare funding in the hospital system, then, if we have to spend, say, another \$10 million at Wallaroo and another \$5 million at Maitland to meet this extra demand on the hospitals just because the state government has withdrawn this small amount of money which allows these private hospitals to exist, in the end it comes back to the feet of the federal taxpayer and the federal government. The government has been talking about this new relationship with the states in which no blame will pass between them, but here, with an underhand movement, we are seeing the pushing back of funding of hospitals to the federal government. It is madness, in my opinion, to be forcing the closure of these two hospitals only for the government to try to save \$420,000 a year between them, when they will be spending millions to meet that increased demand on the public hospitals that are the next in line. Really, it is a measure to fix today's budget problems in the state with very little regard to the future.

The other two of the four hospitals affected are Keith and District Hospital and Glenelg Community Hospital. Keith hospital is in the south-east, in the federal electorate of Barker—I know that my good friend the member for Barker has had a fair bit to say about this issue as well. Over 1,000 people turned up at a public meeting about this issue in Keith. Glenelg Community Hospital is in

the city of Adelaide. I do not profess to fully understand the workings of the Glenelg hospital, other than to say that it was established by an organisation of which I am a life member, and that is the Glenelg Apex Club. I am a member of Apex. These are four private hospitals but none of them are for profit. None of them are about making money. I feel that the state government has quite possibly got this thing about private hospitals not being a concern of the government. These are community hospitals. When the state government was taking over many community hospitals in the state, these hospitals stood their ground and said, 'No, we would prefer to operate under our existing entity.' Here we are, some years down the track, and they are being deserted by the very small amount of public support that they were receiving.

This bill is about national standards, and it incorporates the building of a new bureaucracy. As I said, part of the new deal is that we are not supposed to blame the states, but we are faced with a practice where very little has changed. I think the intent of this bill will change things very little, except to put in a new raft of bureaucratic changes.

There is a rally in Adelaide today, as I said. They are probably marching as I speak. I wish them well, and I wish I could be with them. I believe that the chairman has a meeting with the state minister, John Hill. I also wish them well. While this is not a direct federal responsibility, I have drawn attention to the fact that it has federal implications, and I ask Minister Roxon to take an interest in these issues and to turn her mind to the practical things that will deliver a standard of medical care for regional and metropolitan areas across Australia.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (10.17 am)—I rise today to support the National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010 as presented to the parliament by the Minister for Health and

Ageing. I want to do three things in the time that I have available to me today: firstly, to talk about the content of the bill as it stands before the House; secondly, to put the bill within the context of the national health and hospital reform agenda of this government; and, finally, to talk about the implications of that for my own electorate.

The National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010 is part of a suite of bills that are aimed at implementing major reforms to the funding and governance of the Australian healthcare system. The intention of the reforms is to place the healthcare system on a sustainable foundation for the future. The new governance arrangements will involve the establishment of three agencies. The first agency is the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority; the second is the National Performance Authority; and the third is the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, which is the one referred to in the legislation before us today. It is intended that this bill will be amended to include provisions to establish the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority and the National Performance Authority—the other two agencies I mentioned.

It is imperative that there is a strong focus on improving the safety and quality of health care as it is delivered throughout Australia. Part of the national COAG agreement was around issues of not only funding but also quality assurance and transparency. To ensure that this is achieved, the bill will establish the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. It will be a permanent independent body under the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997. The intention of placing it in this way is to ensure the independence of the commission. It is important to ensure its standing as an authoritative source of knowledge on healthcare safety and quality matters. I think that is achieved by the construction of the

commission and where it is placed. It will continue its important role in helping to reduce harm caused by preventable errors. Some of the contributions to this debate from both sides of the House have acknowledged the important culture change that has occurred over recent decades from a less closed, defensive view by medical practitioners to a more collaborative and review type of culture. Certainly the commission will continue its role of looking at areas in which preventable errors occur. I think that is important because it is part of building community trust and confidence in not only the system but also its processes.

An important part of the commission's expanded role will be to set new national clinical standards and also to strengthen clinical governance. This is an extension of some of that earlier work and it is to lead the drive towards continuous improvement in quality and to safeguard high standards of care. It is an important component of the ongoing commitment of the whole health services sector in looking for ways to be constantly improving clinical standards and increasing community confidence in them. The commission's expanded remit also extends to ensuring the appropriateness of care in all health settings and, importantly, including both primary care and mental health—two areas which we have given particular focus to since coming to government.

The accreditation of health service providers is currently undertaken by a multiplicity of accreditation bodies and some high-risk services are not yet subject to accreditation, which leads to a nationally inconsistent assessment of safety and quality standards. Part of the commission's role will be to continue its work in developing a national accreditation system, and it will develop a national model accreditation scheme. The development of national clinical standards, guidelines and indicators, as outlined in my

previous comments, together with its work on a national accreditation model, will support the take-up of the commission's work by health authorities.

The state and territory authorities have been consulted on this bill and are generally supportive of it. This bill, as I indicated, sits within the reform agenda of this government to address the problems within the health and hospital system on coming into government. I listened to the contribution of the member for Grey. I acknowledge that he was talking about some of the capacity constraints and issues that exist in his electorate. I am sure that we could all talk about constraints like that across all of our electorates. It is exactly why this government has undertaken health and hospital reform. I think you should be a bit fairer to some of the state governments, in that the increasing pressure they have been under to fund hospitals over a period where there was a growth in demand and expectation of our hospital system occurred when the Howard government was failing to expand its commitment to the public hospital system. The end result was, in effect, a billion dollars withdrawn from the public hospital system.

Hospital authorities, particularly those of state and territory governments, were struggling to meet a growing demand with a decreasing responsibility by the federal government in putting its shoulder to the wheel in that task. That is part of what was addressed in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing report *The blame game*. It certainly contributed towards the development of our policy that we took to both the 2007 and 2010 elections and that I believe is well supported in the community.

We are attempting to address two areas through this reform. One is to address the physical challenges and capacity constraints

in our health system of capital and hospitals—money for equipment and so forth—and the other is to address the chronic shortages that had developed in the provision of hospital staff—doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and so forth as a result of the caps and constraints on the training places in place for so long under the Howard government. It is a big task and we understand that.

This bill sits within that reform process, particularly as it was developed through the COAG process. Part of that reform is investing \$1.2 billion in doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. Communities constantly say they are concerned—even when you get new capital for the hospital or a new GP superclinic or where many GP services, as in my area, have applied for the upgrade program available under the superclinic program—about shortages of medical staff and ask whether their new facility will be able to be serviced. It is important that, in parallel with those commitments, we are developing and giving commitment to the training of new doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. That is something that suffered significantly under the Howard government and was creating real challenges for health services. In my own area, the University of Wollongong's medical school has a unique and very well developed program to bring in doctors from regional areas to train at the university and keep them connected to their regional areas by doing practice placements in GP clinics in regional parts of the nation. Therefore, hopefully, having retained their connections to the communities, they will go back and service those communities.

We have also invested in beds and facilities in hospitals as well as undertaken to provide 60 per cent of the capital requirement for new facilities at hospitals. That is only one part of the health and hospital reform. I am particularly pleased that we are also taking over 100 per cent of primary care. An

ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, as the old saying goes. It does not take very long when you talk to health professionals to get a very clear picture that, if we do the primary care at the end of the spectrum better, that is one of the most significant things that we can do to ease the pressure on our hospital system. This bill sits within a comprehensive take on reforming the health system and making it function more effectively, recognising that it is increasingly important, as it is an increasing share of state budgets, that the federal government continue to sustain its commitment to health and hospitals.

In the few minutes I have left I want to talk about what has actually happened in my electorate under this government's reform process. In September 2009, the Minister for Ageing came to our area as part of the reforms that occurred all around the country under the health and hospital reform agenda and we had a consultation session with many health service providers in the region. Certainly there was a great deal of advocacy for better hospital support in our region, but also raised at that forum were preventative health, primary healthcare and mental health issues. At that time, in September 2009, we were part of the rollout of elective surgery money which was an attempt to reduce waiting lists. There was over \$400,000 injected into the Wollongong Hospital to help with that waiting list reduction plan. That obviously was very, very welcome at the time and, in particular, for the Wollongong Hospital, which is the major referral hospital for the region.

This was followed in April 2010 by a visit from the Prime Minister, who announced that we would be putting \$12.1 million towards the Illawarra Cancer Care Centre at Wollongong Hospital. That component of Illawarra cancer care is the major referral for cancer support services in the rest of the region. As part of that package, Nowra also got

a component of funding to make that cancer care centre operate more effectively as a regional hub service. That money was matched with \$2 million from the state government. It was to provide radiotherapy services at the Illawarra Cancer Care Centre. It included additional infrastructure for outpatient clinics and day oncology. It included enhanced facilities for haematology and therapies. It included one additional linear accelerator and one additional radiotherapy bunker, six additional chemotherapy chair beds and medical diagnostic equipment. It was extremely welcomed not only by the health professionals and the patients who were there but also by the community more broadly, as it was something for which we had been lobbying for quite a long time.

In June 2010 the health minister visited the area to announce an additional 21 new beds—19 emergency department and two high-dependency beds—for the Wollongong Hospital, which were part of the COAG agreement. At the same time we met with some young doctors in training as the health minister announced an additional \$5 million for new training facilities at the Wollongong Hospital. That was important. There were about half-a-dozen students in training that we met at that time, all of whom were young people from regional and rural New South Wales. They were doing their training at the University of Wollongong and their hospital placements at Wollongong Hospital and they certainly welcomed the commitment under the clinical teaching and training grants that the minister announced on the day.

For me and my constituency the reality is that over the past two years we have seen important commitments made by this government to the health and hospitals in the area, not only for physical buildings but for equipment and staffing—all the components that add up to making it work. Out of fairness to the former government I thought I

would check what money they had injected into the hospitals in my region over the nearly 12 years they were in power. Sadly, I could not find anything. I leave it up to them to correct the record, but I did go to Senator Connie Fierravanti-Wells' website, where she had outlined all the money that had been given to the region—very handy; thank you very much, Senator. Under health and ageing funding I can find the ongoing recurrent money that federal governments commit for general practice, hearing services, aged care and so forth, but no actual hospital money and certainly no new injections. So I commend what this government has done not only with its commitment to reform of the system and to reform of training and development opportunities for health professionals, but also specifically with its commitment to upgrade the services and facilities in regions like mine.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (10.32 am)—I rise to support the National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010. The explanatory memorandum sets out the following on page 3:

The Bill provides for the establishment of the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) as a permanent, independent statutory authority under the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997.

The legislation provides a framework for the establishment of the Commission, including the expanded role for the Commission of setting national clinical standards and strengthened clinical governance. It is intended that these arrangements under this expanded role will be further developed in consultation with the states and territories and subject to finalising financial commitments.

The establishment of this body forms part of the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States (with the exception of Western Australia) and Territories endorsed on 20 April 2010.

In the bill itself, the functions of the commission are outlined in section 9. I do not propose to read those, but they are expansive, as they should be. I do, however, want to quote from a press release dated 25 October 2010 from the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister, and the minister for health, which basically outlines the purpose of what we are talking about today. I quote:

The new funding arrangements for Australia's health and hospital system will:

- ensure, for the first time, that Federal Governments properly fund Australia's public hospitals—reversing the Commonwealth's declining share of hospital funding;
- ensure that for the first time, the Commonwealth will fund hospitals for each service they provide, rather than through block grants—meeting increases in demand and helping take pressure off hospital waiting lists;
- allow the Commonwealth, as dominant funder, to introduce new national standards for public hospital services, ensuring all patients receive timely and high quality services; and
- drive improvements in primary care and prevention, because as the dominant funder of the hospital system, the Commonwealth will have an incentive to provide better primary care and prevention services to take the pressure off our hospital system.

Specifically the legislation will ensure the Commonwealth will fund:

- 60 per cent of the efficient price of every public hospital service provided to public patients;
- 60 per cent of recurrent expenditure on research and training functions undertaken in public hospitals;
- 60 per cent of capital expenditure; and
- 100 per cent of GP and primary health care services.

... ..

The legislation reflects the historic agreement to reform Australia's health and hospital system

signed by the Commonwealth and seven States and Territories.

Under this agreement, the Commonwealth Government will relieve the States and Territories of \$15.6 billion in growth of health costs from 2014-15 to 2019-20 - allowing them to invest in other essential services.

It is really a massive investment in our health and hospital networks, as it should be, because they were in need of that massive injection of funds. Over the 11½ years of the former government, public hospitals were dying a death of a thousand cuts. There was an ideological spend by the former government that was more interested in other aspects of the health system than public hospitals and the general welfare of the community. It was ideologically driven and we are still getting that in the current opposition. That is no way to provide services.

I also want to point out a couple of things that have happened over the last couple of years in my area and adjoining my area in terms of the hospitals under the Labor government. In January 2009 it was announced that there would be a Medicare-eligible magnetic resonance imaging service at Bankstown hospital. The member for Blaxland, Jason Clare, and I visited the hospital and that service is now up and running. We have also had a fresh visit to the hospital. It is something I welcomed at the time and it is certainly an area of need. Bankstown hospital is a terrific hospital and it will provide a wonderful service through the MRI. Too often we used to miss out under the former government.

In March 2009, the then Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, announced one-off funding grants worth almost \$18,000 to Sydney South West Area Health Service, including Bankstown Ethnic Day Care, the Community Independent Support Service and the Bankstown Dementia Respite project. These one-off grants would improve and support respite

services for carers in Bankstown to cover costs such as minor building modifications or to purchase or replace equipment and furniture. These sorts of grants go a long way, because we have an ageing population. There is a need for assistance for the services that are provided. We cannot continue to rely on the goodwill of people in the local community and on Squibb making a contribution.

In July 2010 the Attorney-General, the federal member for Barton, and the state member for Oatley, Kevin Greene, as a result of the COAG agreement, saw \$790,000 for new surgical and emergency equipment and minor capital works at St George Hospital, which is at the other end of my electorate. It is not actually in my electorate, but it does service my electorate. That was about enhancing patient care. Robert McClelland, Kevin Greene and I visited the hospital. We sat down with the nurses and the doctors, and they were over the moon about what that extra funding would do. Patients at St George Hospital were set to benefit from more than \$5.4 million in additional funding for the South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service under those reform agreements. That reform agreement was actually about more money, which is very much needed.

The package of new medical technology for the hospital included an anaesthetic-monitoring system for \$450,000, a cryosurgery machine for \$200,000, two ECG machines for \$24,000, a compact ultrasound machine for \$40,000, a ventilator for \$20,000 and a bariatric trauma bed for \$15,000. Also included in emergency department funding was \$25,000 for minor capital works to facilitate early assessment for patients needing emergency care.

A lot of support is given by the local community in the St George area and the Bankstown area to their local hospitals

through the club movement, of which I am a proud member. I am currently the elected President of the Revesby Workers Club. Sporting clubs such as the Bankstown Sports Club kick in to Bankstown Hospital for particular projects. Our charity last year gave \$45,000 to Bankstown Hospital. We will give more money to them for particular projects this year. St George Hospital has a wonderful support structure, not just from the clubs but also from local residents—people who have been the beneficiaries of operations at the hospital. That all supplements what the Commonwealth and the state government do, and it should not be underestimated. The local community has raised millions of dollars for St George Hospital over time, and they are to be commended for it.

On 7 October Carmel Tebbutt, the state Minister for Health, visited Bankstown Hospital, together with the state member for East Hills, Alan Ashton, and the state member for Bankstown, Tony Stewart. There was \$1.2 million in funding for new medical equipment, all arising out of the health and hospital reform agreement signed by the NSW government and the Commonwealth government. As a result of the funding boost, Bankstown Hospital's emergency department would receive more than \$350,000 in essential equipment, including heart-monitoring equipment, a defibrillator and an ECG machine to record patients' heart activity. The hospital's operating theatres would also benefit from more than \$920,000 in funding for internal camera equipment for endoscopy procedures and for an extra recovery bed. That is all very much needed.

On 14 October the member for Barton and I announced funding of \$2.9 million for a training facility for Wesley Hospital at Kogarah, which is in the member's electorate. This \$2.9 million is to build a new clinical training facility at Wesley Hospital. The pro-

ject will create space for clinical training facilities where students will gain practical experience in psychology in a private psychiatric hospital, expand training positions within the Sydney metropolitan area, provide students with exposure to patients in an acute psychiatric context and meet training concerns in areas of professional workforce shortage.

That is the sort of money we should not apologise for. That is where our taxes go, and we should explain that to our communities. It is essential that governments look, over time, at increasing this sort of funding to these hospitals, because they do good work. I commend the bill before the House. I think it is on the right track and that the government is trying to do the right thing.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (10.43 am)—There is a reform debate on right now, and it is an important debate on a range of topics—none more important at this moment than health reform in this country. It is my understanding that over the past few years it has been largely a bipartisan exercise—or a multipartisan exercise—and I would hope that with this first reform bill—the National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010—that multipartisan reform agenda can continue.

For a region such as mine—a growth region that has for too long suffered from inequity of funding and inequity of health service delivery, and therefore the secondary consequences of less productivity, less participation in the economy and the greater impacts on an ageing community—this is critical to the reform agenda. It is critical for a growing region like the mid-North Coast of New South Wales, and, I would have thought, more generally for the productivity and participation interests of the reform agenda of Australia.

I have previously described the concepts and the theory around health and hospital reform as a slam dunk for the growth regions of Australia. While there have been some incursions by the states into this reform agenda through various COAG meetings, I still fundamentally believe that this reform is important and must happen quickly. We pitched to the previous Prime Minister the importance of two reform agendas in this broad concept of more Commonwealth funding and more local command and control in clinical services. There must be two Es included in this process that will either make or break the successful reform of health services. The first E is equity of funding. For too long, growth regions in this country have been funded for health services in an inequitable way. I think that can also be said for regional Australia generally.

At a recent meeting, the National Rural Health Alliance said they are underfunded under the various state government funding formulas by up to \$1 billion per annum. That is an outrageous reflection of how the resource distribution formulas used by the states do not deliver in the interests of all Australians. Over time there seems to have been an acceptance of inefficient overfunding in metropolitan locations at the direct expense of underfunded and efficient regional and rural services. This has led to chronic workforce shortages in rural and regional Australia and to health indicators that clearly demonstrate that sometimes it is a health risk to live in regional and rural areas. The obvious example comes from figures relating to cancer and cancer services, where there are higher death rates in rural and regional areas than in metro areas. So, reform matters and equity of funding matters.

In New South Wales, the Garling report was done in 2007. Specifically for the North Coast, it identified the growing region missing out on up to \$70 million per annum

based on the state's own resource distribution formula. For some reason governments have been unwilling to treat the issue of equity as an important part of their brief and they have chosen what I consider to be the lazy option of continuing to overfund some areas and underfund others, and not make the difficult political decisions that would match people movement in this country.

This legislation will hopefully help on the equity front, but it is an ongoing discussion and I will raise it when every single relevant bill about health and hospital reform comes through. The Commonwealth must tie the principle of equity to the flow of Commonwealth dollars to drive this reform process. If that equity principle is not tied to the Commonwealth dollar, we are potentially just going to spin the wheels and fall into the trap of a government once again not making hard decisions when cutting deals on service agreements with all these new local health networks. We will just have a different version of what we had before. I continue to advocate for that equity principle to be included. I know the previous Prime Minister, the now Minister for Foreign Affairs, got it in regards to equity and I hope the current Prime Minister and executive also get it, because that is the key driver of broad reform and it will make these changes to the way health is delivered in this country more significant.

The other E that those of us from growth regions continue to lobby and advocate for is efficiency. One of the original concepts behind the reform agenda was that if a local health and hospital network comes in under benchmark then that money should be returned to that local health network as a way of encouraging efficiency within the system. A criticism up to now is that those that are efficient are not rewarded and therefore there is no incentive to be efficient in the system. This is why comparisons of the costs per bed

between private and public hospitals quite often raise alarm bells about why the costs at certain hospitals are so much higher than in other similar hospitals.

Again, I will continue to advocate and lobby for efficiency to be a critical part of this health reform agenda. It will drive efficiency not only on the ground but also within local health and hospital networks. Along with the principle of equity, it will make this reform agenda matter. I would hope those two Es—the principles of equity and efficiency—are front and centre in all thinking as we see these bills come through. I do not see it in writing. I certainly hear plenty of words about it and I continue to seek feedback from the minister and the government about the details of how we are going to see those two Es survive this process and make it valuable.

I think there are quite genuine concerns within the community and health sectors about the final COAG meeting that sealed the deal on this health reform agenda and saw Western Australia fall out and various state agencies somehow slot back into the organisational structure. There are quite genuine concerns about what happened in that last COAG meeting and the implications of that for the reform agenda. I am told, and I hope it is true, that slotting the states back into the organisational chart is nothing more than a mailbox for the flow of money to the ground. But I am certainly watching it closely, and I would hope everyone watches it closely. As soon as a state has the discretion to start making decisions again that are akin to choices about resource distribution, growth regions like the North Coast will again bear the brunt of those decisions. Rather than making the hard decision to take something away from one area, it is easier in politics and policymaking to deny a growing area much-needed capital and recurrent fund-

ing. In raw politics that is the way decisions can be made.

I flag as an important issue that that element of human discretion at a state level must not be there. If it is, I will fight it. I will also continue to seek those two key principles—equity and efficiency—as the drivers within important reform. If we can achieve that, I will continue to think this reform process is a slam dunk for growth regions, a slam dunk for this nation on reform and a bit of an answer to today's media that are asking what the government's reform agenda is. As everyone is pointing the finger at each other on reform in the last 24 hours, I would hope that this is one of those reform agendas where there is bipartisan and multipartisan support and that through this process that continues over the next critical six to nine months.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (10.54 am)—I rise to speak in support of the National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010—a historic bill. The health reforms that are reflected in this bill are the largest reforms since the advent of Medicare. I want to talk about some of the local issues in the health service that covers my area of Page—and also covers the areas of Richmond, Cowper and Lyne. The previous speaker, the member for Lyne, spoke about issues I am quite familiar with because we share the North Coast Area Health Service.

This bill gives the legislative framework to enable the government to shepherd in the health reform agenda, a key part of the government's program, and the establishment of the permanent body, the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, which will become an independent statutory authority under the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997. That is a good thing because for the health reforms to kick in we need to have this as a standing body

and a statutory authority. The agreements in the health reform agenda entered into with the states, with the exception of Western Australia, were endorsed on 20 April this year. The new National Health and Hospitals Network will have a performance and accountability framework. That is important because the framework will include national standards and the commission will be able to work on developing those.

The member for Lyne spoke about equity and efficiency, issues I also give some attention to. Under the new health reforms we are going to have case-mix funding, which does operate already in other jurisdictions. Case-mix funding is not new but what is new is that it will be part of the health reform agenda. In New South Wales we have the resource distribution formula, the RDF. In the area that I live in, even though the RDF has been improving over the years the North Coast Area Health Service has been underfunded, according to the RDF. I have said that the case-mix funding will correct that and some of the local doctors have also said that and have welcomed it. That is one of the issues that I am quite pleased about and that we will not have to continue to grapple with it. The other issue is that the small hospitals will be given block grants, and other measures will be looked at to ensure they are able to operate really well.

This bill will involve establishing the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority—that is the agreement that this bill is premised on. It will establish the National Performance Authority and it will amend the Federal Financial Relations Act. The permanent commission will formulate and monitor quality and safety standards. The explanatory memorandum sets this all out quite well.

The commission will also provide advice to the Commonwealth, state and territory health ministers about which standards are

suitable for implementation as national clinical standards, and I know that there will be clinical input into that as well through the local hospital networks. In my area the ads recently appeared in the paper, inviting people with particular interests and skills to nominate for the local hospital network governing council. They will be responsible for implementing the national clinical standards once they are agreed to. This is a good thing. I know that, in practice, it will take some working out, some negotiation and lots of goodwill, but it is important that we have it in place.

The bill also talks about consultation, which is particularly important in the area of health. One key area of consultation will be the expanded role of the permanent commission. It will complement the activities that were undertaken by the temporary commission and will come up with guidelines and indicators as well.

I want to talk about another part of the national health reforms, which is the lead clinicians groups. These will be set up and funded by the federal government to deliver a greater say for local health professionals. These will certainly be helpful to the local health and hospital networks in implementing the clinical standards that come from the permanent commission. I will just say a little bit about lead clinicians groups. Fifty-eight million dollars was made available to establish these groups in local hospital networks and at a national level. They will provide local health professionals, as you would expect—doctors, nurses and allied health professionals—with a permanent and influential voice in the National Health and Hospitals Network. A key finding from the government's health reform consultation process was that clinicians felt locked out and disengaged from the operation of public hospitals. Even though they are a key feature of public hospitals and operate in them all the time,

they wanted more say, particularly in clinical and medical pathways. Within the public system there are lots of existing administrative pathways but they particularly wanted more say in the clinical and medical areas.

Lead clinicians groups in local hospital networks will ensure that local health professionals have a say in improving quality and safety in hospitals. That is always a work in progress, but under the new system, particularly with the commission, it will be foremost in our minds. They will plan the most efficient allocation of services within a local hospital network, which is also important. At a local level we often want everything to happen at our local hospital. That is normal; that is what communities ask for. But sometimes it is not possible, and not in our best medical interests, to have things happen at certain hospitals. Within a local hospital and health network we can work out where those services can be delivered with the best trained and most appropriate medical personnel.

It will also be about developing different solutions that best address the needs of local communities. As a bit of a snapshot, in my area, particularly across one valley, we have a very high incidence of diabetes. It is for a whole range of reasons. It is to do with our ageing population; it is to do with our Indigenous population. If you look at the North Coast area, which is covered by the North Coast Area Health Service, you see that nearly 11 per cent of the population are Indigenous, which is quite a significant number of people.

With regard to the health reforms in general, for the first time we will have health that is funded nationally, with the Australian government taking on the dominant funding responsibility for the health system to end the blame game. There was a report called *The blame game: report on the inquiry into*

health funding produced by the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, and it is a matter that has been debated in the parliament. The reforms will eliminate waste and meet rapidly rising health costs. The networks will be run locally, which is really important to locals. They want their hospitals run in the best possible way with the best medical service available but they also want to have input. They did feel shut out, which is one thing that the federal government kept in mind in planning its reforms.

I want to thank Minister Roxon for the wonderful work she has done in this area. I also thank the former Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery, who visited my electorate at different times, along with Minister Roxon. Minister Snowdon visited every hospital in my seat. It was quite a busy two days.

Ms Roxon—He's a legend.

Ms SAFFIN—He is a legend, as Minister Roxon says.

Ms Roxon interjecting—

Ms SAFFIN—Yes, Minister Roxon has been to Lismore and Grafton. What we did—and it was really important—was consult. We went to every hospital. I know reforms are not just about hospitals, even though we focus on hospitals; they are about providing better care in the community and a whole range of primary health care. But we used the hospitals as our focal point, invited people in from the community and talked about what these health reforms mean. It was a really wonderful exercise.

We were able to do that as well in my area when we established the GP superclinic. I did a year-long consultation myself to make sure everybody was on board with it before the formal consultation happened through the Department of Health and Ageing. We were able to bed down what was happening and

everybody was comfortable with it. Everybody wants reform but the question is: how do you implement it? It is in the implementation that we have to do the groundwork.

Also the national network will bring together eight state-run systems with one set of tough national standards to deliver better hospital services. This commission is the subject of the bill and one of the key things it will be able to implement. The Australian government will be taking over full responsibility for the GP and primary healthcare services. In my area we are quite ready for this with the local GP networks getting ready to turn into primary health care organisations or Medicare Locals, as they are called. They will cover the whole North Coast Area Health Service, where a decision has been made that there will be two local hospital and health networks. The North Coast Area Health Service is a big area which will be divided in two. A lot of work has been done on the ground so that we are very comfortable with that model. We are looking forward to operating with those two networks and we are looking forward to working within the new framework, particularly in mental health. We are lucky in our area—we have some wonderful, expert people working in mental health.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on this bill, which is one part of the national health reform agenda. Health reform is not easy. Sometimes it would be easier to shy away and not tackle reform because a lot of health reform that has happened throughout our history has been bits added on here and bits added on there. You can end up with quite a disjointed health system. These health reforms go a really long way to being real reforms where we are trying to recalibrate how we deliver services in communities, with equity and efficiency. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (11.09 am)—I would like to thank the member for Page and the very many members who have contributed to this debate. The National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010 is an important piece of legislation. It is an important part of our national health reforms and members' contributions highlight how much these reforms mean to local communities. They also highlight how it is vitally important for us to make sure that we put quality and safety at the top of the agenda when we talk about delivering health services to our local communities. I note the opposition has moved a second reading amendment which tries to delay the passage of this legislation. We will not support this second reading amendment. We are not prepared to delay this important legislation further. The proposal from the opposition is that this legislation should not be considered until the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority and the National Performance Authority are debated by this House.

The opposition has already indicated that it opposes these bodies. This is despite the fact that Mr Abbott, the current Leader of the Opposition and a former Minister for Health and Ageing, has said that these very reforms are the types of things that would improve our health system across the country. It seems the opposition is once again playing its usual game of trying to hold the public to ransom by failing to deliver important health legislation. It is the same approach that the member for Dickson is taking with relation to be Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010—to be debated later in this House. It seems the member for Dickson is determined to block every reasonable and sensible proposal for something the community and health experts across the country would regard as noncontroversial.

We really have to ask: how could the opposition regard this bill is controversial? This

is a bill to make permanent the temporary Quality and Safety Commission, the very temporary commission which was set up with the support of all states and territories and the Commonwealth at a time when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Health and Ageing. The logic and importance of having quality dealt with in our hospitals is not lost on the opposition. Nevertheless they want to play politics because they have no plans of their own, no plans for delivering better safety and better quality health care. It seems they have no plans for anything in health other than to block every piece of reform legislation the government puts before it.

I ask the community to consider this. One in 30 adults contracts an infection while in hospital, 12,000 of these are severe hospital acquired bloodstream infections and up to a quarter of these patients will die. That is, approximately double the number of patients die from hospital acquired infections as they do from deaths on our roads. We can do something about this worrying statistic. A national body dedicated to monitoring and improving safety and quality in health care can address this problem and can promote better health outcomes from our hospitals.

The Australian and Commission on Safety and to Quality in Health Care is not simply another layer of bureaucracy which wastes public resources, as the opposition would have us believe. For example, its recent release of the national hand hygiene guide and the Australian infection control guidelines will be pivotal in our fight against major health issues such as the hospital acquired infections I have just mentioned. Leaving the commission as a temporary advisory body hampers its ability to give independent and informed advice to all health care providers and thus drive continual quality health improvements for all Australians. Only its establishment as an independent and perma-

nent body can best realise its full potential for ensuring patients safety.

I ask the opposition how they intend to explain to the public why such issues cannot be addressed in this rigorous and sustainable way. I cannot imagine that this is their new contract with Australia where they are going to work tirelessly to defeat every sensible proposal that comes before the parliament. They are determined to make this parliament not work. On the other hand, the government are determined to ensure that members have the opportunity to debate and vote on important measures such as this one. The government will bring legislation to establish the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority and the National Performance Authority before this House. However, we have made a commitment that we will continue to consult with states and territories on the terms of reference for these bodies and other technical matters, which is what we are doing. These bills will be brought before the parliament early next year.

There is no reason, however, why the parliament should not consider this legislation for this Safety and Quality Commission in the meantime—a body which is currently in operation as a temporary body and providing an excellent service for the Australian health system. As I mentioned before, it is a body that was in fact established in 2006 in its temporary way under the coalition government and the then Minister for Health, Mr Abbott.

The National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010 marks an important development in reforming Australia's health system. By establishing a permanent independent safety and quality body, it formalises the government's commitment to drive continuous improvements in quality and safeguard high standards of care for all Australians. We

urge the parliament to support this legislation.

Question put:

That the words proposed to be omitted (**Mr Dutton's** amendment) stand part of the question.

The House divided. [11.20 am]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes.....	74
Noes.....	<u>69</u>
Majority.....	<u>5</u>

AYES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bandt, A.	Bird, S.
Bowen, C.	Brodtmann, G.
Burke, A.E.	Burke, A.S.
Butler, M.C.	Byrne, A.M.
Champion, N.	Cheeseman, D.L.
Clare, J.D.	Combet, G.
Crean, S.F.	Crook, T.
D'Ath, Y.M.	Danby, M.
Dreyfus, M.A.	Elliot, J.
Ellis, K.	Emerson, C.A.
Ferguson, L.D.T.	Ferguson, M.J.
Fitzgibbon, J.A.	Garrett, P.
Georganas, S.	Gibbons, S.W.
Gillard, J.E.	Gray, G.
Grierson, S.J.	Griffin, A.P.
Hall, J.G. *	Hayes, C.P. *
Husic, E.	Jones, S.
Katter, R.C.	Kelly, M.J.
King, C.F.	Leigh, A.
Livermore, K.F.	Lyons, G.
Macklin, J.L.	Marles, R.D.
McClelland, R.B.	Melham, D.
Mitchell, R.	Murphy, J.
Neumann, S.K.	O'Connor, B.P.
O'Neill, D.	Oakeshott, R.J.M.
Owens, J.	Parke, M.
Perrett, G.D.	Ripoll, B.F.
Rishworth, A.L.	Rowland, M.
Roxon, N.L.	Rudd, K.M.
Saffin, J.A.	Shorten, W.R.
Sidebottom, S.	Smith, S.F.
Smyth, L.	Snowdon, W.E.
Swan, W.M.	Symon, M.
Thomson, C.	Thomson, K.J.
Vamvakinou, M.	Wilkie, A.
Windsor, A.H.C.	Zappia, A.

NOES

Abbott, A.J.	Alexander, J.
Andrews, K.	Andrews, K.J.
Baldwin, R.C.	Billsong, B.F.
Bishop, B.K.	Bishop, J.I.
Briggs, J.E.	Broadbent, R.
Buchholz, S.	Chester, D.
Christensen, G.	Ciobo, S.M.
Cobb, J.K.	Coulton, M. *
Dutton, P.C.	Entsch, W.
Fletcher, P.	Forrest, J.A.
Frydenberg, J.	Gambaro, T.
Gash, J.	Griggs, N.
Haase, B.W.	Hartsuyker, L.
Hawke, A.	Hockey, J.B.
Hunt, G.A.	Jensen, D.
Jones, E.	Keenan, M.
Kelly, C.	Laming, A.
Ley, S.P.	Macfarlane, I.E.
Marino, N.B.	Markus, L.E.
Matheson, R.	McCormack, M.
Mirabella, S.	Morrison, S.J.
Moylan, J.E.	Neville, P.C.
O'Dowd, K.	O'Dwyer, K.
Prentice, J.	Pyne, C.
Ramsey, R.	Randall, D.J.
Robb, A.	Robert, S.R.
Roy, Wyatt	Ruddock, P.M.
Schultz, A.	Scott, B.C.
Secker, P.D. *	Simpkins, L.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Somlyay, A.M.	Southcott, A.J.
Tehan, D.	Truss, W.E.
Tudge, A.	Turnbull, M.
Van Manen, B.	Vasta, R.
Wyatt, K.	

PAIRS

Plibersek, T.	Stone, S.N.
Bradbury, D.J.	Irons, S.J.
Collins, J.M.	Washer, M.J.

* denotes teller

Question agreed to.

Original question put:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided. [11.28 am]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes.....	74
Noes.....	<u>69</u>
Majority.....	<u>5</u>

AYES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bandt, A.	Bird, S.
Bowen, C.	Brodthmann, G.
Burke, A.E.	Burke, A.S.
Butler, M.C.	Byrne, A.M.
Champion, N.	Cheeseman, D.L.
Clare, J.D.	Combet, G.
Crean, S.F.	Crook, T.
D'Ath, Y.M.	Danby, M.
Dreyfus, M.A.	Elliot, J.
Ellis, K.	Emerson, C.A.
Ferguson, L.D.T.	Ferguson, M.J.
Fitzgibbon, J.A.	Garrett, P.
Georganas, S.	Gibbons, S.W.
Gillard, J.E.	Gray, G.
Grierson, S.J.	Griffin, A.P.
Hall, J.G. *	Hayes, C.P. *
Husic, E.	Jones, S.
Katter, R.C.	Kelly, M.J.
King, C.F.	Leigh, A.
Livermore, K.F.	Lyons, G.
Macklin, J.L.	Marles, R.D.
McClelland, R.B.	Melham, D.
Mitchell, R.	Murphy, J.
Neumann, S.K.	O'Connor, B.P.
O'Neill, D.	Oakeshott, R.J.M.
Owens, J.	Parke, M.
Perrett, G.D.	Ripoll, B.F.
Rishworth, A.L.	Rowland, M.
Roxon, N.L.	Rudd, K.M.
Saffin, J.A.	Shorten, W.R.
Sidebottom, S.	Smith, S.F.
Smyth, L.	Snowdon, W.E.
Swan, W.M.	Symon, M.
Thomson, C.	Thomson, K.J.
Vamvakinou, M.	Wilkie, A.
Windsor, A.H.C.	Zappia, A.

NOES

Abbott, A.J.	Alexander, J.
Andrews, K.	Andrews, K.J.
Baldwin, R.C.	Billson, B.F.
Bishop, B.K.	Bishop, J.I.
Briggs, J.E.	Broadbent, R.
Buchholz, S.	Chester, D.

Christensen, G.	Ciobo, S.M.
Cobb, J.K.	Coulton, M. *
Dutton, P.C.	Entsch, W.
Fletcher, P.	Forrest, J.A.
Frydenberg, J.	Gambaro, T.
Gash, J.	Griggs, N.
Haase, B.W.	Hartsuyker, L.
Hawke, A.	Hockey, J.B.
Hunt, G.A.	Jensen, D.
Jones, E.	Keenan, M.
Kelly, C.	Laming, A.
Ley, S.P.	Macfarlane, I.E.
Marino, N.B.	Markus, L.E.
Matheson, R.	McCormack, M.
Mirabella, S.	Morrison, S.J.
Moylan, J.E.	Neville, P.C.
O'Dowd, K.	O'Dwyer, K.
Prentice, J.	Pyne, C.
Ramsey, R.	Randall, D.J.
Robb, A.	Robert, S.R.
Roy, Wyatt	Ruddock, P.M.
Schultz, A.	Scott, B.C.
Secker, P.D. *	Simpkins, L.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Somlyay, A.M.	Southcott, A.J.
Tehan, D.	Truss, W.E.
Tudge, A.	Turnbull, M.
Van Manen, B.	Vasta, R.
Wyatt, K.	

PAIRS

Plibersek, T.	Stone, S.N.
Bradbury, D.J.	Irons, S.J.
Collins, J.M.	Washer, M.J.

* denotes teller

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (11.31 am)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL
PREVENTIVE HEALTH AGENCY
BILL 2010**

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 September, on motion by **Ms Roxon**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (11.32 am)—Approximately 32 per cent of Australia's burden of disease is attributable to modifiable risk factors. We need to invest more time and energy into preventing chronic or life-threatening disease. While the 2010 state of the nation's health report indicates that Australia ranks in the top third of the OECD for life expectancy, at birth and at age 65, for both men and women and, in fact, in the top handful of countries anywhere in the world, we are ranked in the bottom third of the OECD on obesity. Within the OECD we compare poorly on measures for diabetes and fruit and vegetable consumption, and we are mid-ranking on alcohol consumption.

Our tobacco smoking rates are amongst the lowest in the world. The combined efforts of national and state governments over 30 years have seen the incidence of smoking fall from 36 per cent of the adult population in 1977 to 19 per cent by 2007. When we look at smoking this can be held up as a long-term, successful public health campaign. It has involved targeting and advertising in the workplace, in entertainment places, in hospitality places and at point of sale. There is still a lot more that we can do. Smoking rates are still too high in specific groups, especially amongst Indigenous populations, and there are still too many women smoking during pregnancy. There is more to be done but we can hold up the reduction in rates as a great success.

Preventive health needs to be on the national agenda. Chronic disease leads to substantial economic and social costs for all

Australians. Managing preventable diseases is a significant burden on Australia's health-care system; a system that is already under considerable pressure. An increased focus on preventive health and keeping people healthy and out of hospital are important goals for any government. On this point the coalition agrees entirely.

In fact, this is not the first time federal parliament has turned its attention to preventive health. Ten years ago in the context of tax reform the Howard government responded to the advocacy of many health groups to move the taxation of cigarettes, the taxation of tobacco, to a per stick excise rather than on the basis of weight. Two years ago the member for Wentworth proposed an increase in the level of tobacco excise as part of the budget-in-reply recognising that cigarette smoking still represents the largest burden of disease and preventable death.

The Minister for Health and Ageing has said that we have been sitting on our hands all this time. This is not true. Yes, we could always do more, but both sides of politics have long been engaged on this issue. Changes have been made to tobacco excise, lifestyle campaigns, anti-alcohol abuse campaigns and anti-drug campaigns. Measure Up, for example, is a government initiative which was introduced by the coalition in 2006. As part of the Australian Better Health Initiative its aim was to reduce the risk factors associated with chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

In an effort to invoke drama in the chamber, the minister has failed to acknowledge the previous efforts of both sides of the House. The object of preventive health is a fundamental goal for us all; that is clear. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010 has been canvassed as an instrument for revitalising Australia's preventive health capacity and alleviating the

pressure on our overstretched hospital and healthcare system. The coalition supports encouraging healthy lifestyles and reducing the risks for many chronic diseases—it is a no-brainer. As conceived, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency will conduct social marketing campaigns and research into preventive health.

Obviously, both of these activities have been conducted by successive federal governments, at least since the Fraser government. The ‘Life. Be in it’ campaign was an initiative of the Fraser government. Tobacco advertising was banned by the Fraser government in 1978. It is ludicrous to suggest that no-one has taken preventive health seriously until this minister came to the job, so the Preventive Health Agency will be a warehouse for activities already occurring.

However, the bill as it stands raises more questions than it answers. It is really an attempt to be seen to be taking action in the health portfolio, where, for the large part, after three years of government and a lot of talk there is not much in the way of achievement. The functions of the agency, as provided by the bill, are far reaching, to say the least. In summary, the National Preventive Health Agency, through the CEO, is designed to: (1) analyse and disseminate information on preventive health to the public, business and government; (2) make recommendations and provide policy advice on preventive health matters; (3) conduct awareness and educational campaigns; (4) make financial assistance grants on behalf of the Commonwealth; and (5) develop national standards and codes of practice.

This bill adds yet another layer of bureaucracy without any assurances of real results for the health sector. Like a lot of things that this government has turned its attention to, it is something that sounds good but in delivery may well be a lemon. The govern-

ment has failed to follow through in so many areas: good ideas that sound good but lack any attention to detail. In this legislation it has failed to ensure that this agency will be a transparent body with purpose. That is why during the consideration in detail stage the coalition will be seeking to move amendments that address the objectives of the agency. Currently there are none. We are also proposing to increase the transparency of the body. The changes will mean that the CEO must publish a copy of any advice or recommendations on the agency’s website. This is about open government. It is about having a transparent process, and we should be aware of any advice or recommendations that the CEO provides to the minister.

Since the introduction of the original bill in the previous parliament, the government has restricted the account to which there is public information available on this proposed body. The explanatory memorandum to the original bill provided a breakdown of fund allocation over the forward estimates. That breakdown has not been provided in this current bill and we would like to know why it has been left out. What is more, the explanatory memorandum has restricted social marketing campaigns to campaigns that only target obesity and smoking. We want to know whether this is deliberate or simply an error in the drafting of the explanatory memorandum. Will the problems of teenage drinking, binge drinking and harmful drinking be getting a social marketing campaign?

Social marketing is an important focus for the agency. The minister must also provide clarity as to the intended scope of social marketing within the context of this bill. Research has shown that social marketing campaigns carried out in isolation are inadequate in influencing behavioural change. It would be more effective to broaden the scope of social marketing in order to integrate other measures such as telephone counselling or

online tools. The Quit campaign is a good example of where taking a collaborative, holistic approach to selling the message has proved successful. We already have much existing infrastructure geared towards achieving preventive health outcomes. The degree to which this agency is successful will depend on the degree to which they successfully engage with all stakeholders. Most Australians will have paid a visit to their GP some time in the previous 12 months. GPs are geared up to provide anti-smoking advice to help people give up smoking and make lifestyle changes. It is important that the agency not operate in isolation but have a very strong engagement with all stakeholders to achieve behavioural change.

As I mentioned previously, there already are a number of existing awareness campaigns. The opposition would like to know whether the social marketing campaigns proposed in the bill will supplement or, rather, substitute these campaigns. Similarly, with the research already occurring in the areas of obesity, drug and alcohol abuse and cigarette smoking, will what is proposed for this agency supplement or simply substitute the activities already going on? The provision of \$102 million for a national social marketing campaign is significant and the minister needs to provide further clarification as to where the money will be spent.

I have spoken with a number of stakeholders in the health sector and it has become apparent that, whilst the broad function of the CEO and agency is far reaching, the extent to which the CEO or agency can conduct education or awareness programs relating to mental health is limited. At present, the CEO or agency may conduct programs relating only to alcohol, tobacco use, other substance abuse and obesity, as drafted in the bill. This does not provide the opportunity to achieve broader community benefits than those focused on in the bill. That is why

the coalition is proposing amendments to ensure that the agency can address other areas of preventive health and, most importantly, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle generally. For example, while obesity is one of the highest risk factors for burden of disease, the problems of nutrition more broadly are also important, and that, both in the preventive health task force and in the way the agency is proposed, has not been addressed.

Finally, we need to revise the membership structure of the advisory council. The coalition will be moving amendments to ensure that the advisory council has broad representation from government and health experts as well as industry and consumer groups. In order to achieve positive outcomes for preventive health, there must be a collaborative effort. It is essential for the proposed agency to work with industry and with consumers to achieve results. The opposition believe that by working with industry and preventive health experts we can see improvements in healthy lifestyle. For example, DrinkWise is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that was established by the alcohol industry in 2005 to promote change towards a healthier and safer drinking culture in Australia. We think this sort of engagement with industry to encourage responsible drinking and to minimise harmful drinking is a better way to go. It is essential that government, health experts, consumer groups and industry continue to engage on this issue. There needs to be a national approach that combines the voices of all sectors in order to achieve practical outcomes that have a lasting effect on the overall health of Australians.

The coalition supports a greater focus on the health system in its move towards prevention. However, preventive health measures of this nature cannot work in isolation. Early detection and intervention to avoid disease progression are just as important. As I said before, we also have an existing infra-

structure which needs to be utilised to harness our preventive health efforts. Most Australians will make a visit to their general practitioner. The innovations of computerisation and practice nurses over the last decade now mean that family practices are well placed to lead the preventive health effort and encourage individuals to change their behaviour. The bottom line is that there is general consensus for an increased focus on preventive health—we all know this. However, it is not enough that we simply agree on the importance of preventive health. The agency needs to show that it is a viable and transparent body, with clear objectives. It must be well governed. We need to be assured of positive, practical results in the area of preventive health. We would like the minister to respond to the legitimate questions we have asked.

Mr CRAIG THOMSON (Dobell) (11.46 am)—I rise to support the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. As I start my contribution, I find myself in the unusual situation of agreeing with a point made by the member for Boothby, which is that preventive health cannot stand alone in relation to the needs of our healthcare system. This makes absurd the position that the opposition have taken on a range of legislation that has been introduced into this place, including one piece of legislation that they most recently voted against. We are in the midst of seeing historic health reform—the greatest health reform that has occurred in this country since Medicare. What we are getting from the other side is blockage, opposition and amendment. They need to get out of the way or get on board with what the Australian public want, and that is serious health reform to all aspects of our health system. That is what this government is about, and this important legislation is part of that.

From those opposite we get opposition to key components of the legislation. The

member for Boothby spoke about electronic records. His side of politics is actually opposing e-health, and it did so at the last election. They have opposed GP superclinics. They have opposed a whole range of important aspects to health legislation. They are even opposing our local hospital networks. Everyone in my area agrees that having our own area health service, our own local network, to look after the health needs of people on the Central Coast is absolutely vital.

I wrote my contribution to this legislation thinking that I would come down here and everyone would be supporting the bill because—and I again agree with the member for Boothby—these sorts of things should be no-brainers. But what we are finding or, rather, what we are not finding is a brain on the other side of the House, because we are continually seeing their opposition to these issues. We are finding that, yes, they are no-brainers and that is why the opposition is without its health brain when it opposes or seeks to obstruct these important pieces of legislation. This bill was first introduced into parliament on 10 September 2009. I also made a contribution on that occasion. The bill went through to the Senate, where it was being debated when the election was called. The bill lapsed, and that is why it is back here again. The objects of this bill are so important that I felt that I needed to again make a contribution on it.

Part of the investment this government is making in health involves campaigns to combat obesity, drug and alcohol abuse and smoking—just some of the key priorities of a new national preventive health agency. Let us look at some of the main reasons that we need such an agency in this country. Potentially avoidable diseases affect the lives of millions of Australians. They also account for around 20 per cent of the total healthcare expenditure. Currently, smoking kills about 15,000 Australians each year and costs Aus-

tralia \$31½ billion each year. More than 60 per cent of Australians aged over 18 are overweight or obese. More than 813,000 Australians aged 15 years and older were hospitalised for alcohol related injury and disease between 1996 and 2005. Unfortunately, the electorate that I represent is over-represented in relation to rates of diabetes, obesity, respiratory illness and skin cancer. My electorate has some of the highest rates of these illnesses in New South Wales and, indeed, in Australia, so we are very much aware of the problems that come about through these diseases. People in my electorate are looking for leadership on how we can tackle preventable illnesses. It is also worth noting that electorates like mine that have lower socioeconomic profiles are more adversely affected by these sorts of diseases. Therefore, this bill, and what it aims to achieve, is very important for people in my electorate and other electorates like it around the country.

Poor health affects the quality of life of Australians and their families. It can also have significant economic affects on them, by reducing their ability to participate in the workforce, and on businesses, through lost productivity and higher costs. Our health system is struggling to deal with the longer term pressures of an ageing population, the increasing cost of pharmaceuticals and new technologies, the rise of chronic disease in our community and the increased expectations of access to high-quality health services in the community. Improving preventive health services and chronic disease management will deliver better health outcomes for Australians and their families and help contain growth in demand for hospital services in the future. It will also promote greater workplace participation and productivity.

Too many people who, with coordinated and preventative health care, need not be admitted to hospital end up there. Too many

older Australians who have been admitted but assessed as requiring aged care or transitional care remain in acute hospital wards waiting for a more appropriate bed and denying another person a place. One of the other issues with preventative health care is making sure that there is adequate access to care. Primary care and the role that GPs play in our community are vitally important. I acknowledge here today the good work that is done by Dr Godden and Mr Bill Parker of the Central Coast Division of General Practice. They do a great job in my community, are great advocates of preventative health care and have been working very closely with this government on this agenda.

There has also been an issue in my electorate with access to GPs. My electorate is not alone in this. This problem has exacerbated the situation with chronic disease and early identification of disease. One of the key strategies to improve the health of residents of the Central Coast is to ensure we have more doctors in the community. We are constantly working towards that goal, including through the government's initiative of setting up GP superclinics. In the electorate of Dobell, thanks to this government, a state-of-the-art GP superclinic is being built in a fast-growing area of the northern part of the Central Coast. The clinic, once completed, will employ in excess of 100 health professionals, including doctors, practice nurses, physiotherapists and others. It will also be the focus of training in conjunction with the University of Newcastle. At its temporary site there are already more than 2,000 patients on the books. This is already starting to take the pressure off the very busy emergency department at Wyong Hospital, which is only some kilometres away. It is the fourth busiest emergency department in New South Wales.

Nationally, the government is investing \$1.2 billion in doctors, nurses and allied

health professionals as part of the National Health and Hospitals Network. This funding will go to training an additional 5,500 new GPs and an additional 6,800 medical specialists over the coming decade. It will also improve support for 4,600 full-time equivalent nurses working in general practice and train aged-care nurses. While the government is getting on with improving and reforming our health system, those opposite need to acknowledge that it was the Howard government putting a cap on the number of GP places which led to the chronic shortages of GPs and other health professionals in areas such as mine.

For the first time, the new National Preventive Health Agency will advise all health ministers and help coordinate preventative campaigns across the country. The agency will bring together some of the best expertise in Australia to gather, analyse and disseminate the latest evidence on ways to prevent chronic disease. A chief executive officer will manage the agency and will be directly accountable to the minister for the financial management of the agency and to the Australian Health Ministers Conference, via the minister, for the agency's performance against agreed strategic objectives and operational plans. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency will have an advisory council comprising between seven and 11 members with preventative health expertise in a variety of disciplines and from a variety of sectors.

The agency is central to the Gillard government's reform strategy to improve Australia's health system. Under the reforms, for the first time the Commonwealth government will take the majority funding responsibility for public hospitals and full responsibility for primary health care. The reforms will provide a strong incentive for the Commonwealth to provide better primary care

and preventative services to take pressure off our hospitals.

The new agency and its CEO will be responsible for supporting Australian health ministers in their efforts to combat preventable disease by: providing evidence based advice to health ministers on key national level preventative health issues—either at their direction or by providing information about emerging challenges and threats; providing national leadership and stewardship of surveillance and data on preventable chronic diseases and their lifestyle related risk factors in order to improve the availability and comparability of evidence; collating evidence available from a range of sources in order to assess and report biennially on the state of preventative health in Australia; supporting behavioural change through educational, promotional and community awareness programs relating to preventative health, including in relation to alcohol, tobacco and other substance misuse, and obesity; providing financial assistance to third parties to support the development and evolution of evidence around preventative health interventions and to achieve preventative health gains, for example, through grants supporting research; forming partnerships with relevant groups—industry, non-government and community sectors—to encourage cooperative action leading to preventative health gains; promulgating national guidelines, standards, codes, charters and other frameworks to guide preventative health initiatives, interventions and activities; and, finally, managing schemes rewarding best practice in preventative health interventions and activities.

The Council of Australian Governments agreed to establish the ANPHA in November 2008 as part of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. The creation of a national preventative health agency was also recommended in the report of the

National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission released in July 2009 and in the National Preventative Health Strategy released in September 2009. A key initial role of the new agency will be to provide the leadership, coordination and monitoring required to support the successful implementation of initiatives funded through the prevention national partnership, including \$692 million provided for interventions to help Australians modify their lifestyles. Beyond this, the agency will more broadly support Australian health ministers in meeting the challenges posed by preventable chronic conditions and lifestyle related risk factors. As the new agency is a COAG mandated body with the function of supporting all Australian health ministers, the minister will be required to consult with the Australian Health Ministers Conference when considering candidates for the CEO's role and for membership of the advisory council; and to seek the agreement of the Health Ministers Advisory Council when setting the agency's strategic directions and operational plans.

The agency's impact will help take pressure off Australian hospitals as more people adopt healthier ways of living and reduce the risk of preventable illnesses. It is part of the Gillard government's \$872.1 million commitment over six years towards the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. As I pointed out earlier, this is the largest investment ever made by an Australian government to support health prevention strategies. The agency will be responsible for three specific programs under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, which are the national social marketing programs relating to tobacco and obesity—\$102 million over four years; a preventative health research fund focusing on transitional research—\$13.1 million over four years; and a preventative workforce audit and strategy—half a million dollars over two years. This is

in addition to the government's commitments, following discussions with the Australian Greens and Senator Xenophon, to allocate an additional \$50 million to the National Binge Drinking Strategy.

The agency will put in place national guidelines and standards to guide preventive health. It will also form partnerships with industry, non-government and community groups to promote healthier lifestyles. The government's comprehensive approach to tobacco control, with sustained and coordinated actions, has seen smoking rates cut from 30.5 per cent in 1988 to 16.6 per cent in 2007. Campaigns such as Measure Up have already helped Australians recognise the link between their waist measurement and their chances of developing chronic disease.

This is an important piece of legislation. It is part of an historic reform to health care. It is part of a number of bills that have been introduced into this parliament this week. What we are seeing from the Gillard government is a constructive series of legislation aimed at reforming Australia's health system to make sure that Australians have better access to health care generally while also making sure that we put important resources into key areas such as preventive health.

What we are seeing from the other side of politics in this health debate is negativity, wrecking, getting in the way, and a series of amendments trying to delay, put off and postpone the very important reforms that this government is seeking to make in relation to health. What people are saying out there is: 'We want our health system to be improved. We want the federal government to play a role. We are sick and tired of the blame game that characterised the previous government's term and the lack of contributions that they made in relation to the health debate. We want to see the change.' I call on the opposition to get out of the way in relation to health

reform. You can support what we are doing and support genuine reform in the various areas that we need to change in terms of health, including this bill and the important role it will play in preventive health. You should be either getting out of the way and not opposing it or you should be supporting it. That is what everyone out there in the electorate wants. They want to see some bipartisan support for important health reforms that this country needs.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (12.01 pm)—Today will be marked in the history of public health in Australia as another one of the days under a Labor administration that broke the hearts of people waiting for preventive and public health outcomes. With the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010, we have a Labor administration utterly focused on inputs. That means that when there is hard and adaptive work to be done on one of the great challenges of health around the world—that is, preventive and public health—they revert to type. They have turned to a new bureaucracy, a new statutory authority, in the third and soon to be the fourth year of their administration.

It was incumbent upon a new Labor administration in 2007 to pick up on the great work that had already been done and build upon it. This debate would be incomplete without a recognition of the history of the impressive work done by Australia in the area of preventive health. I give this history in no way to discredit the work of those who come before us, because obviously in something like preventive health the work of successive administrations has always improved and built upon that which came before. As early as the 1990s we had the national agenda for early childhood, which was implemented under the Howard regime, and I could even go back earlier to the national nutrition strategy under the Keating administration in 1995. From there we already rec-

ognised as a nation the importance of nutrition and the importance of physical activity in combating the unhappy triad of obesity, hypoglycaemia and high blood pressure.

We have moved on. I could go through the child obesity summits that occurred in 2002. They were led by a number of people but Senator Guy Barnett played a significant role in organising that refocussing on obesity rather than just communicating about nutrition and physical activity, which had never gained traction as much as we would hope. Then there was the focus on weight loss in 2008, the national public health partnerships and a real shift through the 2000s towards a focus on new qualifications for those in the health workforce who would deliver those preventive measures, acknowledging and recognising that it was not always frontline service delivery individuals who performed those roles and that we had to move outside of hospitals. There was even an acknowledgement that the greatest health outcomes can often be achieved outside of the health system itself. There was a very important refocussing and acknowledgement that we need to not only look at the ethnic minorities—immigrants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and those of low socioeconomic means—but also recognise that health sits upon a foundation that is based upon having tenure in one's home, levels of education and children going to school. Obviously those elements are just as important as an explicit focus on health care and health checks.

Let me be honest: public health has for a long time been not only a very small part of the annual health expenditure in this and other developed economies but also very fragmented. With eight jurisdictions, as I have said before, we have both the opportunity to learn from the work and the excellence in certain jurisdictions but also the challenge to reach across and make sure that

those efforts are coordinated. As one state heads down towards tuckshop campaigns and another state heads off towards teleconferencing or call centre facilities, we need to make sure that there is a level of consistency around the nation. That is why the Commonwealth will always have an indisputable role.

Acknowledging what this current administration has done in an attempt to have a single-funder arrangement for preventive care would have very little opposition from this side of the House or from the general community. I think a bigger challenge is to acknowledge that there is a certain right of passage in an area as tough as preventive health. It is an area that requires the adaptive work to be done—bringing people together from seemingly unconnected professions to achieve an outcome. There is a certain right of passage and I will tell our health minister what it is: some of that adaptive work gets done, you get some results on the ground, and then the health minister has the right to introduce this slew of statutory authorities and bureaucracies. My problem is where administrative change is all that is occurring. Apart from a fiddling of the Commonwealth-state funding arrangement and a construction of regional health boards that are fundamentally a fourth level of health bureaucracy, there is very little happening on the ground to lead to better public health outcomes. Those on the other side of the chamber will ask: why can't we simply herald the arrival of a new preventive health authority? The answer is this: in two, three or five years time, when people read the contributions made in this debate, let it be very clear that this opposition said, 'It is fine to have the bureaucracy—we want it as small and streamlined as possible—but you cannot have it without any action on the ground.'

On this side of the House we want to see more than this solitary focus on statutory

bodies and authorities. Not everything can be done by big government. It is challenging enough to deliver services that are coordinated from Canberra. But I beg this government, I beg the Minister for Health and Ageing: when \$130 million floats past the Prime Minister and down to the health minister's office, do not just fall for the trap of yet another series of television ad campaigns about why people should be switching off the television. I beg the health minister, when you think about 13 per cent and \$17.6 million to administer this behemoth, ask the very question: is that just a 13 per cent administrative fee, sliced off the top of what should really be preventive health outcomes on the ground? Or, possibly, is this actually too small to enable you to effectively bring together the disparate public health communities in this country and come up with the answers that we really need? Is this absolutely microscopic contribution towards research adequate to fund even a single multi-centred study to give us the evidence we need? The answer is absolutely not. The tokenistic millions for research is such a tiny amount that it is almost an embarrassment to include it in this bill. I would argue that that money needs to be where it belongs: being contested openly through the NHMRC.

The other great uncertainty among the rest of Australia about where exactly this government is heading, as we see boxcarred before us legislation after legislation pertaining to new bureaucracies, is: exactly what is the relationship between this new authority and the health minister? The answer is quite simple. There are nine members plus a chair, and they are all appointed by the minister. Can you imagine the lifespan of a member of that authority if they have to recommend something that is against the government's objectives? I would have thought that the best way to empower the experts in this field is not to select nine—however distinguished the indi-

viduals are—fawning sycophants who will tell the minister only what she wants to hear. The last thing members of this authority are going to want to do is recommend something that the government does not support.

Of those nine plus ‘the chair’, only two positions are for state representatives. Given that, historically, the great effort in preventive health has been made by state administrations—they have a wealth of experience, and an enormous amount of state funding supports that research work—I would argue that there is a formula here for great frustration among states that are not represented. It would have been far wiser, I believe, to have had all states involved early on, until there is a significant clarification of the direction of this body.

Next, of course, is the concern about how this body will function here in Canberra. Are we simply going to be populating the authority with public servants out of the Department of Health and Ageing? Will we have the capacities—and can we afford them—in this administration as it has been set up? There are significant questions around that. The agency itself could well have been an advisory committee bringing the smartest minds together, lean and mean and focused. But what we have here, presented before us, is vague, with an overwhelming focus on television public health advertisements. The great concern is that this administrative body, in the end, will simply monitor and transact contracts regarding TV ad campaigns. Will we be any further advanced? Will the tiny child living in a remote community even feel the slightest change in public health service delivery as a result of this body if the overwhelming proportion—nearly 75 per cent—of the entire funding attached to this legislation is for TV ad campaigns, probably telling people to switch the TV off and be more physically active?

There is an ideological division here, because fundamentally we have a government that believes that the bigger the bureaucracy gets, the better people will live their lives. Fundamentally, the flaw in this is that we are missing the incentives to bring professional groups together and come up with the innovative approaches that were delivered quite effectively and efficiently by the Howard administration—the lifestyle prescriptions that were GP focused, that allowed people who had recurrent contact with a GP 6.8 times per year to talk about lifestyle issues. It was highly, highly targeted; it was a one-to-one discussion with a highly qualified practitioner. We needed a multidisciplinary approach so that preventive health care did not float off on its own, and, of course, we needed to work on systems that brought together the best people in communities to come up with interventions.

My great concern is that this new authority is a cost-recovery administration. Every time a state administration asks for some advice from this authority, they will be given a bill—given a chit to pay. This, again, heralds this new Labor approach that the more something works, the more you tax it. I implore this government: the better it works, let it rip, let it go, let it use its own creativity and achieve great things. Instead we have seen, consecutively, taxing of the things that are good, resulting in good money going after bad. That is what needs to be avoided. We need to talk about a whole range of issues around health promotion, awareness and, of course, the regulatory changes that may well be needed. But what chance does a committee that is fully appointed by the minister have in recommending some regulatory change that may not be popular with the government?

There is inadequate separation. This group needs to be more separated from the health minister. We need it to be truly independ-

ent—to not have money already set aside for nothing more than public awareness campaigns. Moving into the fourth year of this administration, we have seen almost no progress. We will hear from the government a chorus of what will happen if we rip money out of the health system now. However, in no year—ever—did funding to health decrease. There was no more money ripped out of the health system under the Howard government than there was money ripped out of the school system under the Rudd-Gillard government because they built a hall last year and did not build a hall this year. The pure reality is that the increases in health funding were slightly lower in the subsequent agreement but that it never came close to going down. There was no ripping of money out of anything but simply growth that was not as large. For a whole host of reasons, including the fact that debt was paid off over a decade, there were considerable challenges to the health system, which, I am proud to say, the Howard government did not pass on to the current administration.

We are touching now on an opportunity to address health inequalities. We genuinely have the option to take great information and advice from overseas and apply it to preventative health. But let us be honest: when it comes to preventative health, this is an intensely personal choice about the degree to which we exercise, how much time we spend in a sedentary lifestyle and many hours we spend at work. They are some of the great challenges we face in moving the titanic of preventative health even a millimetre.

I do not put unreasonable expectations on this government. I do not ask them to prove within 12 months that they can gain improvements, because that may be way too ambitious. But there is a rite of passage in this game. If we go back into the history of Australian healthcare delivery, there are generations of great work that have achieved

slow and careful gains. It is inadequate to simply set up an authority over the top and promise miracles.

This will be hard work, but we cannot afford to have an authority that is top-heavy and full of fawning sycophants—and I mean that with no offence. We need some separation from the minister and we need to give board members the freedom to be able to reach out and fund the work that needs to be done. Part of that is reaching out and using overseas information. Australia does not have to reinvent the preventative health world; it simply needs to pull together best practice.

Most of this is already well known. Most of this information is available from any school of public health around this nation, each of which have provided some of the world's greatest practitioners. What we know is that there must be a focus on high-risk populations to start with. There needs to be a focus on using existing structures to make it a natural part of people's lives. Yes, I can see that there needs to be some cross-corroboration and some translational research that takes great ideas from one area and applies them more broadly. That is fine, but you do not need an authority to do that. What you need is a lean and mean advisory committee, as I have already argued. They have existed before and they worked perfectly well.

I encourage this government, but not because I do not concede that one authority is probably okay. What we have seen is a health administration that has lurched from taxing alcopops and driving young people towards 750 millilitre bottles of spirits, and we have seen a focus on slicing cataract rebates in half and ripping out private health care—but, in the end, public and preventative health will be the victim.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (12.17 pm)—I rise to speak in support of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. If we were looking at simply one piece of legislation today that dealt with health, there might be some substance and accuracy in what the member for Bowman has said. But if he actually looked at the daily program today he would have seen that there are five bills that relate to the Gillard government's health and hospital reforms. The contention that we have somehow got an isolated piece of legislation that establishes a grand bureaucracy that provides no money to the health and hospital system and simply inflates the bureaucracy is just plain nonsense—absolute nonsense.

When we came to office the federal Labor government commissioned three key reports to examine critical areas of the health system: the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, the Preventative Health Taskforce and the National Primary Health Care Strategy. As a result of those reports, it was recommended that we have an Australian national preventative health agency. As early as the 2020 Summit, this was suggested by the men and women of Australia who were called here to have their say. The task force also recommended this. We are listening to the independent experts and acting on their advice. We are also providing about \$7.4 billion in extra funding to the health system.

We went to the last election campaign offering far more funding for health and hospitals than the coalition. I have heard speakers opposite talk about e-health. The coalition went into the last campaign opposed to e-health. They were opposed to our primary care infrastructure. They were opposed to the GP superclinics. They were opposed to system reform. If they had their way the Ipswich GP superclinic in my electorate of Blair in South-East Queensland would not be open

for business. They would close it down. They did not offer any funding for it; they opposed it tooth and nail. My predecessor wrote a letter to the editor recently which criticised the *Queensland Times* for its support of the Ipswich GP superclinic. He still has not gotten over the 2007 loss and is critical of what we have had to do. They have opposed every reform to the health system which they de-funded. The budget papers make it crystal clear that those opposite de-funded health and hospitals in this country.

In October 2007 the Institute of Health and Welfare, an independent body that is not exactly affiliated with the Australian Labor Party, examined health and hospital funding for the previous decade. It found that the states and territories, which were much vilified by health ministers in the Howard coalition government, had actually taken up the slack for the de-funding of the health and hospital system in this country by the Howard government. The proportion of federal funding for health and hospitals in this country plummeted to just over 40 per cent while those opposite occupied the treasury bench. They have a record of ignorance, idleness, inaction and inertia over health and hospital reform, and of opposing our health and hospital reforms.

The member for Bowman came in here and said he was opposed to what we have to do. I am simply amazed that the coalition are opposed to this legislation. They opposed it last time. When we come into this place there are some things that you kind of know that those opposite are going to oppose. I know that they generally oppose our position on industrial relations. I know that those opposite have opposed us on issues relating to climate change because so many of them do not believe that human beings make any contribution to climate change. But there are some things they are opposed to which I find inexplicable. The only thing I can think of is

that they are in the pockets of the big liquor and tobacco companies, because I cannot for the life of me understand why they are opposed to this legislation.

The Gillard government are pouring money into health and hospitals in this country. Earlier this week there was a private member's bill from the opposition's health spokesperson, the member for Dickson, in relation to mental health. Mental health is a very important part of the health and hospital system in this country. The truth is that this government have provided \$1.2 billion from 2010-11 to 2013-14 for mental health services in this country. The Howard government put \$516 million in from 2004-05 to 2007-08. The facts speak for themselves. Those opposite simply ignored health and hospital funding in this country.

We are making major changes to this funding. Specifically, our legislation provides that we will fund 60 per cent of the efficient price of every public hospital service provided to public patients. We are taking over 100 per cent of GP and primary healthcare services and 60 per cent of capital expenditure, and 60 per cent of recurrent expenditure on research and training functions undertaken in public hospitals. We are pouring money into the health and hospital system of this country, which was neglected for so long when those opposite were in government.

This legislation is really important. We know that preventative health care works. For example, we know that admonitions, warnings and advice to the Australian public work—whether it is HIV-AIDs campaigns; campaigns to wear seatbelts, which we now have to wear and which save lives; campaigns to wear bicycle and motorcycle helmets; or advice to keep fit. There are Australians and many in this House who keep fit and run regularly. We know that when coun-

cils put pathways and bike-ways in suburban communities, more people will walk, run and get exercise. We see it every day. When a local council builds a wonderful park, we see people flocking to it. The Ipswich City Council recently rebuilt Lobley Park in Churchill, not far from where I live. Every time I drive past it, I see young people and old people, mums and dads and kids, running around getting exercise. Preventative health care works. We do not spend anywhere near enough on that.

This bill proposes an Australian National Preventive Health Agency with strategic plans for a five-year period. It will specifically target challenges in relation to alcohol abuse, tobacco use, substance abuse and obesity. What is wrong with that? The amount of money we are using to establish this agency is small compared to the totality of the funding we see on budget night. This particular organisation is not top heavy. It involves stakeholders in the process. It will also provide an advisory role.

We have committed ourselves to making a difference to tobacco consumption. If you travel through South-East Asia, you will see many people smoking. Far more people smoke in the Third World and elsewhere than people in Australia do because the Australian public have been told time and time again to reduce their use of tobacco. The advertising and the government strategies have worked. We have committed ourselves to stopping smoking in this country as much as possible. The tobacco excise was increased by 25 per cent in April this year. We invested another \$5 million in the Quitline services and another \$85 million in anti-tobacco campaigns. I warmly welcomed our proposals on the packaging of tobacco products, which makes sure that tobacco companies cannot lure and entice young people to use this iniquitous substance, which will impact their lives and cause financial deprivation and future health

problems in the form of circulatory and respiratory problems.

Australians drink at high levels. In my childhood and adolescence, I endured the pain of having an alcoholic father. Many Australians will have had similar experiences. Many Australians have seen what alcohol or drug abuse can do to the lives of families. Many families, individuals and children endure financial deprivation, domestic violence, embarrassment, shame and humiliation because of a parent suffering from alcohol abuse. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency will make a difference in terms of policy and advice, and will put a big focus on those health issues.

Too many Australians drink at levels that are harmful. It is said that about three in 10 alcoholics do not actually admit it. We do not have enough services in this country that deal with the long-term effects of alcoholism on individuals and on families. We have taken huge steps, such as the \$103 million national anti-binge drinking campaign, and I was happy to have supported ending the tax loophole on alcopops, which targeted young people. We have seen the consumption of alcopops reduced by 30 per cent. In my electorate, there are a number of great organisations dealing with this, and I particularly want to commend Tanya McKenna, a teacher at Ipswich State High School, who has made a difference to young people with mystery tours, which this federal government have in part funded. These mystery tours offer an alternative to those young people who might engage in binge drinking on their graduation and formal nights. This prototype at Ipswich State High School has now been adopted at Bremer State High School and Redbank Plains State High School. Preventative health care works and it has worked for those young people at those high schools in my electorate of Blair.

A new approach is needed with respect to health care in this country. The federal government are making a big difference and we will in the future with the National Health and Hospitals Network and the Medicare Locals. We are making a big difference in my electorate by funding the after-hours clinic at Ipswich General Hospital, run by the division of general practice; the Ipswich GP superclinic; and the psychology clinic at the University of Queensland. We are making a difference with federal funding for great organisations such as Kambu Medical Centre, helping our Indigenous people in the Ipswich and West Moreton areas, where over 4,300 people live. We are making a difference, but there is so much more to do. The agency created by this bill will make a difference to the lives of our young people, our middle-aged people and our elderly people. It will make a difference to the lives of each and every community across the length and breadth of this country, and it is an absolute shame and tragedy that those opposite are not prepared to support this vital legislation.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (12.30 pm)—It is great to have the opportunity today to speak on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. One thing for sure is that everybody in this House agrees on the importance of preventative health. But the trouble is that, when you come into this place and follow government speakers, they stand up and give one side of the story. They can very easily just say, ‘You guys oppose this,’ or ‘You’re against this.’ It sort of hangs out there as though the opposition have no plan for health. The reality is that if you have alternatives then that is a plan. If we say, ‘You have a plan; we think it’s wrong for the following reasons; here’s our plan,’ then that is an alternative. It is another plan, another idea on the way health could be pushed forward in this country. The government say, ‘You opposed everything we did.’ There was good

reason. We opposed things because we did not think they were going to work. We thought they were going to be too expensive and they were not focused properly. What is the matter with that? Nothing. We stand by our positions and by our policies.

When we look at what happened over the life of the last government, the Howard government, we know that all the time the health budget expanded. Yet there was a time when the state governments were held to account for their health systems. Of course, some people call that the blame game. But why shouldn't focus and scrutiny be placed upon those who are running the state health systems? But a lot of that accountability appears to have just been pushed out of the door. I wonder whether those who live in Queensland and New South Wales really believe that the hospital systems in those states are exemplars of state-of-the-art systems. If you read the media or if you hear the personal experiences of many people in those states then maybe there is room for a little bit of accountability and scrutiny. I make those points before moving on.

In commenting on this bill, the two principles with which I will approach my contribution today are, firstly, that this legislation should be about outcomes and not about another layer of bureaucracy and, secondly—a personal favourite of mine and possibly of quite a few in this House, particularly on this side—that it should be about personal responsibility. This contribution will all be to do with preventative health issues. This morning, whilst in the gym, I was listening to the ABC. I certainly felt that on this occasion the ABC were providing some very interesting and balanced information. They were talking about the mental health situation with regard to teenagers, the point being that teenagers are moving away from physical exercise in their lives towards the focus of the school curriculums on academic

achievement. Obviously, we have no problem with academic achievement. The pursuit of excellence, or at least reaching your potential, is very much an important part of the lives of our young people in this country. However, there is still a need for physical exercise. The point is that the lack of physical exercise and sport within the curriculum is leaving young people and teenagers just with academic subjects, so they are not getting tired through physical pursuits and are staying up later, still having to get up at the same time of day. As we know, and as has been proven, lack of sleep is bad for the mental health of young people. Younger children need enough sleep to keep growing and reach their physical potential. In addition, social interaction using technologies such as the internet and mobile phones—if you can call it social interaction—means that young people are staying up late and of course this is reducing their sleep. Those were the two aspects of the ABC report today. I would say there is a place in the curriculum for physical education and sport. I support that and I am sure we all support that.

But the thrust of the report was really about how this is a school responsibility—that was it: a 100 per cent school responsibility. That was certainly the implication from the report. But, in reality, what about personal responsibility? What about parents encouraging their children to become involved in sport, not just at school but afterwards as well—in clubs after school time and opportunities like that? There is a lot to be said for identifying, in your own life—or parents identifying in their children's lives—the opportunities for this physical education as well, to supplement what is done in schools. This is a basic responsibility of parenting; it is not just the responsibility of curricula; it is not just the responsibility of government. It is time to look in the mirror, in a

lot of respects, Mr Deputy Speaker Murphy. Sorry, I am not talking about you personally, of course—but any parent in this country should keep that in mind.

In the electorate of Cowan we have so many wonderful sporting institutions: the Wanneroo District Netball Association; the Kingsway Little Athletics Centre, which is another great example of opportunities for young people to be involved—and with netball, of course, adults as well. We have football clubs, we have cricket clubs, we have the state badminton organisation as well in Cowan, so that is also very good. So there are opportunities for parents to encourage their children to participate.

Recently, I was at Koondoola Primary School. Koondoola primary is in a more challenged area, a lower socioeconomic area within the electorate of Cowan. I was having a discussion with two of the deputies at the school. They were saying that the cost of fees for club sport participation for young people was quite an issue for people there—and that worries me. I wonder sometimes whether possibly the education rebate could be expanded to include an element of sporting club fees—I mean, that is preventative health for you, and I certainly think that would be a good way forward.

I think there is the opportunity out there in the community for sporting and physical exercise to be able to take place, not just in schools but in the wider community. And that, ultimately, is the responsibility of parents—to encourage and assist their children to participate, whether that is at primary or secondary school level; all through those ages. At the same time, of course, as parents we have the responsibility to lead by example. On Sunday, just before we flew back, I took the opportunity to take my kids to the local pool, Wanneroo Aquamotion. As the weather gets warmer and warmer, we will

find ourselves at the beach more, in the park, maybe going for bike rides—with helmets, of course; another big preventative health issue: all children and all adults should wear helmets. So there are these sorts of opportunities where often you do not need to pay, particularly with beaches, bike riding, visits to parks, kicking the football around. There are no limitations on this. These are the opportunities where parents can lead by example.

I was talking to one of the parents at our local primary school, Hawker Park Primary School. Graham Barrett is his name. He has five children, and they all go down to the Sorrento Surf Lifesaving Club, doing the training. It is a very big thing now in Perth; lots of kids from our school go to surf lifesaving. Graham actually participated in the Family Iron Man at the end of last season, which involved a run and a swim. I think there might have been board paddling as well. So he was out there, not just talking the talk but walking the walk, and that is exactly the way forward.

When they take opportunities in the gym, a lot of people should maybe consider that, if you actually want to look at your weight issues, there are a number of ways to try to reduce your body weight. Getting the heart rate up into the sustained training range—which you can determine at your local gym, as they always have those heart rate charts; or you can consult with your family doctor—is very good. But above all—we can all turn up to the gym; we can all go for a walk or a bike ride occasionally—it comes down to diet. As a PTI, a physical training instructor, in the Army once said in front of a number of us, you can do a thousand sit-ups a day and you will end up with a fabulous set of stomach muscles; however, unless you reduce your food intake, they will be a fabulous set of stomach muscles underneath quite a substantial level of fat. So it is more than exer-

cise; it is about diet. And when we talk about high-salt and high-fat diets then we also open ourselves up to the risk of stroke, diabetes type 2 and a number of other health issues to do with the heart and other more general issues.

So, in a lot of ways, I appreciate that there is a part to play for government in preventative health, and I think a big part of that is education. And there is a part for schools to play. But ultimately it comes down to the decisions we make in our own lives, the self-inflicted injuries that we so often incur—the pizza too many nights a week, or maybe too many nights a month; the KFC; the ‘Oh, I’m too tired to get up this morning to go out for a run or exercise’; or the ‘That’s all right, little Johnny, you can go and play with your DS or your PlayStation all day.’ These are personal decisions that we make, and maybe sometimes we should just look in the mirror and work out whether that decision has an impact on ourselves. And, more than that, as parents we have a responsibility to not only talk the talk about little Johnny, or little Emily—saying that we want them to go out and do physical exercise; our children should see that we also believe that and that we walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

As I said at the start, a lot of what I talk about is personal responsibility, taking that look in the mirror and judging ourselves before we look for some problem in society to blame for the problems that we so often place upon ourselves. In the very limited time left, I will just finish by saying that our position is that we want tangible outcomes from this sort of legislation. There are enough bureaucrats in Canberra and across the country without imposing more unless there are real, tangible benefits. Unless there are outcomes that can be measured, I wonder why we move forward with these things. Ultimately, it is about the individual doing the right things for themselves, first and

foremost accepting that responsibility, and then it is about government putting education in place and then being able to assess the outcomes in the end.

Mr SYMON (Deakin) (12.46 pm)—I speak in support of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. As the member for Cowan was just talking about physical fitness, I can attest that he is a very keen and regular attendee at the parliamentary gym, and I do know that his heart is definitely in that.

Mr Simpkins—As are you, mate.

Mr SYMON—Thank you. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency will be responsible for supporting Australian health ministers in their efforts to combat preventable diseases. A key role of the agency will be to provide the leadership and coordination required to support the implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, an agreement of the Council of Australian Governments. This agreement between the state, territory and federal governments recognises that greater coordination is required in our efforts to tackle preventable chronic conditions.

Initially, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency will focus its efforts on social marketing campaigns to reduce the risks posed by tobacco consumption, alcohol consumption and obesity. The ANPHA will develop a five-year national preventative healthcare strategy to coordinate and provide national leadership on the issue of preventative health as well as to conduct relevant research in these vital areas.

The Gillard government has committed to fund the ANPHA with \$133 million over four years. This includes \$102 million over those four years to fund important campaigns that go to issues that are here and now. As I mentioned before, tobacco use and the rates of obesity are issues that government should

concentrate on. Tackling preventable diseases is one of the most effective ways of improving health outcomes in Australia, saving our country, our community, a lot of money and saving people's lives.

Too often in the past individuals, communities and governments have focused on the issues of treating people after they have become sick. Of course, we still need to do that, but there are so many things that happen over a lifetime that may cause an illness later on that need to be concentrated on now so that we save that money, that illness and those deaths down the track. Governments in Australia have looked at some of these issues in the past, but what is proposed with this bill is a much more comprehensive and, I think, better targeted package to look at these issues both now and in the future. I think the debate we are having now should have been held many, many years ago. When the bill that was similar to this one was put up to the last parliament, we had the debate back in October 2009, and I thought, 'This is good; it's going to happen,' but that bill never made it through the last parliament, so we are back here today having this debate.

In Australia, it is estimated that one-third of the burden on our health system relates to the health behaviour and lifestyle factors of individuals. I think that with education and resources these behaviours and factors can be modified. But it is not a short-term fix. It is not something such that you can get a message across today and change someone's behaviour of a lifetime the next day. It takes reinforcement and a lot of education and help. When we encourage individuals to make different choices, we start to divert people from life-threatening diseases and illnesses and we can make inroads, as I said, on the costs of health and make for a happier, healthier community—not just a few people but everyone.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has identified the seven risk factors that contribute the most to the burden of disease. They are tobacco use, high blood pressure, obesity, lack of physical activity, cholesterol levels, alcohol intake and the low intake of fruit and vegetables. They all sound fairly straightforward, but of course they all have huge impacts. The financial cost that these factors pose to our health system is significant, while the cost to our community in mortality and morbidity is considerable and is growing.

For instance, in the 2004-05 financial year, the health costs associated with tobacco were estimated at \$31 billion. As the member for Dobell noted in his contribution to this debate, we have seen in Australia, through anti-smoking campaigns and price signals, the rate of smoking cut from 30½ per cent in 1988 down to 16.6 per cent in 2007. What the member for Dobell did not note and I will is that even that rate is much reduced from what it used to be. In the 1950s, it was estimated that 70 per cent of adult males and 30 per cent of adult females who lived in Australia smoked. We now see a lot of those problems many, many years down the track, when people who have smoked—and a large percentage of the population have smoked—present with what can be in many cases incurable diseases or chronic diseases that are there for life. There are some other interesting figures on smoking, and it is good to see the rates going down. One that I found while looking up information for this bill is that there are now more former smokers in Australia than there are current smokers. That is a good sign for the future.

A recent report from VicHealth in 2009 titled *The health and economic benefits of reducing disease risk factors* showed that if the smoking of tobacco were reduced to the rate of smoking in California, which is down to 15 per cent, then 5,000 lives per year could

be saved in Australia. The report went on to note that there would be 158,000 fewer new cases each year of illness from tobacco use in Australia. The Gillard government has introduced world-leading reforms to further reduce Australia's smoking rates, which are already among the lowest in the world but, as I said, need to go lower. These reforms include a 25 per cent increase in tobacco excise, an \$85 million investment in anti-smoking campaigns and being the first government in the world to introduce plain packaging of tobacco products. This new body, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, will continue this work to reduce tobacco use in Australia.

Obesity is emerging as one of the major challenges to the health of Australians. Earlier this year, the OECD predicted that in the next decade almost two-thirds of the Australian population would be either overweight or obese. That huge figure almost defies belief but, when we look at our existing figures, we are actually not a long way off that. The World Health Organisation has labelled obesity a worldwide epidemic. To give the House some idea of that, in Australia in 2007-08, 61 per cent of adults were overweight or obese and 25 per cent of children aged five to 17 years were overweight or obese. So we are not actually very far off the prediction of the OECD for the next decade. It is a prediction I hope we as a country do not reach.

The National Preventive Health Strategy, the road map for action, says that by 2032 the leading cause of disease for males and the second leading cause of disease for females will be type 2 diabetes. This will result in an increase in direct healthcare costs for type 2 diabetes to about \$8 billion annually from the current \$1.3 billion. The rise in type 2 diabetes rates is significant because it in many ways reflects the rise of obesity in our community. Poor diet and lack of physical

activity lead on to larger health complications. And diet is so important. As noted in *Australia's health 2010*, only one out of every 20 children aged 14 to 16 consumed the recommended intake of vegetables in 2007. If you start out life without the right eating habits, I am sure it is only downhill from there. As the previous speaker noted, there are many who get an addiction to eating junk food rather than eating food that fuels their bodies. The VicHealth report that I referred to previously found that a cut in physical inactivity of only five per cent would save the health sector \$48 million a year. But in 2007-08 only 37 per cent of adult Australians exercised sufficiently to obtain benefits to their health. In addition, and very importantly, 1,000 lives per year could be saved, and there would be 3,000 fewer cases of illness, for that five per cent cut in physical inactivity. The Gillard government recognises the challenge of tackling obesity and has committed to the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, which will invest a total of \$872 million over six years, with a focus on obesity in that preventive health area.

Another factor that will be a focus of ANPHA is the consumption of alcohol and other substances. Australia still has a very high per capita consumption of alcohol and, although that has dropped overall slightly in recent years, the detrimental effects of excessive alcohol consumption on a person's health are well known. It is estimated that in 2004-05 Australia spent \$1.9 billion on health in relation to the harmful consumption of alcohol. Also associated with the overconsumption of alcohol is the loss of workplace productivity, estimated to be worth another \$3.5 billion, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The Gillard government has already taken action to deal with part of this problem by investing \$103 million in the National Binge Drinking

Campaign and has raised the taxes on alcohols, sugary drinks favoured by many young drinkers.

Given that the evidence shows the role that lifestyle and behavioural factors play in individual health outcomes and that we have known this for some time now, the question that could be asked is why previous governments have not given this the same priority as it is now being given in this place. I think it is a wise investment decision for any government to spend now on preventive health to prevent greater expenditure in the future. But that is not always an easy thing to explain to colleagues in the House or to convince those on the other side or even to convince the public, because the benefits are not necessarily quantifiable, they are not sitting in front of us right now. A cost to the current budget for a return many years down the track is always a difficult case to argue, but in terms of health I think those outcomes can be measured from research that has already been done, and the capacity of governments to fund the system in the future if we do not act now is something that is in doubt because these problems were only going to magnify and grow as the population ages and as our population grows in the future.

In contrast to previous governments, the Gillard Labor government is taking action by funding preventive health programs. We are listening to experts like the people involved in the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and practitioners on the ground. The Gillard government is investing in preventive health and has been working with state health ministers to deliver the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, which overall will invest \$872 million in that area. Investment in preventive health is about helping our community have the knowledge to make healthier decisions and making these decisions easier for the individuals who live in those communities. By taking the lead in

preventive health, the Gillard government is looking to our country's future. I am certain that this investment now in funding preventive health programs will lead to a lesser expense for the community as whole in the future. I commend this bill to the House.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (12.59 pm)—I rise to speak on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. Well before this century reaches its half term, the management of chronic disease will have seriously challenged the health budgets of all nations, and Australia is no exception. Chronic diseases are illnesses prolonged in duration and rarely curable. The range of illnesses is staggering, with examples varying from diabetes, which we know contributes to many other diseases, to HIV-AIDS and to cancer.

In addition to the pain and suffering the illness and disability causes, chronic diseases are a significant economic burden. Estimates from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show that total health expenditure in Australia, including hospital, out-of-hospital and pharmaceutical costs, is approximately \$60.9 billion of which \$40.9 billion is recurrent expenditure on the management of various diseases and conditions. It is not only a cost to the national budget; it is a lost economic opportunity to individuals. It affects the economic wellbeing of individuals and the carers of those individuals, who sometimes suffer debilitating chronic illnesses.

The origins of chronic illness are complex and in many cases not completely understood, with multiple factors compounding over a period of time contributing to their onset. While we rarely know the exact causes, comparison of the dedicated research into individual illnesses has identified shared risk factors as well as protective factors. Recognising the commonalities, stakeholders have pushed for a coordinated national ap-

proach, with greater emphasis on both research and education. The creation of a National Preventive Health Agency appears to meet the calls of stakeholders, but there is no point in creating another layer of bureaucracy without tangible outcomes being realised. I am sure that this has the capacity to realise some of those benefits.

The explanatory memorandum to the bill outlines that the agency will focus its attention on obesity, excessive alcohol consumption and tobacco use, with \$102 million of the \$133.2 million cost going toward national level social marketing campaigns. Campaigns highlighting issues of physical inactivity, smoking and binge drinking have all been effectively undertaken in the past though health departments. Many people can instantly recall quit smoking campaigns, which have reduced the number of smokers very dramatically in this country. We know that one of the outcomes of those public campaigns, and education in schools, is that kids often go home and encourage their parents to give up smoking. So they have had quite a dramatic impact. We have seen a number of other campaigns over time to encourage people to do more physical activity. The catchphrase 'find 30' and the HIV adverts with the grim reaper were part of effective campaigns. The pertinent question then is: how will moving such functions to a national agency add further value to such campaigns?

Advertising is an effective tool in trying to change lifestyle habits that increase risk factors for chronic disease, but it is not a silver bullet. An advert warning against the dire consequences of physical inactivity, no matter how clever or shocking, will achieve little if the government does not follow-up with support to actually get people engaged in physical activity.

Because I have chaired the Parliamentary Diabetes Support Group, which is an informal group established across the benches in this place to try to deal with the relentless march of diabetes, I want to pay tribute to the work of people who have worked with me on the executive: the member for Lyons; the member for Isaacs; the member for Moore in Western Australia, Dr Washer; and my good colleague from the senate Senator Guy Barnett. Guy Barnett actually put out a book in 2006 called *The Millennium Disease*—he edited that—and, in 2004, before this book came out, he pushed the then Howard government to commit to a program called Building a Healthy, Active Australia. There were a couple of really significant programs that came out of that and the Howard government did actually commit \$116 million over four years for a couple of programs. The first was a \$90 million after-school physical activity program and the other was \$15 million in grants to parents and citizens associations to encourage them to set up healthy eating canteens. Then there was some more money—I think it was about \$11 million—that went to trying to have an information program that would give parents and children and communities information and encouragement to adapt to and adopt more healthy eating habits and lifestyle changes that produce better health outcomes over a longer period of time.

A few weeks ago I had the great pleasure of presenting to Mount Helena Primary School in my electorate the award as the Swan East Region Super Site for the Active After-School Communities program. I spoke about this in the adjournment debate last week. In a meeting with the staff, I was struck by the great passion they have for trying to get students involved—very successfully in this case—in physical activity and sport both in school and outside school hours. Their enthusiasm clearly rubbed off

on the students. Through the program, the school continued its involvement in the City to Surf fun run with great success. Mount Helena Primary School is an outstanding example of the benefits of the program that was introduced in 2004. It targeted young primary-school-age children between the hours of 3 pm and 5.30 pm. It aimed to engage children in a variety of sports and develop a love of sport to inspire children to join local sporting clubs and make sport a lifetime activity.

Yet, despite the program's overwhelming success, its funding is not secure. Its funding has been extended for another 12 months, but to date there has been no commitment to longer term funding. That is a tragedy, because it is difficult to retain the incredibly talented human capital that has worked over several years to build up this program and has made it so successful. These people have no security of tenure in the work that they are doing. It would be wonderful to get a longer term approach to ensure the general continuity of the program and greater longer term certainty for those who currently work in it.

Along with the Active After-school Communities program, I will mention the \$15 million in grants for parents and citizens associations to encourage them to set up healthy eating options canteens. I had the pleasure, some time ago, to visit the Arbor Grove Primary School in Ellenbrook in my electorate. Arbor Grove Primary School provides a standout example of how a school can, with the commitment of some marvellous parents, turn around the whole attitude and philosophy of the school towards healthy eating. Through the canteen and the dedication of a number of parents, a range of healthy options have been devised for lunches and snacks and have been presented in such a manner that they are made attractive and exciting to kids, who are looking

forward to eating healthily. This is enormously important for young children, not only for their physical health but also for their capacity to pay attention and to learn. We know that the type of food that kids eat can have an impact on the way in which they behave in school. The government would do well to support and expand these programs which have been so successful. They have a proven track record and could play a very important part in a larger strategy to promote greater intake of fresh fruit and vegetables, which is an important aspect, as we heard from the previous speaker.

Along with such programs, we need to put greater emphasis on primary health care if we are going to deal with chronic illness. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare notes:

More than half of all potentially preventable hospitalisations are from selected chronic conditions ... such as diabetes, asthma, angina, hypertension, congestive heart failure and COPD.

COPD is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. These hospitalisations could have been avoided had there been more ready access to GP services. Rather than creating—in some cases, in suburban inner city areas—GP superclinics that are set up often in competition with existing services, perhaps we should take a more constructive approach and get the government to focus its resources on examining where the gaps in primary health care are and supporting existing services, especially where there is intense pressure on those services.

General practitioners undoubtedly are the key to preventing hospitalisation and complications, as they provide the crucial link between someone being aware of risk factors and those risk factors being identified and acted on. The public may be fully aware that hypertension, high cholesterol and low insulin levels—or high insulin levels in some

cases—are high-risk factors in developing a number of chronic diseases, but ultimately GPs must diagnose and guide patients to a risk management program. It is here that there are preventative health bottlenecks, because of the high pressure on local clinics, and this is where the difficulties lie. It can, as some of my constituents have reported, take up to three weeks to get a doctor's appointment. Sometimes they just give up. The long wait can prevent or dissuade people from seeking a check-up. Often, people wait until late-stage symptoms develop, at which point hospitalisation may result. If they had had earlier diagnosis and treatment, they might have avoided serious complications and so saved significant pain and suffering—and money. While advertising may be able to bring about general societal awareness, nothing is more powerful than a doctor telling a patient that if they do not change their habits they are likely to develop a chronic illness. More support must be given to reduce the bottleneck. The government needs to listen to the concerns of general practitioners, especially where superclinics are planned, to make sure that we are filling those gaps and are value adding, rather than simply replicating services.

The other issue I will touch on is oral health. Sometimes the first sign of a serious chronic health issue is seen in a person's oral health, yet this remains one of the seriously neglected areas of health reform. It is absolutely critical that people have access to dentists and good oral health, because this is undoubtedly a significant factor. The shadow health minister, the member for Dickson, has made some very sensible and supportable recommendations in relation to this bill. We need to deal with this terrible scourge of chronic illness, which is going to cost us dearly, not only in human suffering but in the financial cost to the nation, communities and individuals. The recommendations in relation

to this bill are very sensible and supportable. I hope the government does work in a bipartisan way to ensure the very best outcome in how we approach the public in order to minimise chronic illness, and all of its complications and high costs, in the community.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (1.14 pm)—I commence my contribution to this debate on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010 by also imploring that we have a bipartisan approach to this legislation and by encouraging the opposition to support the establishment of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency. I know that this bill or a very similar bill—there have been some amendments to the legislation—was introduced into the parliament in 2009. I spoke in the debate at that time and I listened to the contribution of the member for Dickson. It disappointed me that he could not give wholehearted support to the establishment of this agency because this government—the previous Rudd government and now the Gillard government—has had a very strong commitment to fighting preventable diseases. This is best done through having a very strong preventative health strategy and through a coordinated National Preventive Health Agency.

This bill currently has a commencement date of 2010. The agency will commence automatically six months after the bill receives royal assent if it is not proclaimed before then. This is very important because it means we will not be back here debating this legislation again if there is some hiccup in the other place. It is very important that we get the Australian National Preventive Health Agency operating, because we have so many lifestyle diseases in this country. We have so many diseases that can be addressed through preventative health strategies. This agency needs to be operational. The legislation we have before us today looks at the number of meetings of the advisory council in 2011, the

timing around the development and approval of the strategy, and timing and presentation of annual reports to the parliament. This legislation creates a framework for the agency.

I would like to touch a little, in the time I have before the parliament, on the importance of fighting preventable diseases. One of the earmarks of the Labor government has been its approach to preventable diseases and how we can combat them—preventable diseases such as obesity, drug and alcohol abuse and smoking. They will be key priorities of the new National Preventative Health Agency. This government has joined forces with peak health groups to call on the parliament to support this legislation. The original bill received wide consultation and was broadly welcomed by stakeholders. Many urged that it be quickly introduced into parliament. I last spoke on this 12 months ago and we still have not got an operational agency. The Commonwealth government will take the major funding responsibility, as we all know, and I spoke about this in my contribution to a debate earlier this week on public hospitals and primary care. Along with that, we need to have in place a structure, an agency, to deal with preventable diseases and take a lot of the pressure off our hospitals. If you can deal with a problem before it becomes a major illness, then we will be a lot better off.

I would like to address a couple of the preventable diseases that this agency will oversee and some of the lifestyle issues that are associated with it. In this parliament I have introduced five private members' motions. The first one I introduced looked at stroke and discussed Stroke Awareness Week. It looked at the number of people that suffer from stroke and strategies to deal with stroke. One of the key factors was to address issues such as obesity as well as tobacco and alcohol abuse. That just demonstrates how important this agency will be.

I had a private member's motion in the House this week on Pink Ribbon Day looking at breast cancer. Once again, lifestyle issues impact on the number of people who develop this type of cancer, along with many other cancers. I also have a motion on the *Notice Paper* looking at cardiovascular disease. That motion talks about what cardiovascular disease is, talks about the fact that it kills one Australian every 11 minutes, looks at the effect that cardiovascular disease has on Australians and looks at how it prevents 1.4 million people in Australia from living a full life because of the disability caused by that disease. The motion goes on to state what the risk factors are for cardiovascular disease—tobacco smoking, insufficient exercise, poor nutrition, alcohol consumption, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, being overweight and having diabetes. These are all lifestyle issues. Cardiovascular disease can be addressed if these issues are addressed.

In my previous contribution to this debate, I highlighted issues such as binge drinking. I referred to the fact that the AMA sees this as one of the biggest problems in our society. Not only does it affect a person's health; it leads to road accidents, domestic violence, vandalism and chaos within our community. Figures that I have looked at show that there is a very high level of alcohol use and abuse in Australia. Ninety per cent of people have tried alcohol and 83 per cent have consumed an alcoholic drink in the past 12 months. Only about 10 per cent of people have never tried alcohol. The AMA has found that about eight per cent of Australians drink daily and about 41 per cent of Australians drink weekly. There is an enormous cost associated with alcohol abuse, and alcohol abuse is responsible for large numbers of hospital beds being occupied in our country. This is an important issue to address, and what better

way of addressing it than through the Australian National Preventive Health Agency?

I also have a motion on the *Notice Paper* about obesity. In the last parliament, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing held an inquiry into obesity. The report from that inquiry was called *Weighing it up*. We looked at a number of issues surrounding obesity, such as diet, exercise and planning at a local government level. In looking at this, we found that Australia is one of the countries in the developed nations with the greatest number of people who are overweight. That is quite frightening. It is associated with diseases such as diabetes, which the member for Pearce spent some time talking about; cardiovascular disease, which I touched on earlier in my contribution to this debate; stroke; and breast cancer—it is also a factor there. It is an issue that we as a nation need to address.

One in two adults and one in four children in Australia are overweight—frightening statistics. We face a situation in which children growing up in Australia look like they will die at a younger age than the generation that we are part of. That has never happened before. It will be a very sad state of affairs if it is allowed to happen. Establishing this agency, which will allow the Commonwealth to control and coordinate a cross-government approach to obesity, is one of the most important things that we in this parliament can do in this regard. Everybody involved in the sector needs to be brought together so that they can work to address the issue of obesity.

The agency will allow for a strong social marketing program, with the government providing education, including education on nutrition, exercise and lifestyle issues. A healthy lifestyle means eating well, exercising well, using alcohol sensibly and cutting out smoking. If we do those things, we will reduce the number of people who require

beds in our hospitals and reduce the cost to government from these lifestyle diseases that are largely preventable.

One lifestyle choice that people make is to smoke. Smoking is responsible for a large number of people requiring hospital beds. The government has a proposal to bring in plain cigarette packaging. There is no better place to coordinate that through than this proposed new agency. The government has led the world in reforms to stop smoking, such as by increasing the tobacco excise this year by 25 per cent, by investing another \$5 million in quit services, by investing \$85 million in anti-tobacco campaigns and by being the first country in the world to introduce plain packaging for tobacco products. Those are very important steps and strategies to address the issue of those lifestyle diseases that have developed in our country.

I implore those on the other side of the House to support this legislation. We need a National Preventive Health Agency in this country to coordinate our approach to fighting all the lifestyle diseases that I mention and to address the causes of those diseases, such as smoking, alcohol abuse and obesity. This is really important legislation that needs to pass this parliament as soon as possible.

Ms O'NEILL (Robertson) (1.29 pm)—In the short time that I have been in this place I have often heard other members say that they are pleased to be able to speak on various pieces of legislation, and I imagine this will generally be the case for me too. But, having reviewed the background to this debate and seen the evidence of aching need for preventive health in our community, I really cannot be pleased about the fact that the Australian National Preventive Health Agency is not already doing the work that it is meant to do.

Today we are revisiting a bill that, as far as I can see, should have been made into law a year ago. We are debating the Australian

National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010 one whole year after the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2009 should have been enacted. That is a whole year in which the Australian National Preventive Health Agency could have set its agenda and progressed its preventive health campaigns as a statutory authority. In fact, it is now almost two years since COAG agreed to the establishment of ANPHA. That is a whole year of prevention lost. Had last year's legislation been passed, ANPHA would already be functioning with its own CEO and advisory council and working to its own strategic plan and operating plan. The agency would already be prosecuting life-altering and, I do not think it is an exaggeration to say, life-saving national health education campaigns on smoking and obesity and supporting the nation's health ministers in that considerable task.

That the agency is not already in existence to carry on its preventive health work is an indictment of the obstructive culture of the coalition that has flourished under the current Leader of the Opposition. How does delaying the installation of ANPHA 'hold the government to account', as the Leader of the Opposition is so fond of saying? This has absolutely nothing to do with holding the government to account and everything to do with holding back the government in its legislative agenda—never mind the social and health costs on the way.

The Leader of the Opposition has shown a callous disregard for the health of Australians who might be spared the burden of chronic disease by the work of the agency in not allowing this legislation to progress through the parliament. By way of preparation for today, I reviewed the *Hansard* of the debate on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2009. That debate took place before the current Leader of the Opposition assumed the position. It was encourag-

ing to read a number of wise contributions from both sides in September last year, when the bill was debated in this House. The member for Isaacs pointed out the direct support for ANPHA from organisations such as the Heart Foundation, the Public Health Association of Australia and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. The member for Pearce, whom I understand has a long-standing involvement with diabetes treatment and who spoke here again today, gave her total support to the general direction of the previous bill. My Central Coast colleague the member for Dobell, who spoke last year and again today, last year spoke of the productivity lost to our economy due to obesity—an enormous \$21 billion in 2005. It seemed like everyone was in heated agreement.

What happened? The legislation reached the other place, where the record shows that opposition senators, for no reason other than political opportunism, consigned the establishment of our first national preventive health agency to legislative purgatory. Twelve months later many of you find yourselves here again with pretty much the same bill. Only the date and the time frame have changed.

As a new member I now have the chance to contribute to the debate, but that is neither here nor there. It is regrettable, even shameful, that the establishment of ANPHA is still a matter for debate. I found the *Hansard* of 27 and 28 October last year, when the previous bill was debated in that place, particularly disturbing—especially the contributions of Senators Cormann and Birmingham. Did they even address the need for a preventive health agency, as agreed by COAG under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health? No, they did not. Did they address how they themselves would approach alleviating the \$6 billion annual cost to our healthcare system of chronic dis-

ease or the loss of productivity of approximately \$13 billion? No again. In fact, they failed to address any substantive preventive health arguments. Worse, Senator Birmingham spoke of preventive health initiatives as infringing on 'the way people choose—quite knowingly—to live their lives'. He even said:

... there are limits to how much government should interfere in people's lives to discourage them from leading unhealthy lives.

The current level of chronic disease in this country is a very serious matter. Frankly, it beggars belief that some of those in the opposition—note that I do not include them all here because I do not believe that there is a total moral vacuum on this issue in the coalition ranks and obviously the bipartisan support for the bill before the House reaffirms that—should be so blase about something like smoking, an addiction that looks set to kill one million Australians over the next decade. Is the death of these people and the suffering of their families really of such little import to the likes of Senator Birmingham? Is the preventable death of one million Australians a toll that is really something to be discounted and dismissed with that kind of misguided libertarian one-liner? Are these people for real?

The facts on smoking are compelling. I direct members to figure 1.1 in the Preventative Health Taskforce's National Preventative Health Strategy. The strategy reveals clearly that tobacco is the No. 1 risk factor contributing to Australia's overall burden of disease. The statistic, sourced from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, shows tobacco causing just under eight disability-adjusted life years. In layman's language that means almost eight years off your life.

Almost 2.9 million Australian adults smoke on a daily basis. Around half of these people who continue to smoke for a pro-

longed period will die early. Half will die in middle age. The total quantifiable costs of smoking to the economy, including the costs associated with loss of life, are estimated to be over \$31 billion. This information is all readily available for all to see in the strategy, yet it seems some in the Liberal Party are in no hurry.

I have a theory on smoking. Shall we say the smoke lifted during the election campaign when the links between the Liberal Party and big tobacco became clear. The Leader of the Opposition tried his hardest to weasel out of the connection and play it down but he was fooling no-one. How do you explain away \$2½ million in donations from British American Tobacco and Phillip Morris in the past 10 years?

There was also the attack ad campaign by the so-called Alliance of Australian Retailers against plain packaging for cigarettes. These ads had Liberal Party fingerprints all over them. Those opposite may try to deny it, but we all know that where there is smoke there is not only fire; there is also money for those willing to compromise their principles. I am proud to be in a party that has chosen, as a matter of principle, not to take donations from tobacco companies. I understand that some individuals on the other side may make a stand on principle too. I am sure these donations to the Liberal Party horrify many members of that party. But while the Liberals and the Nationals take big tobacco's dollar, how can they have any credibility when it comes to the preventive health sphere? I urge those right-thinking members opposite to reform their party so that, like the Labor Party, they take no donations from big tobacco.

When operational, ANPHA will take carriage of national-level social marketing campaigns on critical issues like smoking, obesity and binge drinking. Those of us in this

place who care for the health outcomes of our constituents want this agency in place, to roll out consistent, effective social marketing campaigns that will help us in our quest to change risky behaviours. I note the Parliamentary Library's excellent briefing in the *Bills Digest* and commentary about social marketing being most effective when integrated with other programs such as information about intervention, counselling and the like. And of course I have a particular interest in education within the school sector.

No-one underestimates the difficulty of what is involved in prevention education, but there are communities out there struggling with destructive cultures, particularly binge drinking. Changing such cultures requires persistence. We have to increase the sense of antithetical attitudes in communities, attitudes which stand in complete opposition to notions of binge drinking being normal Australian behaviour. As the minister has rightly pointed out, any debate about preventive health inevitably turns to disadvantage. So we look to where the worst health outcomes are.

Unsurprisingly the greatest prevalence of risk factors for chronic preventable disease are in the communities of greatest socioeconomic disadvantage. Perhaps that is why the Leader of the Opposition is so disinterested in preventive health, other than his own. The evidence is there for all to see, if they choose to. The National Preventative Health Strategy outlines how being overweight or obese and regular tobacco use are significantly greater among the lowest socioeconomic group of the Australian population. Excess body weight becomes more prevalent among Australians as they drop down the socioeconomic scale. Many factors—inequity in physical and social experiences in early life, access to and quality of education, exposure to marketing, even how cities are planned and designed and transport options—are

linked to increased consumption of tobacco, alcohol and energy-dense nutrient-poor foods. And which group bears the greatest burden of chronic preventable disease in our country? Our Indigenous communities. This is, without doubt, our greatest area of need.

Closing the gap in preventive health terms will mean lowering smoking rates from 50 per cent in Aboriginal men to the less than 20 per cent in the rest of the community. I should add that the aim is to get smoking rates down to below 10 per cent. The member for Dobell spoke earlier today about the 1970s and 1980s when Australia had a fantastic international reputation with our Quit smoking campaign, which was emulated in the state of California where they are continuing to advance their efforts through creative ways of engaging the community, acting in their own interests for the best health outcomes.

In the case of alcohol, one in six Indigenous adults reports drinking in such a way as to pose a long-term risk to their health. That figure, sadly, has risen since 2001. In this context, it is unconscionable that this bill be delayed any longer. We on this side of the House have made a record commitment to preventive health. I commend the minister for her efforts. I commend her also for ensuring that obligations under the National Partnership Agreement will still be met despite the opposition's intransigence.

The Commonwealth is progressing activities that the agency will take carriage of once it is operational. We are steadily moving to deliver better, fairer health outcomes for the Australian people. And the Australian people will hold the opposition accountable for any further obstruction to the rollout of a preventive health agenda. They must not take the wrecking ball to this important piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (1.43 pm)—As pleased as I am to speak in this debate and voice my strong support for Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010, it is very frustrating to know that over a year has passed since I made a similar speech about the government's commitment to this area of health policy and the importance of the national leadership and governance of preventive health initiatives at the heart of this bill. The government has long grasped the urgency for action in preventative health but it appears that the evidence of increasing rates of chronic disease, preventable disease more generally and the contribution of lifestyle factors to these problems, let alone any sense of responsibility to address this challenge, has passed the opposition and others by. As a result, the bill passed by this House at the end of last year did not pass the Senate before dissolution of the parliament in July. So we are back where we have started. We have lost much valuable time already, something all members and senators need to keep in mind as we debate the bill for the second time. Let us hope for a more responsible approach this time around.

There are a couple of changes to the bill as a result of the negotiation process and amendments which took place when it was before the Senate. The bill now requires the Preventative Health Agency to prepare strategic plans to run over a five-year period rather than the original three-year period. There is also now explicit reference to alcohol, tobacco and other substance abuse as well as obesity programs being included in the social marketing campaigns to be developed by the agency.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—Order! It being 1.45 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to

continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Great Barrier Reef: Project Catalyst

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (1.45 pm)—Sugar cane growers in the Mackay-Whitsunday region and their partners—the local natural resource management organisation Reef Catchments, Coca-Cola and WWF—have been recognised for their efforts to improve water quality in the region's Great Barrier Reef catchments. The partners in Project Catalyst were recently announced as national winners of the agriculture and food category in this year's Banksia Awards. The Banksia Awards are now in their 21st year of recognising and rewarding environmental excellence, and I congratulate the team behind Project Catalyst for their success in such a prestigious national competition.

Project Catalyst has always been a great initiative but the results from its first year have taken everyone by surprise and have elevated it to a model of farming practice that is of national and even international significance. In its first phase, efforts to reduce the pesticide, herbicide and sediment load leaving sugar cane farms have transformed the quality of 24,000 megalitres of run-off and drainage water entering the reef catchments around the Mackay and Whitsunday region. The Banksia judges commented that the project, involving 19 cane growers, had a major impact on a very sensitive ecosystem with potential to translate to other areas of the world experiencing similar challenges. Congratulations to everyone who has worked so hard to get Project Catalyst to this point and especially to Rob Cocco, Royce Bishop, Will Higham and the team at Reef Catchments, and of course to the growers who have invested their time and money to trial

these innovations that have proved so successful.

Infrastructure

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (1.46 pm)—I call on the government and all members to support the declaration that the Melbourne to Gladstone inland railway become a project of national significance and to intervene to provide the capital necessary to ensure this project is future-proofed by committing to the strategic link being a dual gauge railway with national links. I am passionate about the Port of Gladstone and its potential to become Australia's most important transport hub. A dual-gauge railway will improve the productivity of the Port of Gladstone as a nationally significant logistics hub and will provide a vital boost to Gladstone and the hinterland towns in my electorate. It will be in the national interest.

However, the Queensland government in its incompetence will only support the railway if it is a narrow gauge—that is narrow-minded thinking. If the federal government does not step in, tenders will be called for a narrow-gauge railway and this will mean that Gladstone—Australia's industrial powerhouse—will never be connected to the national rail system and its future as Australia's major bulk freight port will never be realised. This will be a tragedy. I call on the government and everyone in this place to support this project being declared a project of national significance.

Ovarian Cancer

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (1.48 pm)—This month I was honoured to be asked to be an ambassador for Frocktober Canberra 2010. Frocktober encourages Canberra women to don a frock during October to raise awareness about the symptoms of ovarian cancer and raise money for research. Hence my frock today!

Mr Hunt—I'm in!

Ms BRODTMANN—Thank you. We are all very familiar with the symptoms and treatments for breast and cervical cancer, but the non-specific symptoms of ovarian cancer make it hard to detect and awareness about the disease is comparatively low. Between 700 and 800 women in Australia have died from ovarian cancer each year since 1994. Unfortunately there are no proven screening tests for ovarian cancer so the prognosis is relatively poor. Between 2000 and 2006, women who were diagnosed with ovarian cancer were only 40 per cent as likely to live five years as other women. That is why I commend the Canberra women who organised Frocktober Canberra 2010 for their efforts. Congratulations and thanks to Amy Moon, Dr Lucy Bates, Reahn Atchison, Brigid Costello, Ramone Bisset, Cara Foster, Laarni Balila, and Claudia Vannithone. Through Frocktober these women set out to raise \$10,000 for research and so far they have doubled that with \$20,000. Thanks to all the Canberra women, men and businesses who have donated to this worthy women's health cause, and supported the local retail industry in the process.

Flinders Electorate: Infrastructure Charge

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (1.49 pm)—May I firstly congratulate the member for Canberra on her initiative in relation to ovarian cancer. It is a good, important, solid initiative with support from all members of this House. I want to raise briefly the actions of the Victorian government in imposing an extraordinary and unprecedented tax on landowners throughout parts of my electorate—the areas of Clyde, Cardinia, and Devon Meadows. The growth area infrastructure charge will be a tax of up to \$95,000 for landowners and landholders who do nothing. This tax will come in in a short period of time once the urban growth boundary planning process is complete.

Upon transfer of the land, the new owner will have to make that payment. The reality is that that payment will come straight off the bottom line of the money to be received by the seller. Long-standing farmers will suffer. Long-standing family owner groups will suffer. There is a better way which is equitable and fair, and that is the alternative proposal which has been put forward by the Victorian opposition which will help to protect farmers. Only at the point of development should a growth area infrastructure charge be levied, not at the point of transfer. It will guarantee that farms are destroyed and torn up. This must not be allowed to happen. We want to protect the land, protect the area, protect the farmers and have it only on development. *(Time expired)*

Tan Kien Ly

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (1.49 pm)—I rise today to speak about a man who I have come to consider a close friend and ally. Tan Kien Ly, or TK as he is known to many of us in the local community, is an active member of the Vietnamese community in south-west Sydney. He is an organiser of the New South Wales Postal and Telecommunications Branch of the CEPU and is certainly a very active member of the local Labor Party. TK has spent many years campaigning for a fair deal for workers and the local community that he has now come to call home. He has proven to be a strong strategic campaigner and, I have got to say, one that I relied on greatly in the lead-up to the last election.

TK, for his exemplary service and dedication to the Labor Party over the past 20 years, has been recognised with a 2010 McKell Award. I am very pleased that TK received this award; it shows that his service is recognised and appreciated. He has made an invaluable contribution to the community and, for the help that he has given me, I am deeply grateful.

Minister's Awards for Excellence for Employers of Australian Apprentices

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (1.52 pm)—Last night I attended the 2010 Minister's Awards for Excellence for Employers of Australian Apprentices right here in Parliament House. These awards recognise and celebrate the achievement of employers that demonstrate excellence in their training of Australian apprentices. It was wonderful to see my electorate of Solomon represented at these awards. I was grateful that I could be there to join in their celebrations and I would like to place on the record my congratulations to the finalists and winners. Mr David Frieбал, the senior field officer with Australian Apprenticeships NT, was recognised was for his commitment to helping Indigenous Australians, especially those in remote communities. Congratulations to David—well done.

Hastings Deering were the Northern Territory regional winner of the excellence award for employers of Australian apprentices. This is the third time Hastings Deering have won this award. This is a great achievement given that the awards have only been operating for 10 years and that you cannot compete two years in a row. So well done to Colin George and the Hastings Deering team. I also wish to place on the record my congratulations to Mike Harrison and his team at both GTNT and the Australian Apprenticeship Centre for their fantastic work in supporting employers with apprentices in the Northern Territory. The runner-up in this category was Macmahon Contractors Pty Ltd. Well done to you all. It is people and organisations like you that make our territory great.

Turkey: Republic Day

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen) (1.54 pm)—I rise to celebrate with the Australian-Turkish community and congratulate them on the 87th anniversary of the Turkish republic's

national day on 29 October. Republic Day in Turkey commemorates the creation of the Turkish republic back in 1923. I grew up in the suburb of Broadmeadows along with a large Australian-Turkish community. I was welcomed into their homes, learnt parts of their language and ate their food. They became my friends, my team mates, my classmates and my neighbours for years to come. As an Australian, I quickly learned of the great contribution that the Turkish community have made to our multicultural society. The Turkish community, like so many others, have brought with them more labour, skills and business ideas and they have helped shape our great nation.

After Turkey's victory in the war of independence, the Turkish parliament proclaimed the new Turkish state as a republic. In turn, a new constitution was adopted on 29 October 1923 and the leader in the Turkish war of independence, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, became the country's first president on that same day. These events will be celebrated this Friday and I extend my congratulations to the country of Turkey and particularly our Australian-Turkish community here in Australia.

Murray-Darling Basin

Dr STONE (Murray) (1.55 pm)—The Rochester irrigators, who are along the Campaspe River in northern Victoria, suffered from shocking drought impacts and had no water allocation for about four years. So, with great sadness and heavy hearts, some 90 per cent of them very recently—a few months back—decided to sell all of their water via the Victorian government to the environment, to the Commonwealth's environment trust. So they have virtually no water at all, just a few megalitres each of stock and domestic water, which is for flushing their toilets, washing their clothes, keeping

their garden alive and keeping their livestock alive.

Can you imagine their amazement when they read the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's guide, which said they should now be targeted to give up another 45 per cent of their water? This is extraordinary. Is it that the authority does not actually know what is going on—who has already sold their water to the environment—or do they want to claw back, to just one megalitre or no megalitres for those families who totally depend on that last bit of stock and domestic water to be able, literally, to live in this part of Australia. I think it is extraordinary. I suppose it is no more extraordinary than a lot of the other flaws and distressing inaccuracies in the Murray-Darling Basin Authority guide. Will the minister please make sure that the Murray-Darling Basin Authority gets its act together now and restores some confidence across the basin, because too many people are now putting their hands up in the air and saying, 'It is all too hard.'

Professor Berni Einoder AM

Mr LYONS (Bass) (1.56 pm)—I would like to congratulate Professor Berni Einoder AM, who has been honoured with a rare life membership of the Australian Orthopaedic Association. He received his award at the association's annual scientific meeting in Adelaide. This was most appropriate as Berni has edited the scientific journal of that organisation for many years. I first came across him when he was the club doctor at North Launceston Football Club and later in the Sports Medicine Federation. I then worked for him for 17 years at Launceston General Hospital.

I know no fiercer fighter for health, for training, for education and for research. Berni has been an active member of the Orthopaedic Association since 1973 and, when you use the word 'active' about Berni Eino-

der, you mean superactive. Berni does not suffer fools lightly, but in my working life he was the most loyal boss you could wish for. Berni certainly lives by his three Ds and one P—determination, dedication, discipline and perseverance. Berni has been a farmer, a tree grower, a skier, a windsurfer, a bushwalker and, in his younger days, a footballer. In an interview after his appointment, his advice to young people was, ‘You have got 80 years on this earth if you are lucky, so don’t muck around because every minute counts.’ Congratulations to Professor Berni Einoder AM, life member of the Australian Orthopaedic Association.

Kalamunda Schoolies Timor-Leste Project

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (1.58 pm)—I rise to speak about the Kalamunda schoolies Timor-Leste project. It provides year 12 school leavers with an alternative to what has become known as Schoolies Week or Leavers Week. The project commenced in 2008 and the team travels to three destination villages in Timor-Leste to complete humanitarian tasks for villages, such as laying a water pipeline, teaching English, improving community libraries and constructing a youth centre. I commend the project and wish to see similar projects developed around Australia. Such projects are good for students and the community.

In 2010, the team leaves on Sunday, 28 November and arrives back on Saturday, 11 December. I look forward to sending them off and hearing their stories when they arrive back. I congratulate the hard work put in by the committee volunteers who make the project a reality for students in the Shire of Kalamunda. On Saturday, 16 November I attended a quiz night to support these students travelling to Timor-Leste. It was great to see so many supporters of our local community supporting this initiative and I look forward to continuing my support for this

project for as long as I am the member for Hasluck.

Australian Youth Climate Coalition

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (1.59 pm)—I would like to talk today about the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Australia’s largest youth-run organisation with 56,000 members. Three of those members came to see me this week, Basha Stasak, Roman Zethoven and Lawrence McIntosh. These young people are passionate about educating and mobilising young Australians to take action on climate change in their communities and schools and at the national level.

The Australian Youth Climate Coalition is also calling for this parliament to commit to protecting the future for young Australians in a number of ways through: legislating for a price on carbon emissions as soon as possible; increasing our investment in renewable energy; and improving sustainability in schools through incorporation of sustainability as a fundamental part of the new national curriculum and through expanding the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative to more schools around Australia.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 pm, in accordance with standing order 43 the time for members’ statements has concluded. The Prime Minister, on indulgence.

TRAGEDIES IN INDONESIA

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (2.00 pm)—Members would be aware that early on the morning of 26 October a 7.4 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Sumatra caused a tsunami in and around the Mentawai Islands. Of course, this news would have caused many to reflect on the dreadful and tragic tsunami of Boxing Day in 2004. On this occasion it appears that a much, much smaller area has been affected, but lives have been lost. Initial reports are that tens of people have been killed and many more are missing and, of course, much

damage has been caused. On behalf of all members I deeply regret the loss of life and the damage caused and, of course, our thoughts go out to the families and loved ones of the people affected. The Australian government has offered assistance to the government of Indonesia should this be needed.

The region affected by the tsunami is, of course, also popular with Australian travellers and I think we are all aware that a number of them were in the area at the time the tsunami struck. At this stage we have no information to suggest that any Australians have been seriously injured or killed as a result of the tsunami. I am pleased to say, as members are no doubt aware, that a group of Aussie surfers, who were originally reported as missing, have been found safe and well. That is good news, indeed. Late last night officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade confirmed the safety and welfare of this group on board the *Southern Cross*. Australian Embassy officials in Jakarta are working to confirm the welfare of all Australians who are registered as being in the affected area. Those efforts are continuing. We also have a consular official on the ground.

Finally, it would be remiss of me to not also note that in another part of Indonesia the eruption of Mount Merapi has also caused tragic loss of life and hardship. Our thoughts are with the Indonesian people at this time.

The SPEAKER—The Leader of the Opposition, on indulgence.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (2.02 pm)—I rise briefly to support the words of the Prime Minister. The thoughts and prayers of the people of the northern beaches of Sydney were particularly engaged by the news from Indonesia, given that nine local surfers had been reported missing, including Mr Alex McTaggart, the

former state member for Pittwater, and thank God they have been found safe and well. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Indonesia at this time and with everyone who is caught up in this latest tragedy to befall the archipelago. The opposition will, of course, support all reasonable measures that the government might choose to take to assist.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Economy

Mr ABBOTT (2.03 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I point out to the Prime Minister that over the past year electricity costs are up 12.4 per cent, water and sewerage costs are up 12.8 per cent, gas is up 9.8 per cent, child care is up 7.2 per cent, medical costs are up 6.9 per cent and education costs are up 5.8 per cent. I ask the Prime Minister: how is her great big new tax on everything going to help families with their costs of living?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Of course, it points to the debate that we have been having, in this parliament and beyond, over the last few days about economic reform, about pursuing economic reform or about seeking to wreck economic reform. I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to my speech to the Australian Industry Group dinner in Parliament House earlier this week. He, unfortunately, was not able to be in attendance, but a number of members of his political party were in attendance so they would be able to advise him of those words.

What I pointed to in that speech is the fact that electricity prices have been rising as a reflection of underinvestment in electricity generation capacity. When we look at that underinvestment and look at the legacy and the pressure that it is bringing into the electricity system now, our thoughts immediately run to the future. I said during that speech that I do not want the next 10 years to be like

the last 10 years when we continued to see underinvestment.

The reality is—and the Leader of the Opposition, if he talked to representatives from the electricity industry, would soon find this out—that investment is being held up now because of lack of certainty about a carbon price. To the extent that investment is being made, it is running to short-term stock-gap capacity rather than to the long-term baseload power that the system needs. If the Leader of the Opposition is as concerned about electricity prices as he claims to be, then the rational course would be for him to get on board with an agenda of working through and discussing the pricing of carbon. And the door, of course, is open to him to participate in those discussions, accepting the need for a carbon price and participating in the multiparty climate change committee.

I understand that cost-of-living pressures are there for Australian families. Because I understand that, we are taking steps about working through questions of pricing carbon. I do not want to see continued underinvestment in electricity generation and supply putting upwards pressure on prices. I also want to continue to deliver those things to working families which will help with cost-of-living pressures. We have implemented tax cuts to make a real difference. We have created the education tax rebate to help with the cost of getting kids get back to school and we will extend that to school uniforms, as promised. We increased the child care tax rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent and will move to the payment of that fortnightly. We will deliver our promised changes to family tax benefits to assist with the costs of teenagers, understanding that the costs of kids do not go down when kids turn 16. To the Leader of the Opposition, who continues his slogan driven fear campaign, I say: get to grips with the underlying complex issues. If the Leader of the Opposition really wants to

make a difference to working families the door is open to him to do so.

Economic Reform

Ms OWENS (2.08 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Why is bipartisanship important in ensuring enduring benefits from economic reform?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the member for Parramatta for her question. I know that she is concerned about a strong Australian economy and continuing prosperity. I am tempted to say that the answer to her question about the need for bipartisanship in economic reform is that it stops the asking of silly questions. The reasons for bipartisanship for economic reform are far deeper than that. First and foremost is that economic reform matters to the future prosperity of our nation. It matters to our productivity, which is so much a driver of future wealth. Economic reform is necessary to ensure that Australians have the skills and capacities they need in the workforce of today to drive innovation, to take the burden of red tape off the shoulders of business so that more effort can go into productive work rather than unproductive work. Economic reform is necessary to increasing labour force participation, because we know that, amongst the many contemporary challenges we face, one of them is the ageing of our society and the changing of the dependency ratio. Consequently, we cannot afford in the long term working-age adults of capacity being sidelined from the labour market because they lack the skills and capacity to participate in it.

Economic reform matters to the design and efficiency of markets. It matters to the competitive advantage for this country as we compete in the world. Of course, vital to that competitive advantage is to have the infrastructure of the 21st century—to have world-class infrastructure in roads, rail and ports but also to have world-class infrastructure

through the National Broadband Network. Economic reform takes deep policy thinking. It takes leadership and it takes persistence. Inevitably, there will be setbacks along the way. But persistence pays, and we are a government that intends to be persistent.

I am asked about the importance of bipartisanship to economic reform. Given that economic reform is not easy, there is a choice for oppositions: choose to facilitate that reform or choose to stymie that reform. One way of stymieing reform is to come up with cheap, populist slogans to try to distract from the real debate. We have seen that from the shadow Treasurer over recent days whereby he has basically spruiked re-regulation of interest rates in a way that would hurt young couples and working families by ensuring that they would be unable to get a mortgage. That is what re-regulation of interest rates would mean.

I did this morning think for a brief moment that maybe the Leader of the Opposition was turning away from the foolish course of following the shadow Treasurer down the track of these kinds of economic adventurous policies, because on three occasions the Leader of the Opposition was asked whether he backed the shadow Treasurer's nine-point plan and on three occasions he determined not to do so. But later he rang in to a radio station to explain that he had not backed the nine-point plan because, 'You know what it's like in these doorstops, you've got a lot on your mind.'

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. The Prime Minister was asked about the government's position, so how can slugging and bagging the opposition about our position be relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The question went to the importance of bipartisanship in ensuring enduring benefits of eco-

nomie reform. The Prime Minister will be directly relevant to that question.

Ms GILLARD—In conclusion, the Leader of the Opposition apparently has a lot on his mind. I am not sure what is on his mind but it certainly is not a plan for economic reform. In the absence of his own plan I say to the Leader of the Opposition: stop trying to wreck the government's reform. Facilitate reform in the interests of this nation.

Electricity Prices

Mr ANDREWS (2.13 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to analysis that shows that in five years time electricity bills will reach up to \$10,000 a year for families if a carbon tax is introduced. Why is the Prime Minister proposing a carbon tax that will increase the cost of living for struggling Australian families?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the member for his question. Can I perhaps ask him in return why he is determined to see continued underinvestment in electricity generation that will put upwards pressure on prices. I say to the member who asked the question that, when he looks around the nation at increasing electricity prices, whether it is in Western Australia or in other states and territories, he will find that the explanation is underinvestment in electricity generation. If he is in any doubt about that, I suggest that he get on the phone to the Premier of Western Australia, who could quickly explain the concept to him.

When we look forward and say, 'Well, how are we going to get this investment in electricity generation?' what we hit absolutely is the uncertainty from the electricity industry that they will not invest until they know what the economic settings are with a carbon price. We are talking, of course, about investments worth billions of dollars, and people rightly want certainty in the making

of those investments. That is why it is important to work through the question of pricing carbon. Yes, it is not an easy reform. It will take work and thought. It will take the generation of consensus, which is why the government, with the opportunities of this new parliament, have been prepared to say that we will work in that way through the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee. I say again, as I said to the Leader of the Opposition earlier, if the member asking the question is seriously concerned about increasing electricity prices then there is a way of constructively joining this debate, and the way of doing that would be to acknowledge that this is a nation that needs to work through the question of pricing carbon and to join the mechanism to do that. In the absence of the preparedness to work constructively, what we see from the opposition is that they are full of complaint but have absolutely no idea about any solutions.

Mr ABBOTT—Mr Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. Could the Prime Minister explain how raising taxes will somehow lower prices, and when will she stop playing politics with people's futures and get on with governing this country?

The SPEAKER—I accept the first part of the question as being a supplementary, but the Leader of the Opposition should avoid stretching the supplementary nature of questions.

Ms GILLARD—As a man who has advocated increasing taxes, which the Leader of the Opposition did at the recent election, presumably he has had time to think through questions of increased tax, with his increased company tax inevitably hitting working families. So, when the Leader of the Opposition talks about the cost of living, he may want to remind himself and remind others that he stands for increased company tax and increased prices for working families. On the

question of carbon pricing and electricity, what I would say to the Leader of the Opposition is that, if he wanted to get out an economics textbook, it might be able to teach him a little bit about something called 'demand' and something called 'supply'. When you look at something called 'demand' and something called 'supply' it then tells you something about 'price'. When we apply those rules to electricity generation—and I know it can get complicated with a graph, an X-axis and a Y-axis and all the rest of it—or when we apply that economics to electricity pricing, what we see is increasing demand and increasing uncertainty in relation to supply. We have had a decade of underinvestment. Uncertainty by the industry in pricing carbon is constricting investment. If you talk to representatives of the sector, they will say that uncertainty means that, to the extent that there are new investment dollars, they tend to go for stopgap proposals rather than the generation of the baseload power we need. We need to correct that circumstance. Providing certainty to industry is vital to correcting that circumstance. That is why the government, in a collaborative and consultative way through the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee, is working through the question of pricing carbon.

Mr Andrews—Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the document 'Bills may quadruple to \$10,000 a year'. What are you running away from?

Leave not granted.

The SPEAKER—The member for Menzies will be very careful.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I am sure the Leader of the House will get over it.

Broadband

Ms ROWLAND (2.19 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Why is restruc-

turing the telecommunications sector important in delivering the National Broadband Network so that every Australian business and household can get the benefits of super-fast broadband?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the member for Greenway for her question and note her passion, enthusiasm and expertise when it comes to the question of the National Broadband Network. I think the member for Greenway is going to be a bit surprised, as will others in this House, when I quote the following statement made this morning by the Leader of the Opposition. He said:

Let me just make these very important points. The National Broadband Network is not an economic reform ...

Mr Abbott interjecting—

Ms GILLARD—The Leader of the Opposition is full of compliments for his own work! On this side of the House and, to be fair to the crossbenchers, I believe far more broadly it is understood that the National Broadband Network and restructuring of telecommunications in this country is a classic piece of microeconomic reform. It is about better competition. Of course, in this country, we have pursued competition policy—and much of this used to be bipartisan politics before the Leader of the Opposition—as a microeconomic reform, and restructuring telecommunications is about competition. It is about creating a transparent regulatory framework that delivers quality, choice and competitiveness—a classic piece of microeconomic reform. It is about creating a marketplace where entrants do not face prohibitive barriers so that you can have more people coming in, offering more diversified products and putting downwards pressure on prices. This is what the government is committed to. We understand that it is a microeconomic reform. But, on the other side, there appears to be emerging a variety

of views. We have the Leader of the Opposition saying, ‘This isn’t a piece of economic reform.’ The opposition went to the last election actually saying that. Its policy document said:

The Coalition will cancel Labor’s reckless and expensive National Broadband Network.

Then the Leader of the Opposition tasked the member for Wentworth with demolishing the National Broadband Network. But the member for Wentworth, when he was asked about these things, said on the question of whether or not he was going to demolish the NBN, ‘Look, my interest is not in bringing down the NBN or in demolishing the NBN.’ It appears that the member for Wentworth is leading the opposition into a new position where it is not going to oppose the structural separation of Telstra, even though that has been coalition policy for some time. Unfortunately, whilst that move to support structural separation is welcome news, it is not joined with an understanding about how structural separation relates to the National Broadband Network. Apparently, the new coalition policy—I think it is their 19th or their 20th—on broadband is to create a new wholesale company codenamed Can Co. Actually I think it should be ‘Slow Co.’ because the only thing it is going to do is deliver less speed, less competition, less choice and less innovation to Australians. We are determined to deliver the National Broadband Network and, once again, we say to the Leader of the Opposition, ‘Support this economic reform.’ (*Time expired*)

Electricity Prices

Mr VAN MANEN (2.23 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Given today’s inflation data show that households are already under pressure from massive increases in the costs of electricity, gas, water, health, child care and education, why is the government

persisting with its plan to double the cost of electricity generation through a carbon tax?

Mr SWAN—I do thank the member for his question about today's CPI data, because it is very important. I think it is important because it shows that inflation is moderating. Underlying inflation at 2.4 per cent in the figures today is now at its lowest level in five years. I would have thought those opposite might have had something positive to say about that. CPI inflation for the quarter was 0.7 per cent and over the year it was 2.8 per cent, and this is down from 3.1 per cent.

The government is not complacent about these figures. We are not complacent about them at all. We do have a strong economy and, as I was explaining to the House yesterday, very strong job creation. We are now in mining boom mark 2 and that does put a very big obligation on the government to invest in extra capacity in the economy, and no area could be more important here than superfast broadband to lift our productivity, to lift our economic capacity. But it is not just that—it is the investment in the roads and the rail and the ports. It is that investment in capacity which is the best way to secure growth with lower inflation. That is very, very important. We do acknowledge that utility prices have risen substantially in recent times. That has been something that the Prime Minister has addressed at length, firstly in her speech to the Australian Industry Group the other night and again today in the House.

As the Prime Minister has explained, that is why we have put in place three tranches of tax cuts over three years, recognising that families are under financial pressure. It is why we put substantial increases into the education childcare cash rebate. It is why we are putting in place the education tax refund. It is why we are supplying additional family payments to families with teenage children. We are doing all of those things. But what

we must do over time if we are to achieve sustainable growth with lower inflation is get the economic fundamentals right. There is simply no other alternative and that is why it is so disappointing to see that the economic consensus that we have had in this country has been fractured by those opposite.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: the minister was not asked about economic consensus. He was asked about why putting a carbon price on will reduce the cost-of-living pressures on struggling families. He needs to talk about carbon taxes.

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The question referred to the inflation data and the cost of a number of items that were listed and then went on to the aspect that the manager has spoken about. The Treasurer is responding to the question as per the standing orders, but I hope that he is not encouraged to wander from that.

Mr SWAN—Yes, Mr Speaker, I was explaining that fundamental economic reform is, of course, tomorrow's prosperity. It is the key to sustainable growth; it is the key to lower inflation. A price on carbon is part of the fundamental reforms that we require such as the investment in superfast broadband. So fundamental reform is the key to sustainable growth and it is the key to achieving inflation outcomes that are consistent with our objectives. Today, we have seen some commentary from the former Prime Minister Mr Howard. We have also seen some commentary from the former Treasurer Mr Costello. There is one thing that they agree on: that the populism of those opposite is a trashing of their economic reform record.

Mr Pyne—Sit down, windbag.

The SPEAKER—The member for Sturt will withdraw.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, I withdraw in deference to you. I did not realise ‘windbag’ was unparliamentary. I withdraw.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Sturt knows that he should withdraw without condition and he knows that when he does it in defiance of standing order 65(b) there is a lower standard. Whether he likes his expressions or not, that is the way that I treated him last parliament and I will continue it in this parliament.

Banking

Mr STEPHEN JONES (2.29 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the importance of sensible policies to support competition in the banking sector and the government’s views on recent commentary on banking competition?

Mr SWAN—I thank the member for Throsby for that question because, as we were saying in the House the other day, the global financial crisis did have a fundamental impact on competition in our banking sector and it did hit the smaller lenders very hard. Of course, there is no silver bullet solution to this challenge. These are problems that will not be solved overnight. There are a variety of reforms occurring in the international banking sector which have ramifications here. The government has been working very hard to make sure that those reforms are appropriate for Australia because those reforms are very important when it comes to certainty in our financial sector.

The government is also committed to reform here domestically when it does come to banking competition. It is the best way to put downward pressure on rates and certainly the best way to assist small business and homeowners. The government has put forward a package of measures to help smaller lenders to compete with the big banks and we have put in place tough new consumer laws to

crack down on unfair mortgage exit fees. There is our investment of \$16 billion in AAA-rated RMBS. That is important to provide funding support to the smaller lenders. It has been the strength of our system that avoided the destruction that occurred in so many other financial systems around the world.

The one thing we know we cannot do is fracture that consensus I was talking about before. Last week we had the shadow Treasurer come out spinning out hot air about how he was going to reregulate the banks and threaten the very independence of the Reserve Bank. So we had this brain implosion last week from the shadow Treasurer and he has spent the last four or five days trying to mop it up.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: if ‘windbag’ is unparliamentary, ‘brain implosion’ is unparliamentary and I ask that it be withdrawn.

The SPEAKER—Any reference in that manner is argumentative, I would agree. I can agree on a different point of order that the intent of the new standing orders was that there should be less argument, less personality and more issues in the answers. I would ask that the Treasurer keep that in mind.

Mr SWAN—I was asked for any commentary on recent views about banking regulation and the financial system. I was talking about the fracturing of the bipartisan consensus we have had in this House when it comes to the independence of the Reserve Bank. That has now been fractured by some of the statements that have been made by the shadow Treasurer. There is now a fracturing of consensus within the Liberal Party on the banking system.

Mr Dutton—That is a complete lie.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Dickson will withdraw.

Mr Dutton—I withdraw.

The SPEAKER—Just to explain to the House, if reference is made to comments without all the added argument and descriptions of members that are unnecessary, I would have to rule that was directly relevant. It may be something that, in the review of the procedures, people might like to take up. To the extent that a question is drafted that seeks comment about recent comments on the banking sector, I will regrettably allow those relevant answers. But when it goes to other matters and argument, that is where I think we find a line.

Mr SWAN—This morning the opposition leader was asked three times whether he supported the plan put forward by the shadow Treasurer last Thursday and three times in a row he refused to answer that question. As the Prime Minister said, he had to go out and mop it up later on radio.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: in the spirit of the 43rd Parliament, clearly the Treasurer's answer is not relevant to this question. He is not responsible for commentary or the opposition's views.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. I have already ruled on these things. Yet again the difficulty we have is that the Manager of Opposition Business wants to raise points of order and then not listen to the responses, so we will get on with the Treasurer receiving the call again.

Mr SWAN—This nine-point plan that was put out by the shadow Treasurer last week has now been rejected by a number of frontbenchers. At its core it only really has one proposition—that is, he wants to have an inquiry into the financial system, which simply ignores the fact that we have got this fundamental reformation of the international financial system with all of its implications for Australia and the need for certainty.

There is nothing else in any of those nine points but populism. There is no substance. There is about as much meat in the shadow Treasurer's plan as there is in a pack of chicken nuggets.

Banking

Mr HOCKEY (2.36 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to the announcement today by the National Australia Bank of a 63 per cent increase in its profit to \$4.2 billion. Given the Treasurer has now given 32 warnings to the banks, I ask the Treasurer: will he accept the recommendation of the ACCC, which is supported by the coalition, and put in place legislation to prevent price signalling?

Mr SWAN—I thank the shadow Treasurer for his question. It follows the answer that I was giving before, because the government is absolutely committed to making our banking system—and, indeed, our economy—as competitive as possible. I do think there has been a degree of sense in some of the suggestions that have been made by the Chairman of the ACCC.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr Hockey—That was one of the nine, you dope!

Mr SWAN—I am sorry, but it was not. It was not a suggestion or an original thought of those opposite at all. This is something that the Chairman of the ACCC has talked about on a number of occasions, and the government has been talking to him about it, as any responsible government would do. What we have put in place so far is a range of very significant reforms, particularly the consumer reforms I was talking about before and, of course, the investment in the AAA rated residential mortgage backed securities, which are securing funding to banks. I have made it very, very clear that there is no justi-

fication for very profitable banks moving above any change in the cash rate that should come from the Reserve Bank—no justification at all. The figures from the NAB today proved that yet again.

Mr Hockey—Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table my speech. Item No. 1 is, ‘Let’s give the ACCC power to investigate collusive price signalling.’ You just said it was a great speech. Thank you.

Mr Swan interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! Leave is not granted. The Treasurer will resume his seat. The Treasurer has not got the call. the member for North Sydney has not got the call, leave is not granted—and somebody is going to help me out by jumping!

Health Reform

Ms O’NEILL (2.38 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing. What is the scale of quality and safety problems in our health system? What health reforms is the government proposing to improve the safety and quality of health care? How have these been received? And what is the government’s response?

Ms ROXON—I thank the member for Robertson for her question. She has a number of health services in her electorate and I know, like many on this side of the House, would be concerned about the sheer scale of problems that occur in our hospitals and in our health system. It is extraordinary that today, when the government is making efforts to tackle what is such a serious problem, those opposite have stooped to a new low, putting many thousands of Australian lives at risk.

Let me take the parliament through some of these numbers. One in 10 patients in our hospitals across the country experiences an adverse event or has a near miss. One in 30 adult patients contract an infection, which

means—for those opposite who are hollering—that two million extra bed days are needed every year because of incidents that occur in our hospitals. And 12,000 Australians every year acquire bloodstream infections. Of those 12,000 people, a quarter—nearly twice the national road toll—die every year because of infections which are acquired in our hospitals.

Those opposite are misguided in their view about this legislation, if they want to holler that we should just blame the states. This is a piece of legislation to hold the states accountable, and those opposite have actually voted against it. I would like to highlight—because this is the first piece of health reform legislation that this parliament has voted on—that every National Party member and every Liberal Party member has voted against this measure. I thank those on the crossbenches for supporting this important measure. They obviously are concerned that we do something about these shameful statistics. In fact, those opposite who are still yelling may like to be reminded that the first person who introduced this body as a temporary body was the Leader of the Opposition. But now, extraordinarily, when we seek to make this permanent—so that this body can have some teeth, so that we can actually hold the states, the hospitals and others in the system to account—the Leader of the Opposition and his party are against it.

How is this possibly consistent? I think it is clear that the coalition is indicating that when it comes to health reform it is going to block us every step of the way, even if it means that thousands of Australian lives which could be saved will not benefit from these sorts of reforms. It is a great shame that the Leader of the Opposition, who has the decency to smile when he knows he introduced this first step, is now being completely inconsistent. Then you have the member for Dickson, the shadow minister for health,

who has shown in two years that he opposes a lot of things but does not stand for anything. He did not want to support a tax on alcopops. He has been anti nurse, he has been anti prevention, he has been anti reform, he has been pro millionaire, he was anti apology when the parliament apologised to Indigenous Australians and now he is even anti safety when thousands of Australians die in our hospitals every year. Shame!

Banking

Mr HOCKEY (2.42 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his bank account switching package, which came into place on 1 November 2008. How many Australians have switched banks as a result of your package?

Mr SWAN—I thank the shadow Treasurer for that question. He asks about the bank switching package that we did put in place—something that those opposite could not find the wit to do in 12 years.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Treasurer will get to the question.

Mr SWAN—The introduction of that package was then followed by the global financial crisis and of course the global recession. It was also followed by a marked reduction in rates. It is true to say that in those circumstances it was not utilised strongly, for commonsense reasons. As I said before, there is no silver bullet when it comes to competition.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr Hockey—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: a specific question—how many people had switched bank accounts since 2008. How many?

The SPEAKER—Order! The Treasurer.

Mr SWAN—The bank switching package was part of a range of measures which have been introduced by this government over

time, including the ones I was talking about before, such as tough new laws to crack down on unfair mortgage exit fees. That is a very important reform, as are the strong reforms we are putting forward for credit cards and our \$16 billion investment in AAA-rated RMBS. There are a number of other reforms, such as strengthening deposit funding for smaller lenders—that is a 50 per cent discount being phased up to \$1,000 worth of interest income—and, of course, all of the bank guarantees. I think it is a comprehensive package which is going to help a lot of Australians.

Carbon Farming Initiative

Mrs D'ATH (2.45 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Will the Minister update the House on the government's election commitment to establish the Carbon Farming Initiative?

Mr Hunt interjecting—

The SPEAKER—I simply say to the member for Flinders that if he wants to ask a question he can come to the despatch box when it is his side's call, but he cannot just do it by defying 65(b), which I got him to read yesterday.

Mr COMBET—I thank the member for Petrie for her question. Today the government has announced the appointment of six people of particularly pertinent expertise who will form the Domestic Offsets Integrity Committee. This committee has the task of assessing the proposed methods for developing and selling carbon credits. It is the first step in the implementation of the government's Carbon Farming Initiative. When the Carbon Farming Initiative is up and running it will enable farmers, foresters and landholders to receive offset credits for actions that reduce or store carbon pollution. These credits can be sold and thus provide opportu-

nities to generate income. This is an initiative that is good for rural and regional Australia.

The Carbon Farming Initiative will cover a wide range of practices in the land and agricultural sector. It has the capacity and the potential to provide significant benefits. Farmers and landholders can use the income stream that is generated from their carbon abatement to reinvest in their businesses, their farms and their communities. Activities such as reforestation, capturing emissions from existing landfills, better livestock management, improved soil practices and savannah fire management are just some of the many methods that may generate carbon credits.

It is encouraging to see that businesses in the carbon markets are already getting ready for this initiative. Only recently, a company known as Carbon Conscious has undertaken to trade 10,000 of these credits. It has the potential to be quite a significant market and one of significant benefit to the rural sector of the economy.

The role of the committee, the members of which have been announced today, will be to ensure that the carbon credits that are generated under the Carbon Farming Initiative will have market integrity and will lead to sound environmental outcomes. Stakeholders will be engaged on the detail of the Carbon Farming Initiative and formal public consultation will take place during this year and early next year.

This is one very tangible and constructive way for members of the House, particularly those who are representing rural and regional communities, to engage with the government's action to deal with the challenge of climate change. I encourage those members of the House, particularly those representing rural and regional communities, to do so. Of course, members of the House such as the member for New England and the member

for Lyne have already been engaged in some conversation with the government about this issue. I think it is an important issue and I encourage other members of the House to similarly take a constructive rather than obstructionist approach.

Banking

Mr BANDT (2.49 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. With the NAB's announcement today of a \$4.2 billion profit, following the Commonwealth Bank's huge \$5.6 billion profit posted earlier this year, will the government help people take a step towards getting a fairer deal from the banks by supporting the Greens' proposal to ban \$2 ATM fees?

Mr SWAN—I thank the member for Melbourne for his question. There has been very substantial reform already in the area of ATM fees and I think that has made that sector much more competitive. So, no, I do not accept the policy that is being put forward, but I do accept that over time there has been a need for much more competition in this area. We are seeing the substantial results of that now and I am happy to send that to the member for him to have a look at. We are discussing what I regard as very important issues about the competitiveness of our banking system and what we can do to make it more competitive over time. The government has been focused on those issues.

The government is extremely focused on the reforms coming through the new Basel 3 proposals, which are being processed by the Financial Stability Board and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. Indeed, when the Prime Minister and I go to the G20 conference in Seoul those proposals will be a central part of our discussions. Our regulators have been involved in all of those discussions about how those reforms will apply in this country. We have put forward the view that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all

solution when it comes to the Basel 3 framework. That is all very important for competition and stability in the Australian banking system, and that is one of the reasons I reject the call by the shadow Treasurer for an inquiry.

What our sector needs at the moment is certainty as we bed down the fundamental reforms in our banking system that go to the very core of the flow of credit in our economy. We all saw two years ago what can happen when international financial markets seize—our local system is threatened. So this is a very important reform that the government is bedding down. As I have said in previous answers today, we believe that we must always be alert to putting more competition into our banking system domestically, and I have run through some of the very important measures that we have put in place.

I do believe we will see the benefits of the new consumer laws that we have put through this parliament and in particular our proposals which will enable people to do something about unfair mortgage exit fees. This is a proposal that was put forward by the former Minister for Financial Services and is a very important reform. But there are many others. I went through all of those before. I welcome discussion and debate about this important question because it goes to the very core not only of our prosperity and the flow of credit in our economy but also of the living standards of all Australians.

Indonesian Tsunami

Ms PARKE (2.52 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. What is the Australian government's response to the tsunami that struck off the coast of West Sumatra, including the safety of Australians in the region? What are the broader arrangements that Australia has with Indonesia for response to such disasters?

Mr RUDD—I thank the member for Fremantle for her question. The events off the west coast of Sumatra yesterday, Australian time, are a stark reminder to the House of the impact of natural disasters on our region, the frequency of those disasters, the possibility of them resulting in huge losses of life and the necessary arrangements which we have to have in place to help our friends and partners in the region in dealing with these challenges. In recent years, after the tsunami of 2004, we have had the major earthquake in Yogyakarta in 2006, followed by major earthquakes in West Java and West Sumatra in 2009.

For the information of honourable members, the most recent quake struck at 1.40 am yesterday, Australian Eastern Standard Time, 78 kilometres off the west of South Pagai, one of Indonesia's remote Mentawai Islands, west of Sumatra. According to Indonesian authorities, the resulting tsunami wave was some three metres tall. So far, we know it has affected 10 isolated villages and we have seen reports that up to 100 villagers have lost their lives. We are still seeking to ascertain the final death toll and injury toll. The Australian Embassy in Jakarta is working with our friends in Indonesia to ascertain the degree of damage and loss of life, and we have instructed our ambassador in Jakarta to offer the Indonesian government all forms of appropriate assistance.

On the question of the safety of Australians, which goes to the other part of the honourable member's question, as the Prime Minister indicated in her statement earlier today in question time we have been apprised that no Australians died or have been injured as a result of this earthquake and tsunami. However, we have positioned a consular official on the ground at Padang who is liaising with local authorities to make absolutely certain that is the case. The Prime Minister indicated before what occurred in

relation to the vessel *Southern Cross*, and we are pleased that those young men have been located safe and sound. I thank our consular emergency centre for the good work that they have done.

I should also alert the House to what happened with other Australians when this tsunami hit. I am advised the wave tore two charter boats, with Australian surfers on board, from their anchorages at the Macaronis break on Pagai. The boats then collided with a vessel, the motor cruiser *MV Midas*. It burst into flames, forcing eight Australian surfers from the Gold Coast and a New Zealander to leap into the water. Some of the men were reportedly swept some hundreds of metres into the jungle by the tsunami and they were forced to cling to trees until the surge subsided. Consular officials are now assisting with the provision of emergency travel documents for these Australians.

This is a stark reminder for Australians travelling in the region about the impact of these disasters and how that can affect them, and the importance of maintaining a proper system of registration with Australian embassies abroad for Australians travelling.

The honourable member also asks about our broader cooperation with Indonesia. I would remind honourable members of what we have been doing through the Australia-Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction. Between 2008 and 2013 we will be investing \$67 million to enhance Indonesia's overall capacity to respond to natural disasters of this type. We also support a program called Build Back Better to assist villagers and other centres to recover from natural disasters. We believe this is the right thing to do with our friends and partners in Indonesia. The Prime Minister will visit there soon. This is an important relationship for Australia, and helping on these occasions is important as well.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin) (2.57 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: I associate the coalition with the remarks of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, particularly the support our embassy is giving the Indonesian government at this time.

Asylum Seekers

Ms JULIE BISHOP (2.57 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I refer the minister to Mr Laurie Oakes's revelation last night that he opposed the Prime Minister's East Timor detention centre policy, stating:

It will go off like a firecracker in East Timorese domestic politics.

Given that the foreign minister was right and the East Timorese parliament has passed at least two resolutions opposing the detention centre, why won't the government drop this doomed proposal?

Mr RUDD—As I have said to this House before and elsewhere beyond the House, the reason the government—including the Prime Minister, the immigration minister and me—support a proposal for a regional processing centre in the context of a regional protection framework is that (1) it is compatible with the UN convention on refugees, (2) it is capable of attaining the support of the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration and (3) it has the support of regional countries. The honourable member raises that latter point in terms of the reaction from regional countries. I would draw her attention to the response by the President of East Timor to statements made by both the Prime Minister and the immigration minister concerning the East Timorese government's reception to the Australian government's proposal as a basis for further consultation, discussion and negotiation, including through the Bali process.

It is natural that in any country dealing with questions of asylum seekers democratic

debates will occur. I would have thought that is natural and normal in this place—it is natural and normal in East Timor; it is natural and normal in Indonesia; it is natural and normal in any other country.

The government proceeds to support this policy because it is consistent with the three principles I enunciated before. I draw to the attention of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition the reason, for example, that Nauru fails this test and why the previous government ignored the convention. Nauru was not a signatory to the refugees convention. The UNHCR ceased to process asylum seekers on Nauru because of its concerns about the then government's processing arrangements on Nauru. Therefore, the government's approach then failed all basic humanitarian and international legal tests—tests which this government takes seriously and which form the basis of the government's current approach to this challenge which faces not only us but other countries around the world.

Women in the Workplace

Ms BURKE (2.59 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare and Minister for the Status of Women. What practical steps is the government taking to assure greater representation of women on Australian boards?

Ms KATE ELLIS—I thank the member for Chisholm for the question. Members might be aware that the 2010 census that was conducted by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency showed that just 8.4 per cent of board directorships in Australia's top 200 companies are held by women. To put this in context, we can compare that figure with New Zealand, the UK, Canada, the US and South Africa and we find that Australia has the lowest percentages of women in our most senior corporate positions.

These figures are dreadful but they are not just bad news for women; they are bad news for business and they are bad news for our global competitiveness. It does not make good business sense not to be tapping into all of the skills, all of the expertise and all of the education that we possess, which is a fact that the Male Champions of Change group, who are working with our Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Liz Broderick, recognise as they work to spread the word within corporate Australia that in fact gender diversity is good news for business.

It is something that is also clearly demonstrated in the 2009 McKinsey report, which found that companies with three or more women in top management outperformed companies with no women executives on every single organisational and financial indicator. Apart from all these facts, it is also just plain wrong. We should not be supporting structures and cultures which block out women from our corporate boardrooms.

We are determined to see positive change when it comes to increased representation of women on both public sector boards and private sector boards. We made an election commitment to ensuring that by 2015 all government boards would have a minimum of 40 per cent representation of women and 40 per cent representation of men. I am pleased today to announce that this week we honoured another election commitment to the status of women when applications opened for the Board Diversity Scholarship Program under which 70 women will be provided with a scholarship to undertake key courses such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors company director course. In partnership with the AICD, this program is aimed at getting Australian women who have the skills, expertise and education a seat at the boardroom table. I encourage members opposite, whose commitment to women's representation was

shown when in fact their party went backwards in women's representation in the parliament at the most recent election, to encourage women within their own electorates to apply for these scholarships, which can be found at www.companydirectors.com.au, and then go to diversity scholarships.

As we work in partnership, sadly I am of the understanding it is in fact the first time since 1979 that the status of women is not represented in the shadow ministry as well as it is in the ministry. But we will continue to work with the private sector to ensure that women are not shut out of positions and that our corporate boardrooms show that the sorts of statistics we are seeing now are consigned to the past, which is where they belong.

Asylum Seekers

Mr BRIGGS (3.04 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. I refer the minister to the Premier of South Australia's criticism of the Woodside detention centre yesterday in the South Australian parliament in which he said:

... a lack of notice, a shortage of detail and uncertainty about how the facility will impact on the local community ... is fuelling community concern.

Minister, that shortage of detail includes unanswered questions such as: what would happen to these 400 asylum seekers in the event of bushfire evacuations on catastrophic days in this high fire risk area? When will the minister travel to Woodside to answer this and many other concerns of local residents?

Mr BOWEN—I did have a discussion with the Premier of South Australia yesterday. It was a very constructive discussion which he did report to the House in South Australia. He reported to the House, for example, that the federal government was dealing with the issue of education. The Premier of South Australia made it clear to the South

Australian parliament, for example, that we had said very clearly that any school which does not have capacity to take extra students would not be asked to take extra students; that the federal government would work with the state government to explore all opportunities.

I am sorry to disappoint the member for Mayo but I am more than happy to go to Inverbrackie and I will be going to Inverbrackie to discuss these issues. What I will be doing there is engaging with community leaders who want to engage with the federal government to get a good result for their community. I will be engaging with people like Mayor Cooksley, just as I will be engaging with Mayor Pollard of Northam and the member for Pearce and the state member for Central Wheatbelt in Western Australia—two members, the member for Pearce and the member for Central Wheatbelt, who have very vigorously represented the views of their constituents, very vigorously stood up for their constituents, but have done so in a very constructive way, unlike the member for Mayo, who seems intent on engaging in Young Liberal stunts instead of representing his community.

What I will be saying to the people is also a continuation of the conversations I have had with both mayors, with the member for Pearce and with other community representatives—that is, on the matter of health, there will be no negative impacts on health services at either site whatsoever. The federal government has been very clear about that. In relation to education, we will work with the independent schools who have asked to take extra students from the facility at Inverbrackie. We will, if necessary, bring teachers into the facilities so there is no impact on local schools. I am confident that when that consultation is complete the people of Inverbrackie and the people of Northam may have

a similar reaction to the people of Weipa. As I said yesterday on ABC Far North Coast—

Mr Briggs—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order: the question specifically raised the issue of bushfires. I wonder if the minister might turn his attention to that in the answer.

The SPEAKER—The minister is responding to the question.

Mr BOWEN—Yesterday, on my favourite radio station, ABC Far North Queensland, Peter Miller, the acting chair of the Weipa Town Authority, said of our consultation in relation to the Scherger site, ‘I believe that the concerns of the committee have been addressed or are being addressed. Generally it is only positive things now for Weipa.’ That is what you can achieve when you engage positively. This government has engaged in far more discussion with the local community than the member for Berowra ever did when he opened detention centres at Baxter, Woomera, Curtin and elsewhere. This government is actually talking to local communities, something the previous government never did when they engaged in opening detention centres across the country.

Mr Ruddock—What happened in Port Augusta!

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! It is time for one of my lectures, is it? No? Well just behave as you would expect your representatives to behave if you were looking at us from outside. I appreciate that there are certain issues where emotions rise to their greatest, but that does nothing for the policy issues which are under discussion. I warn the member for Berowra, who knows what he did was completely wrong.

Freedom of Information

Ms SAFFIN (3.09 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Minister for Justice and Minister for Privacy and

Freedom of Information. Minister, how is the government improving Australia’s freedom of information laws to improve the accessibility and usability of government information?

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR—I thank the member for Page for her question and her advocacy for freedom of information. This is a very important reform. When Labor came to government in 2007, it undertook to overhaul Australia’s freedom of information laws. It did this to restore transparent government following a decade of secrecy and concealment. We abolished conclusive certificates and, in doing so, abolished the power of a minister to lock up information because it did not suit the government’s interests. Indeed Labor is continuing to restore openness and transparency and trust and integrity, with further reforms to our freedom of information laws to take effect from 1 November 2010. Next week marks the commencement of those laws and also marks the commencement of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. The former Commonwealth Ombudsman, Professor John McMillan AO, will take up the role and will work with public sector agencies to improve community access to government-held information. Professor McMillan and the new Freedom of Information Commissioner will be independent advocates for FOI and will encourage the spread of pro-disclosure information and a pro-disclosure culture right across the government, which is a very good thing.

We recognise that these are important reforms. We also recognise that there has been a deterrent to having access to such information as a result of the fees that currently stand. As a result of that, we are looking to change the fees and charges—that is, to remove fees and charges, especially for people who seek personal information. Previously a person seeking access to their own informa-

tion could be liable for fees and charges of up to \$100. From next week there will be no charge for a person seeking access to personal information. For all applicants for general information the government has abolished the \$30 application fee for FOI requests and also will abolish the \$40 fee—

Mr Dutton—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have a question of you, Mr Speaker. My question is in relation to the new standing orders in this new parliament. To my understanding, ministers are not permitted to read verbatim from their notes—

The SPEAKER—The member will resume his seat. There has been no alteration of standing orders in regard to that matter. This arises out of an agreement signed on behalf of, I think, 147 members. I will have to look to see whether it has been signed on the other two which were signed on behalf of 73 members. While I am on agreements—this will prove that I am not being churlish about agreements—as the member for Lyne’s father is in the gallery and it is his 80th birthday, it is appropriate that I say to Robert Oakeshott Sr, ‘Happy Birthday’. Maybe he can help me with the way in which we interpret not using notes in questions and answers. I hope that this is something which can be maturely visited. In other jurisdictions it has been phrased as the question and answer not being read, which has led to the expression ‘use of copious notes’. I find myself in an invidious position at a time of change in trying to come to grips with this aspect, but I will revisit it. But no change to standing orders was made.

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR—As I said, we are abolishing fees—firstly, a \$30 fee for FOI applications and also a \$40 fee for applications to review FOI decisions. These are important reforms which will make it easier for people to access information. In addition, the government has decided

to make the first five hours of decision making free, not only to journalists and non-government organisations but to the public at large—a significant reform as well. From 1 November there will be a single public interest test in dealing with exemptions, which will favour disclosure of a document unless the public interest lies in non-disclosure. From May next year, as a key part of the pro-disclosure reforms there will be a requirement for public sector agencies to publish any information disclosed in response to an FOI request within 10 days of that disclosure. That will provide information to everybody, not just to the applicant who sought that information.

During the Howard years the coalition practised secrecy and concealment. This government believes in openness and transparency and for that reason these reforms are very important and we are very happy to introduce them. (*Time expired*)

Mr Dutton—Mr Speaker, on a point of order, I ask that you ask the minister to table that note from which he read word for word.

The SPEAKER—Was the minister reading from a document?

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR—Yes.

The SPEAKER—Is the document confidential?

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR—Yes.

Murray-Darling Basin

Mr FORREST (3.16 pm)—My question is addressed to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. In Mildura today thousands of people gathered to protest at the mess this government has created on water reform. People in the basin are now totally confused about what the Murray-Darling Basin Authority can legally report on or how much water will be cut from their entitlements or whether it is the authority or the minister

who is running the show. When will the minister start to set out a clear direction for this reform process, firstly by re-energising the momentum established by the former coalition government—(*Time expired*)

Mr Albanese—I raise a point of order Mr Speaker. I am not sure there was a question there but I know it was in breach of standing order 100.

The SPEAKER—There was plenty of argument in it and there was one aspect that asked the minister when he was going to start—

Mr Albanese—It was an argument, Mr Speaker, rather than a question.

The SPEAKER—There was only one aspect that asked for action. In the tradition of the Westminster system questions either seek information or ask for action. There was, somewhere embedded in the question, a request for action. The minister is at liberty to ignore the rest or to respond to the rest. That is the danger when we have questions constructed in the manner that that question was. I would allow the minister the liberty to either ignore or respond to the other aspects of the question, which I agree with the Leader of the House were out of order.

Mr BURKE—The way the Water Act has been described of late you would think it was a recent Labor invention. The water reform process had bipartisan support and the legislation was brought in under the previous government. In advance of the formal consultative process that comes under the Water Act, the authority has made its own decision to release an advanced document called *The Guide*. They have made that decision independently and it is for them to make that decision.

A large number of issues have caused concern for various communities. Regardless of the level of argument that is contained within the question, I do take in good faith

the motivation of the questioner. He on many occasions—as long as I have known him—has spoken of the many mental health challenges that are faced by his community in particular. The irrigation drought was felt more deeply in Mildura than in many other parts of Australia. The work that he has done there with the community has always been constructive and I do take him at face value on that.

On the question about visiting communities, those who listened to the adjournment debate last night would know I was in Griffith last Friday with the member for Riverina. It was a very constructive meeting with community leaders and irrigators. During the week before that I was in Trangie with the Trangie-Neverfail irrigation authority—

Mr Hunt—Nevertire.

Mr BURKE—Nevertire. I apologise; you are right. Mildura obviously is going to be one of the key places which I will be visiting as well. Similar to how it went with the member for Riverina, I do believe the goodwill of the member will lead to our having a constructive visit together. There are three things that I have been saying the whole way through this process that we need to get through water reform. We need to get healthy rivers—we absolutely need to have a healthy river system; we need to have strong communities; and we need to have strong food production. I have argued those three principles the whole way through, long before *The Guide* ever came out.

There was doubt as to whether or not under the Water Act we would be able to deliver those things, so I sought independent legal advice. In advance of that advice coming out, the minister with responsibility for the Water Act at the time—the member for Wentworth—had been saying that the act did allow you to optimise your environmental,

economic and social consequences. That view was consistent with the view I had been putting about where we needed to get with a healthy river, with strong communities, with strong food production. The legal advice confirmed that the view that had been put publicly by the member for Wentworth was in fact reflected in the legislation and was in fact reflected in the international instruments that underpinned the legislation. But the Water Act says we need to get to the end of the process before we get final numbers. That does mean that there is a level of uncertainty for communities and we all wish that we could go through a process without having levels of uncertainty for communities on the way through.

The reality is that the uncertainty is only there to the extent that the consultation is real, and the consultation on these issues is absolutely real. Let us not forget: no-one is going to be able to walk away from this. Ultimately, the instruments that are signed need to be able to survive a vote in each house of the parliament. That is where this ends up. But no-one will be pleased with us if we allow further uncertainty and we fail in the basic task of reform of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Economy

Ms GRIERSON (3.22 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Trade. Can the minister advise the House of his engagement with countries in our region and explain why economic reform is essential to Australia's trade competitiveness? Minister, what are the impediments to economic reform?

Dr EMERSON—I will briefly take this opportunity to welcome Mr Oakeshott Sr and to point out that Mr Oakeshott Sr and the mum of the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency were the tennis captains at Lismore High some little time ago.

Obviously trade is fundamental to Australia's future prosperity and to the generation of high-skill, high-wage jobs. I was asked about the region—I will be visiting a number of countries in the region. On Monday I will be visiting Korea; on Tuesday, China; on Wednesday, Hong Kong; and on Thursday, Singapore. So it will be a whirlwind tour, but one that will be very important in furthering Australia's trade objectives.

This visit will be ahead of the APEC ministerial meeting, which I will be involved in. What is fundamentally important about APEC is that this was an organisation to promote free trade in the region. It was an initiative of the Hawke Labor government, furthered by the Keating Labor government—a very important and shining example of economic reform. We will be delivering a report on the Bogor Declaration, the goal of which was free and open trade by 2010. That report will be delivered on the back of the pledges that were made back in 1994 and it will be great when Australia can report that we have substantially achieved free and open trade. Why? Because we have embraced economic reform.

This country, under the leadership of Hawke and Keating and in places furthered by the Howard government, has embraced economic reform, but unfortunately we are now going through a period in which the Liberal Party is moving to the far right to the position occupied by Pauline Hanson and Lyndon La Rouche.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Minister for Trade should be very careful.

Dr EMERSON—The problem with this is that it is antireform. This leader is anti-reform and the one person who could unite John Howard and Peter Costello is Tony Abbott, because they said that this man has no interest in economics whatsoever. We will

continue to embrace economic reform in this country, but we will—

Mr Pyne—On a point of order, Mr Speaker: clearly there is an issue of direct relevance. These slag and bag answers should not be allowed.

The SPEAKER—Order! There are two issues: the minister will refer to members by their parliamentary titles and he will be directly relevant to the question.

Dr EMERSON—The relevance is that we need to lock in our trade competitiveness. We will only do that through ongoing economic reform under the Labor government led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard. We will not cop the cheapjack populism of the man opposite, the cheapjack populism of the Liberal Party embracing Hanson economics. We are not going to cop it. We are going to continue with reform.

Cleaner Car Rebate Scheme

Mrs MIRABELLA (3.26 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. Can the minister confirm that, in trying to avert further program delivery debacles, the government is considering breaking yet another election promise, this time the promise to introduce its cash-for-clunkers scheme? If not, can the minister inform the House if the scheme will still begin operation from 1 January next year? Can he also confirm that it will still be delivered in accordance with all the guidelines and costs outlined in the Prime Minister's announcement of 24 July 2010?

Mr GARRETT—I thank the honourable member for her question. The decisions that the government has made in respect of the cash-for-clunkers scheme and the statements that have been made by the minister—

Opposition Members interjecting—

Mr GARRETT—The scheme that she refers to, and the statements made by the relevant ministers constitute our policy and they will be committed.

Economy

Mr SYMON (3.27 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts, representing the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations. How is the government building a modern, prosperous economy with harmony and fairness in the workplace? What is the government's view on recent commentary critical of Australia's industrial relations system?

Mr CREAN—I thank the member for his question. We have been able to achieve it due to a number of factors. First of all, we got rid of Work Choices, something welcomed by the whole of the Australian community. Second, we restored rights and fairness in the workplace system, because all good workplace systems should be based around fairness. Third, we simplified the industrial relations system—we reduced 3,000 awards to 122 modern awards and Access Economics has estimated that this alone will benefit the economy by almost \$5 billion over the decade.

In addition to that, we have invested in skills and in infrastructure, because we understand that the opportunity to participate more effectively in a marketplace, in a changing workplace, is dependent on those investments. The end result has been an incredible increase in jobs in this country—over the three years we have been in office 600,000 jobs have been created. We have also seen an increase in productivity, because fairness does of itself produce the productivity dividend. Through that increase in productivity we have also been able to see an increase in real wages, because it has to be

understood that you can effectively only sustain real wage growth if you do lift productivity. So ours is a dual approach based on fairness but also driving productivity.

I have been asked if there is any critical commentary as to this success that the government have achieved over the last three years. There has been, indeed today. I was interested to read in the *Australian* newspaper today that Peter Reith is back in town. People might remember Peter Reith; he was the original architect of Work Choices. There he was in the paper today, and he has said that the Australian workplace has been degraded. As I said, he was the original architect of Work Choices, now it is another Lazarus rising from the grave in terms of that thing that they said was buried—like the Rottweiler returning to its mess, that is what it reminds us of.

I will tell this House what degraded the industrial relations system in the workplace. It was decisions that Peter Reith was responsible for that saw a government conspiring to sack workers, a government legislating to strip them of their entitlements and at the same time urging other employers to follow suit. That is not the Australian way. It is why we opposed it, why we will continue to oppose it and why the Australian people will continue to support us in that endeavour.

Ms Gillard—Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (3.31 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr RUDDOCK—Yes, I do grievously.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr RUDDOCK—During an answer in question time the Minister for Immigration

and Citizenship accused me, as a former minister, of not consulting communities in relation to the establishment of detention facilities. Port Hedland was established under Labor, Curtin was established under Labor, Woomera has next to no local community engaged, and Baxter was in the countryside, but, when it came to establishing premises in Port Augusta for the children and their parents, very extensive consultation took place with the Mayor, Joy Baluch. As the Deputy Prime Minister might also vouch for, there was also very considerable consultation when we considered a detention facility in Brisbane in his electorate.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (3.32 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr RANDALL—Yes.

The SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr RANDALL—An article in today's *Australian* by James Jeffrey claims, under a heading 'Night of long knives', that I was in a Vietnamese restaurant called Hoang Hau in Kingston along with Bill Shorten and Kate Ellis plotting the downfall of Kevin Rudd. I would never have done that and I was not there.

USE OF MOBILE TELEPHONES

Statement by the Speaker

The SPEAKER (3.33 pm)—I wish to make a short statement on the use of mobile phones in the chamber.

Earlier this year a matter of privilege was raised concerning the apparent use of a mobile phone to take a photograph of a member during proceedings. A reference was made to the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests, but the committee had not reported when the House was dissolved, and so the reference lapsed.

I iterate comments I made at the time: the taking of a photograph by a member during proceedings would indeed be outside the guidelines for photography in the chamber—the guidelines do not even contemplate the taking of photographs of members by other members; like Speakers Andrew and Hawker, I have felt that members should be able to use laptops and mobile devices in the chamber in ways that enable them to make more efficient use of their time, but in ways which do not infringe on the rights of others and the ability of the House to operate; the misuse of mobile phones or other devices has the potential to contribute to lowering the standing of the House.

I am confident that members generally would share my concerns in these matters. I would hope that we will be mature enough to allow members to make good use of modern technology, but resolute in rejecting inappropriate use of the devices that are available to us.

COMMITTEES

Selection Committee

Report No. 4

The SPEAKER (3.35 pm)—I present the Selection Committee's Report No. 4 relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private Members' business on Monday, 15 November 2010. The report will be printed in today's *Hansard* and the committee's determinations will appear on tomorrow's *Notice Paper*. Copies of the report have been placed on the Table.

The report read as follows—

Report relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private Members' business on Monday, 15 November 2010

Pursuant to standing order 222, the Selection Committee has determined the order of precedence and times to be allotted for consideration of committee and delegation business and private

Members' business on Monday, 15 November 2010. The order of precedence and the allotments of time determined by the Committee are as follows:

Items for House of Representatives Chamber (10.10 am to 12 noon)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 MR ABBOTT: To present a Bill for an Act to protect the interests of Aboriginal people in the management, development and use of native title land situated in wild river areas, and for related purposes. (Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010). (Notice given 30 September 2010.)

Presenter may speak for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41.

2 MR HARTSUYKER: To present a Bill for an Act to provide for the consideration of matters of public health and safety in the operation of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and for related purposes. (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (Public Health and Safety) Amendment Bill 2010). (Notice given 19 October 2010.)

Presenter may speak for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41.

3 MR BANDT: To present a Bill for an Act to deliver essential financial services at reasonable cost, fair loans and mortgages and increased competition for the community, and for related purposes. (Banking Amendment (Delivering Essential Financial Services) Bill 2010). (Notice given 20 October 2010.)

Presenter may speak for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41.

4 MR BANDT: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Defence Act 1903 to provide for parliamentary approval of overseas service by members of the Defence Force. (Defence Amendment (Parliamentary Approval of Overseas Service) Bill 2010). (Notice given 20 October 2010.)

Presenter may speak for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41.

5 MR BILLSON: To present a Bill for an Act to reduce the compliance burden for employers under the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010, and for

related purposes. (Paid Parental Leave (Reduction of Compliance Burden for Employers) Amendment Bill 2010). (Notice given 25 October 2010.)

Presenter may speak for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41.

Orders of the day

1 NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY BILL 2010

(Mr Turnbull): Second reading (from 25 October 2010).

**Time allotted—Remaining private Members' business prior to 12 noon.*

Speech time limits—

Mr Turnbull—10 minutes.

Next Member speaking—10 minutes.

Other Member—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 8 x 5 mins]

**The Committee also determined that resumption of debate on the second reading should take place later this day in the Main Committee.*

Items for House of Representatives Chamber (8 to 9.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

6 MR BANDT: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that there is:

(a) a growing list of countries that allow same-sex couples to marry including the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Spain, Canada and South Africa; and

(b) widespread support for equal marriage in the Australian community; and

(2) calls on all parliamentarians to gauge their constituents' views on the issue of marriage equality. (Notice given 25 October 2010.)

Time allotted—60 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Bandt—10 minutes.

Next Member speaking—10 minutes.

Other Member—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

7 MR GEORGANAS: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 14 November 2010 is United Nations World Diabetes Day, with this year's theme being diabetes education and prevention;

(b) the symbol for World Diabetes Day is a blue ring which symbolises:

(i) life;

(ii) health;

(iii) the sky that connects all nations; and

(iv) the unity of the global diabetes community in response to the diabetes pandemic; and

(c) diabetes is Australia's fastest growing chronic disease with up to 3.3 million people estimated to have diabetes or pre diabetes, and one person in Australia diagnosed every seven minutes;

(2) recognises that:

(a) diabetes is a complex and chronic disease which affects the entire body and often lasts a lifetime;

(b) Type 2 Diabetes is the most common form of diabetes accounting for 85 90 per cent of all cases and costs the economy up to \$3 billion dollars every year;

(c) a person with Type 2 Diabetes and no complications costs the community \$9625 a year and a person with Type 2 Diabetes who has complications costs the community \$15 850 per year; and

(d) there is currently no cure for diabetes, but up to 60 per cent of cases of Type 2 Diabetes are preventable; and

(3) supports:

(a) diabetes awareness and education campaigns;

- (b) healthy lifestyles and other preventative measures; and
- (c) research for a cure. (Notice given 26 October 2010.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 9.30 pm.

Speech time limits—

Mr Georganas—10 minutes.

Next Member speaking—10 minutes.

Other Member—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 2 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Main Committee (approx 11 am to approx 1.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 MR MURPHY: To move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Bernie Banton Foundation estimates that by 2020, some 40 000 Australians will have contracted asbestos related cancer;
- (2) recognises the role governments, the trade union movement and individuals, such as Bernie Banton, have played in raising awareness about the dangers of asbestos and in banning the sale and use of asbestos and asbestos products in Australia;
- (3) expresses concern that:
 - (a) countries, such as Canada, continue to export asbestos to India and many other countries in South Asia; and
 - (b) international efforts to list chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Treaty, which requires importing countries to be warned of the risks associated with hazardous substances and products, have been blocked by countries, such as Canada; and
- (4) leads international efforts to ban the sale, mining and use of all forms of asbestos, such as chrysotile asbestos, throughout the world. (Notice given 21 October 2010).

Time allotted—60 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Murphy—10 minutes.

Next Member speaking—10 minutes.

Other Member—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

2 MS BRODTMANN: To move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) organ donor rates are showing slow and sustained improvement in 2010;
 - (b) more than 98 per cent of Australians agree that organ and tissue donation have the potential to save and improve lives, yet less than 60 per cent of Australians accept the invitation for their loved ones to become organ donors when asked;
 - (c) there are more than 1700 Australians on the transplant waiting list at any time;
 - (d) many more Australians cannot get into waiting lists as they are too sick or unlikely to receive a life saving transplant because there are not enough donors; and
 - (e) the Government has invested more than \$150 million over four years to establish a coordinated approach to organ donation, enabling all jurisdictions to work cooperatively to support sustained improvements in organ donation in Australia; and
- (2) acknowledges:
 - (a) the selfless act of the 228 donor families who have already donated organs in 2010 (to 30 September), which has saved or improved the lives of at least 683 Australians;
 - (b) the work undertaken across jurisdictions led by the National Medical Director of the Australian Organ and Tissue Authority, State and Territory Medical Direc-

tors and clinical groups to develop nationally consistent protocols and clinical triggers;

- (c) the support of community groups such as Gift of Life, Kidney Health Australia, Transplant Australia, the Organ Donation and Transplant Foundation of Western Australia and the David Hookes Foundation, which are integral in supporting the work of clinicians in improving organ donor rates; and
- (d) the importance of a steady and sustained improvement in organ donor rates to support Australia's quest to become a world leader in organ and tissue donation and transplantation. (Notice given 21 October 2010.)

Time allotted—60 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Ms Brodtmann—10 minutes.

Next Member speaking—10 minutes.

Other Member—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3 MR NEUMANN: To move:

That this House:

- (1) notes with deep concern the ongoing human rights violations in Iran, including the:
 - (a) use of the death penalty, especially the use of stoning as a method of execution;
 - (b) violations of the rights of women;
 - (c) repeated violations of due process of law;
 - (d) use of violence, intimidation and arbitrary arrest to suppress peaceful opposition activity and the impact this has on the ability of Iranians to exercise their freedom of expression, association and assembly;
 - (e) reported arbitrary arrest and detention, and torture of opposition protestors;
 - (f) discrimination against and failure to protect the rights of minorities, including

the Baha'f, Sufi, Baluch, and Kurdish communities; and

- (g) trial and reported sentencing of seven Baha'f leaders—Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm—for insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the Islamic Republic; and
- (2) calls upon the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to:
- (a) ensure that the rights of all individuals are fully protected, without discrimination, and that it fulfils its obligations to its own citizens as set out in the Iranian constitution;
 - (b) abide by its international human rights obligations, including the rights to freedom of religion or belief as set out in Article 18 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights; and
 - (c) ensure that all trials, including the case of the seven Baha'f leaders, are fair and transparent and conducted in accordance with Iran's international obligations. (Notice given 25 October 2010.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 1.30 pm

Speech time limits—

Mr Neumann—10 minutes.

Next Member speaking—10 minutes.

Other Member—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 2 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Main Committee (approx 6.30 to 9 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Orders of the day

1 NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY BILL 2010

(Mr Turnbull): Resumption of debate on the second reading.

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 9 pm

Speech time limits—

Each Member speaking—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 30 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Recommendations

Pursuant to Standing Order 222(a)(ii), the Committee recommends that the following items of private Members' business be voted on:

- Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Bill 2010 (Mr Wilkie);
- Commission of Inquiry into the Building the Education Revolution Program Bill 2010 (Mr Pyne); and
- National Broadband Network Financial Transparency Bill 2010 (Mr Turnbull).
- Asbestos (Notice of motion given by Mr Murphy on 21 October 2010); and
- Same sex couples (Notice of motion given by Mr Bandt on 25 October 2010).

DOCUMENTS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (3.35 pm)—Mr Speaker, as Leader of the House I very much welcome your statement to the House about the use of electronic equipment in an inappropriate fashion. Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings* and I move:

That the House take note of the following documents:

Australian Transport Safety Bureau-Report for 2009-10.

Commissioner of Taxation-Report for 2009-10.

Companies Auditors and Liquidators Disciplinary Board-Report for 2009-10.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-Reports for 2009-10-

Volume 1-Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Volume 2-Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government-Report for 2009-10.

Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research-Report for 2009-10.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet-Report for 2009-10.

Financial Reporting Panel-Report for 2009-10.

National Transport Commission-Report for 2009-10.

National Water Commission-Report for 2009-10.

Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General-Report for 2009-10.

Privacy Act 1988-Report on the operation of the Act for 2009-10.

Tourism Australia-Report for 2009-10.

Veterans' Review Board-Report for 2009-10.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Hartsuyker**) adjourned.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Economy

The SPEAKER—I have received a letter from the honourable member for North Sydney proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The failure of the Government to take decisive action to ease the rising cost of living.

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

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

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (3.36 pm)—The inflation data that was released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics recognises in part that Australian families are burdened with everyday cost-of-living increases that are not being properly recognised by this government. Over the past year

electricity prices have risen by 12.4 per cent, water and sewerage by 12.8 per cent, gas by nearly 10 per cent, child care by 7.2 per cent, hospital and medical services by nearly seven per cent, postal services by 6.5 per cent, property rates and charges by over six per cent and education by nearly six per cent. They are hefty increases for everyday Australians, who have to meet the sorts of costs that are not properly recognised in the CPI, as the Reserve Bank has stated previously.

Since Labor was elected in the December quarter of 2007, water and sewerage prices in Australia have increased by 46 per cent. Electricity prices since Labor was elected have increased by 42 per cent. Gas has increased by 29 per cent, hospital and medical services have increased by 20 per cent, postal costs are up by 16 per cent, property charges are up by 19 per cent and education costs have risen by 17 per cent. All of that is since Labor was elected in December 2007, when Kevin Rudd, the member for Griffith, said the cost of living was a No. 1 issue for Australians.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what have you got to do about it? I will tell you what you have got to do about it: you have got to make hard decisions. The coalition has never been afraid to make hard decisions, and we have been challenged over recent days by a sanctimonious Prime Minister giving us another lecture about Hansonism. I was in this House when Pauline Hanson gave her maiden speech. My colleagues were here when Hansonism was alive and well, and to have a sanctimonious Prime Minister who was not in the building give us a lecture about Hansonism is just absurd. I will tell you what happened with the now Prime Minister. The now Prime Minister was handing out guides to her mates in the MUA on how to fight waterfront reform. This is a Prime Minister that gives us a lecture about economic reform, yet at that very time she was chief so-

licitor for Slater and Gordon, running around giving people on the waterfront all the help they could get to resist the sort of reform that was so necessary.

I tell you what, Mr Deputy Speaker: we are the party of reform. We are the party of economic reform. To have the Treasurer come into this place and claim that the Labor Party is part of the grand consensus on economic reform is a joke. When I was on that side of the House and Tony Abbott, the now Leader of the Opposition, was on that side of the House and so many of my colleagues were on that side of the House and we were putting in place the hard yards of economic reform, Labor at every single stage—every stage—fought against it and opposed it. It started with the privatisation of the last tranche of the Commonwealth Bank. Labor opposed the privatisation of Telstra. Even regarding giving the Reserve Bank independence in relation to monetary policy, by putting in place a letter of intent about the inflationary band from two to three per cent, Labor from opposition wanted to take Peter Costello to the High Court. And now they are the custodians of the independence of the Reserve Bank.

The Labor Party opposed our fiscal consolidation. After they left a \$10 billion black hole they opposed us every step of the way in trying to fill that black hole to get the budget back into surplus. Labor opposed us in our attempts to pay off \$96 billion of debt, to make all the hard yards, and Labor then went on to oppose us in industrial relations reform. They opposed us on tax reform and of course in 1998, after the tax election, the now Prime Minister and the previous Prime Minister voted against tax reform. The previous Prime Minister described it as 'fundamental injustice day'—1 July 2000. And let us talk about what they describe further as a 'consensus on economic policy', because they made my life difficult trying to get the

Corporate Law Economic Reform Program through, which in fact helped to inoculate us against the recent global financial crisis. It was the Labor Party which went on to make life so difficult in relation to the establishment of the Productivity Commission. The Productivity Commission that they now laud, the then Leader of the Opposition, Simon Crean, in fact tried to oppose. In fact, he was not the Leader of the Opposition; he was shadow Treasurer. But I would say this: the Labor Party at every step of the way have sought to oppose economic reform when it has been so necessary when they have been in opposition. Now they accuse us of opposing economic reform.

Let me say something about banking. I am not backing down one step from everything that I have said and I have delivered on behalf of the coalition in relation to banking in the last few days. We have a plan to actually help Australian families and small businesses get greater competition out of their banks. It is amazing that, in answer to his own party's question today, the Treasurer said that there was nothing of substance in our nine-point plan and then in the very next answer, in response to my question about giving the ACCC greater power to take on price signalling, the Treasury said there are a number of good initiatives in the nine-point plan. And there were issues of substance.

But this is the hypocrisy of the Labor Party. What they have to understand is, whether you like it or not, there has been change in the banking system over the last two years. Whether you like it or not, globally and particularly in Australia there has been a reduction in competition. There have been changes in the nature of wholesale funding. Whether you like it or not, in Australia the mortgage originators cannot access a liquid and competitive market. Whether you like it or not, St George is no longer an independent bank. BankWest no longer ex-

ists. Wizard Home Loans, RAMS Home Loans, Aussie Home Loans are no longer independent. Whether you like it or not, Societe Generale has left Australia. The Royal Bank of Scotland, Citigroup and a range of other international banks have reduced their activities in Australia. Whether you like it or not, the banking landscape has changed, and the four major banks now have more power and more influence in the market than at any other time. Either we are going to be ahead of this issue or we are going to be in catchup at what could be the most dangerous time in the financial services cycle.

We still face significant global uncertainty. The Treasurer is right: Basel III does put in place greater capital liquidity requirements for our banks. There are going to be challenges for our financial services system in the way that it funds its Australian operations into the future. It is the case, as we universally celebrate, that there is not the same exaggerated growth in credit today or perhaps over the next few months as there was prior to the global financial crisis. So now is the time to do the hard yards of reform. It is this side of the parliament that has mustered the courage that the Labor government does not have and has laid down a platform for reform of financial services that inoculates us against the next financial crisis. If you truly believe the words of the Treasurer that the reforms of today guarantee the prosperity of tomorrow—words that, on so many occasions in this place, he has stolen, without credit, from John Howard—then I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, now is the time to undertake that reform. That reform properly considered and properly consulted will deliver a stronger, more robust and significantly more competitive financial services system. You can do that by doing the hard yards and undertaking the challenges. When I talk about engaging in a 'son of Wallace' or a 'grand-daughter of Campbell', I am saying

that we do not want to go down another path similar to the one that Labor went down in the last term of parliament whereby they commissioned reports and then did nothing about them.

Let us talk about reform. Ken Henry made 138 recommendations. The Labor Party have now accepted 1½ of them. They had accepted 2½ reforms but they dumped one—the original form of the mining tax. Now we know that the mining tax itself is no longer guaranteed in this term of parliament. If you want to talk about reform, it is the Labor Party that is doing nothing at all about the labour force capacity of Australia. We did the hard yards: Welfare to Work—the Labor Party opposed us on that; mutual obligation—they opposed us on that; and remember Work for the Dole—the Labor Party opposed us on that. They have not lifted a finger on labour force participation rates. We went to the last election with three detailed policies—getting people under the age of 30 off welfare and getting them into work; helping mums, particularly those who had children, to get back into the workforce; and helping people over the age of 50 to get off welfare and get a job. We had considered, funded policies that helped to increase the participation rate of Australians, without pulling the lazy lever of a massive increase in immigration. The Labor Party did not have one participation policy. They talk about building capacity but—do you know what?—their definition of capacity is to waste \$43 billion on fibre optic cable that is going to take years to roll out and will not deliver what they are promising. Their idea of building capacity is to roll out pink batts and school halls at a cost of billions of dollars to the Australian taxpayer. Their idea of building capacity is words; it is not action. The Labor Party fundamentally do not believe that it is appropriate to take unpopular

measures that may in fact inoculate us against the challenges that lie ahead.

I come back to where I started. For everyday Australians the cost of living is the number 1 issue. For everyday Australians who get an electricity bill or a water bill, who have to pay school fees or who get bills from a hospital or a doctor, this is the issue. They are now facing higher interest rates. They are facing banks that are price signalling. The banks are actively out there, engaging in price signalling to each other so that they can increase interest rates above and beyond what the Reserve Bank does. We are the only parties that have laid down a plan that will take the upward pressure off interest rates, with \$50 billion of cuts to the budget that will deliver a smaller fiscal expansion and real surpluses into the future. We are the only parties that are prepared to stick our necks out, to call it as we see it on banking reform, on real telecommunications activity and on doing something meaningful about climate change. We are the only parties that are prepared, when in government, to undertake the reforms so necessary—be it industrial relations reform, welfare reform, tax reform or productivity reform. We are the only parties that deliver on our word—we are the only ones.

I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, do not be conned by the Labor Party's rhetoric about Hanson economics. We know Pauline Hanson. We know what Hansonism is. The Labor Party is a party that lacks courage. The Labor party is a party that seems to have great one-liners but never has great delivery. The Labor Party is a party that is all bluster and no soul. We have a Prime Minister that is all talk and no courage—a Prime Minister that is more concerned about having the power than using it. I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, if you want commitment to economic reform, if you want commitment to the hard yards, if you want commitment to

deliver tomorrow's prosperity, only the coalition can do that. It is only the coalition that has the courage to match its plans.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation) (3.51 pm)—Personally I am glad that this matter of public importance has been raised today. Fancy any opposition giving a reformist, forward-thinking, productivity driven government the opportunity to create more bridges with the Australian community about the strong economic policy that we are delivering. I can report to Australians that the Gillard government is persistently and consistently protecting Australians economically. We have taken decisive action to deal with cost-of-living issues and we are taking more this year. When it comes to the future, to borrow a phrase from a former visitor to this dispatch box, our record is our guarantee.

Today's inflation figures show that CPI inflation—and the underlying inflation in the Australian economy—has continued to moderate through the year, with underlying inflation easing to its lowest level since December 2005. We welcome the fact that the September quarter results show that the CPI has increased 2.8 per cent through the year, down from 3.1 per cent in the June quarter. We now see the CPI within the band that the Reserve Bank of Australia wants to see it. I point out this not to segue into an analysis for the member for North Sydney's silly statements about treading all over the RBA's independence in setting interest rates—I am not going to do that today—but I do make clear that today's inflation figures demonstrate to those opposite that the cost of the basket of goods is pressured and we are keeping the pressure on to keep the rises to the cost of living as low as possible.

There is no question that the government has empathy with Australians who are find-

ing things hard and to pay the rising bills. Many families do struggle to make ends meet. We are the Labor Party and these are the people that we serve. We do know it is tough. We understand that every time we walk into this place and get on with our jobs. But I am more than pleased to update the House and emphasise to all Australians that—despite the opposition's bluster on these matters—whilst we understand that many Australians are feeling the cost-of-living pressures we are 100 per cent alongside them in their challenges to pay the bills.

We have put in place a raft of measures to assist people. As I take the House through these measures, I regretfully advise those Australians listening that many—indeed, most—of these measures were opposed by the current recalcitrant opposition. Let me begin with a little bit of history. The discretionary fiscal stimulus packages enacted by the government between October 2008 and the budget of May 2009 were undertaken to respond quickly to the scale and the pace of the global financial crisis. It was a recession which the Australian economy thankfully did not experience, but we certainly experienced the impact of the problems from all around the globe. We provided one-off cash payments in December 2008 and in April and May 2009, which were the most effective way the government could provide immediate stimulus to the economy and support to growth and jobs until our government investments in infrastructure took effect.

The pension increases were also made not only to age pensioners but to disability pensioners, a group who were sorely neglected in previous years by those opposite when they were in power. The fact that the government stimulus and the family and tax assistance measures were part of this stimulus has been welcomed by well-credentialed professionals outside this place. Let us not just take the word of the government. David

de Garis, Senior Economist at NAB Capital, observed:

It was a sizeable fiscal stimulus and, I think, appropriate in the circumstances both in terms of the size of the stimulus and also its construction.

In other words, front loading the tax bonus that will be paid from April this year but also slanting the latest stimulus towards public investment which has a longer term and also complementary benefit, lifting productivity and growth down the track, as well as providing stimulus to the economy. As I have indicated, the government appreciates that, whilst the Australian economy has sailed, has moved through, through the global financial crisis into a stronger position than most other comparable economies, there are still many Australians who find it hard to make ends meet.

In the 2010-11 budget—the latest budget—we provided another round of personal income tax cuts, meeting the government's commitment to deliver real benefits to working families and to ease cost of living pressures. As a result of the personal income tax cuts that we have delivered, a worker earning \$50,000 a year will have an additional \$1,750 in their pockets. This is a big help to ease the pressure on household budgets. The government also has introduced the education tax refund and increased the child-care rebate to help families with the costs of educating and caring for their kids. These are real things and we should be clear that we are addressing the cost-of-living pressures for younger Australian families.

We are also making sure that older Australians get help. One of the ways we do this is by getting the tax settings correct. In this respect, we provide real income tax relief for eligible senior Australians through our senior Australians tax offset. For example, in 2007-08, when the senior Australians tax offset was combined with the low income tax off-

set, eligible senior single older Australians had income up to \$25,867 without paying income tax. But, as part of our government's plan to reduce the impact of tax, this increased to \$28,867 in 2008-09. It has increased to \$29,867 for 2009-10 and it is now at \$30,685 in 2010-11.

The government also recognises that housing affordability can be a cost pressure issue for senior Australians. Through measures such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme and A Place to Call Home program, the government is addressing these challenges. In relation to the rental affordability scheme, a total of \$622 million has been allocated for the implementation of the scheme to allow it to create 50,000 new affordable rental dwellings over the next four years from 2008 to 2012 for low and moderate income households. Under A Place to Call Home initiative, the government is implementing its election commitment, spending \$150 million over five years to deliver at least 600 additional homes across Australia for families and individuals who are homeless. A central anticipation of this measure is that older people will benefit from the scheme.

Another area of substantial change in which this government is delivering protection to Australian people from cost-of-living pressures is through our consumer credit reforms. I am very committed to keeping this robust reform program going here as it will make a real difference to people in every part of our country. I speak of efficiencies for industries that now need only to comply with one law instead of a different law in each jurisdiction of Australia. I am speaking of the protection of consumers from unscrupulous practices that sometimes take place at the fringe of the credit industry. But they also put ordinary families in a better position to manage their credit cards and to save on interest repayments.

Our fairer, simpler banking policy, which was announced in the recent election campaign, will change the way that credit cards operate in Australia. No longer will consumers be unexpectedly caught out by overlimit fees. No longer will consumers be punished because they failed to read the fine print on how the interest on their card will be calculated. No longer will banks be able to allocate repayments to the interest-free component of the debt instead of the part of the debt that is racking up the most interest. These reforms not only protect consumers from unscrupulous players but also will save them money—money that, instead of being eaten up in interest card payments, can go towards the mortgage, putting food on the table or paying off bills. Indeed, it has been estimated that the changes to the way that interest is calculated will save consumers \$225 million each year.

In noting the CPI figures, as we did earlier, it is appropriate to update the House on what the government has done and what it is doing to put pressure on household bills. Supermarket bills, I might note, could have been much higher if the opposition had been successful in the last election and their dangerous and ill-thought-through Coles and Woolies tax had been implemented, which would have definitely put upward pressure on grocery prices.

Competition, as I am sure even those opposite would be prepared to agree, is far and away the most effective means of exerting downward pressures on grocery prices. To introduce more competition and empower consumers, the government has taken decisive action on these matters. We have changed the foreign investment policy to extend the time frame for the development of vacant commercial land from 12 months to five years. We have strengthened the laws against predatory pricing. We have provided information about the Australian retail gro-

cery industry in international trade forums to attract new entrants into the Australian market, and we have introduced a mandatory, nationally consistent unit-pricing regime. One only has to watch the shoppers in any shopping centre to see them using this unit pricing to establish best value. I should add that the government also welcomes agreements between the ACCC and the major supermarket operators to phase out restrictive provisions in supermarket leases. These agreements are in the form of court enforceable undertakings that have been voluntarily provided by the major supermarket operators.

Let me turn briefly to electricity prices as there is no doubt these are a particular source of concern for Australian families. Whilst we do experience some of the lower electricity prices around the world, this is cold comfort for many Australians who will be shaking their heads this week and next when they open the envelope and look at their power bill. As the Prime Minister made clear in her speech to the Australian Industry Group warning about economic Hansonism, electricity prices are rising and we believe it is important that the origins of these prices be properly understood. Underinvestment in transmission systems is a key factor, and we are talking about underinvestment over a sustained period. Over the past three years, according to the ABS, residential electricity prices have risen by more than 40 per cent across Australia. We will continue to see electricity prices increase. The increases in recent years have been, and those in the future will be, substantially driven by a lack of investment.

Significant investment is required to replace ageing network infrastructure and deliver energy security. As the Prime Minister has made clear, we are not going to have another sustained period of underinvestment now, at least not while Labor is in govern-

ment. That is why we are firmly committed to delivering a carbon price. Delaying the delivery of a carbon price makes the eventual adjustment for industry more expensive. Uncertainty in the market is always an inhibitor of investment and of greater capacity. This is particularly the case in the electricity generation sector, where uncertainty will direct what capacity growth there is towards meeting incremental rises in energy demand rather than long-term baseload growth. As the TRUenergy Managing Director, Richard McIndoe, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 16 September this year:

We all would like a price on carbon ... if it's not done in this government and if this uncertainty continues, not for two to three years, but four to five years, and nobody is building, then you will have power shortages and insufficient capacity.

Whilst those opposite may like to engage in short-sighted scare campaigns about a price on carbon and what it will do to electricity prices, my advice is: drop it and move on with the program. Drop the scare campaign, drop the politicking and recognise the benefit to consumers and to Australian families of delivering a carbon price to the market and building baseload generation from a position of certainty.

I should also mention another reform that goes to help families, another example of decisive action that the Gillard government is committed to—our superannuation reforms. Access to safe, low-cost, simple superannuation is essential to help our retirement savings go further. While you do not get a bill in the post, Australians pay around \$85 a month on average in superannuation fees, which is actually more than the average monthly mobile phone bill. Every dollar Australians save in unnecessary superannuation fees directly boosts their retirement savings, helping them enjoy the secure retirement they deserve, a retirement eased by lower cost-of-living pressures.

The Gillard government will allow superannuation funds to offer a simple low-cost superannuation product called My Super from 1 July 2013. It is a key component of our economic plan. The improvement from the assault on high fees in superannuation would lift the retirement savings of a 30-year-old worker on average wages by \$40,000. It delivers on the substantial benefits promised by the Prime Minister's breakthrough agreement on the mining tax, including the boost in the superannuation guarantee from nine to 12 per cent for 8.4 million Australians. Taken together, our reforms in superannuation will add almost \$150,000 to the retirement superannuation balance of an average 30-year-old Australian worker. National Seniors Australia, the peak body, has welcomed the transparency and choice in the superannuation changes generated from the Cooper review. NSA's Michael O'Neill said on 5 July 2010:

The Review's member, rather than industry, focus will encourage more Australians to have greater ownership and interest in saving for retirement ... An overhaul is well overdue. As it stands, the superannuation system is industry-oriented, difficult to navigate and plagued by trailing commissions and hidden fees.

Let me sum up this MPI with an overview. I believe that the evidence and the support of others, not just the government, for a very wide range of measures and policy levers has delivered to ease the cost-of-living pressures that many Australians feel today. We have lowered taxes. That person on \$50,000 is paying \$1,750 less tax than in 2007-08. We have increased the pension by around \$115 per fortnight for single pensioners and around \$97 a fortnight for pensioner couples, and the same goes for people with disabilities. Under the education tax refund people can claim up to 50 per cent of costs up to \$390 per year for a child in primary school and up to \$779 for each child in a secondary

school. Nearly a million families and 1.7 million students have benefited from the education tax refund. The childcare rebate that we have pushed helps with the cost of child care. We increased the rebate in July 2008 from 30 to 50 per cent for the out-of-pocket childcare expenses, providing families with up to \$7,500 per year. We have made the rebate payment more frequent and 700,000 families are going to be eligible for it. We have got the teen dental plan. We have got the increase of \$4,000 to family tax benefit A. We have extended the education tax refund to school uniforms. We are going to have the childcare rebate paid fortnightly. We have got paid parental leave, paid parental leave for dads and further pension increases. We have made tax returns easier and we are providing tax relief for savings accounts. By any objective measure, we are working on cost-of-living pressures. (*Time expired*)

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (4.06 pm)—I rise in support of the matters of public importance motion of my colleague the member for North Sydney on the failure of this government to take decisive action to ease the rising cost of living. This Labor government, led by Prime Minister Gillard, has failed in so many ways. But, more than ever, Australians are feeling let down following Labor's broken promise to address the rising cost of living.

Prime Minister Gillard looked Australians in the eye and promised that hers would be a government that was 'moving forward', yet it appears that the only direction Labor is heading in is further and further into political spin. I suppose we should not be surprised that the Prime Minister has broken yet another Labor promise, this time the promise to address the cost-of-living pressures on Australians. You only have to ask the former Prime Minister, the member for Griffith, just how much the Prime Minister's word is worth.

Just like the Prime Minister's word on 17 May, when she said that there was more chance of her becoming full forward for the 'Dogs than there was of any change in the Labor Party, the Prime Minister's—and her Labor government's—pledge to do something—anything—to ease the rising cost of living is a furphy. It is the case that the Prime Minister did not keep her word to the member for Griffith on three or more occasions, and clearly she is intent on not keeping her word to families, individuals and businesses who are struggling with rising costs under this Labor government.

Anyone who seriously believes that the Rudd Labor government had or the Gillard Labor government has—depending on whether you look at this issue pre or post the events of 24 June—any plan to address the cost-of-living pressures is being deliberately dishonest. Prior to the midnight knock on his door from the member for Maribyrnong and Senator Arbib, the member for Griffith was hailed as the almighty Labor leader who brought the party back from 12 of its most miserable and irrelevant years in opposition. The member for Griffith also boldly looked the Australian people in the eye and promised to address the cost-of-living pressures. But all the member for Griffith has as his legacy are the failed programs GroceryWatch and Fuelwatch—at least \$7 million wasted and thrown away, all because the member for Griffith and his then loyal deputy, now the Prime Minister, cobbled together a plan to make the government look as though they were acting on their promise to the Australian people to address the cost of living.

The fact is GroceryWatch was a dud, just as this government is a dud government. Like so many of the Rudd and Gillard government programs, GroceryWatch cost a lot and delivered little. Make no mistake: we could speak for days and days about Labor's failures, policy debacles, backflips and, to

quote the Prime Minister, programs that are 'a mess'. When you look hard at what this government promised prior to the 2007 election and subsequently, with their new 'real' leader, prior to the 2010 election, you see the government has failed to deliver on their main promise, and that was to do something about the rising cost of living. For all Labor's talk about the rising cost of living eating away at the social fabric of the country, the cost of living meant nothing to a Labor opposition and then a Labor government that is happy to say and do anything to win a vote and, once they have that vote, to do absolutely nothing about a problem that trusting Australians took them at their word to fix. I find it very alarming that in our country today—the best country in the world—we still, despite our records of achievement, hear day in and day out about people rationing food, skipping meals because they cannot afford to go to the grocery stores and, in many cases, not having power for their homes whilst they wait for the next payday to come.

Recently the *Courier Mail* carried a prominent report which looked at the rising cost of living in the state of Queensland. It said that rising costs across the board are forcing more and more Queenslanders into real hardship. It reported that more than 10 per cent of the population in the Sunshine State is living in poverty conditions. That equates to more than 400,000 people who are struggling to pay everything from grocery bills to utility bills. That is in Queensland alone. I have grave fears that, if this typical Labor talkfest continues, things will get a whole lot worse for these Queenslanders and, no doubt, for other Australians living in extreme financial hardship around the nation before they get any better.

In the *Sunday Mail* on 12 September it was revealed that householders will have to find as much as \$600 more to meet soaring energy and water bills next year. For many,

this is another \$600 that they do not have and will not be able to find. It is not as though they can send their bills to their state and federal Labor governments who have let them down for far too long. Their taxes and costs go up under Labor, whilst their quality of life goes down. The article found that for a family of five living in a large house with a garden, air conditioning and a gas heater, utility bills would increase by \$600 per year; for a family of three living in a three-bedroom home with a medium-sized garden, by \$300; and for a couple in a small house with a small courtyard, by \$200. These costs are going up under Labor, and taxpayers are getting absolutely nothing back in return.

A separate article in the *Sunday Mail* predicted that electricity prices will rise by 60 per cent over the next five years and will push low-income families over the edge. These are the very income earners and Australians whom Labor always claim as their own but never support. The article went on to say that it is not uncommon for social workers to find people living in their homes without electricity.

This is not an Australia I want to see. The Labor government has a responsibility to stop the talk and put aside the spin, whether it is the Prime Minister, the Treasurer—now Deputy Prime Minister, following his promotion—the member for Griffith, the member for Maribyrnong or the member for Charlton. It does not matter which one of them wants the credit. The coalition and the Australian people just want to see the problem addressed.

In the September quarter of 2010, the ABS consumer price index rose by 0.7 per cent, compared with 0.6 per cent in the June quarter. However, the most significant rises, which dismiss the government's rhetoric of 'moving forward', were a rise of 12.8 per cent in water and sewerage costs, a six per

cent rise in electricity costs and a rise of 6.2 per cent in property rates and charges. In the June quarter of 2010, electricity prices rose by 18.2 per cent, petrol prices rose by 7.6 per cent, childcare costs rose by 5.5 per cent and the price of vegetables rose by 3.3 per cent. Clearly, this nation is not 'moving forward', and the Gillard government has not taken any action to remedy this crisis. Take the article in the *Adelaide Advertiser* on 9 October 2010 which detailed how the cost of a basket of groceries, including milk, bread, butter, oranges, bananas, chocolate, eggs, coffee and laundry detergent, had risen from \$210 in the June 2005 quarter to \$259 in the same period of 2010, according to ABS data—another failure of this Labor government.

What is most alarming about the Labor government's ignorance on this issue is that deep down they know they have failed. The government is well aware of their promises and their failures. The tide of popularity that swept the member for Griffith to power in 2007 was largely different to the tide of union and caucus revolt that saw him lose the keys to the Lodge. However, the member for Lindsay was right when he stood up in the Labor caucus to raise concerns about the Labor Party's disastrous 25 per cent swing in the Penrith by-election, which he believed was due to voter concern about the federal government's inaction on the issues of asylum seekers and the rising cost of living.

Let us look at Labor's record of helping families, individuals and businesses with the rising cost of living pressures we all face. The Labor government has seen six interest rate increases in just 10 months and continues to put upward pressure on interest rates through its record budget deficits. Labor cut the maximum child-care rebate by more than \$250 per child. Labor has done nothing to bring down rising fuel and grocery prices. Labor is about big spending, even bigger

debt and having no plans to address the everyday pressures on families that it pretended to understand so well during the election campaign. This government has failed Australian families and workers by not addressing the rising cost of living, and in doing so it has once again confirmed that it does not take the job of governing seriously. This Prime Minister cannot be taken at her word. Only the coalition can deliver real reform.

Mr CHEESEMAN (Corangamite) (4.16 pm)—It is with pleasure that I take this opportunity to address this MPI from the member for North Sydney. I acknowledge that many working families are facing cost of living pressures, but the government is taking the necessary steps to address those issues on almost a daily basis. In responding to the member for North Sydney's MPI, I thought I might take the opportunity to look at the coalition's record when they were in government.

The first thing that comes to mind is their failed Work Choices policy. We know Work Choices removed significant elements of people's pay and conditions. Some 64 per cent of AWAs under that legislation removed annual leave loading. That in itself would put significant pressure on many working families. Some 63 per cent cut penalty rates—again taking money out of people's pockets and making cost of living pressures more difficult for working families to respond to. Some 52 per cent cut shift-work loading and some 51 per cent of those AWAs cut overtime loading. Some 46 per cent cut public holiday pay for workers working outside of normal hours. Some 40 per cent cut rest breaks, which would have made work more uncomfortable and many workplaces far more dangerous, and some 36 per cent of those AWAs removed public holidays.

There is no doubt that the coalition's record certainly put significant cost of living

pressures on families and I think it is worth pointing that out. During the federal election we also had the farcical situation of Tony Abbott signing a blank piece of paper saying that Work Choices was dead.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—The member for Corangamite should remember that he ought to refer to the Leader of the Opposition by his title and not by his name.

Mr CHEESEMAN—I apologise. It goes further than this. Since then we have had senior member after senior member of the coalition come out and indicate very clearly and loudly to the Australian community that Work Choices is not in fact dead. Perhaps the name is dead, but the policy is still alive and well. So we know that if they return to this side of the parliament they will bring back Work Choices and they will increase the cost of living pressures on working families throughout this nation.

We have also had an enormous amount of commentary from members of the coalition about electricity prices. I want to debunk this myth. It is very clear that electricity prices have been rising across this nation because of the failure of those on the other side to pass the necessary legislation to put a price on carbon, which has led to a freeze in investment across the electricity sector. That is the reality. We also know that demand for electricity has been increasing over the last few years as people take advantage of modern technologies like air conditioning. Again, it is their policy of resisting putting a price on carbon that is leading to rising cost-of-living pressures for many working families across this nation.

If the coalition want to be serious about easing the cost-of-living pressures that many working families are experiencing then they need to work with the government and the crossbenchers in this parliament to put a

price on carbon so that we can start to address the issues in that part of the economy and alleviate the cost-of-living pressures which every Australian household is subject to. I urge them to revise their position on that and start working with all members of this place to address that issue.

I want to compare another of their policies with ours. The National Broadband Network is a very significant piece of economic infrastructure that will enable us to advance and grow our economy in a very, very substantial way. Let us look at the coalition's position on this. The coalition's position is to frustrate. Their position is to come up with a new policy every second day of the week. Let us look at some commentary from others on this. The OECD, a highly esteemed organisation, have indicated very clearly that a national broadband network will enable us to grow our economy and increase our productive capacity—and they have written on that. Again, I urge the coalition to get out of the way, start working with the government and enable us to deploy the National Broadband Network as effectively and efficiently as we can. We also know from various studies that have been undertaken that the implementation of a wide-scale broadband network across this nation could assist our economy to the tune of \$2 billion to \$4 billion a year. Of course, that will create jobs, increase the productive capacity of our economy and alleviate the cost-of-living pressures that this country is currently facing. The government have a raft of other policies to help many young people in terms of the cost of living. I would like to highlight to the House our various housing affordability programs that enable young people to enter the housing market and enable young people to work in the building industry.

Also, let us look at some of the other things that this government have done to address the cost-of-living pressures. The first

is making sure that people have work. Over the last few years the Australian economy has gone through the global financial crisis. Of course, this government put in place a stimulus package that helped protect our economy and keep people in the workforce, particularly those in the building sector. In an area like mine in the southern suburbs of Geelong, construction is a vital part of our local economy. Those on the other side opposed the stimulus package. If you want to respond to cost-of-living pressures, the best thing you can do is keep people in work. That is something those on the other side failed to recognise.

In conclusion, I note that the Treasurer released a media statement today which looks at the September quarter's inflation rate. It is fair to say that the efforts of this government over the last few years have ensured that the CPI has remained as close as possible to the two to three per cent target band set by the Reserve Bank. Again, that is about reducing cost-of-living pressures on working families.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (4.26 pm)—Costs of living are increasing and Australians are worried. Today's official consumer price index figures on the cost of living must surely send a signal to the government to stop its reckless spending and ease the financial pressure on Australian families. Labor's refusal to reduce spending is putting upward pressure on inflation. The September quarter CPI figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that inflation rose by 0.7 per cent in the quarter, lifting the annual rate to 2.8 per cent. Over the past year the cost of essentials has risen: electricity by 12.4 per cent; water and sewerage 12.8 per cent; gas 9.8 per cent, child care 7.2 per cent; hospital and medical services 6.9 per cent and education 5.8 per cent. Increases in essential goods and services have applied considerable tension on already stretched household budgets.

The recent minutes of the October meeting of the Reserve Bank of Australia show an interest rate hike is now seemingly inevitable, revealing that the RBA 'could not wait indefinitely' due to increased pressure on inflation. Why is the government continuing to spend at a recession-like rate and accumulate a \$41 billion budget deficit at a time when the economy is running at near full capacity? Labor must immediately stop its spending largesse to relieve some of the upward pressure on interest rates.

Increasing interest rates will cause more pain for all Australians who are facing higher costs as a consequence of the Gillard government's failure to deliver on its promise to reduce the cost of living for working families. Families are desperately worried about electricity prices, which have shot up 35 per cent since the end of 2007—35 per cent in just three years. In the same period, gas prices have risen by 24 per cent, water prices by 29 per cent and rents by 15 per cent. There is constant concern that mortgage repayments could be pressured by banks lifting their rates above and beyond the Reserve Bank of Australia's cash-rate increases.

Alarming too is the continual upward trend of the price of food, placing undue and excessive strain on the family budget. The weekly grocery bill just gets higher and higher, and it is not as if shoppers are placing any more items in their trolleys. In fact, the opposite is the case as families struggle to make ends meet. It is certainly not as if the poor old farmer is getting a higher price for produce. The price at the farm gate does not change. If anything, farming is less and less profitable. The difference in prices from paddock to plate is unreasonable, unfair and unAustralian. The farmer is being ripped off, likewise the customer at the checkout—all because this fiscally irresponsible Labor government knows not how or when to rein in its reckless and wasteful spending all be-

cause the Rudd-Gillard governments have continued to borrow at least \$100 million a day, even after the worst of the global financial crisis is behind us, and this is feeding into inflation.

People respect the need for taxes but expect value for money. They expect government to ease cost-of-living pressures, not burden them with more. Any small business owner or those who do a simple household budget know a government cannot go on borrowing \$100 million per day. Those borrowings have to come from somewhere. Most of them come from offshore, meaning less available money for Australian businesses to access: businesses needing to invest in research and development, businesses investing in capital equipment and technology, businesses investing in their own people, products and futures—our people, products and futures. What we end up with is our federal government competing for finance in the capital market against Australian businesses, which then have to pay more to finance their hopeful growth and futures, in turn pushing up prices for goods and services and adding to inflationary pressures.

It cannot continue. This government has failed to take decisive action to ease the rising cost of living, and middle Australia is hurting as a result. Especially hurting is regional Australia. The government stands condemned for its diabolical mismanagement of the water issue. This has created so much uncertainty in rural areas, areas which make up the food bowl of the nation. The fact that this government took six months to get to a water policy, 18 months to set up the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and 36 months to determine that there needs to be a proper analysis of the social and economic impact—the human cost—of water reform is, quite frankly, beyond belief.

It is little comfort now to the thousands of people in basin communities that a parliamentary inquiry has been established to look into the water issue and that the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Tony Burke, has received legal advice that the socioeconomic effects of the Water Act should and must come into play in any deliberations of the MDBA. It is little comfort because some of the damage to the confidence in these basin communities has already been done. People already troubled by cost-of-living increases have been hit with the added woe of whether their farm or business has a future if water cuts of a proposed 45 per cent are introduced. It is a responsibility, an obligation, of this government to now restore that confidence. The government has a duty to move within what would be considered a reasonable time frame—and country people are reasonable and patient—to allay the widespread and growing fears about the future of regional Australia, about how regional, and indeed all, Australians will meet costs of living and about how they will be able to balance household budgets.

Australian families will quite correctly lay the blame for interest rate rises fairly and squarely with the Gillard government. They will also sheet home to the Gillard government the blame for our refusal to pay or delay repaying the national debt. As far as longer term challenges and, hopefully, opportunities are concerned, a necessary requirement is to lift productivity and the speed limits to growth. Contrary to what the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts, Simon Crean, said in question time this afternoon, productivity growth is slipping, and that should be of considerable concern to all of us in this place.

We need to better promote and increase labour force participation. Small business,

the engine room of the Australian economy, has to be helped, not hindered. On this side of the House we see the need for more prudent spending—restraint, responsibility and respect for taxpayers, working families and all Australians. An achievable and attainable benchmark is spending as a proportion of gross domestic product to be no higher than in the last year of the coalition government—23 per cent. Of course, national debt will not in any way be assisted by a Labor government which is rolling out a \$43 billion National Broadband Network without a proper cost-benefit analysis, with no business case and with no guarantee of a take-up rate which would go anywhere near close to justifying such a gross misuse of Commonwealth money, the people's money.

Now this same incompetent, spend-happy government wants to inflict a carbon tax on all of us, which will be such a roadblock to future growth and prosperity and which will especially hurt regional areas. It is a slippery slope on which this government is taking us. The suggestion that electricity bills will reach up to \$10,000 a year for families in five years if a carbon tax is introduced should send a shiver up the spine of every Aussie battler. As a nation we seem so intent on rushing down the path of environmentalism for the sake of environmentalism that we are forgetting Mr and Mrs Average, pensioners, businesspeople and farmers, who are trying to keep pace with ever-increasing costs of living brought about by this Labor government.

This Labor government has wasted so much money on Building the Education Revolution, the failed Home Insulation Program, Fuelwatch, GroceryWatch—I could go on. All the while, hospitals across Australia are in a state of disrepair, regional fuel prices are extraordinarily high, the price of groceries everywhere is soaring—again I could go on. It is time for Labor to rein in the spend-

ing, stop the waste and repay the spiralling debt before it is too late.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (4.35 pm)—I am very pleased today to speak on this MPI proposed by the member for North Sydney because the member for North Sydney has been having a bad week. His bluster here in the chamber today certainly showed that he has no plan to ease cost-of-living pressures.

The member for North Sydney hung his hat on what he saw to be the major achievements of the Howard government. The two examples he gave were Work Choices and the privatisation of Telstra. Work Choices was something that I am sure the member for North Sydney did pursue; however it is certainly not something he should hang his hat on. Work Choices ripped away basic conditions and pay from ordinary Australians. I am not entirely sure how that would have eased the cost-of-living pressures on working families. It did nothing to improve productivity. Instead, it reduced the take-home pay of many ordinary Australians.

The second thing he hung his hat on was the Telstra privatisation. He failed to demonstrate exactly how the privatisation of Telstra reduced cost-of-living pressures on ordinary families. The feedback that I get from my electorate is that Telstra continually hampers price competition in my local area. It does not provide connections for many people to ADSL2 and it really has not been able to provide basic competition with the other telcos.

The other telcos often lament the fact that without a separation between the wholesale and the retail parts of the network they have not been able to adequately achieve decent competition in telecommunications and it has been up to this government, with the bill before the parliament at the moment, to fix this monumental error made by the previous

government. They were the two examples on which the member for North Sydney hung his hat, saying that they were great and difficult reforms made by the previous government, but neither of those reforms led to any improvement of cost-of-living pressures for ordinary Australians. In fact, I would argue that they increased cost-of-living pressures on ordinary working families.

During the election we heard a lot from the member for Riverina and a lot from the other members who spoke in this debate about the big national debt that Labor is accumulating. Might I remind members on the other side that the big spenders at the last election—the huge proposals, throwing money at everyone—were indeed the Liberal and National parties. They outspent the government significantly. While we were not out there trying to buy votes, the Liberal and National parties were out there spending, spending. They tried to hide this from the Australian people but unfortunately their \$11 million black hole was exposed after the election. If we want to talk about restraint, member for Riverina and members on the other side, maybe you should sit down and look at your policies.

The other big policy taken to the last election was indeed the Liberal Party's great big new tax. We hear a lot about great big new taxes from the Liberal Party. Certainly increasing company tax would have been a great big new tax which would have significantly impacted on cost-of-living pressures. This government have been showing restraint. We have been very clear that we intend to return the budget to surplus. Senator Penny Wong has made it clear that she will do that and the government have been very certain about that.

On the other side of the House there have been no plans, apart from the member for North Sydney's plan to nationalise the banks.

The member for Ryan seemed in her contribution to support nationalisation of the banks, which is not good economic reform. The member for North Sydney reminds me of the attempt to nationalise the banks. On our side of the House we are doing a lot. We have done a lot and we will continue to do a lot to address cost-of-living pressures. In the global financial crisis this government made sure that people had a job. If you do not have a job, it is very difficult to pay bills. This government stepped in and ensured that we protected jobs.

In addition, as soon as we were elected to government we addressed child care costs, increasing the child care rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent of out-of-pocket expenses. We introduced the education tax refund—something the Liberal Party did not propose at the 2007 election. This was an initiative of the Labor Party and, once elected, we introduced it. Now families are claiming up to 50 per cent of the cost of school fees for both primary and secondary school children. At the last election we made a commitment to build on that to ensure that school uniforms were part of it.

This government implemented tax cuts very quickly. That means, for example, that someone on \$50,000 is paying \$1,750 less tax than when the Liberal Party was in government. This was another significant reform. Something that the coalition could not bring themselves to do in the whole time they were in government was to address cost-of-living issues for pensioners. Pensioners in my electorate told me how difficult it was and how important the increase was. The coalition could never ever commit to it. Instead, they allowed the pension to be eroded so that many people had much difficulty in just living. It was this government that moved to increase the pension and reduce cost-of-living pressures.

We also moved on housing—something the coalition completely ignored while in government. Housing was a significant problem and we have moved on social housing and also on the Rental Affordability Scheme. This scheme has led to approximately 50,000 properties which will come on line to provide affordable rental accommodation. This is part of our housing policy and will have a big impact on families looking for affordable housing—and it is something that those on the other side have never done.

At the beginning of this debate we saw the member for North Sydney beating his chest about his great economic credentials. I guess he has to do it because no-one else is doing it for him. This government will not be distracted by some of the slogans from the other side. This government is going to get down to business and do something about productivity. This government will build the National Broadband Network.

Those on the other side regularly talk about how they are the party of small business. Small business nominate that not having access to broadband is the No. 1 impediment to their economic growth. That is something they see as of critical importance to ensure that they are able to grow their business, to employ people and to do those things which we want small businesses in our country to do. For those on the other side to say that they want productivity advice—you need to invest. We need productivity growth in this country to ensure that our country continues to improve and that those working Australians get a better slice of the pie. I would urge those on the other side to ensure that they do support the National Broadband Network because it will help our economic growth not only in the medium term but also in the long term, certainly in my local electorate.

On this issue, the government is doing a significant amount on cost-of-living issues, much more than was ever done under the previous government and much more than the current Liberal-National coalition plans to do. I will continue working with the government to ensure that we are looking at this very important issue and I will let those on the other side use their slogans and glib phrases to try to con the Australian people.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (4.45 pm)—The 43rd Parliament is full of ironies and nothing could be more ironic than the member for North Sydney, of all people, coming into the House on the day that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has reported the lowest underlying inflation rate for five years to complain about cost-of-living pressures. It is ironic for two reasons. The first is that the consumer price index does matter, yet the member for North Sydney came in here trying to suggest to the broader community—tapping in to some popular sentiment, I must add—that the CPI is somehow wrong and distorted. I look forward to hearing from him his proposal to reform the way in which we measure the cost of living in this country. The other irony is obvious. I said the ‘member for North Sydney’—the member who represents a suburb which rates amongst the five wealthiest areas in our country. The member for North Sydney would not know what it is like to put a family budget together, what it is like to worry about how the electricity bills will be paid, and how the groceries will be paid for.

The government, despite our fantastic economic performance, recognises that there are cost-of-living pressures out there in the community. This is a debate about what we have done about that and what those opposite did not do about that. We know inflationary pressures come when the aggregate economy gets out of balance, when demand outstrips supply, and that is why we have been work-

ing over the past three years or more to address that imbalance by investing in infrastructure and in the supply side of the economy.

The best thing you can do for a working family is to grow the economy, which we have done in the face of the greatest global financial crisis in decades. We have kept interest rates relatively low because we have returned balance to the aggregate economy. Just as importantly as any of that, we have kept people in jobs. Those opposite believe the best way to help those who earn money on behalf of their families is to make it easier to sack them. That is what the member for North Sydney believes in. He believes in making it easier to sack them. His view of the world is that that is how you help families deal with cost-of-living pressures.

Let us ask ourselves what this government has done to help families deal with cost-of-living pressures. How about lower taxes? They do not believe in lower taxes. The member for North Sydney was with the leader of those who introduced large tax cuts in 2005 targeted at those people living in North Sydney but which forgot all those who were really struggling out there in the broader community. The fact is that someone on \$50,000 today is paying \$1,750 less tax than they were in 2007-08. Since 2009 we have increased the pension by around \$115 a fortnight. With the education tax refund families can now claim up to 50 per cent of the cost—up to \$390 a year—of putting their children through education. The Prime Minister went through many of these during question time today.

The member for North Sydney came in here full of bluster but he put forward not one proposal to ease cost-of-living pressures on Australian families and said nothing about the Labor government's record over the last three years. How laughable it is for the

member for North Sydney to come in here on the release of the CPI—a day of record low inflation—and feign concern for those working-class families who are facing cost-of-living pressures. Of course, power prices have been going up—that is true—but it is a state issue. Those opposite are professionals at coming in here and talking about state issues. They do not want to talk about national issues or issues which are the responsibility of the Commonwealth government, because they are ashamed of their record and they are envious of those of us on this side of the parliament who again, in the face of the greatest global financial crisis in decades, managed to restore this country to slow growth, managed to create jobs and managed to take that pressure off working families.

How ridiculous it is for the member for North Sydney to come in here and spend most of his time talking about industrial relations, which of course we are happy to debate—particularly the relationship between Work Choices and cost-of-living pressures on working families. He tried to argue that somehow we were not a reforming government; that they were. I do remember a reform on that side—it was called the GST. They will argue that it is a tax now accepted by the broader Australian community. Let me give those opposite one example of how the GST continues to impact on Australian families, notwithstanding what they would argue is the compensation put in place to offset the GST.

Let us take members opposite to something called petrol prices. Does anyone on that side ever hear from constituents concerned about petrol prices? Let me give you the story. When the GST was introduced, the excise was reduced to offset the impact of the GST on petrol. Otherwise you would have had a compounding tax-on-tax effect on petrol prices. But here is the trick: the excise was reduced by 7c or thereabouts. The calcu-

lation was that that would offset the impact of the GST while ever petrol prices were less than 70c a litre. Of course any price above 70c a litre means that the GST is adding to the cost of petrol. With petrol at about a \$1.30 a litre, everyone listening to this debate will immediately and easily see that the GST remains a tax on a tax on petrol. Every time motorists fill up their vehicle with petrol, they should remember the coalition's only real reform—and it was called the goods and services tax.

Specifically, what is Labor doing in areas like my own to reduce cost-of-living pressures? Again, we are growing the economy locally and we continue to open up our economy to the rest of the world, unlike those opposite who have gone all insular and are now embracing these Hansonite policies. We are introducing a new tax on coalmining to ensure that the dividend of the next mining boom is fairly returned to the people who own the resources.

I remember that, when the new tax was first mooted, people were saying: 'Gee, the member for Hunter won't like this. This will be bad in his electorate. He'll be worried.' No, people in my electorate were cheering because, while they appreciate the wealth that coalmining has brought to the valley, they also have to put up with the impact on air quality, the impact on water quality, the congestion on the roads and so on. They are so pleased that they are finally about to have a fair dividend from that mining boom returned to them. This is another reform, another initiative, that those opposite oppose. All they can do is run a scare campaign.

I see the member for Wentworth sitting at the table. He knows, just as the majority of the Australian community knows, that something has to be done to address climate change. There is emerging consensus in the community, including in coalmining elector-

ates like the Hunter, aluminium-smelting electorates like the Hunter and coal power generation areas like the Hunter, that something has to be done about climate change. But will the coalition join us in a consensus on an issue which impacts on cost-of-living pressures on families? No, they just want to wreck, they want to run interference, they want to deny climate change exists and they want to deny climate change is human induced. They have no ideas. They are an absolute rabble. If they really want to help Australia families, they should just get out of the way. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The discussion is concluded.

AUTONOMOUS SANCTIONS BILL 2010

Report from Main Committee

Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (4.57 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (WEEKLY PAYMENTS) BILL 2010

Report from Main Committee

Bill returned from Main Committee without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (4.58 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

THERAPEUTIC GOODS AMENDMENT (2010 MEASURES No. 1) BILL 2010

Report from Main Committee

Bill returned from Main Committee with an unresolved question, appropriation message having been reported; certified copy of the bill and schedule of the unresolved question presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.

Unresolved question—

That the amendments moved by the honourable member for Ballarat be agreed to:

- (1) Clause 2, page 2 (after table item 2), insert:
 - 2A. Schedule 1A The 28th day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.
- (2) Clause 2, page 2 (at the end of the table), add:
 5. Schedule 2, Part 3 The later of:
 - (a) immediately after the commencement of the provision(s) covered by table item 2; and
 - (b) immediately after the commencement of Schedule 1 to the *Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2009 Measures No. 3) Act 2010*.
- (3) Page 9 (after line 30), after Schedule 1, insert:

Schedule 1A—Product information for medicine

Therapeutic Goods Act 1989

1 Subsection 3(1)

Insert:

product information, in relation to therapeutic goods, means information relating to the safe and effective use of the goods, including information regarding the usefulness and limitations of the goods.

2 Subsection 3(1)

Insert:

restricted medicine means:

- (a) a medicine specified in an instrument under subsection (2A); or
- (b) a medicine included in a class of medicine specified in an instrument under subsection (2B).

3 After subsection 3(2)

Insert:

- (2A) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, specify medicines for the purposes of paragraph (a) of the definition of *restricted medicine* in subsection (1).
- (2B) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, specify classes of medicine for the purposes of paragraph (b) of the definition of *restricted medicine* in subsection (1).

4 After section 7C

Insert:

7D Form for product information for medicine

- (1) The Secretary may, by writing, approve a form for product information in relation to medicine.
- (2) The Secretary may approve different forms for different medicines or different classes of medicine.

5 Subsection 9D(5)

Repeal the subsection (not including the note).

6 After paragraph 23(2)(b)

Insert:

- (ba) if the application is for the registration of restricted medicine—the application is accompanied by product information, in relation to the medicine, that is in the form approved under section 7D in relation to the medicine; and

7 After paragraph 25(1)(d)

Insert:

- (da) if:
 - (i) the applicant is applying for the registration of restricted medicine; or
 - (ii) the applicant is applying for the registration of medicine (other than restricted medicine) and the applicant has been given a notice in writing by the Secretary requiring the applicant to give to the Secretary product information, in relation to the medicine, that is in the form approved under section 7D in relation to the medicine;

the product information given by the applicant in relation to the medicine; and

8 After subparagraph 25(4)(d)(i)

Insert:

- (ia) if the goods are restricted medicine or the goods are medicine in respect of which the applicant has been given a notice of the kind referred to in subparagraph (1)(da)(ii)—notify the applicant in writing of the product information that is approved in relation to the medicine; and

9 After section 25

Insert:

25AA Approved product information for medicine

(1) If:

- (a) the Secretary includes restricted medicine in the Register in relation to a person under subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ii); or
- (b) an applicant for the registration of medicine (other than restricted medicine) is given a notice of the kind referred to in subparagraph 25(1)(da)(ii) and the Secretary includes the medicine in the Register in relation to the applicant under subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ii);

the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine is the product information referred to in subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ia).

Note: Subsection (4) deals with variation of the product information.

Transitional

(2) If:

- (a) at the start of the day the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) takes effect, there is medicine included in the Register in relation to a person; and
- (b) before that day, the Secretary, in a notice given under subsection 25(4) to the person in relation to the registration of the medicine, specified the product information that was approved by the Secretary in relation to the medicine;

then that product information (including as varied before that day) is, on and after that day, the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine.

Note: Subsection (4) deals with variation of the product information.

(3) If:

- (a) before the day the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) takes effect, a person made an application to include medicine in the Register; and

(b) before that day and in relation to that application, the Secretary, in a notice given under subsection 25(4) to the person, specified the product information that was approved by the Secretary in relation to the medicine; and

(c) on or after that day and in relation to that application, the Secretary includes the medicine in the Register in relation to the person under subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ii);

then that product information (including as varied before that inclusion) is, on and after the day the registration of the medicine commences, the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine.

Note: Subsection (4) deals with variation of the product information.

Variations

(4) If:

(a) there is medicine included in the Register in relation to a person and there is product information approved under this section in relation to the medicine; and

(b) either:

(i) under section 9D, the Secretary varies the entry in the Register in relation to the medicine; or

(ii) there is a change in the conditions to which the inclusion of the medicine is subject; and

(c) as a result of that variation or change, the Secretary is satisfied that a variation to that product information is required;

the Secretary may, by notice in writing given to the person, make any variations that the Secretary considers appropriate to the product information that is approved in relation to the medicine.

(5) To avoid doubt, if product information that is approved in relation to medicine

is varied under this section, that product information, as varied, becomes the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine.

10 Application

(1) Paragraph 23(2)(ba) and subparagraph 25(1)(da)(i) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, apply in relation to applications for registration of medicine that are made after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect.

(2) Subparagraph 25(1)(da)(ii) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, applies in relation to applications for registration of medicine that are made on or after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect.

(3) Subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ia) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, applies on and after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect (whether the application for registration was made before, on or after that day).

(4) Subsection 25AA(1) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, applies in relation to medicine included in the Register on or after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect (where the notification (in relation to the medicine) referred to in subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ia) of that Act also occurred on or after that day).

Note: Section 12 of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003* deals with when a legislative instrument takes effect.

- (4) Schedule 2, page 10 (before line 5), before item 1, insert:

1A Paragraph 9D(2)(a)

Omit “product”.

1B After subsection 9D(2)

Insert:

- (2A) Subsection (2), to the extent to which it relates to subparagraph (2)(b)(i), applies despite subsection 16(1).

1C Before subsection 9D(4)

Insert:

- (3C) If:

- (a) the person in relation to whom a kind of medical device is included in the Register has requested the Secretary to vary information included in the entry in the Register that relates to the kind of medical device; and

- (b) the only effect of the variation would be:

- (i) to reduce the class of persons for whom the kind of medical device is suitable; or
- (ii) to add a warning, restriction or precaution, that does not include any comparison of the kind of medical device with any other therapeutic goods by reference to quality, safety or performance;

the Secretary must vary the entry in accordance with the request.

- (3D) If:

- (a) the person in relation to whom a kind of medical device is included in the Register has requested the Secretary to vary information included in the entry in the Register that relates to the kind of medical device; and

- (b) subsection (3C) does not apply to the request; and

- (c) the Secretary is satisfied that the variation requested does not indicate any reduction in the quality, safety

or performance of the kind of medical device for the purposes for which it is to be used;

the Secretary may vary the entry in accordance with the request.

1D At the end of section 9D

Add:

Approved forms for requests

- (6) The Secretary may, by writing, approve a form for particular kinds of requests under this section.

- (7) If the Secretary has approved a form for a particular kind of request under this section, then any request of that kind must be in accordance with that form.

Fees

- (8) A request under this section must be accompanied by any prescribed application fee or prescribed evaluation fee or both.

- (5) Schedule 2, page 10, after proposed item 1D, insert:

1E Subsection 25(1)

Omit all the words from and including “Where:” to and including “having regard to:”, substitute “If an application is made for the registration of therapeutic goods in relation to a person in accordance with section 23, the Secretary must evaluate the goods for registration having regard to:”.

- (6) Schedule 2, items 2 and 3, page 10 (line 7) to page 11 (line 20), omit the items, substitute:

2 Paragraphs 26A(2)(ca) to (cd)

Repeal the paragraphs, substitute:

- (ca) the medicine does not contain an ingredient that is not specified in a determination under paragraph 26BB(1)(a); and

- (cb) if a determination under paragraph 26BB(1)(b) specifies requirements in relation to ingredients being contained in the medicine—none of the

requirements have been contravened; and

3 Section 26BB

Repeal the section, substitute:

26BB Permissible ingredients

- (1) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, make a determination specifying either or both of the following:
- (a) ingredients;
 - (b) for some or all of those ingredients—requirements in relation to those ingredients being contained in medicine.

Note: A person seeking the listing of a medicine under section 26A must certify that:

- (a) the medicine does not contain an ingredient that is not specified in the determination; and
- (b) none of the requirements specified in the determination in relation to ingredients being contained in the medicine have been contravened.

Requirements

- (2) The requirements referred to in paragraph (1)(b) may relate to particular ingredients not being contained in particular medicine.
- (3) The requirements referred to in paragraph (1)(b) may relate to permitted concentrations or permitted total amounts of ingredients.
- (4) Subsections (2) and (3) do not limit paragraph (1)(b).
- (5) A determination under paragraph (1)(b) may make different provision for different classes of medicine.

Limitations on determination under subsection (1)

- (6) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, make a determination specifying either or both of the following:
 - (a) ingredients that must not be specified under paragraph (1)(a);

- (b) requirements that must not be specified under paragraph (1)(b) in relation to ingredients being contained in medicine.

- (7) A determination under paragraph (6)(b) may make different provision for different classes of medicine.

Incorporation of instruments

- (8) Despite subsection 14(2) of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*, a determination under this section may make provision in relation to a matter by applying, adopting or incorporating any matter contained in an instrument or other writing as in force or existing from time to time.

Note: The heading to section 26BC is altered by omitting “**list of active ingredients**” and substituting “**determination under section 26BB**”.

- (7) Schedule 2, page 11 (before line 25), before item 5, insert:

4A After subsection 26BD(3)

Insert:

- (3A) In deciding whether to vary the determination, the Minister must have regard to the quality and safety of the ingredients concerned. This subsection does not limit the matters to which the Minister may have regard to in deciding whether to vary the determination.

- (8) Schedule 2, page 11 (after line 28), after item 6, insert:

6A After subsection 31(1A)

Insert:

- (1B) If:
 - (a) a person makes an application under section 23 for the registration of therapeutic goods in accordance with a form referred to in paragraph 23(1)(a); and
 - (b) the form is described as a pre-submission form; and
 - (c) the person chooses a number of days specified in the form for the purposes of giving information or

documents to the Secretary in the event that the person is given a notice under subsection (1) of this section in relation to the application;

then that number of days must be specified in any such notice as the time within which the person must give the required information or documents to the Secretary. The number of days so specified is taken to be a reasonable time for the purposes of subsection (1).

(1C) If:

- (a) the person in relation to whom therapeutic goods are registered makes a request under subsection 9D(3) in accordance with a form referred to in subsection 9D(6); and
- (b) the form is described as a pre-submission form; and
- (c) the person chooses a number of days specified in the form for the purposes of giving information or documents to the Secretary in the event that the person is given a notice under subsection (1) of this section in relation to the request;

then that number of days must be specified in any such notice as the time within which the person must give the required information or documents to the Secretary. The number of days so specified is taken to be a reasonable time for the purposes of subsection (1).

- (9) Schedule 2, item 7, page 11 (line 29) to page 12 (line 3), omit the item, substitute:

7 Application

- (1) The amendments made by items 1A to 1D apply in relation to requests made on or after the commencement of those items.
- (2) The amendment made by item 1E applies in relation to applications for registration made on or after the commencement of that item.

- (3) The amendments made by items 1 and 2 apply in relation to applications for listings made on or after the commencement of those items.

- (4) The amendment made by item 6A applies in relation to a notice given on or after the commencement of that item (whether the application or request was made before, on or after that commencement).

- (10) Schedule 2, page 13 (before line 4), before item 8, insert:

7A After subsection 7(1)

Insert:

- (1A) In deciding whether particular goods or classes of goods:

- (a) are therapeutic goods; or
- (b) when used, advertised, or presented for supply in a particular way, are therapeutic goods;

the Secretary must disregard paragraphs (e) and (f) of the definition of *therapeutic goods* in subsection 3(1).

- (11) Schedule 2, item 13, page 14 (lines 5 and 6), omit the item.

- (12) Schedule 2, item 14, page 14 (lines 7 to 10), omit the item, substitute:

14 After paragraph 31(2)(f)

Insert:

- (fa) if the goods are medicine—the matters covered by a certification by the person under paragraph 26A(2)(j) in relation to the medicine;
- (fb) whether the goods comply with conditions (if any) on the listing of the goods;

- (13) Schedule 2, page 14 (after line 17), after item 15, insert:

15A Paragraph 31(4)(a)

Repeal the paragraph, substitute:

- (a) either:
 - (i) the person is given a notice under subsection (1) and the person is covered by paragraph (1)(ab) or (ac); or

- (ii) the person is given a notice under subsection (2) and the person is covered by paragraph (2)(ab) or (ac); and
- (14) Schedule 2, item 21, page 15 (after line 25), after subitem (2), insert:

(2A) The amendment made by item 15A applies in relation to notices given on or after the commencement of that item.

- (15) Schedule 2, page 15 (after line 29), at the end of the Schedule, add:

Part 3—Amendments relating to biologicals

Therapeutic Goods Act 1989

22 Before subsection 9D(3A)

Insert:

(3AA) If:

- (a) the person in relation to whom a biological is included in the Register has requested the Secretary to vary information included in the entry in the Register that relates to the biological; and
- (b) the only effect of the variation would be:
- (i) to reduce the class of persons for whom the biological is suitable; or
- (ii) to add a warning, or precaution, that does not include any comparison of the biological with any other therapeutic goods by reference to quality, safety or efficacy; the Secretary must vary the entry in accordance with the request.

23 After paragraph 9D(3A)(a)

Insert:

- (aa) subsection (3AA) does not apply to the request; and

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport (4.59 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (4.59 pm)—I move:

That orders of the day Nos 3 to 5, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed from 26 October, on the proposed address-in-reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor-General—

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, express our loyalty to the Sovereign, and thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have been pleased to address to the Parliament—

on motion by **Ms O'Neill**:

That the Address be agreed to.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the member for Wannon, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (5.00 pm)—It is with great humility that I stand before you today in the 43rd Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia as the 14th member for Wannon. It is with great pride that I stand here as the son of the late Marie Tehan, my mother, who was a state parliamentarian. This is a first for the Commonwealth parlia-

ment. In Australian political history there has never been a member of this great chamber whose mother was also a parliamentarian. My late mother, Marie, was and remains a great inspiration to me. Not only was she before all else a wonderful loving mother but she was also an inspirational role model. She was a loving wife, devoted grandmother and brought up six children. It is fantastic to have my sister, Kathryn, and brothers, James and Dave, in the gallery today.

Mum firmly believed elected office was not an end in itself. It came with an obligation to work tirelessly to make your community a better place. She showed me the importance of having the courage to drive reform and how, if you needed to take tough decisions, you did not have countless reviews and put things to endless committees—you acted. As Victoria's health minister she was personally responsible in 1992 for the most significant health reforms this country has ever seen. She drove the reform process in the most trying of economic circumstances with Victoria \$22 billion in debt thanks to the gross waste and incompetence of the Cain-Kirner state Labor government. Not much changes.

My father, Jim, who is here today, was a great support to my mother, and she would not have achieved what she did without his help. I can also say without doubt that I would not be in this place today as the new member for Wannon if it were not for his guidance and support throughout my life. Like his father before him, Dad was a farmer who believed in not only working hard on the land but working hard through agripolitics for the land and for his fellow farmers. Like Mum he always found the time for his children, driving me countless miles every winter and summer so I could play country football and cricket. And all this, even though I had decided at age five, despite his

urgings, to barrack for the mighty Richmond Tigers instead of his beloved Carlton Blues.

More than anything though, Dad taught me the value of hard work. At any opportunity he put us to work on the farm whether it was as a young boy driving the Land Rover while he fed sheep oats from the back, sweeping the woolshed board after school during shearing time or 5 am starts during summer holidays to help with dipping. We were always expected to put in. When we left school all of us returned to the farm to work for a year. This was a form of exchange. The farm had given us the opportunity to go to boarding school therefore we should give something back to the farm.

I do not think I could have been more blessed than growing up in a large, loving family in the country. It moulded my perspective on life and the beliefs which will always inspire and guide me. It taught me that above all else those who aspire and claim to govern in the national interest should encourage and reward those who are willing to be enterprising, work hard and have a go at life no matter where they live. It taught me that what was good for the country was good for the nation.

The electorate of Wannon is named after the river that runs through it. It is a Federation electorate and its last two members have been Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who saved our great nation from Gough Whitlam, and former Speaker David Hawker, to whom, along with his wife, Penny, I owe great debt of gratitude for their encouragement and support. As I stand here this evening there is not a more beautiful place in the world to live than the electorate of Wannon. Whether it be the yellow canola crops blending with the red gums, lakes and rivers, the majestic backdrop of the Grampians or the fields of rich green pasture running into the rugged coastal shoreline, its breathtaking

scenery is superior to any other vista you could find across the world. It is little wonder that, after having travelled most of south-eastern Australia, so taken with it was the early explorer Thomas Mitchell that he called it Australia Felix; fortunate Australia.

The Wannon electorate is diverse and home to wonderful people with outstanding community spirit. Our largest town of Warrnambool is home to 32,000 residents and the famous May races, with the other 300 or more towns ranging in population from 12,000 to less than 10. The towns include many businesses servicing the mighty western district agricultural industry and a host of firms including education, financial, legal and tourism enterprises. They are surrounded by Australia's largest dairy region, its largest wool growing region, ever-expanding cropping land and vineyards. This agriculture and services mix is supported by industry including mining, meat and dairy processing, timber and engineering for renewable infrastructure.

During my campaign for the seat I set out clearly what I hoped to achieve locally as the member for Wannon—greater federal funding for our crumbling road infrastructure; better health services, including the much-needed Medicare-funded MRI licence for south-west Victoria; employment rules which, instead of putting barriers in the way, encourage our young people to work; changes to the independent youth allowance so we can begin to address the alarming decline in country students accessing tertiary education; and real and practical action to support our local environment. I am deeply honoured and humbled that the electors of Wannon saw fit to make me their representative, their voice in the national parliament. With their help I now set about the task of honouring my commitment to fight for what Wannon needs and of ensuring that this government delivers services on a needs basis

for all Australians, no matter where they live, highlighting that what is good for Wannon is good for the nation.

I would not be here today if it were not for the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party is unique in that it relies on individuals volunteering their time and effort to create an organisation that will represent their views and the views of their community in the parliament. In Wannon the Liberal Party has more than 1,000 members, and one of the things that greatly inspired me as I campaigned across the electorate was witnessing how much our local members gave to and engaged with our local communities. I cannot place a value on how much this helped my campaign and inspired me personally, but I can say it was central to our success. In many ways, through their volunteer work they were living a life inspired by Robert Menzies, working for social justice and security, for national progress and for the full development of the individual citizen. It is as obvious to me as to anyone else however that, like many other volunteer organisations, our membership is ageing. If what sets us apart from all other political parties in Australia is our volunteer base, we are facing a looming and serious problem. As a party we are continually asking our ageing membership to give even more of themselves, when our collective vision should be to encourage more people, especially from my generation, to join so that they can give. In the end this will mean power ultimately and rightly will remain with our party membership, ensuring that we remain the party best connected to the community and, as a result, the best able to govern for all Australians, including country Australians.

My life experiences will play a large part in informing the way I represent my constituents. As a young boy working in our shearing shed I was taken aback by the fact that two of the shearers who had always been

the best of friends were not talking to each other. Upon inquiring of the rouseabout as to why, I learned that one was in favour of using wide combs and the other was not. As it turned out, the friendship of the two shearers, who were both union members, never recovered. One shearer could not understand why the union would have them spending longer doing their backbreaking work and hence being less productive and earning less money per day. The other was of the view that the union bosses knew best: the Kiwis had to be kept out to protect union solidarity, and what did it matter if the comb was not a few centimetres wider? As it turned out, the first was vindicated. But as a young boy I could never understand why the dispute had happened. Why were the best of friends pitted against each other? Why did it take so long for common sense to prevail, for the union bosses to realise that better productivity for the shearers was in the shearers' interests, country Australia's interests and the nation's interests?

Work Choices is dead. One of the most effective union propaganda campaigns ever seen, and Julia Gillard's regulatory zeal, has seen to it. The regulatory zeal has had consequences however. Take the three-hour-minimum provision. When country kids in my electorate can no longer do their paper round before school, when dairy farmers can no longer get a break from their morning milking and when six kids get the sack from working after school in a hardware store because of this reregulation, something is wrong in Wannon and therefore in the nation, and there is a need to act. Julia Gillard told two young students in my electorate she would act. She said she would, and with one stroke of the pen through a ministerial directive to so-called Fair Work Australia she could have. But it seems the bosses of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Union spoke, and two courageous young

Australians, Matthew Spencer and Leticia Harrison, were left hung out to dry.

I want to take this opportunity to put to the Prime Minister three simple questions. Why are you siding with union bosses in supporting rules that mean young Australians in my electorate stay at home playing on their PlayStations rather than encouraging them to work? Why won't you act in a way that allows all Australians, including country students, to work if they want to? Why can't you see that what is good for country students in my electorate is good for the nation?

With Australia in the grip of a mining boom, employment flexibility has never been more vital to businesses directly competing with the mining sector for employment, and Australia's young might never again have an opportunity like this to get the best start to their adult lives by getting a job. As the workforce was deregulated, youth unemployment over the period of the Howard government went from 28 per cent to 17.4 per cent and long-term unemployment went from 27 per cent to 15 per cent. What happens with these two key statistics in the future will be an important social justice indicator of Julia Gillard's reregulation of the workplace.

Working as a diplomat I was fortunate enough to represent our great nation in Mexico, Central America and Cuba. On my first visit to Cuba I was given an extended briefing by the Cuban government on its health system. I was told that Cuba has more doctors per head of population than any country in the world, that the Cuban medical training school was regarded internationally and that Cuba exports its doctors to Third World countries such as Angola and Mozambique. Following this briefing I met the only foreign journalist permitted to live on the island. He was married to a Cuban woman and they had just had their first child in Havana Hospital.

After I told him of my briefing, he told me of the birth of his first child. It was a simple story of the horrors of government intervention, of the misallocation of resources and of why no amount of spin can hide the fact that smaller government is better. He told me how he and his wife took to the birth of their first child at Havana Hospital toilet paper, bed linen and a light bulb.

When a government decides to legislate it always needs to make use of every available means to think through the consequences of its actions and to stop and think whether it should act at all. Nowhere is this more apparent today than in the way this government develops policy. Allowing state bureaucracies rather than school councils and principals to allocate BER resources and allowing a community group in my electorate, Peter's Project, who want to build an Integrated Cancer Centre, only two months to put together a detailed and technical proposal for funding is, to me, Cuban-style decision making. Less stark, but equally relevant, is a policy that has left a large footprint in my electorate of Wannon. Managed Investment Schemes, or MISs, were primarily designed to provide incentive for investment in forestry. Unfortunately, the incentive that was provided was directed at the corporate tax break and not at sustaining production in timber. While initially providing a flow of investment, an MIS soon became an MIPS, a Managed Investment 'Ponzi' Scheme, leaving many in my local communities to ask why the long-term impacts of the scheme were not considered when it was developed. With MIS companies now insolvent, banks having no confidence to lend to the scheme, leading CEOs calling for it to be axed and timbered land in prime food and fibre production areas lying unproductively dormant, now is the time for us to act. An MIS, which unfairly pits small business, our family farmers, against large corporates and which gives

the corporates a tax advantage when it comes to purchasing land is not what I consider good Liberal policy. It needs to go and an alternative found to encourage long-term investment in forestry.

Education is a key reason that I am standing here today. Nothing saddens me more than the growing gap between country students who access a tertiary education and their city cousins. The whole system of financial support that helps rural and regional students access a tertiary education needs to be reviewed. This growing gap needs to be reversed as a matter of urgency. As a country student I was lucky. I had a farm to work on for 12 months before I went to university and during school holidays. I was able to take a year off in the middle of my degree to work as a farmhand in Denmark. Even though I worked three nights a week in a bar, I had parents who could help support me when I did my Masters Degree in the United Kingdom. My international relations degree was insightful in two ways. The first is that, by studying international political theory, I was able to understand the philosophical antecedents of the parties in this place. The influence of Burke and Mill has been proudly and well documented on this side. But what of our dear friends opposite? They seem to have lost their way. We must never forget that they are born out of Marx even if they would try and have us forget. We should also remember they have done a deal with the Greens—the party that uses the environment as a guise; the party of Nietzsche, who want to trash modernity and religion in the hope that this will lead dangerously to a complete re-evaluation of our traditional values.

The second lesson I learnt is that globalisation will continue to impact on our society in ways which will continue to challenge us. How we respond to those challenges as Liberals will, in many ways, determine the economic future of our children. Over the long

term, we cannot regulate or play defence against globalisation. The capital and labour markets of the world will eventually just pass us by to our detriment. If there was a lesson out of the global financial crisis, it was that the reform undertaken prior to the election of the Rudd Labor government saved us. It is why we have to continually look at ways to make all our businesses, large and small, more competitive. It is why, when country hotels still find it cheaper to buy their beer from the major supermarkets than the brewery, we should look beyond regulation to fix the problem. We should look to our tax system, including company tax, to help small business compete against such anti-competitive behaviour. It is why we should never buy into the concept of fair trade. You are either for trade liberalisation or for trade protectionism. Granted, we have to ensure that, when liberalising, it is done in a way that maximises our competitive advantage. That is not fair trade; that is negotiating cleverly. As a nation that is reliant on our trade in mineral resources, agriculture and services, we have far more to lose from trade protectionism than nearly any other country in the world. In dealing with globalisation, all our children, both country and city, will need the tools to compete. It is why I want to ensure that those country students who want to access tertiary studies can afford to do so. They should be able to access tertiary education—the great enabler.

I would not be standing here today if it were not for the help and support of a great many people. The Wannon preselection had 10 worthy candidates. I was encouraged to be one of them by Dr Denis Napthine, Michael Stewart, Jim and Ellen Dwyer, Leigh Allen, Alison McLeod and Simon Troeth. Jamie Briggs and Brad Williams and their charming wives, Estee and Meredith, as well as others also provided me with invaluable support during the process. My previous

bosses—Mark Vaile, former Deputy Prime Minister; Fran Bailey, former Minister for Small Business and Tourism; and Peter Anderson, head of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry—provided me with the opportunity to improve myself and with excellent references—I will be forever grateful.

The seat of Wannon was contested by nine candidates. I thank from the bottom of my heart the hundreds of Liberal Party members and supporters who, from nonagenarian Kay Wiltshire to teenager Jamie Pepper, the third generation of Peppers to support the Liberal cause, contributed to what was an outstanding team effort. My campaign team of Lisa Robertson, Neil Gough, Evelyn Hunt, Sam Wilson, Geoff Cain, Anna Jamieson, Rob Lawrance, Pat Dalton, Graeme Sandlant, Hazel McKinnon and Matt Makin never wavered from our commitment to run a positive, locally focused campaign. Bill Phillpot, Nick Rule and Duncan Macgugan skilfully drove Wannon area finance. Tony Nutt and Damien Mantach from the state secretariat responded professionally and quickly to my every campaign need. Former Prime Minister John Howard and Australia's longest serving Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, provided me with references. Former cabinet minister Peter Reith provided me with the soundest of advice. I am honoured.

My friends, many of whom are here in the gallery, did what friends do best. They kept me grounded and never allowed me to take myself too seriously. To Denys Batten and John Parlett, who both took a week off work to help drive me around the 33,000 square kilometres of the electorate, I say thanks. To Dad and Sue, and my brothers and sisters, who all helped on election day: thanks also. To Tony Abbott: we have both come a long way since Beaufort. To the eight members of the shadow ministry who visited: thanks for

showing through your actions that you care about Wannon and rural Australia.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Sarah, and our children. Sarah and I met not long after we had both lost a parent extremely dear to us. We built through love and sheer hard work a family that brings me such joy words cannot describe. To our children, Oliver, Tim, Amelia, Maya and last but not least Eleanor: give us a wave! You have all had to make large sacrifices so I can be here today. Our soccer games are fewer and Harmony and Rhapsody, the fairies who live in the bottom of the garden, do not get visited as often. I want you to know that I am here because I believe in your future. We are judged rightly by the electorate at each election but, when you grow up, if you and your generation locally deem my time here a success I will have done my job.

My great great grandfather settled in Portland—which is in the electorate of Wannon—with his wife and nine children on two acres of land in 1852. It is possible that one or more of his children were taught by Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop, who was working there at the time. I said I thought I was blessed growing up in a large family in the country! My grandfather, who was the youngest of seven, was the last to leave the two acres. With both his parents deceased, after completing his schooling, he left to join the Postmaster-General before buying his first milk bar and later first country hotel and, importantly, steeplechaser.

His first daughter was my mother. In the well-known Australian sitcom *Mother and Son* Maggie always had to have the final word. In the parliamentary version, it should be no different. In her maiden speech, my mother had this to say about Labor in power: That sense of pride and achievement in self, in work well done and in community effort is being eroded throughout this country and must be rein-

stated as a fundamental value in personal and civic life if we are again to stand tall as ... a country. The best place to start to instil and activate this sense of pride is in the security of an accepting environment—the home, the small business, the small town or rural community.

I couldn't have said it better except to add 'in Wannon'.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call Mr Christensen, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (5.30 pm)—I stand here in this chamber today in the knowledge that I am but one man among many who have been elected by their peers to serve their community and their nation. I stand here as but one man aware that many others have served the Dawson electorate before me. I wish to acknowledge the previous member, James Bidgood, as well as the previous two National Party members, DeAnne Kelly and Ray Braithwaite, both of whom assisted me in my campaign. I stand here as but one man very much aware of the political greats both past and present who have sat or who sit in this place. The thought of being a minnow in a very big pond does spring to mind. I stand here as but one man who feels the enormous responsibility of representing the 94,533 electors in the seat of Dawson.

The mighty electorate of Dawson stretches from the powerhouse city of Mackay; through the idyllic Whitsundays, the beachside of Bowen and the bountiful Burdekin, which is one of the finest sugar-growing areas in this nation; north to the southern suburbs of Townsville, including Wulguru, Oonoonba, Idalia and Annandale. The industries that make up this mighty electorate include sugar but also tourism, horticulture, fishing and, importantly, industries serving the Central Queensland mining sector. The Dawson electorate is also home to

many serving Australian Defence Force personnel.

With all due respect to members present, the needs and concerns of the people of Dawson are very different to the needs and concerns of those in capital cities. Whether it be in Mackay, Townsville or any of the towns adjoining the Bruce Highway, the poor state of our road network is a major concern. In Mackay, there is a desperate need for action when it comes to roads. Firstly, we need a solid commitment from the government to the important Mackay ring-road project. During the election campaign, the Liberal-National coalition committed to kick-starting this project. But all the government has done is promise yet another study, this one at a cost of \$10 million. The ring-road will not only alleviate the growing traffic congestion problems for north side residents but link the port of Mackay to the thriving industrial precinct of Paget and to the gateway to the Bowen Basin mines, the Peak Downs Highway.

As someone who served on the Mackay council for six years, I also want to put on record the need for greater funding for local roads by both state and federal governments. Councils and ratepayers in growing regional centres like Mackay are literally at breaking point trying to keep up with the skyrocketing costs associated with building new roads and effectively maintaining old ones. The federal government is the only level of government that can give these communities what they need: access to an ongoing revenue stream that recognises the growing pains that they are going through.

Along with the road network issues in Mackay, there is a dire need for increased funding for a range of problem areas on the Bruce Highway. From the need for a new Burdekin Bridge to a four-lane duplication of Vantassel Street to Flinders Highway in Townsville, increasing overtaking lanes and

flood-proofing sections near Proserpine and Bowen, there is about \$1 billion worth of immediate work needed on the Bruce Highway from St Lawrence north, most of which is not in the government's planning.

Health is another key area where we are being let down badly by Labor. In Mackay, we have an appalling situation in which this government weakened our rural rating which attracts relocation funding for GPs and incentive payments for GPs and registrars. Since the middle of this year, Townsville, Cairns and Rockhampton have all been classified as more remote than Mackay. As a result, they attract greater funding for GPs. In fact, Mackay is now classified on the same footing as some Brisbane suburbs. Given Labor's penchant for quick fixes, here is one that can be done very quickly: put Mackay's rural rating back to three so we can effectively compete with other regional centres for new GPs without having one hand tied behind our back.

There is a gaping hole in Mackay's health network which must be mentioned. I refer to the desperate need for a Headspace youth mental health facility in Mackay. Two years ago, we had a spate of youth suicides in Mackay. In one six-week period, five children committed suicide and several others attempted suicide. That problem has not gone away. I am told by front-line social workers and GPs in Mackay that every week there is a suicide attempt that someone has to be talked out of. It was a commitment of this Liberal-National coalition to deliver a Headspace centre for Mackay. But I say to the government that they need to put politics aside on this issue. We need a Headspace centre urgently.

Finally in terms of needs for Dawson, there is a noticeable lack of adequate community and social infrastructure for growing populations. Whether it be an upgrade for the

Mackay Showgrounds, the sporting grounds of the Mackay and District Junior Soccer Club, the Whitsunday Moto Sports Club's raceway or the Whitsunday Sports Park, there is a clear need for more social infrastructure. If we are to make our regions truly liveable, we must have social and community infrastructure in place that makes those locations attractive to families and young professionals.

Under the coalition, such infrastructure was to be funded through a new Better Regions Program. I note that the new Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has indicated that this type of funding will not be happening under his government as he considers it to be pork-barrelling. If it is all right for Western Sydney to get multimillion-dollar Labor promises for soccer centres and hockey centres during election campaigns, then it is only right that, through a proper process, we give regional areas that miss out time and again a fair go and a fair share. A fair go and a fair share is all regional Australia is asking for. Apart from that, government can get out of the way and let us manage our own futures.

The Dawson electorate, with its support services for the mining sector, with its major resource port of Abbot Point and with its resilient sugar industry, is the engine room of this nation's economy. The onus is on the government, which reaps so much wealth from the efforts of the mineworkers, the farmers, the manufacturers, the businesses and the workers in the Dawson electorate, to give back a fair share in return for those efforts. I consider it my duty to hold the government to account on that front.

I am well aware that it is also my duty to serve in the national interest. That duty will be aided by the values that I bring to this House, values that were formed by the 32

years of my life thus far. My mother was an immigrant to this country. Her family came to this country with nothing but hope. Both my parents were disability pensioners during my childhood life and we lived very humbly compared to many others. All of that gave me a social justice conscience but tempered with a strong belief that living in abject poverty, or any form of poverty, does not necessarily lead one to poor academic performance, into further poverty or into crime. My father and mother strived to escape the welfare trap as much as they could. In the bad old days, my father—who is in the gallery today—fronted the CES looking for work. They told him, 'No; you're on the pension for life, mate.' He did not accept that. He went on to become a taxi driver—the fastest in town, actually, because he also went on to become a professional drag car racer. My parents now own and run a successful small business, manufacturing and exporting motorsport car parts all over the world.

I was raised a Catholic, but family finances meant I never went to a private school. Of the state schools that I did attend, Walkerston State School lays claim to a former member of this House, the Rt Hon. Arthur Fadden, Leader of the Country Party and, famously, Prime Minister for 40 days and 40 nights. With some government support, I funded my own way through university, where I graduated with a degree in, of all things, journalism—yes, I am one of them! I attended Central Queensland University and was a proud residential student of Capricornia College. Amongst many other spirits, Capricornia College instilled in me a collegial spirit which I will have for life.

I had a great-uncle who ran for the Labor Party in the seat of Dawson in 1955. I had a grandfather of Irish stock who worked on the docks in Glasgow. My first job was on the floor of a printing factory and I myself have been a member of two different unions. So

from all of this I understand and respect the needs and aspirations of blue-collar working men and women in the seat of Dawson. On the other side of the family, my grandparents were cane farmers and my father was a big Joh fan: 'Don't you worry about that!'

Over a decade ago, I joined the National Party, now the merged Liberal-National Party. And while in this parliament I sit with the parliamentary National Party, I now consider myself, first and foremost, a member of the Liberal-National Party, a unified grassroots conservative force. This grassroots conservative force came into being through the tenacious efforts of dedicated men and women, but I will single out for praise the father of the LNP, the Hon. Lawrence Springborg MP, party president Bruce McIver and deputy president Gary Spence, not forgetting the prior efforts of the member for Maranoa in his role as party president. I echo the words of the Leader of the Liberal-National coalition, who has written elsewhere that 'there could be a strong case for a merged party at the national level'. He also said:

A merged party would be "liberal" in its instinctive support for individuals and community solutions over government ones and "national" in its determination that Australia should matter in the wider world.

I only hope that one day on a national level we can achieve that vision and unite the Liberal and National parties into a force that will be for the greater benefit of this nation. Because right now our nation groans under the weight of high taxation, government overspending, waste, debt and a political and media elite fostered culture of relativism and lack of responsibility that is often masked as tolerance and compassion. It is the conservative principles of those in the Liberal-National coalition that are needed to rectify this situation. It is the conservatism of those who sit on this side of the House—for

now—that is the true philosophy in defence of individual rights. Conservatism, like libertarianism, seeks to defend individual choice and freedoms but it also points to the consequences of that choice and freedom, be it success or failure. One of my political heroes, former US President Ronald Reagan, declared as much when he said:

If you analyze it I believe the very heart and soul of conservatism is libertarianism ... The basis of conservatism is a desire for less government interference or less centralized authority or more individual freedom ...

On the other hand, Labor, like all leftist movements, likes to pretend it is the champion of individual rights. But, whether it be the mineworker, the cane grower, the small business owner or the mother in the working family, Labor is the party that has one hand picking their pockets while the other is boxing them in with regulation and red tape. Right now, a resident in the seat of Dawson could be subject to ambulance tax, land tax, stamp duties, local government rates, water rates, sewerage charges, waste levies, car registration fees, boat registration fees, cigarette excise, alcohol excise, fuel excise, capital gains tax, fringe benefits tax, superannuation tax, GST and, last but not least, personal income tax. To me, the most hated of these taxes is income tax and there are only a few things more detestable than someone mooching directly off your income, even if it is the state and it is supposedly for the common good. I believe income tax should go.

To paraphrase Lennon—John Lennon, John Lennon that is—I know I may be a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. It is a big call, but I dream of the day where we can put more money into workers' pockets by ending personal income tax. We are taxed to the hilt. And now Labor want to bring in two new taxes. The first is their mining tax that will put jobs and businesses throughout the Mackay region and North Queensland completely

at risk. Those opposite may not know it but, when the global financial crisis first raised its ugly head, we felt it in Mackay. The mining industry hiccuped and people lost jobs, mining service businesses stopped getting orders and small businesses across the community felt the pinch in a very big way.

To us, it showed that the mining industry was not the unstoppable economic force we had thought it was and that obviously the government still thinks it is. But make no mistake: if the government rips billions out of the Central Queensland mining sector through its mining tax, it will have an impact. This is somewhat personal for me. My brother is coalminer. My sister is the wife of a coalminer. My two nephews and my niece rely on their dad's coalmining income to live. If Labor causes the mining industry to hiccup, these are the kind of people who will feel it: miners, their wives, their husbands and their children—working families in Dawson, who have effectively been told by the Prime Minister that the only way Australia can move forward is by a great big new tax that will hold them back.

Then there is this carbon tax, the one that was twice denied during the election, the one that threatens to push up the price of everything, notably electricity, in the vain hope that we are going to cool the temperature of the globe. But whether you want income tax gone, or you just want tax in general lowered, here is the difference between the conservatives and the Labor socialists: we think that people should be able to make choices with their own money, while Labor dictates where they can spend it by taxing it and then giving back to you if you are performing an activity that falls into line with their particular world view. For instance, under Labor you could get some of your tax money back if you supposedly helped the environment by installing pink batts or foil insulation. We know how that ended up.

A better example: Labor gives generous subsidies to parents if their children are put into institutionalised child care. But what about choice? Shouldn't parents, not governments, be the experts in deciding on the best day-to-day care for their children? Under Labor, childcare funding, along with paid parental leave, is more about promoting paid workforce participation than helping parents afford the care they really want for their children. Every family pays for child care by giving up or giving away income, in particular mothers who do their own childcare work unwaged. It is unfair that most Australian families miss out on childcare funding because they do not use day care or other outsourced care. I believe child care must be redefined to include parental and informal child care, which is preferred by most families and cheaper for taxpayers to fund. We need to put parents 100 per cent in control of the childcare budget, by phasing in a single childcare payment that parents can use for family based, as well as formal, child care.

But pinching people's pockets and using and abusing tax dollars are not the only ways that socialists try to dictate people's lives. We also have that other hand I talked about, the one boxing people in with red tape and regulation. In the electorate of Dawson, due to the actions of Queensland Labor, in concert with the Greens, we have a classic example of red tape and regulation strangling local cane farmers. You see, despite the Australian Bureau of Statistics finding that 97 per cent of farmers in the Great Barrier Reef catchment area were doing the right thing when it came to managing water run-off, state Labor brought in their draconian reef regulation rules. These rules require farmers to fill out piles and piles of paperwork, taking hours and hours each week—just to put some fertiliser on the paddock! It is typical of Labor. Despite knowing that farmers are already doing the right thing, they seem to

think that through red tape and paperwork they can better protect the environment. Quite frankly, farmers are sick and tired of being portrayed as environmental vandals.

To the conservative, property rights are sacred. This is because the ownership of private property is so intrinsically linked to freedom for the individual, which I talked about earlier. So, as a conservative, I sympathise greatly with the plight of landholders who have had their property rights effectively stolen from them, without compensation, under the guise of native vegetation management legislation or the like. To even think that a farmer's property rights have been restricted in the belief that locking up trees will keep the climate from changing is disgraceful.

But it is not the first disgraceful thing that has been done in the name of tackling so-called man-made climate change, and it will not be the last. Despite what the political and media elite tell us to think, the truth is the science on climate change is not settled. There are more than 700 scientists who have openly opposed the theory of man-made climate change in a report of the US Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. One of those scientists is a resident in the seat of Dawson, the respected geophysicist Professor Bob Carter. It seems to me that, before we go down the track of removing people's property rights or introducing carbon taxes in the name of stopping man-made climate change, we should really work out what the facts are. That is why I believe it is high time we had a royal commission to determine the scientific facts of the theory of man-made climate change.

But while liberty from taxation, liberty of choice and liberty from regulation are important, the liberty of life is fundamental to my conservatism. Whether it be the frail, the elderly, the terminally ill or the child in the

womb, life matters. The left of politics promote welfarism of all varieties under the guise of compassion. Through days for this cause and that cause, and ribbons for this campaign and that campaign, the left champion this faux compassion between all and sundry, including complete strangers. But the relationship that exists between parents and children, or an adult child and dying parent, should be inherently compassionate by its nature. When we break that nexus, when we allow and encourage the removal of compassion from relationships that by their nature should be the most compassionate, then we are all the poorer for it. If we accept this as lawmakers, we accept a culture of death, and then we can no longer say we are a compassionate society.

I stand here as but one man, a conservative who is prepared to fight for the rights of the individual. I stand here as but one man ready to do his duty for his electorate. I stand here as but one man who knows that the task ahead of him is mammoth. And I stand here as but one man still feeling like a minnow in a big pond. But to quote my other political hero, the late, great BA Santamaria: 'Even the minnow must do what he can.'

In closing, I would like to dedicate my speech to my family and loved ones, to my friends both here and departed, to coalition MPs and senators, to the LNP members and to all supporters who assisted me during the election campaign, and to most of all the people of Dawson who have put their faith in me.

Debate (on motion by **Dr Emerson**) adjourned.

**HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT
AMENDMENT (FEE-HELP LOAN FEE)
BILL 2010**

Referred to Main Committee

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (5.52 pm)—
by leave—I move:

That the Higher Education Support Amendment (FEE-HELP Loan Fee) Bill 2010 be referred to the Main Committee for further consideration.

Question agreed to.

**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL
PREVENTIVE HEALTH AGENCY
BILL 2010**

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (5.53 pm)—Before the debate was interrupted earlier this afternoon, I was talking about a couple of small changes that have been made to the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010 compared to the form it took when it last passed the House in 2009. Apart from those two small changes, the scope and purpose of the bill remain unchanged.

This bill fits within the overall health reform agenda of the Labor government. This government is committed to improving the health of all Australians through policies that deal with the challenges of access, affordability and the overall cost of providing quality health care. We are doing that in the face of evidence that warns us that those aims will be hard to achieve in the coming decades due to the increased demands and costs associated with the ageing population and increasing rates of chronic disease. That is why we place such a priority on preventative health policies, and this bill is an integral part of that important strategy.

We will not get on top of the rising costs of providing health care to Australians unless we direct more resources towards preventative health and do it in a strategic and nationally coordinated way. The challenge is enormous and growing. Potentially avoidable diseases affect the lives of millions of Australians. They also account for around 20 per cent of the total healthcare expenditure. Currently, smoking kills around 15,000 Aus-

tralian each year and costs Australia \$31½ billion each year. More than 60 per cent of Australians aged over 18 are overweight or obese. And more than 800,000 Australians aged 15 years and older were hospitalised for alcohol related injury and disease between 1996 and 2005. We have to be able to do better and, frankly, we cannot afford not to.

The reform agenda Labor are driving has made it clear that we recognise that our health system should be as much about keeping people in good health as it is about treating them when they are sick. The focus on preventative health, however, involves a major change in the way we organise and fund our health system and in the way people think about their lifestyles and personal responsibility for their wellbeing. That requires national leadership, something that was recognised and recommended by both the Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the national Preventative Health Taskforce.

The government sees the Australian National Preventive Health Agency as a key part of the national effort towards driving those essential changes in the way we look at health. The need for and rationale for the National Preventive Health Agency have been endorsed by groups that know all too well the personal and financial costs of ignoring the current trends of chronic and preventable disease. For example, the Heart Foundation has welcomed the establishment of the National Preventive Health Agency, saying that it ‘heralds an important and proactive focus for preventative health care, especially in the major health risk areas of tobacco and obesity, that could potentially shift the significant burden of cost that accompanies chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease’. Similarly, the Public Health Association of Australia and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians have indicated their support for the agency

and the desire for it to be up and running as quickly as possible. That is exactly what the government is striving for.

The bill before us today establishes the Australian Preventive Health Agency to support Australian health ministers in tackling the complex and growing challenge of preventable chronic disease. The bill specifies the functions, governance and structure of the agency, including the interaction with the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Ageing and the Australian Health Ministers Conference. An important part of the structure of the Preventive Health Agency is the advisory council, which will be made up of between seven and 11 members with experience in the preventative health sector in a variety of disciplines and from a variety of sectors across that area.

The agency takes its place within a much broader preventative health effort being undertaken through a historic partnership on preventative health between the Commonwealth and state governments. Early in this government's first term, COAG signed off on the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. That partnership represents an initial \$872 million investment in preventative health measures developing strategies to inform people of the risks of obesity, smoking and drinking and encouraging people to make choices that will lead to better long-term health outcomes. That investment of \$872 million is the largest ever investment by an Australian government to support preventative health initiatives.

That partnership agreement included the establishment of this Preventive Health Agency. COAG recognised that supporting or enabling infrastructure such as the Preventive Health Agency and its research and surveillance capacity was required to support the Commonwealth and the states in their efforts to tackle the complex challenges as-

sociated with preventable chronic conditions and achieve the outcomes specified in the prevention partnership signed off at COAG, particularly those around healthy weight, physical activity, healthy eating and smoking.

In fact, it is Australia's track record in bringing down the rates of smoking that should give encouragement to all of us about what it is possible to achieve through concerted strategies to educate the community, promote health messages and back that up with action. Australia has one of the lowest rates of smoking in the world as a result of hard-hitting social marketing campaigns backed up by measures such as increasing the excise applying to tobacco products, banning tobacco advertising and introducing graphic warning labels. This government wants to go further by making Australia the first country in the world to introduce plain packaging of tobacco products.

We have seen the results on smoking rates but more needs to be done on that, as well as on the rising incidence of obesity and harmful drinking. Up until now there have been programs running here and there across multiple jurisdictions and departments, but it is time for a fully coordinated national approach backed up by the best research into the exact dimensions of the problem, including a full understanding of the social determinants of health outcomes.

A key initial role of the National Preventive Health Agency will be to provide the leadership, coordination and monitoring required to support the successful implementation of initiatives funded through the prevention partnership, including \$692 million out of that \$872 million I mentioned earlier. From the recommendations of the agency a consistent and clear policy is to be delivered in order to ensure that this nation's health risks are met with action. Under the preven-

tion partnership the Commonwealth will provide funding of \$133 million over four years for the National Preventive Health Agency. Of this, \$17.6 million will be provided for the establishment and maintenance of the agency. Other funds will be used for social marketing—an amount of \$102 million—and there is \$13 million to support preventive health research, particularly that which focuses on the translation of research into practice. There is also money to audit workforce availability and to develop a strategy to address any identified gaps in that workforce.

We know that the challenges associated with chronic disease and lifestyle risk factors are very large. There are already numerous programs across the country aimed at increasing Australians' physical activity levels and reducing those lifestyle factors that impact so negatively on people's health. I spoke in the last debate on this bill about the 10,000 Steps program, which originated in Rockhampton in my electorate and which continues to play an important role in educating people about the importance of incorporating exercise into their daily lives and establishing a research base, backed up by the Central Queensland University, about the effectiveness of such community-wide campaigns.

The federal government is also supporting the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program, and I had great pleasure in joining the community on Saturday morning to celebrate the opening of the kitchen garden project at Farnborough State School on the Capricorn Coast. I was very proud when Farnborough State School was chosen to be amongst the first schools to be funded after the program was expanded beyond Victoria, thanks to a commitment made by this government in the 2007 election. It was truly astonishing to see what the school has achieved with the support of the Stephanie

Alexander Foundation; funding from our government, including from the BER; and a great deal of hard work by teachers, especially Pam and Sue, the students and community volunteers. The program seeks to revolutionise the way children approach and experience food. It teaches children to grow, harvest and prepare healthy, nutritional food and experience the home-grown taste that is lacking in much of the processed food that makes up our diets today. The Farnborough students are developing the knowledge and skills that can set them up for a lifetime of good eating habits. We saw plenty of evidence of the power of this project at Farnborough as the students served guests samples of the beautiful food they cooked themselves using the produce from the extensive school garden.

Not so obvious but just as important are the social and educational benefits that are flowing from the school's embrace of this project, as we learned from one of the mothers who shared her child's kitchen garden experience with the audience at the opening. She said:

For a special needs child the Stephanie Alexander project gets these kids out of the classroom which is so overwhelming and into the outdoors, gardening where they can be themselves and nothing is expected of them. I think they blossom 100 per cent. Many schools only offer sports as outside activities, which is not what autistic or Asperger's kids would consider as fun. The garden is a much better alternative. The garden and kitchen are teaching them so many life skills without them realising, whether it's tending to plants or following a recipe. My child makes some pretty good salads and is a great help in the kitchen at home. My child was struggling with reading but can follow a recipe no worries. The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden project is not just a garden or a kitchen. It is my child's happy place.

We were all so pleased to hear of that experience and that Amanda was able to share that with us on Saturday morning.

So it is great to know that, with the assistance of \$12.8 million in federal funding, by 2012 there will be 200 schools and over 20,000 children sharing this experience nationwide. It shows us that there are things out there that work to put Australians on the path to being better informed about the choices they make. The challenge to governments is to reverse the traditional health policy model which puts preventive health initiatives at the edges of the health system and instead give them priority within a fully integrated health system. Australia is now getting the leadership and the funding it needs to tackle the complex and growing challenge of preventable disease caused by smoking, obesity, alcohol and poor lifestyle choices.

I commend this bill to the House as one more step towards tackling that challenge. When smoking kills 15,000 Australians every year and our children are facing a shorter life expectancy than the current generation, I call on the opposition to stop wasting valuable time and to support this bill.

Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (6.05 pm)—I am very pleased to speak on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. This is tremendous legislation before the parliament and we should be very proud of the minister for bringing it to the parliament. Like the previous speaker, I am appalled that the opposition, the Liberal and National parties, are opposing this legislation. The bill seeks to focus and revitalise Australia's preventive health capacity. It also extends the period of the agency's strategy plan to cover a five-year rather than a three-year period and explicitly mentions programs related to obesity and to alcohol, tobacco and other substances of abuse as being included in the scope of social marketing campaigns to be undertaken by the agency.

In 2008 the government reached agreement with the states and territories through

COAG, among other things making historic investments in Indigenous health but also in prevention, and part of the agreement in prevention was to create the agency and commit funding to it, with an investment of over \$130 million for its establishment, preventive health research and social marketing campaigns. And it was not going to be just a poster and T-shirt campaign or another calendar; it was real substance by this government and by the COAG ministers.

Preventative health is an area to which this government has given the highest possible priority. The government has committed \$872.1 million over six years from 2009-10 under the COAG National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. This is the largest single commitment to health promotion by an Australian government. There are a range of initiatives under the Preventative Health Strategy targeting the lifestyle risk factors of chronic disease, including: settings based interventions in preschools, schools, workplaces and communities to support behavioural changes in the social contexts of everyday lives, and focusing on poor nutrition, physical inactivity, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, including the scourge of binge drinking, which probably every member has in their electorate; social marketing aimed at obesity and tobacco; and the enabling infrastructure, including the agency.

The agency is part of the government's broader health reform agenda and was recommended in both the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's report, released in July 2009, and in the final report of the Preventative Health Taskforce, released in September 2009, based on good solid work. In response, the government released Taking Preventative Action in May 2010, outlining the government's preventive health initiatives. There is a rising incidence of chronic illness. Combine this with an ageing

population and the sorts of lifestyles we have been leading, and we have a very explosive health situation, in terms of cost of dealing with illness, the hospital system and, in very personal terms, the impact that illness has on people's lives in both cost and productivity.

This bill establishes national infrastructure to help drive major change in the way we deal with our health. Most people want to do something about their health, especially if it affects the way they look and feel. But the knowledge is just not there to develop a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. The National Preventative Health Taskforce stated that if obesity trends are left unchecked the life expectancy for Australian children alive today will fall by two years by the time they are just 20. The National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health will invest \$872 million for prevention, in particular with a large emphasis on tackling obesity through workplaces, local governments and programs targeted at children.

It will take all levels of government and all sorts of cross-agency programs to deliver this outcome. It is a great opportunity for our nation. We must ensure that Australia moves forward in health delivery. Success in changing lifestyles takes a long time, a systematic approach informed by the latest evidence and ongoing evaluation of results—getting away from the public relations exercise of the poster and T-shirt, as I mentioned earlier. It needs engagement, action and responsibility to be taken by individuals, families, communities, industries and businesses.

But we believe government can play a leadership role by gathering, analysing and disseminating the best available evidence and implementing programs and policies based on that evidence. We need to bring together the best experience in the country and we need to engage employers, businesses and the wider community in this pre-

ventative health debate. A new approach is needed. It needs to be the responsibility of everyone to ensure their families, their households and their communities are moving towards healthier outcomes. And it must include information. This must include clarifying what is contained in our processed food, so food labelling becomes vitally important. It also means that we need to know how our individual bodies work. Going to the doctor should not just be when you are sick; it should also be for advice when you are well, so he or she, the deliverer of primary health care, can ensure you stay well.

Some of the examples I have observed in my communities over the years have been working towards this. At a fun day some years ago at Rosebery, a mining town that is no longer in my electorate sadly, there were giveaway crib boxes full of healthy fresh food for the children to encourage sensible eating—fitting into their community life, as dad takes a crib off to the mine each day. It was very sensible and a very good initiative. Schools and the parents and friends organisations have been keen to improve and to provide healthy foods in canteens at schools for many years now. I am sure you, Madam Chair, would have been interested in that over the years. There should be plenty of choice of healthy foods available to encourage good eating, particularly in the teenage years.

We must start here. I noted that the Prime Minister participated in a walk to work to her office the other day. Maybe we should re-evaluate our hours of work in this place to allow more exercise and stimulation. Being in here at 7 am and leaving at 10.30 pm or later does not allow much attention to health issues! When I mention to people who have worked in the health sector—a few medicos and others in this area—they all agree that we are not setting a very good example. Available food in the building should indi-

cate its food value so that we can make those good choices.

Local government needs to be encouraged to put value on such infrastructure as walking tracks, swimming pools and permanent exercise equipment—outside activities that encourage participation by both the fit and unfit. Local swimming pools must be upgraded or built in areas that do not have them already. It can be done in conjunction with schools or aged person facilities, or as part of local government activities programs. At the moment local government has no incentive to keep pools going for health outcomes. Yet a pool can be used as part of local competitive swimming early in morning, by the oldies for some healthy and warming activities during the day to overcome arthritis through movement programs, along with rehabilitation after accidents or operations, and then by youngsters for recreation and at other times for learn-to-swim or other activities. Swimming days can encourage the whole community to participate.

Talking of swimming pools, I had a meeting recently with a famous Australian, Shane Gould. She is an Olympic gold medallist who is now living in the good electorate of Lyons. She is doing some work on swimming pool use and design and the issue of people's swimming activities. She said that we have to change the design of swimming pools to fit the needs of particular communities. Swimming pools are not just for people to swim up and down. Some of my community are also trying to deal with the costs of swimming pools. We need to find new business models so we can find ways to pay for our swimming activities.

All activities should be encouraged by putting more information on signage, like the lengths of walking tracks. I understand that, if you put a time on a walking track and where it goes to, 50 per cent more people

will actually use that track because they feel comfortable about it. The degree of energy required to participate in the activity could also be included on signage. There is a whole range of things that we can put on interpretive signs within our communities. We also have to learn about how our bodies work under strain.

School sports and physical education should be put firmly back into the curriculum with resources to run them. Help for programs such as Little Athletics and swimming lessons may need to be reconsidered as well. We must encourage youngsters to join sporting clubs and participate in whole-of-club activities, with the less fit being encouraged to support their teams through important activities such as maintaining the scoreboard or equipment until they are fit enough to be involved.

I have mentioned food labelling as part of these comments, but we also need to look at food advertising under the truth-in-advertising legislation. We need to look at school vegetable gardens from kindergarten up—and the previous speaker mentioned the Stephanie Alexander program, which has been a great program for focusing on growing food and the nutritional value of that food. We also need to ensure that health and food education extends through the whole education process, much like literacy and numeracy do now. Then there is the slow food movement, which encourages us to know how what we eat affects us and to give ourselves time to prepare and eat healthy foods. We must not let this program become elitist. It must be affordable for everyone and must not impinge on the day-to-day budget. It must help change the way people use their food budget or their entertainment budget. Those are some of the goals and aims that can come out this movement.

I am very encouraged by this. For the first time since I have been in this parliament I have seen major change on really tackling health issues in a proper, constructive and strategic way. This is the biggest opportunity we have ever had to change the way we do things. Australians can lead the way in being responsible for our own health, so that we can cut down illness costs, both personally and to the community. It is the only way to do it and I fully support the intention of the bill. I look forward to supporting the bill when the vote comes on and I am extremely disappointed that the Liberal and National parties are opposing this bill. I think they are really failing the people of Australia.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (6.20 pm)—I too rise to support the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. Before I do so I would like to congratulate the member for Lyons on the well-presented views and thoughts he placed on the record in this place. Australians are living longer, and that is a good thing, but there are still too many among us dying before their time or growing old with chronic illnesses that quite simply can be prevented. We have a responsibility to use the knowledge we have gained through the best medical research from Australia and around the world and, in the case of preventable disease, to actually prevent it. I rise today to speak on this bill because it is a groundbreaking initiative to help make us a healthier nation.

We all grew up with the truism that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We have all heard that, yet for too many years we have dealt with health issues after they have developed. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency, as the name suggests, is going to dramatically change that culture and address chronic preventable health problems before they start. The benefits of this approach are first and foremost about our health. But there are also

economic benefits. A healthier nation, particularly a healthier ageing nation, is a good thing for the economy. People work longer, which makes them more productive and greater consumers. They require less medical assistance and less hospitalisation.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, I am very encouraged by this long, long overdue and welcome shift in our approach to preventive health care. The combination of an ageing population and a rise in the incidence of chronic illness makes this sort of approach essential to a healthier Australian population. It has been identified by many groups, such as the Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the National Preventive Health Taskforce, and was a significant proposal to come out of the 2020 Summit.

We have some very obvious health issues relating to cigarettes, alcohol and obesity, to name just three. But despite their transparency, we are too often striving to fix a problem that should never have developed in the first place. Certain facts cannot be argued with or ignored. For example, a quarter of all cancer deaths in Australia are a product of smoking and alcohol abuse. Smoking leads to the premature deaths of hundreds of thousands of Australians. One in four Australians is at short-term risk through drinking and one in 10 at long-term risk. Again, Australia is one of the most obese nations on earth.

These are preventable problems, yet they cost this nation dearly on both a deeply personal and an economic level. Despite these facts, we currently spend less than two per cent of our annual health budget on preventive measures. When you consider that our preventive health problems add up to a lot more than two per cent of all health issues, that just does not make sense. It is not the right thing to do from a medical perspective,

and it is certainly not sound economics. This bill addresses that anomaly with a commitment of well over \$800 million towards preventive health care. It is a massive, unprecedented investment in Australia's wellbeing.

Just as there has been a concerted and highly successful push to reduce smoking in this country, we need to deal with the problem of obesity. A report to the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing revealed that obesity cost the Australian economy almost \$8 billion last year alone. Consider that fact from a purely economic standpoint—\$8 billion. Obesity leads, as we heard earlier, to an increase in diabetes, cardiovascular disease and complications associated with surgery and other interventions. It affects people of all ages, it affects people of all ethnic backgrounds and it affects people in all socioeconomic areas, and it can be prevented.

Preventive health measures and their impact on the ageing have an even greater bearing on the people in the electorate I represent. Hindmarsh, in Adelaide's west and south areas, is one of the oldest electorates in Australia, with more than 20 per cent of residents aged over 65. These are people who have worked hard all their lives to enjoy their retirement or to stay in the workforce longer, and preventive health reforms will help them achieve that. Many older Australians, in particular, suffer from illnesses and conditions that could and should have been prevented. They do not need to have a terminal condition for their quality of life to be severely affected or to be in a position where they can no longer walk or even have a part-time job.

The Gillard Labor government has made a genuine commitment to preventive health care. It is a major priority, and it is a major key focus of our reform agenda. For example, a national preventive health system will bring enormous advantages to Australia in

the future and help develop a culture where people think about prevention first and cure second.

This bill has been rejected by the opposition, sad to say—it has already been rejected, in October of 2009. The opposition has also resisted the prevention of poor health that results as a direct consequence of the absence of adequate dental care. The opposition's position of washing its hands of the onset of preventable conditions and the distress, decreased productivity and loss of freedom that comes from not having good health is sickeningly predictable and an affront to all Australians who value the wellbeing of our families, friends, neighbours and workmates.

The government has, over recent times, made unprecedented investments in infrastructure that will enable the Australian economy to grow with more strength well into the future. The government has also made unprecedented investments in our secondary and especially our primary education system, advancing all primary schools' capital works programs in ways the schools thought would never, ever happen.

The government intends to similarly invest in Australians' lives—in their wellbeing as maintained through good health and the avoidance of preventable disease. Any objection to such an objective—the pursuit and maintenance of the good health of our fellow citizens—should invoke the disgust of all of us and deserves our utter contempt. Nothing is clearer than the merits of avoiding problems before they occur. So, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Science and Personnel and Minister for Indigenous Health) (6.28 pm)—I am very pleased to be participating in this debate this afternoon on the Australian National Preventive

Health Agency Bill 2010. The bill establishes, as we know, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency to support Australian health ministers in tackling the complex and growing challenges of preventable chronic disease. Others in this place have spoken about the construction of the agency. It has its origins in the report of the National Preventive Health Taskforce, which was a very worthwhile and detailed document. The taskforce outlined a comprehensive plan to advance the prevention agenda in Australia and identified that to address the disparity in sickness and death in the Indigenous population, in particular, we needed to focus on tobacco, alcohol and obesity.

I will talk about those two elements in a moment, but I just remind the House that the establishment of the agency was also a recommendation of the final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, chaired by Dr Christine Bennett. I know that members on this side of the House read that report assiduously. Recommendation 9, which is significant, recommends the establishment of an independent national health promotion and prevention agency, and it says:

This agency would be responsible for national leadership on the Healthy Australia 2020 goals, as well as building the evidence base, capacity and infrastructure that is required so that prevention becomes the platform of healthy communities and is integrated into all aspects of our health care system.

I want to speak briefly about some elements that were identified by the National Preventive Health Taskforce and I want to illustrate why it is so important that health prevention is given the priority that this government seeks to give it. The first element is that we now know that smoking continues to be Australia's largest preventable cause of death and disease. The National Preventive Health Taskforce report identifies that smok-

ing is the cause of 20 per cent of all deaths and is the major single contributor to ill health amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people generally, smoking rates are about 50 per cent. For the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, smoking rates are about 16 per cent. There are smoking rates of up to 83 per cent recorded in some communities.

Under the COAG National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous health outcomes, the Commonwealth is already providing \$100.6 million directly for the Tackling Smoking measure. This includes the establishment of a new workforce of regional tobacco coordinators and tobacco action workers led by Mr Tom Calma. This shows what is required to prevent tobacco consumption. The new tobacco workforce will work directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on healthy lifestyle development and quitting smoking.

Alcohol was another significant issue that was raised by the taskforce. I will not go into detail because the time for debate is about to elapse, but I want to make sure that people understand that the Commonwealth government recognises the importance of investing resources into addressing alcohol misuse because of its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes. We are investing \$164.7 million over six years to increase treatment and rehabilitation services, \$22.3 million for local capacity building pilot programs and \$2.5 million for foetal alcohol spectrum disorders. In addition, 120 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance abuse services across Australia are being supported under the Australian government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance misuse program.

I conclude by saying that there are other areas where communities have shown the

way in prevention and I want to pinpoint one. The community of Amata in the north-west of South Australia made a decision that its store should no longer stock drinks with high sugar content. As a result, there has been a reduction in sugar consumption in that community alone of 4.3 tonnes. This is a really important example of how communities, if they are aware of what is required, can take the sort of action that is needed to address issues relating to prevention. By doing so, they can have a direct impact on the early onset of diabetes, and in the longer term these communities can address the issue of life expectancy, which is the issue we are focused on.

This is a very important piece of legislation. It again highlights the reformist attitude of this government in the health field. I hope that the opposition will not do as they have done previously and oppose this legislation. It is for the benefit of all Australians. I hope the opposition will see the merits of this legislation and support the government in its endeavour to make prevention a priority for all Australians.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (6.35 pm)—in reply—It gives me great pleasure to briefly sum up on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010. I understand that it is the intention of the opposition to move a number of amendments to this bill. I will sum up this debate by first quoting Michael Moore, the CEO of the Public Health Association, who earlier this year referred to this legislation in the following terms:

This is vital legislation for anyone who is serious about keeping all Australians healthy and particularly the most vulnerable of our people.

This is a very important and timely reminder. I think the Minister for Indigenous Health touched on the potential for an agency to drive these sorts of reforms and deliver to the

community. I noted the comments from many speakers on this bill and I want to thank the large number of people who spoke on it. It is clearly an issue that many people are passionate about. I know that the shadow minister spoke passionately about the need for more investment in prevention. We do not totally agree on the best ways to do that, but I do not doubt that people are determined to try to make a difference.

Unfortunately, the approach of the opposition to date has meant that an agency that would have been focusing Australia's attention on prevention from 1 January this year has been delayed. We hope that it will not be delayed again when there are so many opportunities for us to be able to invest in sensible initiatives in the areas of obesity, alcohol and tobacco. Of course, there is the potential for the agency to grow over time and invest in many other preventative health measures. Dr Andrew Pesce from the AMA has said that this would:

... put momentum back into the prevention focus in Australia.

These sorts of endorsements are important ones, because the opposition want to paint this as a frolic by the government or as the government being interested just in establishing a new bureaucracy, for the hell of it. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. We believe this is a way of establishing an independent agency, separate from government, with its own budget to be able to drive important public health messages in partnership and collaboration with government, non-government organisations, consumers, industry and public health organisations.

We would like to thank the many people across the community who have worked with us to try and see this agency become a reality: the Public Health Association in particular, the Cancer Council, the Heart Foundation, VicHealth, Quit Victoria and the

AMA—just to name a few who have been very supportive of the establishment of this agency. The non-government sector really have shown leadership in health prevention to governments of all persuasions and I want to pay tribute to their work.

Finally, I thank the many members who have made contributions in this debate. I hope that in this place today we will be able to say that two important pieces of health reform legislation were passed. Of course, this House passed the first piece of health reform legislation earlier today, establishing the Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. We hope the House will see good sense on this and be in that happy place again. In the spirit of working together in this new parliament, I indicate for the benefit of members that we intend to, and are prepared to, accept a number of amendments that have been put forward by the opposition. However we do not intend to accept all of them. I have had those discussions with the shadow minister. He is determined to put each of those amendments, as is his right, and we will speak briefly to those as they are moved. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (6.39 pm)—by leave—I move opposition amendment (1):

- (1) Part 1, page 2 (after line 12), after clause 2, insert:

2A Objects and functions

- (1) The object of this Act is to establish an Agency to advise on and manage national preventive health programs.

- (2) The function of the Agency and its CEO are to be interpreted in accordance with the following objects:
- (a) to effectively monitor, evaluate and build evidence in relation to preventive health strategies;
 - (b) to facilitate a national health prevention research infrastructure;
 - (c) to generate new partnerships for workplace, community and school interventions;
 - (d) to assist in the development of the health prevention workforce; and
 - (e) to coordinate and implement a national approach to social marketing for preventive health programs.

This is a very straightforward amendment. It deals with the objects and functions of the agency. The Preventative Health Taskforce recommended the establishment of a National Preventive Health Agency. It also recommended an independent statutory body to give high-level advice to the government, but the government decided not to go down that path and have instead proposed that the agency be a part of government. That is why the coalition are seeking to introduce these amendments that address the objects and functions of the agency where currently there are none as defined in the legislation.

Very briefly, we say the function of the agency and its CEO are to be interpreted in accordance with five objects in relation to: preventative health strategies; prevention research infrastructure; new partnerships for workplace, community and school interventions; assisting in the development of the health prevention workforce; and coordinating and implementing a national approach to social marketing for preventative health programs. It is a very straightforward amendment and I encourage members to support it.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (6.41 pm)—The government do not believe that this amendment

is necessary, but we are prepared to support it with some small modifications. We are disappointed that the opposition rejected those sensible modifications that were designed to allow the legislation to be more workable. We have already agreed to support the objects clause as was initially proposed by the Greens in the Senate, and these changes were made following those negotiations with the Greens in the Senate. We agree the agency's role is to support the development of evidence and data, and obviously that is the reason we are establishing the agency. I think this could have been made even better, but we are certainly not going to stand in the way of this amendment being agreed to.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (6.41 pm)—The Greens also support the amendment for the reasons that have been outlined. We thought it up, and if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then we thank the opposition for picking up on it. We will support it and I will not rehash the reasons for that.

Question agreed to.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (6.42 pm)—I move opposition amendment (2):

(2) Clause 3, page 3 (after line 7), insert:

industry representative means a person who the Minister is satisfied has high level industry or commercial expertise in manufacture, distribution, or marketing of food or beverages, including of alcohol beverages.

This is a definition amendment and it relates to having an industry representative on the advisory council of the Preventive Health Agency. The opposition believe that to get outcomes in this area, it is necessary to work closely with all stakeholders. If you are talking about transfats, you have to work closely with the restaurants to get outcomes in this area. If you are talking about reducing harmful drinking, anti-social drinking or teenage

drinking, you have to work closely with industry. The explanatory memorandum acknowledges this and says that some of the people who might be considered to be members of the advisory council could be industry representatives. I think the minister herself has said that members of the advisory council could be industry representatives. As there is no objection to having an industry representative on the advisory council, we think that it is a simple matter of making sure this is in legislation. There will be further amendments which relate to this as well, but this amendment is the definition of an industry representative. We believe it is important to have a close engagement with stakeholders. We encourage members to support this amendment.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (6.44 pm)—As with the first amendment, we are prepared to support this amendment from the opposition. We recognise of course that industry and consumers should play an important role in the prevention agenda. Amendment (6), which is going to be moved, actually prescribes, as suggested by the opposition, the industry and consumer having nominated representatives. The only reason for our not doing that was not to have a long list of specific people that needed to be represented, but of course industry and consumers are major players in this discussion and we do not have any objection if the opposition is insistent on moving this amendment.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (6.45 pm)—The Australian Greens oppose amendment (2), and for the same reasons, which I will give, we oppose (5) and (6). We believe that an industry representative on the advisory council is completely inappropriate and has the potential to undermine the important work of the agency. The marketing of alcohol and junk food is one of the key problems faced in promoting healthy lifestyles and

acting on preventative health. Given that, as was said, there was nothing preventing the appointment of an industry representative if it were thought to be appropriate, we do not see the need to enshrine it and indeed believe that that would be counterproductive and ultimately would potentially undermine the work of the agency.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (6.46 pm)—I apologise for the inconvenience to the chamber because it may not have been clear. Obviously if there were a number of members in the chamber who opposed this amendment, which was not part of our initial plans, and there were a vote called for we would not support the amendments; they are not our preference. But, as I have made clear to the opposition member, although he has not been particularly interested in taking up this offer, we are prepared for this parliament to work as it should, with members being able to raise and debate issues of concern.

We absolutely put on the record that the government regard the involvement of consumers and industry as important. We do not believe it is necessary for it to be prescribed in the legislation. If that were opposed by members of this House, we would be voting against the amendment, and I apologise if my earlier comments were misinterpreted. ‘Being prepared to live with’ is a different thing to ‘actively supporting’ if there is going to be a vote on this matter.

Question put:

That the amendment (**Dr Southcott’s**) be agreed to.

The House divided. [6.51 pm]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes..... 72

Noes..... 73

Majority..... 1

AYES

Abbott, A.J.	Alexander, J.
Andrews, K.	Andrews, K.J.
Baldwin, R.C.	Billson, B.F.
Bishop, B.K.	Bishop, J.I.
Briggs, J.E.	Broadbent, R.
Buchholz, S.	Chester, D.
Christensen, G.	Ciobo, S.M.
Cobb, J.K.	Coulton, M. *
Crook, T.	Dutton, P.C.
Entsch, W.	Fletcher, P.
Forrest, J.A.	Frydenberg, J.
Gambaro, T.	Griggs, N.
Haase, B.W.	Hartsuyker, L.
Hawke, A.	Hockey, J.B.
Hunt, G.A.	Irons, S.J.
Jensen, D.	Jones, E.
Keenan, M.	Kelly, C.
Laming, A.	Ley, S.P.
Macfarlane, I.E.	Marino, N.B.
Markus, L.E.	Matheson, R.
McCormack, M.	Mirabella, S.
Morrison, S.J.	Moylan, J.E.
Neville, P.C.	O’Dowd, K.
O’Dwyer, K.	Prentice, J.
Pyne, C.	Ramsey, R.
Randall, D.J.	Robb, A.
Robert, S.R.	Roy, Wyatt
Schultz, A.	Scott, B.C.
Secker, P.D. *	Simpkins, L.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Somlyay, A.M.	Southcott, A.J.
Stone, S.N.	Tehan, D.
Truss, W.E.	Tudge, A.
Turnbull, M.	Van Manen, B.
Vasta, R.	Washer, M.J.
Windsor, A.H.C.	Wyatt, K.

NOES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bandt, A.	Bird, S.
Bowen, C.	Brodtnann, G.
Burke, A.E.	Burke, A.S.
Butler, M.C.	Byrne, A.M.
Champion, N.	Cheeseman, D.L.
Clare, J.D.	Collins, J.M.

Combet, G.
 D'Ath, Y.M.
 Dreyfus, M.A.
 Ellis, K.
 Ferguson, L.D.T.
 Fitzgibbon, J.A.
 Georganas, S.
 Gillard, J.E.
 Grierson, S.J.
 Hall, J.G. *
 Husic, E.
 Katter, R.C.
 King, C.F.
 Livermore, K.F.
 Macklin, J.L.
 McClelland, R.B.
 Mitchell, R.
 Neumann, S.K.
 O'Neill, D.
 Owens, J.
 Perrett, G.D.
 Rishworth, A.L.
 Roxon, N.L.
 Saffin, J.A.
 Sidebottom, S.
 Smyth, L.
 Swan, W.M.
 Thomson, C.
 Vamvakinou, M.
 Zappia, A.

Crean, S.F.
 Danby, M.
 Elliot, J.
 Emerson, C.A.
 Ferguson, M.J.
 Garrett, P.
 Gibbons, S.W.
 Gray, G.
 Griffin, A.P.
 Hayes, C.P. *
 Jones, S.
 Kelly, M.J.
 Leigh, A.
 Lyons, G.
 Marles, R.D.
 Melham, D.
 Murphy, J.
 O'Connor, B.P.
 Oakeshott, R.J.M.
 Parke, M.
 Ripoll, B.F.
 Rowland, M.
 Rudd, K.M.
 Shorten, W.R.
 Smith, S.F.
 Snowdon, W.E.
 Symon, M.
 Thomson, K.J.
 Wilkie, A.

- (iv) discouraging substance abuse; and
- (v) reducing the incidence of obesity amongst Australians; and

This amendment relates to the functions of the Chief Executive Officer. The opposition proposes a different form of words because many things have been missed in this. For example, the Dietitians Association of Australia have made the very good point that we have no food and nutrition policy. In terms of the functions of the CEO, we are proposing that we have a definite reference to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and good nutrition. We are proposing that there be a focus on reducing tobacco use. We are proposing a minimising of the harmful drinking of alcohol. We are proposing that there be a focus on discouraging substance abuse and also a focus on reducing the incidence of obesity among Australians. This amendment is an improvement to the bill and we encourage members to support this amendment.

Question agreed.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (6.59 pm)—We propose that the shadow minister move the remaining three amendments in a group as we will be opposing those and it would suit the convenience of the House to vote on those amendments together.

Consideration interrupted, adjournment proposed and negated.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (7.00 pm)—by leave—I move opposition amendments (4), (5) and (6) as circulated in my name:

- (4) Part 3, page 7 (after line 27), after clause 11, insert:

11A Publication

The CEO must cause a copy of any advice or recommendations made in undertaking the CEO's functions under subsection 11(1) to be published on the

PAIRS

Gash, J.
 Ruddock, P.M.

Plibersek, T.
 Bradbury, D.J.

* denotes teller

Question negated.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (6.57 pm)—I move opposition amendment (3):

- (3) Clause 11, page 5 (lines 26 to 29), omit paragraph 11(f), substitute:

- (f) to conduct educational, promotional and community awareness programs relating to preventive health, including:
 - (i) the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and good nutrition;
 - (ii) reducing tobacco use;
 - (iii) minimising the harmful drinking of alcohol;

ANPHA's website within 14 days of providing the advice or making the recommendations.

- (5) Clause 29, page 14 (line 11), omit "and".
- (6) Clause 29, page 14 (line 13), at the end of paragraph 29(c), add:
 - ;
 - (d) at least one, but no more than 2, members who are industry representatives; and
 - (e) at least 1, but no more than 2, other members representing consumers or consumer health organisations.

These amendments relate to the publishing advice for the CEO. The National Preventative Health Task Force recommended a high level independent statutory body. Instead, the government is making this agency an arm of government. We believe that the recommendations and advice should be as transparent as possible. They should be transparent and open to public scrutiny.

The changes that the coalition is proposing will increase the transparency of this body, and I emphasise that this measure is taken from an amendment which was moved by Senator Xenophon during the debate on this bill in the Senate last year. These changes will mean that the CEO must publish a copy of any advice or recommendations on the agency's website. This is about the future health of our nation and as such it should be subject to public scrutiny and debate.

Amendments (5) and (6) relate to the need for broad representation on the advisory council. The government has acknowledged in the explanatory memorandum that the advisory council could include industry representatives. The minister, I believe, said so in her second reading speech. So we need to look at the membership structure of the advisory council. We believe that it is important to get outcomes in preventative health

whereby you have a focus; where you do have representation from industry representatives and also consumer health organisations. We believe it is important that by working with industry and preventative health experts we get these outcomes. I encourage members to support these amendments.

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (7.02 pm)—Very briefly, the government opposes amendment (4). We believe it is entirely impractical and inappropriate. It would be the first time that any agency would be required to publish all its advice to government. The agency would report to Senate estimates and would prepare an annual report. If amendments (5) and (6) are opposed—as I understand has been indicated by the Greens—it would be our preference for these amendments not to be passed. We did offer to negotiate with the opposition. That was rejected and accordingly we will be voting with the Greens in opposing all three amendments.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (7.03 pm)—The government was never prepared to negotiate on the amendments (4), (5) and (6). It never supported these amendments. Amendments (4), (5) and (6) were not ones which the government was prepared to support. We believe that these are important. This is the new paradigm where the House of Representatives is a house of review. I know it is something new. We encourage members to support these amendments.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (7.03 pm)—The Greens oppose these amendments. The alcohol and junk food industries alone spend enormous sums to undermine the potential benefits that would be achieved by this agency. When we consider the efforts of the alcohol industry in particular to oppose measures designed to make its products less attractive to young people, we note with

some great concern that the moves to enshrine the place of the alcohol and junk food industries on this agency would potentially undermine its work. For those reasons we oppose these amendments.

Question put:

That the amendments (**Dr Southcott's**) be agreed to.

The House divided. [7.08 pm]

(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes.....	71
Noes.....	<u>74</u>
Majority.....	<u>3</u>

AYES

Abbott, A.J.	Alexander, J.
Andrews, K.	Andrews, K.J.
Baldwin, R.C.	Billson, B.F.
Bishop, B.K.	Bishop, J.I.
Briggs, J.E.	Broadbent, R.
Buchholz, S.	Chester, D.
Christensen, G.	Ciobo, S.M.
Cobb, J.K.	Coulton, M. *
Crook, T.	Dutton, P.C.
Entsch, W.	Fletcher, P.
Forrest, J.A.	Frydenberg, J.
Gambaro, T.	Griggs, N.
Haase, B.W.	Hartsuyker, L.
Hawke, A.	Hockey, J.B.
Hunt, G.A.	Irons, S.J.
Jensen, D.	Jones, E.
Keenan, M.	Kelly, C.
Laming, A.	Ley, S.P.
Macfarlane, I.E.	Marino, N.B.
Markus, L.E.	Matheson, R.
McCormack, M.	Mirabella, S.
Morrison, S.J.	Moylan, J.E.
Neville, P.C.	O'Dowd, K.
O'Dwyer, K.	Prentice, J.
Pyne, C.	Ramsey, R.
Randall, D.J.	Robb, A.
Robert, S.R.	Roy, Wyatt
Schultz, A.	Scott, B.C.
Secker, P.D. *	Simpkins, L.
Slipper, P.N.	Smith, A.D.H.
Somlyay, A.M.	Southcott, A.J.
Stone, S.N.	Tehan, D.
Truss, W.E.	Tudge, A.

Turnbull, M.
Vasta, R.
Wyatt, K.

Van Manen, B.
Washer, M.J.

NOES

Adams, D.G.H.	Albanese, A.N.
Bandt, A.	Bird, S.
Bowen, C.	Brodtmann, G.
Burke, A.E.	Burke, A.S.
Butler, M.C.	Byrne, A.M.
Champion, N.	Cheeseman, D.L.
Clare, J.D.	Collins, J.M.
Combet, G.	Crean, S.F.
D'Ath, Y.M.	Danby, M.
Dreyfus, M.A.	Elliot, J.
Ellis, K.	Emerson, C.A.
Ferguson, L.D.T.	Ferguson, M.J.
Fitzgibbon, J.A.	Garrett, P.
Georganas, S.	Gibbons, S.W.
Gillard, J.E.	Gray, G.
Grierson, S.J.	Griffin, A.P.
Hall, J.G. *	Hayes, C.P. *
Husic, E.	Jones, S.
Katter, R.C.	Kelly, M.J.
King, C.F.	Leigh, A.
Livermore, K.F.	Lyons, G.
Macklin, J.L.	Marles, R.D.
McClelland, R.B.	Melham, D.
Mitchell, R.	Murphy, J.
Neumann, S.K.	O'Connor, B.P.
O'Neill, D.	Oakeshott, R.J.M.
Owens, J.	Parke, M.
Perrett, G.D.	Ripoll, B.F.
Rishworth, A.L.	Rowland, M.
Roxon, N.L.	Rudd, K.M.
Saffin, J.A.	Shorten, W.R.
Sidebottom, S.	Smith, S.F.
Smyth, L.	Snowdon, W.E.
Swan, W.M.	Symon, M.
Thomson, C.	Thomson, K.J.
Vamvakinou, M.	Wilkie, A.
Windsor, A.H.C.	Zappia, A.

PAIRS

Gash, J.	Plibersek, T.
Ruddock, P.M.	Bradbury, D.J.

* denotes teller

Question negatived.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (7.12 pm)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (7.13 pm)—I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Apprenticeships

Ms LEY (Farrer) (7.13 pm)—I rise today to speak on the topic of apprenticeships. Looming skills shortages persist despite numerous efforts by successive governments to increase apprenticeship incentives. Particularly in the building and engineering disciplines, there are significant shortages in professionals and tradespeople. Yet despite these recognised shortages, and virtually guaranteed jobs, completion rates of apprentices in the trades are very poor. The Housing Industry Association undertook research in January this year which indicated shortages of approximately 60,000 workers in residential construction alone. This is expected to blow out to 65,000 by 2012. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research has estimated that around half the people who start an apprenticeship fail to complete their qualification.

With attrition rates in excess of 50 per cent of completions in some trades we need to be doing far more to ensure apprentices remain engaged and complete their training. Such high attrition rates do no favours for business or employees and will exacerbate shortages in years to come. Noncompletion of training causes a major strain on Australian businesses as these businesses invest heavily in training for their apprentices par-

ticularly in the first two years of an apprenticeship.

However, the strain is equally high on those people who have ceased training. According to NCVER research approximately one-third of people who drop out of an apprenticeship are unemployed 12 months later. Apprentices are renowned for being poorly paid, however, research undertaken by NCVER indicates that wages alone are not the reason why people fail to complete their apprenticeships. In fact, there is a plethora of government funded incentives on offer for apprentices and employers. Yet despite these incentives attrition rates are still very high.

We need to focus on the real reasons why people are exiting training early. It is not enough to keep reinventing the wheel when it comes to apprenticeship incentives. The Labor government has tried this and failed badly. One only needs to consider all the 'reassigned' apprenticeship funding measures listed in the last budget to see the evidence of this. Often apprentices decide that the work on offer does not really meet their expectations. Often young people in particular are not quite certain what path they want to follow when they leave school. We need to ensure that potential apprentices are able to access a 'try a trade' program similar to that undertaken by WorldSkills Australia which enables people to have hands-on experience in a trade.

School based apprenticeships are also a great pathway to a full-time apprenticeship once a student graduates. The Australian technical colleges established under the Howard government provided a gold-class standard for apprenticeship training for school students, ensuring they also gained a year 11 and year 12 qualification. Regrettably the Labor government has ceased funding these facilities. Too often policy deci-

sions are made without adequate consultation with those who their decisions affect.

Along with my coalition colleagues I recognise the critical role that apprentices play in Australia and we want to engage with apprentices, employers and industry to work together to ensure that more apprentices complete their training and are retained by industry. I am not interested in the hardhat photo opportunities but I certainly plan on getting out to the building sites, workshops, kitchens and other workplaces to talk with apprentices and find out what would make a difference.

Burma Palestine

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (7.17 pm)—I rise to speak about two international matters that concern the community in Australia. The first one is to do with Burma. On Sunday I attended an event in Sydney organised to mark 15 cumulative years out of the past 20 years of incarceration of Aung San Suu Kyi. The event was well attended. It was a very rainy day and over 120 people attended, including a large number of people from the Australian-Burmese community. It was organised by the Burma Australia Campaign—and well done to them.

The Burma Australia Campaign visited the parliament yesterday and met with a whole range of people including the Parliamentary Friends Group, which is jointly convened by the member for Werriwa, me and Senators Payne and Ludlam. We listened to Dr Sean Turnell, who is an economist expert particularly on Burma, talk about issues impacting on Burma and the economy. He also spoke about their recent visits to the United States where they met with people who were also concerned about Burma. They raised the matter of the commission of inquiry that people want the UN to undertake

in Burma, they raised the issue of sanctions and they also raised the question of elections.

The elections will take place on 7 November in Burma. A lot of people call for them to be free and fair, and I understand why they do that. These elections can never be free nor fair—they cannot be and will not be. For a range of reasons Burma is a country that is under the rule of a military dictatorship which is commanding control and does not allow free and fair elections. It is a state that has been delegitimised in a whole range of ways. There is no rule of law and it is being premised with a constitution that is fatally flawed in process and design and is referred to as a sham constitution. Therefore the elections cannot be free and fair in any way.

The second matter I want to raise was my attendance last night at the parliamentary Friends of Palestine group along with a large number of colleagues from all sides of the political spectrum. We listened to a very compelling speaker, Anna Baltzer. She is a Columbia graduate, a former Fulbright scholar, a Jewish-American woman and, as she said, the granddaughter of Holocaust refugees. Anna showed a DVD called 'Witness in Palestine' and spoke about visiting Palestine as a young Jewish-American. She went to the West Bank to discover the realities of daily life for Palestinians under the occupation. She said that what she found changed her outlook on the conflict forever. The full title of her presentation was 'Life in occupied Palestine: eye witness stories and photos'. It provided a down-to-earth way of looking at the occupation in Palestine and at the non-violent movement for freedom and equality in the Holy Land.

She gave accounts of personal stories, of human rights abuses and spoke about what Palestinians faced in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. She spoke about the endless

waiting at checkpoints, the devastation of home demolitions to make way for what she said were the settlements. She also spoke about the separation wall and about how it was not a wall in the sense that we know but was something quite draconian. She spoke about the impact on the environment and the struggle to maintain dignity in the face of relentless oppression.

It was very interesting to hear her speak and I want to thank the convenors of the Friends of Palestine group, particularly the member for Calwell and the member for Farrer, who both spoke and hosted the event. It gave a lot of people an opportunity to hear from someone who is not a political person, as such, but is someone deeply concerned about human rights.

Road Infrastructure

Mr TUDGE (Aston) (7.22 pm)—The government believes that a tax is the answer to every problem. There is an issue with binge drinking, so they introduce an alcopops tax. There is a climate problem, so they propose a carbon tax. There is a mining boom, so apparently we need a mining tax. One of the great issues facing my electorate of Aston and many similar suburban areas in the big cities is congestion, and so what is the government considering? A road congestion tax. I stand on behalf of Aston residents in firmly opposing such a tax and I ask the government to immediately rule out applying one.

The proposal for a congestion tax came up as part of the government's Henry review of taxation, which was made public by the government in early May this year. Recommendation 61 of the Henry review stated:

... governments should consider existing tolling technology across heavily congested parts of the road network ... In general, congestion charges should apply to all registered vehicles using congested roads.

There were 138 recommendations in the Henry review. As we know, the government immediately agreed to implement some of them, but it also immediately ruled out 27 recommendations and said that it would not act on them. But the recommendation that I just read out, recommendation 61, was not ruled out.

It has now been almost a year that the government have had this report and have been able to consider that recommendation, and they have yet to rule it out. If they were going to do so they should have done so by now. In fact, the issue has now morphed into one of climate change. Just two weeks ago the Prime Minister's Task Group on Energy Efficiency called for road congestion taxes on our busy roads as a measure to reduce carbon dioxide. The Prime Minister welcomed the report.

Residents in Aston are alarmed at the prospect of road congestion charges on our busy roads. Residents of Aston remember only too well the promises which were broken by the Labor governments on the Scoresby Freeway, a road which was supposed to be free of tolls and now has charges. Every day we drive along it, and every day we get a bill in the mail telling us how much we have to pay EastLink, we remember that broken promise. We do not need tolls in addition on Wellington Road, Stud Road, Fern-tree Gully Road or Burwood Highway. We do not need extra tolls along the Monash Freeway.

We do have a serious congestion problem, and with the population growing so rapidly it will only get worse. The answer to congestion, though, is not a tax. The answer is to properly build the infrastructure that the community needs. That means a rail link to Rowville, which would take the equivalent of a lane of traffic off the Monash Freeway and link Australia's largest university; it

means finally completing the Dorset Road extension; it means duplicating the last remaining section of High Street Road; and of course it means getting rid of the dangerous and nearly always empty Stud Road bus lane.

Labor have made the roads more congested by introducing bus lanes on busy roads and increasing our population without adequately improving our road and public transport infrastructure, and now they want to charge us because the roads are congested. The Prime Minister should act immediately and rule out road congestion taxes applying to our busy roads.

Ipswich Region Community Church Day of Honour

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (7.26 pm)—Last Sunday, along with my wife, Carolyn, and our daughters, Alex and Jacqui, I attended Ipswich Region Community Church's day of honour. It is the 10th anniversary of the day of honour, which grew out of senior pastor Mark Edwards' feelings that Australia had a tendency to overlook the contributions of members of the community. This came about because Mark is the son of a former Deputy Premier and Liberal leader in Queensland, Sir Llew Edwards. Mark felt that our infamous tall poppy syndrome meant that we hesitate to honour those who work in the background and who give their time freely to the community and we hesitate to honour politicians of all parties as well.

People from all walks of life attended—emergency services workers, community volunteers and politicians from three levels of government. When he was asked recently if there was a catch or an agenda to the day of honour, Mark said, 'No. We honour you. We want to do this on behalf of the community and thank the political leaders and the volunteers for their contribution to the local community.' Scottish satirical writer, essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle said:

Show me the man you honour, and I will know what kind of man you are ...

On that day we particularly honoured a great local community champion in Ipswich, John Bowles. John started the Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade with his good mate Jim Runham, who is also a very good friend of mine. The fire brigade was formed in February 1995 in response to the November 1994 fires which occurred in South-East Queensland. John was born and raised in Ipswich and moved to the Ripley area after he married his long-suffering wife, Julianne, and they have raised four children in that area. I want to thank particularly Jan Runham, the wife of Jim, and Julianne, the wife of John, who have put up with their husbands and stood beside them in their work to prevent fires and protect the safety of land holders in the Ripley Valley.

Ipswich Region Community Church thanked John, particularly for his 15 years of service. There are 35 active members in the Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade and 15 others who, on a causal basis, give assistance. You can see them all on Anzac Day, Ipswich Festival, the Ipswich Show, the Ipswich children's hospital day. They are always there helping our local community and standing up for them. They meet regularly to do monthly training sessions and conduct control burn-offs. These burn-offs are done for local landowners in the Ripley Valley for the purpose of hazard reduction. I recently attended the AGM of the Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade.

John's wonderful long-term commitment to the Ipswich community has seen him volunteer for 15 years. His employer deserves credit as well. NQX Freight Systems have given him time off to undertake this work. I want to commend all the employers in Australia who support volunteering within their workforce, and I particularly thank NQX Freight for allowing John Bowles to make

this contribution to our community. John stepped down as the First Officer of the Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade this year and was honoured and recognised at the AGM as well as at the Ipswich Region Community Church at the Day of Honour for the work he has done. I know that I speak for all the constituents of Blair when I express my deep gratitude and appreciation for John's considerable contribution to our community over the past 15 years. I offer my congratulations to him, Jim and all the other members of the Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade for all the worthwhile and welcome work that they continue to undertake in the Ripley Valley and in the wider Ipswich community.

Dunkley Electorate: Frankston

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (7.31 pm)—In the few minutes available to me tonight, I would like to talk about one of the great Southern Hemisphere cities of Australia, and that is Frankston. It is a community that runs through my veins and I am deeply proud of not only all that it has achieved but its potential for the future. What is worrying, though, is that I see in local newspaper reports that at a time when it has never been more important for our community to collaborate on a clear, shared vision and a blueprint for the future of our city that the next big thing has come along and that next big thing happens to be a proposition from Swinburne University of Technology. It is not really a proposition, though; it is a thought that perhaps another university campus in Frankston would be advantageous to our community. I understand the appeal of such an idea. It is one in which a number of us have played a role in the past in trying to highlight Frankston as a learning city. We are blessed with Chisholm Institute of TAFE. There are 15,000 students who participate in that institution across a number of campuses, including a very substantial campus in Frankston. The Monash University Peninsula campus at Frankston

has been nurtured and supported, particularly by the previous Howard government, with new educational programs that have attracted more students. This is quite a vibrant and energetic campus and presents a range of opportunities for our citizens.

But our region is significantly underrepresented in higher education participation. My thesis as to why that is the case has much to do with the education opportunities within reach and the need to take higher education opportunities out into the neighbourhoods and school communities where it might be less common than it is in other parts of Australia. But the idea that Swinburne is perhaps going to fill that hole on its own concerns me in that we need to think through what that will do for our vision for our city in the first place. I believe Frankston needs to have a coherent strategic plan for its future so that ideas that pop up are not chased without great thought and consideration about how they might knit into and contribute to our ambitions for our community into the future.

At the heart of the concern is how the state Labor government seems to have identified a range of central activity districts: it has supported many but certainly not Frankston. Frankston has received only \$16 million from the state Labor government under funding for Transit Cities and Melbourne@5Million program compared to \$290 million that has gone to Dandenong and more than \$80 million to Broadmeadows. This sort of indifference towards Frankston seems to have been carried forward by Labor in the most recent federal election. The concerns relate to not only the economic opportunities that are within reach and how a university can lift aspirations for students about their future but also the need to have those future opportunities located in the community which people are already a part of. Broadmeadows has about twice the number of jobs within half an hour of its city

compared to Frankston. There are about three times as many jobs within half an hour of Ringwood. Dandenong is much the same. There are six times the number of jobs within half an hour of Box Hill and eight times the number in Footscray. We need to take a sober, considered and evidence based approach to formulating a blueprint for our city that all levels of government as well as our community can get behind and can understand what it means for future opportunities, the vitality of our community, its appeal as an investment destination and—picking up on the member for Aston's comment—a destination with one of the few arterial ring roads around Melbourne where you need to pay a toll to use it.

I commend the work of Vice-Chancellor Ed Byrne and encourage him to follow through on his optimism for Monash's role in our city. I also want to pay my respects and convey my congratulations to Pro Vice-Chancellor Phillip Steele and wish him a really bright retirement, because he has contributed much. I look forward to working with Pro Vice-Chancellor Leon Pitterman, who will be overseeing the Peninsula campus into the future.

But let us get together, let us get involved with the people who have skin in the game and who have been in and out nurturing this vision of a learning city, and let us welcome new players into that picture. But let us not throw our eggs all into a basket that we have not seen before, that has not been described and that has not bothered to engage with the broader community about what they are proposing in return for our unquestioning support for a proposition they may put forward.

Moreton Electorate: Seniors

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (7.35 pm)—There are more than 17,000 seniors in my electorate, and we know from current trends and reports like the *Intergenerational Report*

that the number of seniors is going to continue to grow. That is why the Gillard Labor government's superannuation and health reforms are so vital. These important reforms will ensure that our health system is sustainable into the future and will also ensure that more Australians can fund their own retirement.

I know that many of the over 65s are not entirely comfortable with the term 'senior' because they are still active, work hard and make an important contribution to our community through work, clubs, charities and other volunteer work. They tell me that 'seniors' are people who are 15 years older than them. Nevertheless, I particularly value the views of our seniors because they have made such an important contribution and have helped shape the vibrant society we enjoy today.

In my electorate I think of people like Aunty Delmae Barton, a world-famous singer, who is helping young people understand local Indigenous peoples' ongoing spiritual connection to our area. I saw her recently in Rome at the canonisation of Mary MacKillop—St Mary of the Cross. Then there is Keith and Joyce Morton of Sunnybank Hills who keep me informed on issues like the RSPT, taxation, nation building, the jobs plan and many other issues. There is Kay McPadden, who stands up for the environment and advocates for social justice issues like child health and Indigenous health. And then there is Joan McGrath of Moorooka, who is in her 70s but who still contacts me to advocate on behalf of people who are less fortunate than herself.

As I say, the seniors in Moreton are making a valuable contribution. Seniors have seen many changes in our community, most I hope for the better but I am sure sometimes there are changes that make them long for the 'good old days'. When my mum used to

get off the tram at the end of the line in Moorooka soon after World War II, the makeup of the Southside was completely different. Then Australia had reached out to World War II survivors and refugees from Europe. I am sure that back then the changing suburb was also a topic of conversation. Today I hear from some seniors who are concerned about the number of new arrivals from around the world. I assure people that the number of refugee and humanitarian visas issued under the Howard government was around 13,000. It is the same number today under the Gillard Labor government.

Each year since I was elected I have invited Southside seniors to information morning teas. This year they were held at Sherwood, Annerley and Sunnybank Hills. We shared a cuppa and also discussed ideas and issues important to them like falls prevention and safety in the home, pension and other Centrelink issues, support for our veterans and crime. I will continue to host these morning teas because they provide valuable information for seniors. It is also a great way for seniors to have their say about the Gillard government and our priorities for the future.

Next week I will attend the 20th anniversary of the Acacia 50 and Better Program. I should note, Mr Speaker, I will be attending as an honorary guest as, like you, I do not yet qualify for this esteemed group. My great grandfather lived in Watson Road, Acacia Ridge during World War II, so it is no surprise I feel a strong connection with this part of my electorate. For two decades the Acacia 50 and Better Program has supported older people on Brisbane's Southside with a program that offers a mix of physical, social and intellectual activities. The goal is to help older people make friends, develop interests and continue to contribute to our community. Activities include exercise programs, health talks, craft activities, theatre groups, card games and computer lessons. Judi Donnelly,

the coordinator, has done a terrific job in getting people involved in this program and I very much look forward to visiting the team at Acacia Ridge next week.

Grey Electorate: Road Conditions on the Birdsville Track

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (7.39 pm)—I have brought to the attention of this House on a couple of occasions the very big rains we have had in the north of the state and the complications that these have caused for the Birdsville Track and the punt that crosses the Cooper south of Mungerannie. I have just lately received a letter from Sharon Oldfield, of Cowrie Station. I would like to take the opportunity to read some of that letter onto the record:

Over the past 10 months the far north region of South Australia has received excellent rainfalls. While these rains have been beneficial they have created major damage to the regional road networks. The decreasing road budget, for this Area, over the last several years has prevented ongoing & continual road upkeep. At best 'touch up' maintenance is all that has been carried out. The road and any water crossings have been allowed to deteriorate to the point that they now are unable to shed water from the road. The minimal and piecemeal 'repairs' have in fact added to its deterioration. The road condition supports our view (and anecdotal comments by Dept of Transport staff) that the S.A Govt has neither the political will nor finances to undertake major repairs and an appropriate maintenance program on this road.

The condition of this major Transport Corridor is a national disgrace. We now have families with small children going without fresh food for up to 8 weeks. Pastoral Companies are unable to trade and sell cattle. Businesses are incurring additional major costs and delays.

The second major issue affecting transport and life in the region presently is the Cooper Creek. The Cooper crossed the Birdsville Track on the 1st June this year closing the road for an indefinite period to traffic. The government solution to provide an almost 50 year old punt is inadequate in today's world. Due to its size limitations it prohib-

its livestock transport and therefore trade options, limits the economic delivery of fuel and supplies to local businesses, service providers & provides inefficient passenger/visitor movement and prohibits transporting camper trailers and caravans. Despite Transport Minister Conlon committing to providing livestock yards on both sides of the Cooper and basic ablution facilities for passengers, even these basic facilities have not yet occurred.

The Diamantina Shire Council has offered assistance on two occasions; these offers have not been taken up. An interstate Tourist Operator has also offered financial assistance towards operational costs. This indicates that others share our concerns. An increased awareness of this issue is spreading to other states. Pastoralists, business and the wider community are becoming increasingly angry and concerned that no one is listening; or cares about the adverse economic and social impacts that they now face. In effect after 8 years of drought their economic drought continues through Govt indifference to the appalling lack of infrastructure in this remote region.

Earlier in the year we saw Governments take swift and appropriate action to assist and address concerns for pastoralists and communities as these outback floods passed through Queensland.

These flood waters have moved 'downstream', and have and are now, creating similar problems and hardships for residents in this area. Yet not a politician in an Akubra has been sighted—no flood relief funds or work—no fuel or freight assistance—no major works to repair damaged roads—no plan to undertake work to mitigate future damage. If ever there was a region of Australia that has been ignored and marginalised, this is it!

Public interest & visitor traffic due to the filling of Lake Eyre and the Cooper Creek over the last two years has increased. This has added to the pressure on the roads that have not been constructed to sustain such large traffic volumes. Rains have led to frequent road closures and large numbers of people repeatedly being stranded on the three major roads (Birdsville, Oodnadatta & Strzelecki Tracks).

I will discontinue that letter there owing to time constraints except to say the letter goes on to highlight the problems again. Just in my own defence I might say that I have been up the Birdsville Track on two occasions in that period and I did have my akubra on.

Makin Electorate: Greek Community

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (7.43 pm)—On Saturday 10 October I attended the Greek Festival in Salisbury. Next Sunday I will be attending the St Dimitrios Greek Parish Festival at the St Dimitrios Greek Orthodox Church in Salisbury as I have done every year for more than a decade. The two events are not just a celebration of Greek culture but are as much a sharing of their culture—in particular Greek food, music and dancing—with the broader community. The Salisbury Greek Festival is held in the Salisbury Civic Square and is free to all who wish to attend. It began in 2009 and has become an annual event with the intention being that it becomes a broader multicultural festival.

I take this opportunity to briefly talk about these events and to highlight the social and economic contribution made by the Greek community in South Australia and more particularly in the northern region of Adelaide. South Australia is home to many people of Greek origin and the majority of them came during the years immediately following World War II. Most of them settled in Adelaide's western suburbs and are today represented in this place by the member for Hindmarsh, Mr Georganas, but a considerable number of them moved to the northern suburbs of Adelaide. At the time the northern suburbs were regarded as outside of the metropolitan area and, because services were almost non-existent, land was more affordable.

The new arrivals secured employment wherever they could and supplemented their income by growing vegetables. Life was not

easy for them and in those years government welfare and social assistance was non-existent. They very much relied on each other for support. They worked hard, educated their children, built their homes and contributed to the economic growth of Adelaide's northern suburbs, which today have become the growth heartland of Adelaide. In time, as they became more settled, many of them branched out into business and, as was the case with other new settlers, they began integrating into the broader Australian community. Today people of Greek origin can be found in all walks of Australian life—in leadership positions and in all professions, trades and vocations. That is very much the case with the Greek community in Adelaide's northern region.

While they have integrated into Australian life, they have also ensured that they have retained their cultural identity by establishing their own facilities. The Greek Florina social club was formed and now has its own club-rooms. Over the years I have joined the Greek community at many functions there. The Florina Soccer Club was also established and participates in the local amateur soccer competition. The St Dimitrios Greek Orthodox Church, built in the 1980s, has in recent years purchased additional land. An R-12 school and multi-use community facilities have been established alongside the church. The classrooms have also been made available to other cultural groups. Greek language is taught at the school and a Greek youth arts and dancing group has also been established there.

Much credit for the Salisbury Greek Festival and the St Dimitrios parish feast goes to the parish priest, Father Christos Tsoraklidis, who has been a civic leader in the northern Adelaide community and clearly a leader of the Greek community. In 2009 Father Christos was named as a Salisbury Living Legend. This public recognition is given each year by

Salisbury council to several individuals who are outstanding community role models. I have known Father Christos, his wife, Cathy, and their children for many years and I know that he is held in very high regard by both the Greek community and the wider Salisbury community. I also know how hard he works for the community and how committed he is to making the region a better place in which to live for all who settle in the area.

I grew up amongst the Greek people in northern Adelaide and I look forward to attending the St Dimitrios feast each year because it enables me to catch up with many of the Greek friends that I have made over the years. Just as importantly, however, many of the post-war Greek migrants are now elderly people. They rely on others for transport and generally do not get out of their homes as much as they used to. The annual parish feast and the Greek festival provide them with a day when they can celebrate their heritage, reacquaint with friends and enjoy the traditional foods and music. I congratulate all those who make these events possible and I pay tribute to the contribution made by the Greek migrants to the development of Adelaide's northern region.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

Dr STONE (Murray) (7.47 pm)—I rise to speak about the history of Australia in relation to our drinking of alcohol. We had a currency of rum in the 1700s and ever since then we have had quite an affection for alcohol. Raising a glass is what we do at a time of celebration. In fact, about 84 per cent of people over 14 in Australia say they drink alcohol. Nine per cent say they drink daily and 41 per cent say they drink at least weekly. Most of that drinking is responsible. In our country we have a lot of laws about drinking too much and driving and so on. But there is one group of Australians who should never raise a glass or drink at all—

that is, pregnant women, or indeed women who are trying to become pregnant or think they may become pregnant.

The National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines are that, to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol, maternal alcohol consumption should be zero. The guidelines state that:

Maternal alcohol consumption can harm the developing fetus or breastfeeding baby.

... ..

A. For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option.

B. For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

Why is this? It is because of a condition called foetal alcohol syndrome. Sadly it is one of the few intellectual and physical handicaps that a baby may be born with which is, at this point in time, absolutely not able to be cured or reversed, but it is 100 per cent avoidable. When a woman is pregnant, the first three months is the most dangerous period for her foetus to be affected by alcohol consumption. Of course, for women who have an addiction to alcohol or who drink very heavily, the danger continues beyond that first three months.

The problem with foetal alcohol syndrome is that some children are born with physical abnormalities related to the condition and along with those most commonly go intellectual handicap, but some babies are born who do not have the physical characteristics so it takes some time for the diagnosis to be made. The conditions that are associated with foetal alcohol syndrome include: joint abnormalities, cardiac anomalies, developmental delay, mental retardation, problems with the central nervous system, trouble remembering and or learning, vision or hearing impairment and behavioural problems.

I have to say that this is not only a problem of Indigenous communities or indeed

Indigenous Australians. Foetal alcohol syndrome affects any community that has heavy drinking and restricted access to gynaecologists and obstetricians. Some courageous Indigenous women in Fitzroy Crossing have invited specialists to come into their community to do one of the first incidence studies of foetal alcohol syndrome in Australia. They as Indigenous women are tackling this problem head on. It is a condition that they have seen affecting their children for several generations. It is not though, as I said, a condition that appears only in Indigenous communities; it is a condition which occurs right across all socioeconomic strata in Australia. The sad thing is that, while we spend a lot of time making sure that people understand the dangers of tobacco smoking during pregnancy—there is labelling on packages, or labels are removed from tobacco to make it appear less attractive—we are not as a society moving towards labelling on alcohol to say this is a dangerous substance to consume if you are pregnant. Other countries have made sure that alcohol is labelled like that.

There is another serious problem. A postal survey of Western Australian health professionals, which did not include paediatricians, found that these health professionals had a limited knowledge of the diagnostic features of foetal alcohol syndrome and that less than half of them asked women about their alcohol use during pregnancy. This is a serious problem for our society. We have to do better. I certainly will do all I can to make sure that women in Australia understand the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. We have to make sure that our health service professionals are fully informed about the dangers and that our community is supportive of women who are alcohol dependent and who become pregnant, to help them reduce their dependency during their pregnancy to minimise the harm that might occur as a result of their alcohol consumption. We

owe every newborn child in Australia the best possible chance to have a decent life. If you are born handicapped, this is a serious issue. It is a serious issue for all Australians. *(Time expired)*

Canberra Electorate: Telstra Awards

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (7.52 pm)—Tonight I would like to acknowledge the achievements of five Canberra businesswomen who recently took out Telstra ACT businesswomen awards. The private sector in Canberra makes up about 50 per cent of the local economy. These awards highlight the diversity and the innovation of our business community, particularly what women are doing.

Kate Sykes won the Telstra ACT business woman of the year award and the Commonwealth Bank business owner award with her successful business, CareerMums. CareerMums is a national jobs board and careers centre website for working parents. The site also provides employers with a pool of specialist working parents, typically aged between 30 and 50. Kate believes that the website will become more relevant for Australian businesses as the population ages, as skills shortages increase—particularly here in Canberra—and as paid parental leave is extended.

Carol Sawyer won the Hudson private and corporate sector award for her success as General Manager of the Canberra Southern Cross Club, a not-for-profit business. Carol has been general manager since 2006 and has watched membership grow to 84,000 and turnover grow to \$48 million. In 2009, Carol introduced the 'small appetite' meal option that proved very popular with the club's senior diners and increased revenue. Reduced appetite is a real issue for the aged, so this is a great initiative. Carol also introduced a loyalty and rewards program that tripled membership. The club is a major contributor

to the Canberra community and employs 200 people. One of Carol's proudest achievements is her 16 energy-saving and two waste reduction initiatives, which she introduced at the beginning of this year.

Catherine Carter won the White Pages community and government award for her work with the ACT Division of the Property Council of Australia. As its Executive Director, Catherine performs a dual ACT and federal advocacy role on Canberra-related property issues. Catherine's leadership has seen the number of member companies jump from 112 to 172 over five years, and she has doubled revenue streams. Catherine is the public face of the Property Council. She is a tireless advocate for environmental sustainability, the need for long-term planning and a vision for our national capital.

ACT Health's Executive Director, Brenda Ainsworth, won the Nokia business innovation award for establishing Australia's first nurse-led walk-in centre at the Canberra Hospital, in my electorate. The centre treats minor illnesses and injuries and takes the pressure off the hospital's emergency department. It provides faster access to treatment and, again, alleviates our skills shortage. Modelled on UK operations, the innovative walk-in centre model required legislative change in the ACT. Brenda was involved in challenging negotiations with clinical groups. The centre uses paperless medical records and has served 1,000 patients in its first month. It is a great concept.

Carly-Jane Tozer won the *Marie Claire* young businesswomen award. Carly-Jane opened her first hair salon, CJ's Style, at the age of 20 and now employs nine people on a full-time, casual and contract basis—and she is only 23 now. As part of her marketing strategy, Carly-Jane invited clients to pay what they think the service is worth, and the response was overwhelming. Only three

people paid less than the asking price and others paid more, as they believed the salon provided better value for money than other salons. Since 2007, Carly-Jane has also invested in young Canberrans by training eight apprentices.

As a former small business owner I know the challenges of juggling your own marketing, administration, tax and superannuation at the same time as keeping clients happy. That is why I commend the Gillard government for making it simpler and easier for small businesses to operate through a range of initiatives. These include a range of tax breaks for sole traders and companies, an investment of \$125 million to cut red tape when it comes to business name registration, an investment of \$42 million to enhance small business advisory services, the establishment of the Superannuation Clearing House and the introduction of the Franchising Code of Conduct.

The Gillard government recognises that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. These ACT award winners represent all that is best about business in Canberra and women in business in Canberra. I wish all the winners all the best for the national finals next month.

Infrastructure

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (7.56 pm)—I spoke earlier today, during my 90-second statement, about the importance of having a Melbourne to Gladstone inland rail project declared a project of national significance. I cannot stress enough how important this project is, not only to Australia but to the electorate of Flynn. Gladstone and the hinterland need to have projects such as this to ensure that there is a continuity of opportunity long after the resources boom has been and gone. We need sustainability of development. We all know that one day the demand for coal and LNG may diminish as countries around

the world move to alternative power sources and even uranium.

The Port of Gladstone is ideally placed to receive imports from Asia and to act as a distribution point to the rest of Australia. The missing link is the inland railway. The project consists of three sectors. The first is the new track from Wondoan to Banana, popularly known as the southern missing link of the Queensland rail system. The other two sectors are existing Queensland railway narrow-gauge tracks at either end of the 'missing link'. They are from Toowoomba to Wondoan and from Banana to Gladstone. The consortium has met all mandate deadlines to date and will achieve financial closure for the 'missing link' during the second half of 2011, provided that negotiations over the mining tax do not cause any further delays in the development of the Surat Basin coal mines.

The Queensland state government has a vested interest in making sure that the new line is a narrow-gauge line, but this is madness. It is 19th century logic, and we need 21st century solutions. Of course, a narrow-gauge line would serve to protect the interests of the Queensland government at a time when it is promoting the sale of its rail freight business. But it is not in the interests of Gladstone, Central Queensland or, indeed, Australia.

The only way to solve this problem is for the federal government to declare this a project of national significance. Gladstone and the hinterland towns of Central Queensland deserve better. The mining boom will not go on forever. We have the port. We need this new dual-gauge railway to future-proof the economy of Central Queensland so that we can have sustainability for the future.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 8 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 8.00 pm

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Shorten to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to some international financial institutions, and for related purposes.

Mr Gray to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Integrated fit-out of new leased premises for the Australian Taxation Office at 12-26 Franklin St, Adelaide, SA.

Mr Gray to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Proposed fit-out of new leased premises for the Attorney-General's Department at 4 National Circuit, Barton, ACT.

Mr Gray to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: HMAS *Penguin* and Pittwater Annexe redevelopment, Mosman and Clareville, NSW.

Mr Gray to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Proposed redevelopment and construction of housing for the Department of Defence at Largs North (Bayriver), Port Adelaide, SA.

Mr Crean to move:

That in accordance with section 5 of the *Parliament Act 1974*, the House approves the following proposal for works in the Parliamentary Zone which was presented to the House on 25 October

2010, namely: New Access Road from Kings Avenue to the National Archives of Australia.

Mr Crean to move:

That in accordance with section 5 of the *Parliament Act 1974*, the House approves the following proposal for works in the Parliamentary Zone which was presented to the House on 25 October 2010, namely: installation of five new outdoor exhibits within the Parliamentary Zone adjacent to the Questacon building and to make permanent seven existing temporary outdoor exhibits.

Mr Katter to move:

That this House resolves:

- (1) that a *Community Water Protection Act* be introduced into the Parliament incorporating a direction that the Murray Darling Basin Authority (The Authority) endeavour to optimise social, economic and environmental outcomes;
- (2) to support legislation which will meet the following objectives:
 - (a) that the objects of the Act include consideration of water saving measures and, if required, the impact of buybacks on:
 - (i) individuals and communities in impacted areas;
 - (ii) larger cities, due in part, but not restricted to, migration from impacted areas;
 - (iii) national food affordability and food security; and
 - (iv) international export earning and threat to Australian public health and danger to Australian ecosystems by major increases in the amount of food being imported; and
 - (b) that The Authority be required to:
 - (i) assess and publish the social and economic effects of the proposed buybacks on:
 - individuals and communities in impacted areas;
 - larger cities, due in part, but not restricted to, migration from impacted areas;

-
- national food affordability and food security; and
 - international export earning and threat to Australian public health and danger to Australian ecosystems by major increases in the amount of food being imported;
- (ii) analyse, consider and publish all water saving measures, including water saving technology;
 - (iii) prepare a report with recommendations based on the objects of the Act; and
 - (iv) present this report to Parliament; and
- (3) to make an assessment and determination of The Authority's report before any buyback program is commenced.

Wednesday, 27 October 2010

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)** took the chair at 9.41 am.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Stirling Electorate: Neighbourhood Watch

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (9.41 am)—I would like to talk about an organisation that is very important to me and one that has in the past had a great presence in the Stirling community, a presence that I hope to help re-establish in the near future. Neighbourhood Watch was once a strong community network right across my electorate, with countless members, suburb managers and street representatives all working to make their local neighbourhoods safer places to live. Unfortunately, a lack of support from all levels of government has over time eroded the foundation of support for this group in Stirling, with only one suburb manager left at the start of this year. That member was Les Gray, one of the most selfless, hardworking and dedicated community members in my constituency of Stirling.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a special note of Les and his involvement with Neighbourhood Watch. Les has persevered with the organisation and worked tirelessly with the local police with what little resources are available to him to try to keep the brand and the network alive. Without Les's involvement, I would not be here today with such a strong optimism about the future of the local branch of the organisation. Les brought to my attention the dire situation Neighbourhood Watch was in and how his tireless efforts to rebuild the once strong network were going largely unnoticed by his government representatives. His perseverance brought him to my office and together we hope to restore the strength of the network in the Stirling community.

With Les's help, I have been pursuing a new membership drive across my electorate, and I can report in this place today that our efforts have been largely successful. Neighbourhood Watch has grown by 60 members in the last few months alone and more membership forms continue to come in every week. We now have 14 suburb managers in suburbs including Carine, Balcatta, Westminster and Nollamara. We also have another eight street representatives, all actively recruiting new members to Neighbourhood Watch. The effect, according to the new members in particular, is already noticeable. Graffiti hotspots have now been marked with the unmistakable Neighbourhood Watch logo on a sticker or a sign, and once that has been done the vandals have not been returning to those sites. Confidence has been restored in some of our local streets where crime has in the past been a serious problem. Most importantly, young people are getting involved and taking up a role in the safety of our communities.

One of the most noticeable factors amongst the new members is the average age. Half of the new members are relatively young, in their 30s—a new generation of people willing to get involved in efforts to make our community safer. This gives me a lot of confidence in the future of Neighbourhood Watch locally and the potential to build the network and spread the logo right across the state. The Neighbourhood Watch logo, one of the most recognisable logos in Australia, is also one of the best deterrents for local crime. My goal is to have the suburbs of Stirling saturated with this logo and members behind each one ready to deter the criminals who for too long have had free rein on our streets. Neighbourhood Watch is, by its

own definition, a community based program aimed at reducing the incidence of preventable crime and preserving our way of life. This is my goal and I call on every member of the Stirling community to get involved. *(Time expired)*

Calwell Electorate: Radio 3ZZZ

Ms VAMVAKINO (Calwell) (9.44 am)—Today I rise to talk about Australia's largest multilingual institution, which reaches people and places both locally and internationally. It is an institution that has the ability to build communities, contribute to social cohesion and which, at the same time, empowers and trains thousands and thousands of volunteers. I am talking about community radio 3ZZZ, the largest ethnic community radio station in Australia, based in my home city of Melbourne.

Radio 3ZZZ can be found at 92.3 on the FM radio band. The station has been broadcasting 24 hours a day almost continuously since its inception in June 1989 and, since October 2000, the station has acquired an international audience through its internet broadcasting services. The station employs only six full-time staff and it relies heavily on the 400-plus contingency of volunteers to keep it functioning.

Radio 3ZZZ is an organisation very close to my own heart because it delivers cost-effective news, information and entertainment to more than 400,000 people Australia wide. It is also the place where I first began broadcasting my own community radio program.

The radio station covers 65 cultural groups, broadcasting 75 languages, and reaches about 100 different new and emerging as well as existing communities here in Australia. The Afghan program, for example, is broadcast in Pashto and Dari and accommodates our growing Afghani community, and the Spanish program has the largest audience and is heard by more than 25 Spanish groups from Latin America and Spain.

Station manager Martin Wright says the program helps communities, particularly new arrivals, become familiar with the Australian way of life and that it does so by disseminating information ranging from important areas of health and social services to even transport timetables. Mr Wright says that the established groups also rely on the programs that are made available because ageing ethnic communities often revert to their original language and like to continue to hear news and information in their own language.

Radio 3ZZZ is primarily financed by listener subscriptions and donations through sponsorship and through special fundraising events, including its annual two-week radiothon, which is currently being conducted. Each program must raise about \$1,000 for every hour that they are on air. This is the only way the station can survive. Ethnic broadcasting has for years lobbied government to increase its funding and I would like to call on the government and the opposition to support ethnic radio broadcasting programs and to support their campaign to increase their funding to keep a very worthwhile service running, a service that is worth while to all of us including the communities it services.

Macarthur Electorate: 24-Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (9.47 am)—On 16 October I had the pleasure of attending the 24-Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur at Campbelltown sports stadium. Over 1,200 people from the community turned up to support those who have survived cancer, those who are currently receiving treatment and those who wished to pay tribute to loved ones they had lost.

This event brings together people from all over the Macarthur region with teams coming from schools, churches, sporting organisations and local businesses. On the day I was privileged to be accompanied by three mayors of the region: Paul Lake of Campbelltown City Council, Chris Patterson of Camden Council and Michael Banasik of Wollondilly Council; as well as by my good friend Jai Rowell.

I was proud to walk as part of 'Jod's Team' which was led by her sister Kelly Lakeman. Jodie tragically died from a melanoma in 2009. She was just 24 years of age. Jodie's mother and father, Julie and Garry, family and friends joined the event to honour their beloved sister, daughter and friend. It was a very emotional time for the family but they were proud to keep the memory of Jodie alive and help raise awareness for families like them who have lost a loved one. Jodie's mother praised the nurses from Camden Palliative Care Unit who were so loving and caring to Jodie and her family in their time of need.

Kerrie Noyce and her son Chris, who initially invited me to participate in the walk, worked tirelessly to fundraise—selling raffle tickets, key rings and baking cakes—and raise awareness for the event, so I take this opportunity to thank them for all their hard work for this noble cause.

The 24-Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur has been running for six years and this year celebrated its one million-dollar year. All funds raised are spent on cancer services in Macarthur. The event has been integral in providing cancer services with specialist and state-of-the-art equipment they would otherwise not have been able to afford.

I would like to recognise the hard work of the committee members who made this year's event possible: Councillor Fred Borg, Associate Professor Stephen Della Fiorentina, Christine Edge, Sharon and Adam Galway, Dave Gray, Brendan Kinsela, Dot Lechner OAM, Janet Morgan, Sue McGarrity, Rebecca Purcell, Ken Stonestreet, Kathy Wong and Vanessa Asper.

The amount raised this year will tip the overall total raised to \$1 million. The event raises funds for three main cancer services: the Paediatric Ambulatory Cancer Care Service, the Macarthur Cancer Therapy Centre in Campbelltown Hospital and the Palliative Care Unit at Camden Hospital. It is a tragic thing to lose a young life, especially to a disease as indiscriminating as cancer. However, community events such as this ensure that our loved ones are not forgotten but rather that their passing unites a community to come together for a common cause—just as it has done in my electorate of Macarthur.

Parramatta Electorate: Merrylands Baptist Church

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (9.50 am)—I rise to recognise the Merrylands Baptist Church community for their outstanding contribution to the cause of global justice and poverty reduction. The church has a very active and successful group that they call 'Catalyst', a group whose objective in life is to change people's views about the need to act on poverty and to better inform their community, and they regularly organise really quite innovative and inspirational events in Merrylands to raise awareness about global poverty and the Millennium Development Goals.

In the past I have attended their fifth birthday party, designed to recognise the unacceptably high number of children who do not reach their fifth birthday. The birthday party was for those who never reach the age of five. They presented me at that time with a tiny little white jumpsuit—for probably a one-year-old—and asked me to bring it down to the foreign minister

of the day. Attached to it were cards with the name and address of each person that participated and birthday wishes for children who died before the age of five. It actually looked quite pretty until you realised what it was—one card for every child who died during the four-minute period it took them to write the cards. One of my staff, Jacinta, whose job it was to enter all those names in our database, found it quite a traumatic experience as well. But, again, I would reiterate that they are a quite remarkable group of people.

This week they sent me down with something else. They sent me down with a banner. I know we do not have props, so I will not open it, but it would in fact cover this entire desk. It is a banner covered with 150 hand prints and it comes with a card which I will read. By imprinting their hands on this banner, they say:

... we promise to remember the poor, we promise to remind our leaders to keep their commitment to the poor. As a sign of our promise we make this hand print. Together our hands are a message to our leaders to act with justice and to remember the poor.

In the next day or so I will present this banner to our foreign minister, but before I did that I wanted to bring it to the House and indicate to the members of the House that 150 members of my community have attached their hand prints to this banner to remind us of our commitment to the poor and to meeting the Millennium Development Goals as a nation.

I commend these people from the Merrylands Baptist Church; they are an extraordinary group of people. When they first started this program, there were very few of them who understood or who were informed about the issues that face some of the most disadvantaged people in the world. That is certainly not the case now. They keep me on my toes. They visit me regularly and they contact me regularly, in many ways, to remind me of our obligation. Thank you.

Grey Electorate: Bedford Industries

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (9.53 am)—I would like to place on the record the tremendous contribution Bedford Industries are making to people with disabilities in South Australia generally and in my electorate of Grey particularly. Bedford have been working with the disability sector since 1945 and have created opportunities and a future for South Australians with a disability by offering employment, recreational day activities, training, life skills, community housing and support services. In recent years, they have been expanding their footprint across the state, and I cannot tell you how pleased I am.

Next Wednesday I will have the pleasure of attending the opening of Bedford's new supported accommodation complex in Port Pirie. Bedford moved into Port Pirie three years ago and committed to opening a supported accommodation facility. The group have renovated an existing home and built three new homes. The facility will provide housing for 10 people. I was fortunate to be invited to view the complex as it neared completion several months ago and was impressed with the state-of-the-art, homely, modern and functional accommodation.

With 24 employment sites across the state, including seven in my electorate—two in Port Lincoln, three in Port Pirie, one in Kadina and one in Wallaroo—Bedford has grown into one of the biggest service organisations of its type in Australia. On Friday, a new day option service is being opened in Wallaroo which will service 30 people. Novel and interesting ways to stretch employment opportunities include the Compass egg farm at Port Lincoln, where the workers learn not only how to care for animals but also modern egg-farming practices and

have the opportunity to get outdoors. Eight hundred and twenty people across the state are in receipt of services from Bedford through supported employment; 2,000 are in open employment in the community; and 150 are in housing, with 200 more expected in the next 12 months—in total, more than 3,000 people. Bedford's recreational programs for people with higher support needs assist 100 people across South Australia.

The expansion of Bedford outside Adelaide's city limits has been a revelation in disability services. They have come into communities and taken over locally driven organisations which were struggling for critical mass, introducing sophisticated management procedures. The organisation have an annual turnover of \$50 million, support 3,000 people, when just a decade ago they were assisting 520, and raise 75 per cent of their own funds, with most of the other 25 per cent coming from the federal government.

Bedford are an organisation to be proud of in South Australia. Their chief executive, Max Dyason, has just returned from Ireland, where he and other Bedford representatives were invited to speak on the Bedford model to the disability sector from across Europe. From my perspective, they have much to offer the world. I thank them for their contribution and wish them all the best for their opening next week.

Deakin Electorate: Building the Education Revolution Program

Mr SYMON (Deakin) (9.56 am)—Last Friday, 22 October, I had the great honour of officially opening the new multipurpose hall at Blackburn Primary School in my electorate of Deakin. Sue Henderson, the school principal; Peter Chaffey, the school council president; Rod Williamson, the Whitehorse regional network leader; and Tony Robinson, the state Labor member for Mitcham, were all in attendance. Each of those people has done so much to ensure that this project was successful and that it delivered the infrastructure that the school actually needed. Through many meetings and discussions, along with to-and-fro arguments, the project was put together and was accepted into round 1 of the Victorian government's delivery of the federal Labor government's Primary Schools for the 21st Century. Also attending the opening were more than 400 students and another 200 or so parents and staff. The school captains, Breanna Beck and Jack Roughsedge, were on hand to welcome me and all the other guests at the school gate.

Blackburn Primary School is a fantastic local school that has a proud history of excellence in education but especially music. They have a very accomplished school band that played at the opening ceremony, and I am sure that many of the students there will go on to actually make that their career. I have visited Blackburn primary on many occasions and can well remember being crammed into the old assembly room where there literally was not enough room for all the students to meet at once for an assembly, let alone for the parents, many of whom used to stand outside and put their heads in through a window. Through Building the Education Revolution, Blackburn Primary School received a \$3 million grant for a building, and that was a great thing. They have now been able to build a multipurpose hall that their school band can fit into and play in. They now can play school sports on rainy days in the hall, something they could not do before because they simply did not have the facility.

On this particular project, from start to finish, in one way or another more than 110 people were employed. That is one of the great things about a P21 project, part of Building the Education Revolution: it provided employment when it was needed. It has also provided infrastructure that the school has been after for years; now it finally has it.

Of course, we must remember that this did not just happen by chance. It was part of the economic stimulus program, and that program only made it through the parliament by one vote in the other place. It almost did not become a reality. The school almost did not get its new hall. The students almost missed out on that benefit. So it was a very proud moment for me to open this facility for what is a great local school—and of course it is not just the school that uses it; it is also local community groups. They already have a basketball club that has moved in and uses the facility after hours and they also have community groups use the facility when it is not being used by the school. It is a great result for our community, and I commend the program to the House.

Dunkley Electorate: Small Businesses

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (9.59 am)—People ask me what happened to my foot, and I say that these are the wounds from trying to kick-start this government's interest in small business! I will persist in that effort today, as I am happy to inform the House.

Mr Hayes interjecting—

Mr BILLSON—It was actually from simulating athleticism with my 12-year-old son, but that is a discussion for another day. The point is that I will continue this effort to have the Gillard government take some interest in the small business community. Since the election of Labor, the ABS statistics show that 300,000 jobs have been lost in smaller businesses in Australia. There are 20,000 fewer small businesses than there were when this mob were elected. These are clear key performance indicators that show that things are tough in small business.

We want to put the business back into small business and that is why we provided a comprehensive election policy prior to the last election. One element we spoke about was the opportunity to relieve the unnecessary red-tape burden on small employers—in fact, on all employers creating wealth and opportunity in Australia. I am pleased that the Paid Parental Leave (Reduction of Compliance Burden for Employers) Amendment Bill 2010, which is a private member's bill, is on the *Notice Paper*. I am encouraged that the Selection Committee has indicated there is some prospect of having it debated in the last sitting fortnight. I urge government members to get behind this bill.

The government has failed to provide any compelling reasons why employers should be forced into the role of handling the payments and being the PPL pay clerks with the responsibilities, compliance risks, costs to their systems and burdens that need not be there. There is no good reason why employers, particularly small employers, should be faced with those red-tape burdens, the costs of revising their payroll systems to receive and reconcile the government instalments and passing on those payments. There is no compelling reason why that is being provided.

It is interesting that the previous small business minister, who admittedly was out of cabinet—and the coalition were going to remedy that failure of Labor—could not convince his own people when the bill was first debated that the payroll responsibilities should not rest with employers, particularly small employers. He would go around the country telling small business organisations: 'We agree. You should not have to do this.' What is the consequence? Nothing. They were left with that burden because the small business minister was unpersuasive in the previous government.

The current Minister for Small Business has inherited this virus. He is also running around the country saying: 'We agree with the opposition. I personally cannot see why small employers particularly or employers generally should have this burden placed on them.' When is the talk going to turn into action? When are the Labor members and small business ministers, who admittedly do not have much influence in this government, going to turn their words into action and get behind some constructive red-tape reduction measures? They talk privately about supporting that but then come into this place and impose these new burdens, risks and costs on small employers. Turn the talk into action. Get behind this private member's bill. *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I am sure the honourable member for Dunkley is thankful that I did not order his prop, which is his foot that is encased in a therapeutic device, to be removed from the chamber.

Corio Electorate: Youth Leadership Awards

Mr MARLES (Corio—Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs) (10.02 am)—This year at the end of term 4 it will be my pleasure as the member for Corio to again present outstanding leadership awards to students in primary and secondary schools across the Corio electorate. These awards are a great opportunity to celebrate the effort and energy of students committed to playing a positive role within their school. Last year we broadened the scope of these awards, offering each recipient of the outstanding leadership award from their school the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Geelong youth leadership awards. It was the first time young people in our region had been acknowledged at a federal level for their citizenship efforts. We held these awards earlier this year on Australia Day.

The students were invited to tell us what they thought it means to be an outstanding leader. I was blown away by the calibre of the entries. Students spoke about the need to always try your best and the importance of motivating others and being thoughtful and caring. They had organised school fundraisers, visited the sick and elderly, and set themselves the task of being good role models to others and overcoming personal challenges. Most of all we looked for students who exhibited the greatest qualities of leadership: courage and kindness.

Out of an excellent field of 21 students we had two outstanding winners: Bellarine Secondary College student Jenna Sinclair and Christ the King student Sarah Kenworthy. These girls demonstrated a wonderful capacity to lead by example both at school and through their activities outside school. I have spoken to the member for Corangamite and this year we hope to extend these awards to schools in the Corangamite electorate as well so that they too can participate in the Geelong youth leadership awards for Australia Day next year.

Good leaders are not simply presidents, prime ministers, mayors and successful businesspeople; good leaders are everywhere. They are the backbone of our community, running our sports clubs, Auskick clinics, school canteens and charities, fighting our fires and attending our accidents. They pitch in when work needs to be done and encourage others to do the same. We need good leaders across every facet of our lives. Good leaders build strong communities. Our schoolchildren are learning this. Whether it is through raising money for a charity or giving time to a worthwhile cause, they are learning the important lessons that will last them through their lives.

That is why I am so proud to promote the outstanding leadership awards at the end of this year and flowing from them the 2011 Geelong youth leadership awards to be awarded next year on Australia Day. Every school has been invited to participate. I encourage each of them to take up the invitation. I encourage students everywhere to get involved with their school awards. Encouraging the qualities of good leadership among the next generation of citizens will ensure a great future for Geelong.

Bradfield Electorate: San Run for Life

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (10.05 am)—I rise to report to the House on the 10th running of the San Run for Life held on Sunday, 17 October. The first thing I want to report to the House is the performance of one entrant: P Fletcher, who achieved a time of 26 minutes and 30 seconds for the five-kilometre run. That was, I am pleased to say, slightly better than the average time of 32 minutes and 17 seconds for the five-kilometre run, although, having had a look at the detailed results, I suspect that the median time as opposed to the average time was quite a lot lower than 32 minutes and 17 seconds. Even so, I was not unhappy with my performance.

The real reason that motivates me to speak about the San Run for Life is that this is an important event in my electorate of Bradfield. There were three events: a five-kilometre run, a 10-kilometre run and a five-kilometre walk. On this 10th occasion some 1,500 participants were involved in those three events. The event was hosted by the Sydney Adventist Hospital, which is universally known as the San. It is a major institution in my seat of Bradfield. It is a large high-quality research and teaching hospital. It is the largest private hospital by far on the upper North Shore and a much loved and valued institution in our community.

The run is an excellent community event which encourages fitness, participation and healthy lifestyle habits. You run through the rolling hills and leafy streets of Wahroonga and Fox Valley. It is a very popular event, as demonstrated by the significant number of people who participated. The proceeds of the run—such moneys as are raised from the entry fees less the costs of organising the event—are provided to the Australasian Research Institute, which is the research arm of the Sydney Adventist Hospital and does important medical research.

In the House yesterday we heard from the Minister for Health and Ageing about preventative health programs run by the government. Of course these are important, but the merit of the San fun run, as with so many similar events round the country, is that it is a community event organised within the community, with no government involvement. I particularly want to congratulate the San, its chief executive, Dr Leon Clark, and all of the many volunteers who were there from many community organisations, such as the SES and Wahroonga Rotary, which is heavily involved in assisting with the organisation of this event. Most importantly, I want to congratulate all of the participants for a most enjoyable event. I congratulate them on taking action to look after their own health and have some fun along the way.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I am sure that all honourable members would join in congratulating the member for Bradfield on his achievement.

Page Electorate

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (10.08 am)—I want to do a bit of a regional round-up for my seat of Page. I have been to a number of BER openings, and there will be many more coming up in the near future, particularly one at Alstonville Public School—a wonderful school with great,

dedicated teachers like David Wright and the principal, Lorraine Bryant. The school really is well served by the teachers. The BER project there is one that I have been very actively involved in, working with the school community so they could get exactly what they wanted, something that would work for that school community. We have been able to do that. I got an email from the school this week saying that I should be proud, along with Reeds, who have got the contract to do it, and the federal government, which has made the funds available. I will be going out there next week to have a look at it. I also want to pay tribute to the general assistant, who is a parent. He is particularly skilful and has been very active in this project as well. They really got value out of him.

The *Daily Examiner* newspaper in Grafton have recently announced that they have taken on a former Telstra call centre employee. I spoke in this place about Telstra axing 108 jobs, with the closure of a business call centre in Grafton. This is causing great concern to the community and everybody is rallying around to help place some of these employees. Some groups have started to look at that in the community. I am involved in a range of activities to help them with federal and state agencies. Everybody is working together to make sure that people get other employment. I was talking to one of the workers the other day. She had never been for an interview in her life and she had just scored an interview and was feeling quite good about that. She felt quite confident that she would be okay to face the future. It was reassuring to hear that.

On the 10th of the 10th, I attended a Girl Guides ceremony in Lismore to help celebrate the Year of the Girl Guide and the centenary of the Girl Guide movement in Australia. I would like to pay tribute to Helen Hargreaves, Division Leader of the Northern Rivers Division of the Girl Guides Association, New South Wales and ACT, for organising it. It was a pretty rainy day—we have had a bit of weather up my way—and we were supposed to be outside. Anyway, we ended up inside at the town hall. It was wonderful to be there with the young Girl Guides and some of the older ones who have participated in that movement for a long time. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

THERAPEUTIC GOODS AMENDMENT (2010 MEASURES No. 1) BILL 2010

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 30 September, on motion by **Ms King**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (10.12 am)—The Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2010 Measures No. 1) Bill 2010 introduces a number of amendments to the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989. The coalition does not oppose the government's regulatory reform plan designed to improve the regulation of therapeutic goods in Australia. At present the act covers short-term exemptions for medicines to serve as substitutes for other medicines that are on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods but which are unavailable or in short supply and medicines that have no substitute registered in Australia. This bill transfers the same arrangements to medical devices as apply for medicines currently.

Schedule 1 of the bill introduces mirroring provisions for medical devices. The amendments are intended to enable the Secretary to the Department of Health and Ageing to approve

the importation and supply of certain medical devices in a number of circumstances. In particular, the amendments enable the secretary to grant approval for the importation and supply of medical devices that are not on the register to act as substitutes for devices that are on the register where these devices are in short supply or unavailable.

The other amendments are largely administrative. These include allowing the secretary to list export-only variations of medicines which are already included on the register; improving the capacity of the TGA to obtain information in relation to medicines; allowing the minister to determine lists of permissible ingredients to be included in medicines; and specifying that persons applying for reconsideration by the minister of an initial decision by the TGA must provide all the information they wish to be considered at the time of application. This bill was previously introduced earlier this year but lapsed with the prorogation of the parliament.

One issue that I should flag is that when the legislation was originally introduced, the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills expressed concern about the way the bill had been drafted, particularly that proposed subsection 26BB(7), item 3 in schedule 2, provided for incorporating material by reference. The committee did state some concern about that in that it can lead to the ability for a change in obligations to be imposed without reference to the parliament. The committee did seek the minister's advice about the justification for the way that this bill has been drafted and the opposition will be seeking a response to that. Having said that, we do not see this as a controversial bill. It is essentially about improving the regulation of the therapeutic goods in Australia under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989. In discussions with stakeholders no concerns were raised about the amendments to this act. It was seen as being a sensible alignment with the way medicines are treated.

The amendments to the act are largely technical or administrative in nature. They do enhance the operation of the act and the efficiency of the TGA. They support Australian companies who wish to export medicines and they improve the TGA's ability to obtain information from persons who have registered or listed medicines. The legislation also improves the TGA's ability to obtain information on whether registered or listed medicines have been imported to Australia, supplied in Australia or exported from Australia. It also revises the process in which the minister can reconsider an initial decision by the TGA.

Speaking briefly on the TGA, I believe it is disappointing that the joint regulatory agency, which was planned with New Zealand, will now not be going ahead due to concerns at the New Zealand end, not the Australian end. That is disappointing. We have had a regulatory reform package which originally had in mind a joint regulator between Australia and New Zealand but now it would just be applying to Australia.

This bill will enable the TGA to continue to operate effectively and to keep up with other therapeutic goods regulators around the world and the opposition will not be opposing this legislation.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (10.17 am)—I rise to speak on the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2010 Measures No. 1) Bill 2010 and the government amendments. At the outset of my contribution to this debate I would like to mention that, whilst this was introduced in the last parliament, I can actually see the fingerprints of the new Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, the member for Ballarat, on this as well. I know she has a long history working in this area and I know that parliament will benefit enormously from her experience prior to entering this parliament. Mr Speaker, I would like to—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—Thank you for the promotion.

Ms HALL—Any time! Mr Deputy Speaker, this legislation provides a statutory basis for the current practice of the secretary approving product information for prescription medicines as part of the registration process and, for the latter, variation of approved product information. It provides a clear statutory basis for the secretary to vary entries in the register for registered and listed goods, medical devices and biologicals, and to charge fees in relation to requests for such variations. Being a member of the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing for a number of years, I know how important that flexibility is.

This legislation supports the implementation of the business review process for prescription medicines by ensuring that the secretary can prescribe relevant documents and information that must be provided in applications for registration of prescription medicines and requests for variation of those entries. The time frames within which such documents and information is required reflects what has been agreed with the sponsor. The evaluation by the TGA of applications for registration of prescription medicines can continue even if an applicant has not provided all the documents and information requested during the evaluation by the secretary within the agreed time frames. It also ensures that the offence of failing to comply with a request from the secretary to provide information on documents does not apply to requests for application for registration or listings but only when a request is made to those who currently have goods on the register or who have had goods on the register in the previous five years. This corrects a drafting error.

The legislation also clarifies the power of the minister to determine what ingredients can be included in lists of medicines and the criteria that must be taken into account if a person requests a variation to the list of such ingredients. It also ensures that the secretary can determine that particular goods continue to be treated as therapeutic goods in appropriate cases even if a food standard is made when such goods or their status as a food or therapeutic good is otherwise not clear. There has been community consultation on this legislation. Similar legislation was introduced in the previous parliament. It is non-controversial legislation. It is legislation that will benefit the community as a whole and I commend the legislation to the House.

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport (10.21 am)—in reply—I rise to speak on the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2010 Measures No. 1) Bill 2010. I thank both the member for Boothby and the member to Shortland for their contributions to this debate. As I mentioned in the second reading speech, this bill and the government's amendments to be moved in committee will amend the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 in the number of ways.

First of all, the bill implements arrangements to enable medical devices which are not approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration to be temporarily supplied in Australia to substitute for approved medicines that are unavailable or are in short supply. This will mirror an existing provision under the Therapeutic Goods Act that has been operating successfully for medicines.

The bill also enables export variants of registered or listed medicines to be listed, and this amendment will support Australian businesses to compete internationally by enabling them to make minor modifications to non-active ingredients in medicines so as to meet the specific requirements of importing countries. We are committed, as a government, to implementing

export variant arrangements, and the amendments follow through on that commitment to support Australian exports.

The bill also makes a number of smaller changes to the act. They include providing that information can be sought from sponsors about compliance, with conditions imposed on improved medicines, and also about whether goods are being imported, exported or supplied; providing a more efficient process for the ministerial reconsideration of initial decisions by the TGA to ensure that the minister or minister's delegate is afforded the full 60 days in which to consider all relevant information; and clarifying the provisions that allow the minister to determine a list of ingredients permitted for use in listed medicines.

I note that the opposition has raised an issue regarding drafting. That was raised in the Senate inquiry. I do have to apologise. I am continuing to seek some advice on that. I understand the response to the Senate query on that was lodged with the selection committee but that was part of the previous bill. We are just trying to seek some further advice on that. Hopefully we will have that by the time I have finished speaking.

I would like to turn now to the government amendments to the bill, which I will be moving in committee. These amendments principally implement measures to formalise the process for submission and approval of product information for medicines. The product information document contains important technical information about a medicine. Its purpose is to assist medical practitioners, pharmacists and other health professionals in prescribing and dispensing the medicine and to assist them to provide patient education and the medicine that will support high-quality and safe clinical care. The amendments will provide for a consistent format for product information documents and ensure that approved product information cannot be changed without the approval of the secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing.

The government amendments also make changes to the act relating to the business process reforms currently being implemented in relation to the evaluation of prescription medicines. The TGA and industry have been working together in a review of the prescription medicines evaluation process, and a number of areas for process improvement have been identified to eliminate unnecessary queues and delays in the evaluation process. The new processes are to commence from 1 November 2010, and the intention is to reduce the current 500 days for a new prescription medicine to be approved to approximately 300 days. The amendments make a small number of changes to the act to support elements of this streamlined evaluation process. I have to say they are supported by industry, who have been actively engaged and involved in those new business reform processes.

The government amendments also seek to clarify the operation of section 9D of the act, under which requests for the variation of entries in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods can be made, and the operation of section 7 of the act, under which the secretary can declare that particular goods are therapeutic goods and therefore come within the act's regulatory regime. Australia has been served well by the TGA in the past, and it is important that the regulatory regime it implements is kept up to date so that the TGA and the industry it regulates can operate as efficiently as possible so that Australian consumers can continue to have timely access to safe and effective therapeutic goods.

I also note that in the contribution from the member for Boothby he expressed, as a broader general term, some concerns about the process between Australia and New Zealand. I can assure the member for Boothby that the government is still committed to exploring those re-

forms. Unfortunately there has been, obviously, as he pointed out, some disagreement about how that may happen. It is a complex and difficult process. I think anyone who was involved in the harmonisation of the food standards between Australia and New Zealand and the establishment of that regulatory regime will understand that it is a very complex process, but it is something to which the government continues to work. I want to, again, thank the member for Boothby and the member for Shortland for their contributions to the bill. I will let debate continue.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport (10.27 am)—I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill. I ask leave of the committee to move government amendments 1 to 15, as circulated, together.

Leave granted.

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport (10.28 am)—I move:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (after table item 2), insert:

2A. Schedule 1A The 28th day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(2) Clause 2, page 2 (at the end of the table), add:

5. Schedule 2, Part The later of:

- 3
- (a) immediately after the commencement of the provision(s) covered by table item 2; and
 - (b) immediately after the commencement of Schedule 1 to the *Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2009 Measures No. 3) Act 2010*.

(3) Page 9 (after line 30), after Schedule 1, insert:

Schedule 1A—Product information for medicine

Therapeutic Goods Act 1989

1 Subsection 3(1)

Insert:

product information, in relation to therapeutic goods, means information relating to the safe and effective use of the goods, including information regarding the usefulness and limitations of the goods.

2 Subsection 3(1)

Insert:

restricted medicine means:

- (a) a medicine specified in an instrument under subsection (2A); or
- (b) a medicine included in a class of medicine specified in an instrument under subsection (2B).

3 After subsection 3(2)

Insert:

- (2A) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, specify medicines for the purposes of paragraph (a) of the definition of *restricted medicine* in subsection (1).
- (2B) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, specify classes of medicine for the purposes of paragraph (b) of the definition of *restricted medicine* in subsection (1).

4 After section 7C

Insert:

7D Form for product information for medicine

- (1) The Secretary may, by writing, approve a form for product information in relation to medicine.
- (2) The Secretary may approve different forms for different medicines or different classes of medicine.

5 Subsection 9D(5)

Repeal the subsection (not including the note).

6 After paragraph 23(2)(b)

Insert:

- (ba) if the application is for the registration of restricted medicine—the application is accompanied by product information, in relation to the medicine, that is in the form approved under section 7D in relation to the medicine; and

7 After paragraph 25(1)(d)

Insert:

- (da) if:
 - (i) the applicant is applying for the registration of restricted medicine; or
 - (ii) the applicant is applying for the registration of medicine (other than restricted medicine) and the applicant has been given a notice in writing by the Secretary requiring the applicant to give to the Secretary product information, in relation to the medicine, that is in the form approved under section 7D in relation to the medicine;the product information given by the applicant in relation to the medicine; and

8 After subparagraph 25(4)(d)(i)

Insert:

- (ia) if the goods are restricted medicine or the goods are medicine in respect of which the applicant has been given a notice of the kind referred to in subparagraph (1)(da)(ii)—notify the applicant in writing of the product information that is approved in relation to the medicine; and

9 After section 25

Insert:

25AA Approved product information for medicine

- (1) If:
 - (a) the Secretary includes restricted medicine in the Register in relation to a person under subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ii); or

- (b) an applicant for the registration of medicine (other than restricted medicine) is given a notice of the kind referred to in subparagraph 25(1)(da)(ii) and the Secretary includes the medicine in the Register in relation to the applicant under subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ii);
the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine is the product information referred to in subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ia).

Note: Subsection (4) deals with variation of the product information.

Transitional

- (2) If:
- (a) at the start of the day the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) takes effect, there is medicine included in the Register in relation to a person; and
- (b) before that day, the Secretary, in a notice given under subsection 25(4) to the person in relation to the registration of the medicine, specified the product information that was approved by the Secretary in relation to the medicine;
- then that product information (including as varied before that day) is, on and after that day, the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine.

Note: Subsection (4) deals with variation of the product information.

- (3) If:
- (a) before the day the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) takes effect, a person made an application to include medicine in the Register; and
- (b) before that day and in relation to that application, the Secretary, in a notice given under subsection 25(4) to the person, specified the product information that was approved by the Secretary in relation to the medicine; and
- (c) on or after that day and in relation to that application, the Secretary includes the medicine in the Register in relation to the person under subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ii);
- then that product information (including as varied before that inclusion) is, on and after the day the registration of the medicine commences, the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine.

Note: Subsection (4) deals with variation of the product information.

Variations

- (4) If:
- (a) there is medicine included in the Register in relation to a person and there is product information approved under this section in relation to the medicine; and
- (b) either:
- (i) under section 9D, the Secretary varies the entry in the Register in relation to the medicine; or
- (ii) there is a change in the conditions to which the inclusion of the medicine is subject; and
- (c) as a result of that variation or change, the Secretary is satisfied that a variation to that product information is required;
- the Secretary may, by notice in writing given to the person, make any variations that the Secretary considers appropriate to the product information that is approved in relation to the medicine.
- (5) To avoid doubt, if product information that is approved in relation to medicine is varied under this section, that product information, as varied, becomes the product information that is approved under this section in relation to the medicine.

10 Application

- (1) Paragraph 23(2)(ba) and subparagraph 25(1)(da)(i) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, apply in relation to applications for registration of medicine that are made after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect.
- (2) Subparagraph 25(1)(da)(ii) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, applies in relation to applications for registration of medicine that are made on or after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect.
- (3) Subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ia) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, applies on and after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect (whether the application for registration was made before, on or after that day).
- (4) Subsection 25AA(1) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, as inserted by this Act, applies in relation to medicine included in the Register on or after the day on which the first instrument made under subsection 3(2A) or (2B) of that Act takes effect (where the notification (in relation to the medicine) referred to in subparagraph 25(4)(d)(ia) of that Act also occurred on or after that day).

Note: Section 12 of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003* deals with when a legislative instrument takes effect.

- (4) Schedule 2, page 10 (before line 5), before item 1, insert:

1A Paragraph 9D(2)(a)

Omit “product”.

1B After subsection 9D(2)

Insert:

- (2A) Subsection (2), to the extent to which it relates to subparagraph (2)(b)(i), applies despite subsection 16(1).

1C Before subsection 9D(4)

Insert:

- (3C) If:
- (a) the person in relation to whom a kind of medical device is included in the Register has requested the Secretary to vary information included in the entry in the Register that relates to the kind of medical device; and
 - (b) the only effect of the variation would be:
 - (i) to reduce the class of persons for whom the kind of medical device is suitable; or
 - (ii) to add a warning, restriction or precaution, that does not include any comparison of the kind of medical device with any other therapeutic goods by reference to quality, safety or performance;the Secretary must vary the entry in accordance with the request.
- (3D) If:
- (a) the person in relation to whom a kind of medical device is included in the Register has requested the Secretary to vary information included in the entry in the Register that relates to the kind of medical device; and
 - (b) subsection (3C) does not apply to the request; and

- (c) the Secretary is satisfied that the variation requested does not indicate any reduction in the quality, safety or performance of the kind of medical device for the purposes for which it is to be used;

the Secretary may vary the entry in accordance with the request.

1D At the end of section 9D

Add:

Approved forms for requests

- (6) The Secretary may, by writing, approve a form for particular kinds of requests under this section.
- (7) If the Secretary has approved a form for a particular kind of request under this section, then any request of that kind must be in accordance with that form.

Fees

- (8) A request under this section must be accompanied by any prescribed application fee or prescribed evaluation fee or both.
- (5) Schedule 2, page 10, after proposed item 1D, insert:

1E Subsection 25(1)

Omit all the words from and including “Where:” to and including “having regard to:”, substitute “If an application is made for the registration of therapeutic goods in relation to a person in accordance with section 23, the Secretary must evaluate the goods for registration having regard to:”.

- (6) Schedule 2, items 2 and 3, page 10 (line 7) to page 11 (line 20), omit the items, substitute:

2 Paragraphs 26A(2)(ca) to (cd)

Repeal the paragraphs, substitute:

- (ca) the medicine does not contain an ingredient that is not specified in a determination under paragraph 26BB(1)(a); and
- (cb) if a determination under paragraph 26BB(1)(b) specifies requirements in relation to ingredients being contained in the medicine—none of the requirements have been contravened; and

3 Section 26BB

Repeal the section, substitute:

26BB Permissible ingredients

- (1) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, make a determination specifying either or both of the following:
- (a) ingredients;
- (b) for some or all of those ingredients—requirements in relation to those ingredients being contained in medicine.

Note: A person seeking the listing of a medicine under section 26A must certify that:

- (a) the medicine does not contain an ingredient that is not specified in the determination; and
- (b) none of the requirements specified in the determination in relation to ingredients being contained in the medicine have been contravened.

Requirements

- (2) The requirements referred to in paragraph (1)(b) may relate to particular ingredients not being contained in particular medicine.
- (3) The requirements referred to in paragraph (1)(b) may relate to permitted concentrations or permitted total amounts of ingredients.
- (4) Subsections (2) and (3) do not limit paragraph (1)(b).
- (5) A determination under paragraph (1)(b) may make different provision for different classes of medicine.

Limitations on determination under subsection (1)

- (6) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, make a determination specifying either or both of the following:
 - (a) ingredients that must not be specified under paragraph (1)(a);
 - (b) requirements that must not be specified under paragraph (1)(b) in relation to ingredients being contained in medicine.
- (7) A determination under paragraph (6)(b) may make different provision for different classes of medicine.

Incorporation of instruments

- (8) Despite subsection 14(2) of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*, a determination under this section may make provision in relation to a matter by applying, adopting or incorporating any matter contained in an instrument or other writing as in force or existing from time to time.

Note: The heading to section 26BC is altered by omitting “**list of active ingredients**” and substituting “**determination under section 26BB**”.

- (7) Schedule 2, page 11 (before line 25), before item 5, insert:

4A After subsection 26BD(3)

Insert:

- (3A) In deciding whether to vary the determination, the Minister must have regard to the quality and safety of the ingredients concerned. This subsection does not limit the matters to which the Minister may have regard to in deciding whether to vary the determination.

- (8) Schedule 2, page 11 (after line 28), after item 6, insert:

6A After subsection 31(1A)

Insert:

- (1B) If:
 - (a) a person makes an application under section 23 for the registration of therapeutic goods in accordance with a form referred to in paragraph 23(1)(a); and
 - (b) the form is described as a pre-submission form; and
 - (c) the person chooses a number of days specified in the form for the purposes of giving information or documents to the Secretary in the event that the person is given a notice under subsection (1) of this section in relation to the application;

then that number of days must be specified in any such notice as the time within which the person must give the required information or documents to the Secretary. The number of days so specified is taken to be a reasonable time for the purposes of subsection (1).

(1C) If:

- (a) the person in relation to whom therapeutic goods are registered makes a request under subsection 9D(3) in accordance with a form referred to in subsection 9D(6); and
- (b) the form is described as a pre-submission form; and
- (c) the person chooses a number of days specified in the form for the purposes of giving information or documents to the Secretary in the event that the person is given a notice under subsection (1) of this section in relation to the request;

then that number of days must be specified in any such notice as the time within which the person must give the required information or documents to the Secretary. The number of days so specified is taken to be a reasonable time for the purposes of subsection (1).

(9) Schedule 2, item 7, page 11 (line 29) to page 12 (line 3), omit the item, substitute:

7 Application

- (1) The amendments made by items 1A to 1D apply in relation to requests made on or after the commencement of those items.
- (2) The amendment made by item 1E applies in relation to applications for registration made on or after the commencement of that item.
- (3) The amendments made by items 1 and 2 apply in relation to applications for listings made on or after the commencement of those items.
- (4) The amendment made by item 6A applies in relation to a notice given on or after the commencement of that item (whether the application or request was made before, on or after that commencement).

(10) Schedule 2, page 13 (before line 4), before item 8, insert:

7A After subsection 7(1)

Insert:

(1A) In deciding whether particular goods or classes of goods:

- (a) are therapeutic goods; or
- (b) when used, advertised, or presented for supply in a particular way, are therapeutic goods; the Secretary must disregard paragraphs (e) and (f) of the definition of *therapeutic goods* in subsection 3(1).

(11) Schedule 2, item 13, page 14 (lines 5 and 6), omit the item.

(12) Schedule 2, item 14, page 14 (lines 7 to 10), omit the item, substitute:

14 After paragraph 31(2)(f)

Insert:

- (fa) if the goods are medicine—the matters covered by a certification by the person under paragraph 26A(2)(j) in relation to the medicine;
- (fb) whether the goods comply with conditions (if any) on the listing of the goods;

(13) Schedule 2, page 14 (after line 17), after item 15, insert:

15A Paragraph 31(4)(a)

Repeal the paragraph, substitute:

- (a) either:
 - (i) the person is given a notice under subsection (1) and the person is covered by paragraph (1)(ab) or (ac); or

- (ii) the person is given a notice under subsection (2) and the person is covered by paragraph (2)(ab) or (ac); and
- (14) Schedule 2, item 21, page 15 (after line 25), after subitem (2), insert:
- (2A) The amendment made by item 15A applies in relation to notices given on or after the commencement of that item.
- (15) Schedule 2, page 15 (after line 29), at the end of the Schedule, add:

Part 3—Amendments relating to biologicals

Therapeutic Goods Act 1989

22 Before subsection 9D(3A)

Insert:

(3AA) If:

- (a) the person in relation to whom a biological is included in the Register has requested the Secretary to vary information included in the entry in the Register that relates to the biological; and
- (b) the only effect of the variation would be:
 - (i) to reduce the class of persons for whom the biological is suitable; or
 - (ii) to add a warning, or precaution, that does not include any comparison of the biological with any other therapeutic goods by reference to quality, safety or efficacy;the Secretary must vary the entry in accordance with the request.

23 After paragraph 9D(3A)(a)

Insert:

- (aa) subsection (3AA) does not apply to the request; and

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (10.28 am)—As I said earlier during the debate on the second reading, this is an uncontroversial bill and the opposition do support regulatory reform of the TGA. The opposition have not sighted the government amendments. This was a bill which was only introduced in the first or second sitting week of the parliament, and we are not in a position to comment, having not even seen the amendments. On what the Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing has said, they sound uncontroversial. If they have been circulated I do not have a copy in front of me. I just make the point that this bill was referred to the Main Committee as an uncontroversial bill, but the opposition are not in a position to provide any comment on the government's amendments to its own bill—for which there was considerable time to have properly drafted when it was first introduced—because we have not sighted the government amendments.

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport (10.30 am)—I extend my apologies to the member for Boothby. I had understood that that process was underway, but obviously there has been an issue in terms of communication around those amendments. I am just seeking to make sure that you now have available, via the clerks, a copy of those amendments. Obviously you may want to take some time to look at them.

The government amendments to this bill, as I stated, are not controversial. They are around the issue of product information—the document that contains important technical information. They are about making sure that that product information cannot be changed without the

approval of the Secretary to the Department of Health and Ageing. The government amendments also make changes to the act relating to the business process reforms, which have been widely canvassed in the Australian community. I understand that the opposition is aware of the business reforms that have been undertaken by the TGA and I am quite sure it would have received representations from industry around those as well because it has been a lengthy and ongoing process in which a large number of consultations have been undertaken. There is also just a small clarification of the operation of section 9D of the act, which relates to requests for the variation of entries in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods and how they can be made.

As I said, these amendments are not controversial. They are amendments that have been supported by industry and they have certainly been supported by consumer groups as well. I certainly think that they should be supported by the opposition.

Question unresolved.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I am referring this bill to the House of Representatives with an unresolved question.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (10.32 am)—By way of clarification: the opposition are not necessarily against these amendments but we just would like some time to examine them. I think this is something that can be done in the House of Representatives.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Under our standing orders, we do not have the capacity to resolve a question here if there is dissent. So, if there is a vote to be taken—and I realise that there has been no decision made on that yet—it will be taken in the main chamber. Because there is opposition to this particular proposal, it will be referred to the main chamber, where it will be dealt with. Does the parliamentary secretary wish to make a comment?

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport (10.33 am))—Yes. I am in the hands of the chair on this. There is a possibility that we could adjourn the matter here in the Main Committee and we will provide the opposition with some time to scrutinise those amendments.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—We could do that.

Ms KING—Again, my apologies; I thought that had been the case. If that is possible, that may be another pathway forward to allow the opposition some time. I am in the hands of the whips a little bit here too to see whether we could then bring that on again later in the Main Committee, if that is possible.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—That is possible, but the effect is that it would be picked up at the same position of debate in the main chamber, so it is probably better to refer it to the main chamber. I am referring the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2010 Measures No. 1) Bill 2010 to the House with an unresolved question.

**VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (WEEKLY PAYMENTS)
BILL 2010**

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 October, on motion by **Mr Snowdon**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (10.34 am)—I rise to lend support to the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Weekly Payments) Bill 2010. This bill will seek to enable the Department of Veterans' Affairs to make payments to some veterans on a weekly rather than fortnightly basis. The Repatriation Commission and/or the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission will make recommendations to the department for this purpose. Ostensibly, to be eligible, a veteran must either be homeless or at risk of being homeless. It is a small change but certainly one that provides benefit to that small group of veterans who may find themselves in difficult straits.

It is interesting to note that similar measures to these were contained in legislation passed in the 42nd Parliament, in the Social Security and Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Weekly Payments) Bill 2010. That bill was introduced in the House of Representatives in February 2010 and subsequently passed the Senate on 18 March. The Department of Veterans' Affairs advises that the measures contained in this legislation were intended to be included in the social security legislation; however, time did not allow this to occur. I am a little staggered that the government could not sort its act out to include a very, very simple amendment within the wider bill and now has to take more of the parliament's time because the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the minister could not get it together to put it there. I could perhaps say to the government: if it would better prioritise its time, that would be useful.

If it could not manage to find the time for a range of simple housekeeping bills, seriously, what hope do we have at all about the government finding time for real reform within the Veterans' Affairs portfolio? One only has to look at the Podger review, which the Gillard government has now had for three long years. We are still waiting for a response from this government after three years as to what it will do with that review that has come through. The member for Blair may sit there and smile, but his government has had this for three years. For three years the veterans community has been waiting for a response to the Podger review. Over 1,000 days have now transpired whilst various ministers have sat there and cogitated, and the veteran community is none the wiser as to what the government will do. All this sends a disturbing message as to the efficacy of this government and its ability to make serious and sound reform for our veteran community.

Be that as it may, the relevant changes to the MRC Act and the Veterans' Entitlements Act, with this veterans-specific legislation, mean that veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will be treated in the same manner as those clients eligible for assistance under the Social Security Act. Simply put, this bill will halve a fortnightly pension and provide half of that payment each week to the eligible recipient. It is almost that simple.

But, importantly, the bill makes a range of relevant changes to the MRC Act 2004 and the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 to ensure that veterans who choose to be paid weekly are not financially disadvantaged as a result of electing to receive weekly payments. It is also worth noting that, where a veteran is subject to deductions, these deductions will also be halved. The bill also mandates the authorities for determining which veterans are able to access weekly payments, the authorities being the Repatriation Commission and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission. This bill provides these authorities with the discretion to allow a veteran or ex-serviceperson in receipt of a pension through the Department of Veterans' Affairs to receive that payment weekly where it is in the veteran's best interests to do so. The

bill also establishes the power to create a 'class of persons' who can be considered eligible for weekly assistance where such a determination is in the veterans' best interests.

The bill provides that the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, and separately, although likely identically, the Repatriation Commission, may also specify by legislative instrument a 'class of persons' who are eligible to apply to have their usually fortnightly-paid pension paid in weekly instalments. This instrument, once written, will become a disallowable instrument, normally tabled in the Senate. Once the commissions have determined this 'class of persons', upon request of an eligible veteran, their income support and/or disability pension can then be paid weekly. It is also worth noting that a veteran can continue to receive their weekly payments indefinitely—that is, the weekly payment option is not subject to review.

Clearly we support the bill, however with a comment on the lapse of the government in not actually combining this with the aforementioned social security bill. We certainly believe that it will ensure that veterans' entitlements continue to be determined in a beneficial manner, which is the sole purpose. Any change to veterans' entitlements which will ensure that veterans are better provided for has to be a worthwhile change. However, this legislative change, whilst welcome, will not deal with homelessness and should not be seen as a panacea for dealing with homelessness. The bill simply changes a payment from a fortnightly one to a weekly one.

Thankfully, the number of homeless veterans is small. My considered view is that it should be zero. The Department of Veterans' Affairs has advised that the number of veterans who may be eligible for weekly payments is commensurately small. Furthermore, the RSL in New South Wales advises that they have provided assistance to a small number of homeless veterans—less than 10—in the Sydney area. I think everyone in the House would agree that a worthy goal for the number of homeless veterans has to completely and utterly zero.

This bill is a housekeeping bill. It makes a small change to legislation that affects a relatively minor number of veterans. That is not to say that the change is not welcome; it is. Anything that provides support to veterans will certainly be welcomed by our side of the House. However, the changes remain small. And whilst the Gillard government refuses to respond, after over 1,000 days, to the Podger review, and continues to tinker around the edges of Veterans' Affairs policies, it continues to avoid the great reforms needed. One of those, of course, has to do with military superannuation. In fact, since the government has not even responded to the review of military compensation arrangements in the Podger review for over 1,000 days, we are none the wiser as to where the government is going. The former Minister for Veterans' Affairs made a range of noises before the last election about an impending large announcement, which all came to nothing. On the other hand, the coalition remains committed to addressing the needs of DFRDB military superannuants and veterans more widely. While the Gillard Labor government continues to deny a problem in the area of DFRDB superannuation, only the coalition has a plan to address these issues. The coalition released its plan before the last election: that we would index DFRDB pensions to the same level as those for the age pension. We made that firm and absolute commitment prior to the last election.

Furthermore, staggeringly, the Gillard Labor government's complex pharmaceutical cost reimbursement scheme will not provide any real relief to veterans until 2013. The coalition's plan, announced before the election, would have benefited almost 20,000 more veterans than

Labor's plan and would have included all of our most disabled veterans, which would have provided real relief from 2012. The Gillard Labor government must do more than simply tinker around the edges of veterans affairs policy. It needs to take the issue of veterans seriously, listen to the concerns being raised by the veterans community and act decisively—words that, unfortunately at present, the Gillard government seems to ignore.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (10.42 am)—I rise to speak in support of the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Weekly Payments) Bill 2010. It is always interesting following the member for Fadden, as I have on many occasions—he has spoken after me and I have spoken after him. One of the things that the member for Fadden failed to elucidate for the House was the fact that the coalition did nothing with respect to the issues concerning veterans. If you speak to people in the veterans community, they know very well that, with respect to the DFRDB and indexation, the coalition's record was not in the light that the member for Fadden claimed—and their announcing a policy before the election, which we do not believe they would ever implement if they had a chance, is simply not good enough.

In relation to Podger, the coalition did nothing in relation to the issues raised in that during 11½ years as well. And with respect to homelessness, which this bill seeks to address in a small way, the coalition's record in the area was simply appalling. The privatisation of public housing and social housing across my state of Queensland was the norm. You only had to speak to state minister Robert Swarten about the issues in relation to that. In my electorate alone we are putting \$66.5 million into social housing and defence housing, simply to make up for the culpable failure of the Howard coalition government with respect to social housing and defence housing, particularly in Ipswich and the West Moreton region.

The bill that is before the House is a minor one, but we think it goes a long way to assisting disadvantaged people who may have difficulties managing their finances and their funds and who may, indeed, spend them too quickly. So payments on a weekly rather than fortnightly basis can make a difference in the budgets of veterans, to make sure they do not fall into homelessness.

No-one in our country, as wealthy as we are, should be homeless. The white paper on homelessness, *The Road Home*, identified the responsibilities that we as a country have in addressing issues of homelessness. The government have responded to that white paper. We have set ambitious targets for what we will do in relation to homelessness. We have set addressing those issues of homelessness as a national priority. We have committed to halving homelessness and providing accommodation for rough sleepers—some of whom, sadly and tragically, are veterans.

We want to make sure we invest money to address the issue of homelessness. We have committed \$4.9 billion in new funding to address homelessness, with an additional \$400 million coming from the states and territories. We have increased funding to homelessness services by 55 per cent and committed to building more than 80,000 affordable homes across the country. This includes almost 20,000 built through the nation building and economic stimulus plan, which I addressed. The sum of \$66.5 million in my electorate alone which I referred to earlier includes that.

Reducing homelessness is a shared responsibility that must encompass not just government at a state and territory level but federal government, business, charities and the community. In February this year we saw the coalition walk away from a bipartisan approach to homeless-

ness by refusing to support the white paper targets. The member for Fadden did not say that. The former coalition government could not even find a minister to address the issue of homelessness and housing. They did not even have one allocated for that purpose. They did nothing to help the homeless in my community. All they thought they could do was privatise public housing. There are simply too many kids in this country, some in veterans' families, who grow up without a roof over their head. It is a national disgrace. We should have determination, a commitment and real vigour to attack this problem.

The legislation before this place is minor. It is technical. Most veteran recipients of money use it wisely and well. It does accord with what we did earlier this year in replicating the Centrelink arrangements and aligning veterans' affairs legislation with social security law. That is sensible. The Department of Veterans' Affairs administers payments to veterans, members and former members and their dependents under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the Veterans' Entitlements Act and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. As I said, those payments are made fortnightly. The amendment here will enable compensation and income support pensions and other payments under the Veterans' Entitlements Act to be paid weekly instead of fortnightly in certain circumstances. It is voluntary. In other words, if a veteran wants to get paid the money voluntarily they can. It may assist them if they have fallen on hard times. People at risk of homelessness need money urgently. That is why many approach organisations like Lifeline and Centrelink. It is to get the kind of assistance they need urgently.

We are acting in the area of homelessness. The National Affordable Housing Agreement will deliver longer term housing for Australians who are currently homeless, and we are partnering with the states and territories to do that. I think the aspiration is noble and the commitment to halving overall homelessness by 2020 is sure.

Supported accommodation is particularly important for rough sleepers. When I was much younger I was the secretary of a church committee that ran a homeless shelter for what many years ago people would have described as delinquent teenage boys. We kept many out of jail and away from trouble during those times. I saw firsthand the challenges of young teenage fellows, some of them a little younger than me. It changed your life when you saw how they could fall into a life of crime, how they could lose their self-esteem and how their employment skills could be diminished because of illiteracy and lack of ability in numeracy. This is a big challenge for this country, and we need to take a very broad-brush and committed approach to funding. The cycle of violence and abuse which many people suffer from can lead to homelessness. We must be sure to tackle this.

In my community, the Ipswich and West Moreton community, we have the fantastic Ipswich RSL Services Club. I want to pay tribute to a number of people there who do a lot of work in the community, particularly looking after veterans and their dependents. I am sure that they will warmly welcome the funding that we have provided. Certainly they would warmly welcome the arrangements whereby veterans can get the money on a weekly basis. I pay tribute to: Phil Gilbert, the president of the Ipswich sub-branch of the RSL; the railway sub-branch president, Ray Watherston; and Donna Reggett, who is the pension and welfare officer of Ipswich RSL. Donna is on the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters. She is the partner of a long-serving RAAF veteran who served as a peacekeeper in Somalia. She is also the daughter of a RAN veteran who served in Vietnam. She is a member

of the Operational Working Party. She has undertaken studies in counselling and mediation at Southern Cross University and has trained under the department's training and information program as a level three advocate. She is actively involved in the Ipswich community and in the veteran and ex-service community as a pensions and welfare advocate. She has been a tremendous supporter of RSL Ipswich, both the railway and Ipswich sub-branches, and has also fought for the rights of veterans and stood up for their dependents.

Anything we can do to help veterans, whether it is by way of financial support or simply these arrangements whereby we make sure that the payments are made weekly rather than fortnightly, will assist to avoid the risk of homelessness, to help veterans and to provide for their families to make sure that their children and particularly those young fellows at the home I talked about earlier—which we called Baldwin House—no longer fall into a life of criminality, despair and destitution. We want to make sure that they get provided for and make sure that veterans and their dependents and also all those associated with the RSL are looked after in the Ipswich and West Moreton area.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10.52 am)—I rise to speak on the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Weekly Payments) Bill 2010. From the outset, Mr Deputy Speaker, can I say that, along with my Liberal and National party colleagues, I support the government's bill. This bill will enable the Department of Veterans' Affairs, upon the recommendation of the Repatriation Commission and/or the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, to make payments to some veterans on a weekly basis rather than a fortnightly basis. I welcome this move and the coalition supports this bill. I would, however, note that to be eligible a veteran must either be homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is distressing that any veteran would actually be in this position, and I would caution that the criteria should be based on compassion and not rigid bureaucracy. This bill will ensure that veterans' entitlements continue to be determined in a beneficial manner. Under the measures, a veteran's usual fortnightly payment is halved, with one half being paid each week. Where the veteran's payment is also subject to deductions, these deductions will also be halved. Half of the deduction will be removed from each payment so that the maximum benefit of weekly payments is passed on.

Any change to veterans' entitlements which will ensure that veterans are better provided for is a worthwhile change. Whilst it may not be one that will impact on a lot of veterans, and the member for Fadden mentioned that the RSL in New South Wales advise that they have provided assistance to a small number of homeless veterans—fewer than 10—in the Sydney area, I do welcome this legislation and I emphasise that any improvements to this system have the support of the coalition. However, I think it would be a bit rich for the Gillard Labor government to be able to slide their way through this debate without their appalling track record in the vital policy area of veterans' affairs being highlighted and condemned. On that note, can I say how proud I am to come from this side of the chamber, the Liberal-National side of politics, which has a strong record of standing up for and protecting our veterans since our party's creation in 1944. It has always been and will continue to be the Liberal way to support veterans and their families and acknowledge their sacrifices and the contribution they have made and continue to make to the fabric of our nation. We must hold them in the highest regard, and the coalition does so.

As well, this legislative change, whilst a welcome one, will obviously not on its own deal with the serious issues surrounding homelessness in the community. The Gillard government cannot and must not see this as an easy way out when it comes to homelessness in this country, and I call on the government to put to one side their usual ideological games in this social policy area and get on with the job of actually addressing the problem and not just talking about it. The member for Blair had the temerity to criticise the Howard government and mentioned the Queensland government and the problems of homelessness. That is a state government which has sold off public housing. At a time of greatest need they have sold off homes that should have been there to be provided for the homeless in that state.

I would like to put on the record that the coalition remains committed to addressing the needs of DFRDB military superannuants. The Gillard Labor government continues to deny a problem in the area of DFRDB superannuation and that summarises and epitomises the Labor Party's true thoughts on veterans and military personnel. As a member whose seat takes in the Gallipoli barracks at Enoggera and who has a substantial military personnel population in the electorate of Ryan, I am naturally concerned that the Labor government has a closed mind when it comes to this issue and I am concerned about their neglect of the veteran and military community. Once again only the coalition has a plan to address these issues and stand up for veterans and military personnel. It is also worth mentioning that the Gillard Labor government's complex pharmaceutical cost reimbursement scheme will not provide any real relief to veterans until 2013. This is a great shame given that the coalition's plan would have benefited almost 20,000 more veterans than Labor's excuse for a plan and would have included all of our most disabled veterans and provided real relief from 2012.

It is totally shameful that in Senate estimates last week the shadow minister for veterans' affairs, Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson, confirmed with the War Memorial's director that consideration was actually given, although not ultimately actioned, to close the memorial one day a week because of the Labor government's funding cuts. This is yet another black mark and a poor reflection on the Labor government when it comes to veterans' affairs. It is not unreasonable that Australians rightfully expect our war memorials around the country to be resourced by the government. Everyday Australians have an expectation of their elected representatives and government to ensure war memorials and veterans' facilities are well maintained and are resourced and staffed appropriately so that Australians who have made the ultimate sacrifice and fought for their country, its people and our freedom can be remembered in the highest regard. It is fair to ask when will Labor give veterans the support that is their due.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Science and Personnel and Minister for Indigenous Health) (10.58 am)—in reply—I am pleased to be able to sum up in this debate on the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Weekly Payments) Bill 2010, and I thank the members for Ryan, Blair and Fadden for their contributions. But I would encourage the member for Ryan to actually read a bit of history and to understand very clearly the absence of any commitment by the former Howard government to address the issue of superannuation entitlements for veterans. In fact, that government had the Podger report provided which they refused to release. It took the Labor government, and me in particular as the then Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, to release that report for public comment.

Whilst I understand that the member for Ryan is a new member in this place, and I understand she has no corporate memory of what has happened in the past, I would encourage her to understand the facts of what has happened in the past and not come in here and blithely just announce the lines she has been given by her shadow minister. Clearly, she has got no deep understanding of the veterans' affairs issues or, indeed, the history of veterans' affairs policy under the Howard government or what we are doing under the Gillard government and previously under the Rudd government. I might say that those comments apply equally to the member for Fadden.

This bill will implement in the repatriation system an important element of the government's strategy to address homelessness. The bill will enable the Department of Veterans' Affairs to introduce the option of weekly payments of pension entitlements for those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless and who would benefit from weekly payments.

This measure is an important component of the government's strategy to reduce homelessness. Whilst this measure does not affect the total amount of a pension that a person can receive, the availability of weekly payments will assist those vulnerable clients to better manage their money. This action, in conjunction with other elements of the government's strategy, can contribute to stabilising and improving the circumstances of those who may be facing homelessness. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that the bill be reported to the House without amendment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Afghanistan

Debate resumed from 26 October, on motion by **Mr Stephen Smith**:

That the House take note of the document.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (11.02 am)—Nearly 2½ thousand years ago Aristotle wrote about war:

We make war that we may live in peace.

It is a sentiment which guides my thoughts today whenever our nation considers committing the vitality of our youth, of sacrificing the lives of our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, to war.

Indeed, it is on the shoulders of all of us privileged to stand in this place to decide whether we endorse the executive in their decision when we enter war and, to a limited extent perhaps—even with delusion—the conditions on which we engage. As difficult as that responsibility is, however, it pales in comparison to the burden borne by those we commit to armed conflict: Australia's men and women in uniform who, through gritted teeth and a steely resolve, brave conditions I cannot pretend to truly understand. They do the real work and pay the true price. Families are permanently scarred, and they pay the true price. Veterans are scarred, physically and emotionally, and they pay the true price. This parliament, as the physical manifestation of the will of the Australian people, is charged with the most solemn duty of determining whether that price needs to be paid so that our people may live in peace.

In considering this question in relation to Afghanistan, I turn my mind to the events which were, of course, the precursors to this conflict. I reflect on the fact of the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. These were coordinated suicide attacks by 19 al-Qaeda terrorists who hijacked four commercial airline flights and murdered nearly 3,000 people. There were 2,752 victims who died in the attacks on the World Trade Centre and some 836 responders, including police and fire fighters, were killed. One hundred and eighty-four people were killed in the attack on the Pentagon and all those aboard United Airlines flight 93 perished while attempting to retake that aircraft when it crashed in a field in Shanksville in rural Pennsylvania.

The overwhelming majority of the victims were civilians, including nationals from over 70 countries, including from our country Australia. I personally recall receiving, together with my wife, a message from friends who lived in London late in the evening. They questioned whether or not my sister-in-law was okay. That was the first notice that we had of the attacks unfolding. My wife's sister was a flight attendant with United Airlines in the United States. Whilst she was not on those flights—thankfully, I say, of course—the reality is that that is when it was borne to us, as we switched on the television and saw the true horror unfolding. At the time, I recall my wife, who is an American, literally on her knees and crying as we saw the collapse of the two World Trade Centre buildings.

Indirectly, terrorism has also reached out to me with the Bali bombings on 12 October 2002. These bombings, of course, occurred in the tourist district of Kuta on the Indonesian island of Bali. The attack has been the deadliest act of terrorism in the history of Indonesia, killing 202 people of whom 88 were Australians and 38 were Indonesian citizens. A further 240 people were injured.

We know that the attack involved the detonation of three bombs: a backpack-mounted device carried by a suicide bomber and a large car bomb, both of which were detonated in or near popular night clubs in Kuta; and a third small explosive device detonated near the United States consulate in Denpasar which, thankfully, caused only limited damage. In this instance, the terrorists who perpetrated this crime were members of Jemaah Islamiyah, a violent extremist group based in Indonesia.

I remember receiving a phone call—I think it was early on a Sunday morning—from the mother of a friend of mine who rang to inquire what services may be made available. When I received the phone call that morning, it was the first I had heard of it. Her son had been a victim of the attacks. At that stage it still was not known whether or not it was a gas tank explosion, as some had thought it may have been, or was in fact a terrorist attack. As the true horror unfolded over ensuing days I discovered just how many of my friends were affected: Glenn Cosman, Andrew—or Andy, as he is known to his mates—Csabi and Glen Forster. There were others from the Gold Coast that I grew to know, such as Ben Tullipan. They were all victims of the indiscriminate warfare and attacks that come from terrorists. I also got to meet the father of Robert Thwaites, who was murdered in the attacks in Bali. Robert's father commenced the Zero to One Foundation on the Gold Coast and has committed his life to humanitarian projects in Indonesia not only as a way of committing to the memory of his son but also because he views it as a meaningful way in which to change the lives of those in Indonesia who might otherwise be prone to the kind of ideological blindness that comes through terrorism

philosophy. He now has humanitarian projects in, for example, Palau Aceh, where the Zero to One Foundation has provided housing—in this case, up to 25 new homes.

These were the precursors that led to Australia's and, indeed, initially the United States decision to declare war in Afghanistan on the Taliban. These attacks, referred to as asymmetric warfare, were the precursor that led to the then executive decision to commit Australian troops alongside our very strong alliance partner, the United States, in their operations in Afghanistan. We must deal with these questions in determining whether or not we can truly ask of young Australian men and women the sacrifice that we do in determining whether or not to commit troops. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in its 2004 publication *Transnational terrorism: the threat to Australia*, defined what we are up against. In reference to asymmetric warfare it says:

Terrorism is a form of asymmetric warfare: an approach that uses non-traditional methods to counter an opponent's conventional military superiority. It uses unconventional means to attack unexpected targets. It turns perceived strengths into weaknesses and exploits vulnerabilities to deadly effect. It may also involve the capability to attack an adversary with means for which they are unprepared or incapable of responding in kind.

The new transnational terrorists have adopted a strategy that responds to the unprecedented dominance of the United States and other highly developed Western countries in all aspects of conventional military power. The terrorists therefore seek means other than conventional warfare with which to confront the West.

Terrorism pits clandestine methods against open societies. It uses small teams whose operations are cheap, but demands a response that is enormous in scale and expensive in resources. It exploits the foundations of civil society, such as principles of human rights, efforts to avoid civilian casualties, and adherence to the rule of law—including the laws of armed conflict.

The terrorists' asymmetric approach demands a sustained, comprehensive and coordinated response at national and international levels, incorporating a wide range of Australia's assets.

In many respects this is the foundation that I think best summarises the battle that this nation has—and indeed that other Western democracies have—in the conflict in Afghanistan, and we must be mindful that this is a decision that lies at the very heart of whether or not we continue our mission in Afghanistan.

Now, some nine years into the conflict in Afghanistan, though, many are questioning whether or not we are actually winning the war. Many are questioning whether or not we have the ability, if we do win the war, to also then win the peace. I simply put on the record that we can only judge this based on the information we receive from those in the field—from those who actually put their lives on the line so that we may live in peace. The advice from them is clear. That is that we are, as a direct consequence of the surge in numbers, now also starting to see real progress being made with respect to our humanitarian mission, alongside the mission that we have of armed conflict. It is not lost on me that two former ministers who sat around the cabinet table when the executive took this decision, Senator Nick Minchin and the Hon. Alexander Downer, have both made remarks in this debate with the view that in some way, shape or form, Australia's role needs to be reconsidered. It is my mind on which their views weigh heavily in determining whether or not we should stay the course. I think that these matters are not static. They change as time passes, as strategies change, as countries evolve and as the people on the ground, both the civilians of Afghanistan and our troops, experience the fatigue of war. But I would hope that they experience some excitement about the potential that

can come through peace. Knowing that we are making real progress, as has been reported, I believe Australia must remain committed. Notwithstanding that, it is fundamental that we at all times inform our strategy on the basis of national interest. And I do not believe that Australia's national interest is well served through, for example, the United Nations having overarching responsibility for what is taking place in Afghanistan.

More fundamentally, Australia must assess and evaluate its decisions with respect to the commitment of troops by its own measures, by its own considerations and by its own reference to whether or not the lives of Australians are buying peace. It simply is not acceptable to me that we would attempt to outsource the determination of our national interest to a body like the United Nations. Certainly, multilateral approaches in war zones and in armed conflict are crucial, but that sits alongside rather than in the place of national determinations of whether our national interest is being served. So, nine years in, my charge as I see it is simply to keep a watchful eye on whether our national interest continues to be served on the basis of the advice provided by those on the ground.

At this point we absolutely must ensure that we put, for lack of a better term, key performance indicators in place when it comes to the training of Afghan national troops, Afghan national police and the transition to those authorities from those troops wearing uniform in Afghanistan. Failure to do this will see us caught in what effectively will be a quagmire. We as parliamentarians and, through us, the executive must ensure that we have in place clear delineations that demonstrate to all of us that we are making progress with respect to the hand-over to Afghan nationals so that they themselves can control their nation.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 11.16 am to 11.43 am

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa—Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services) (11.44 am)—There is a great danger in debates such as this on the ministerial statement on Afghanistan that people become very repetitive and there is not much novelty, so I will not traverse areas that many have covered earlier. However, I do put on the record my appreciation of Australian forces on an individual and collective basis in Afghanistan. I see this locally with my good friends and political colleagues Peggy and Phil Gordon, whose son Matthew has served in Iraq, Timor and Afghanistan. I see the duality of, first, their pride in his efforts for this country and the fact he is a voluntary serviceperson and, on the other hand, the fear that they always have about his circumstances. So I do at the outset salute those efforts.

I want to comment on a few contributions in this debate, and I turn first to that of the member for Denison. This was one of the most pompous, self-important performances I have had the honour of hearing since I have been in the federal parliament. He essentially said that all other members of this parliament, unlike him, are not pure, have the wrong motivations and hide behind their party labels. Quite frankly, he will be the first person in Western parliamentary civilisation at the end of this term to be able to say that every time there was a vote in this parliament he voted as his electorate thought he should. To quote public opinion polls and say that everyone else is not following their electorate is absolutely ridiculous. I do say, however, on a broader front, that I question some of the arguments he put forward. Yes, the fact that the Western world supports Israel, that it supports extrajudicial killings, that it supports the bantustans that are being created for the Arab people and their expulsion from their lands, that it

supports racist laws in Israel with regard to citizenship, that it supported nuclear engagement between South Africa and Israel during the apartheid period—yes, those kinds of decisions do lead Arabs and Muslims to be hostile to the Western world.

Similarly, in Iraq, obviously the total disaster there, where Iran's influence has been so massively increased to the point where we see last week that Iran is essentially deciding who will be in coalition in Iraq in the future, getting forces to support al-Maliki rather than having a secular government, is indicative of another interference which does lead people in the Arab world to become more hostile to Western values and Western civilisation. However, for the member for Denison to say that some bloke said in a court case that he was motivated by the fact that Kevin Rudd went to Berlin for a conference, and therefore we are aiding and abetting extremism and radicalisation, is ridiculous. We support these positions because they are right on balance; we do not necessarily get affected by the impact they might have on the rest of the world and on individuals. I also note that he joined with the Greens in having a dream world about infrastructure, welfare, foreign aid et cetera being delivered and that will solve all the world's problems. Quite frankly, we see every day of the week organisations that are themselves sometimes critical of Western engagement being targeted in their foreign aid delivery in Afghanistan by the Taliban. To say that we can basically solve this by foreign aid and walk away is extremely simplistic.

I heard the Leader of the Greens, Senator Brown, being pressed by Fran Kelly last week on ABC Radio. On three or four occasions she put to him: 'Can you simply have foreign aid delivery, can you solve all these problems, in the current environment in Afghanistan if you withdraw all forces?' Three times he ignored that question. There is this idea that we can basically just deliver money, there is going to be fantastic governance, there is going to be no corruption, foreign aid will be delivered effectively and education and health will somehow be assisted massively without infrastructure in the country. He failed to answer that question and then finally said, 'I'm pleased to see they are negotiating with the Taliban.' That was not the question. We are all pleased to see there are negotiations with the Taliban.

This was reiterated, of course, by the member for Melbourne in his contribution in this debate. He basically said that the whole problem there can be solved by money and foreign aid, and he made an analogy between Yemen and Oman. I do not want to decry the role of Oman and its emphasis on education. I am actually going to a conference there next week and I am not a detractor of that country. But to compare these two countries is absolutely ridiculous. Forty-six per cent of Yemen's population are from the Shia minority. Oman has the advantage that its population virtually all belong to a Sunni sect called the Ibadis. The population sizes are 10 times different. Oman has far more oil reserves; Yemen's are just running out. Yemen was the creation of two separate countries, it has had a number of civil wars and it had Egyptian Nasserites fighting monarchists decades ago. It is not comparable and to say that we can simply build Afghanistan by foreign aid and by spending on education is not a recognition of the realities.

As I say, I find these arguments that we can just walk away and that all will be well rather difficult to cater for. These are the same people who, like me, would say that the Hazaras have been mistreated not only by the Taliban but for centuries. They have legitimate humanitarian refugee claims in this country. It is a recognition of some of the realities of this country that on the one hand the Greens and other refugee advocates say how dire the circumstances are,

how dreadful it is for these people, and yet somehow they believe that a Taliban victory, not by negotiations but by a military victory, is somehow going to be good for the country. I have heard a number of these speakers talking about the circumstances of refugees in Iran, Pakistan and India. Why the hell do people think they are there? They are there because of the situation in Afghanistan that forced them out: the persecution that occurred, the fact that the Taliban instigated a theocratic state, restricted the rights of women to education, prescribed how long people's beards were to be, banned music, banned kite flying, banned football, persecuted minorities and destroyed the historic Buddhist relics at Bamiyan. These are some of the realities that have to be dealt with in these circumstances.

On the other hand I fully endorse the beginning of negotiations with the Taliban. I refer to a very interesting article by Jonathan Steele in the *London Review of Books* recently. He makes the point that the only account of the Taliban period by an internal player of any substance was by Abdul Salam Zaeef, the former Ambassador to Pakistan for the Taliban. He made a number of points in the book, and one was that the Taliban very strongly condemned the bombing on September 11. He said the Taliban is a complex group of people. On the one hand they were historically very rigorous hard-line Islamists, but he says we should not deny their other crucial feature: that they are Pashtuns, that they believe the Pashtuns have been excluded from power structures in the country and that they want to see rights for that group that constitutes 42 per cent of the population. He also makes the point that the negotiations up till now have been manifestly inept and failed. Of the UN sanctions list of 142 Taliban leaders, only 12 have come in from the cold, basically to accept money et cetera and to reconcile with the government.

Jonathan Steele also makes the point that there is a real need to deal with the Taliban on a localised basis. This is not a monolithic organisation. It is a combination of a wide variety of localised forces. There can be localised ceasefires with tribal leaders. The situation will probably demand in the long term a weak central government. One of the things that has to be overcome is the total dominance of the officer corps within the Afghan army by the Tajik minority. It is going to be very difficult to bring Pashtuns into the central army. While I support our involvement there, I very strongly support negotiations. It is pleasing to see that this has been occurring and that the United States is essentially not hampering this process.

We have to be very aware that Afghanistan has a very complex ethnic mix. It is very difficult to see a strong central government emerging. You have a situation in which nearly half the population are Pashtuns, with the rest being Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks. This has always been a central issue. During the negotiations in Rome as to who would be president of Afghanistan—while Karzai eventually succeeded—originally Abdul Satar Sirat, an Uzbeki, was chosen to be the new president. But he could not become president because he came from a small minority, the Uzbeks. We have to understand that this is a central problem in the country.

We have to appreciate that it is not going to be a Western democracy. It is not going to be an extremely advanced country with regard to women's rights. We have to be very careful, given the fact that military victory for the allies seems extremely doubtful, of making too many demands of the Taliban. At this stage, we are saying that they must subscribe to the constitution and that they have to basically put down all their arms. Good luck accomplishing that in any kind of negotiation. We have to be mindful that at the end of the day we are probably

not going to succeed militarily. We have Obama giving dates for withdrawal; we have a number of Western countries reducing their forces, sending a clear signal that they are not there for the long haul. In these negotiations we have to emphasise the possibility of a solution rather than putting restrictions in the way.

I am very mindful of the need to ensure that all forces are part of the negotiating process. Even in our own country, Australia, we see the difficulties in reconciling ethnic groups. I was on Hazara radio last week. The first question that they asked me was not about the future of Afghanistan as a nation but the rights of Hazaras and their persecution. I went to Melbourne and met a very educated, sophisticated and well-off Pashtun community. Their starting point was to decry the fact that Hazaras are monopolising refugee places in this country. I went to a ceremony of the Tajik community recently in commemoration of one of the great people of their country, Ahmed Shah Massoud, a leader of the Tajiks who was murdered by al-Qaeda, and their whole preoccupation was with him and Tajik rights. That is the situation that we have in the Afghan community in our country. So you can imagine what is occurring in Afghanistan.

To those who decry the military intervention and talk about the various failures in regards to the delivery of services, the fact that health services are still stretched and the fact that there are still a large number of females in particular who are not receiving education, I say that these are manifestly realities. It is very difficult to accomplish things. I read a US congressional review recently that showed that the Taliban, or people close to them, have some of the US contracts for security in Afghanistan. They are ripping off that system. To somehow say that forces should never have gone there because it is so difficult, because there have been failings and because there is a struggle around these things is ridiculous. The counterpoint that is put by some that essentially all will be well if we withdraw is really quite difficult to subscribe to.

In conclusion, on balance I support our continued engagement. Despite the fact that in Pashtun areas there is a very high level of support for the Taliban, there are also indications in some areas that people are receiving rights, have more involvement in the political system, are receiving education et cetera through allied intervention.

Ms MARINO (Forrest) (11.57 am)—In rising to support our engagement in Afghanistan, I want to primarily offer my absolute support and respect for our Australian Defence Force personnel who have served or who are currently serving in Afghanistan in very harsh and inhospitable terrain day after day. I seriously wonder what our ADF members who are currently in Afghanistan are making of this debate. We know what we know about this issue through what we read and hear. I suspect that while we are debating this quite strongly, they are simply getting on with the job that they were sent there to do. That typifies the men and women of the Australian defence forces.

Much has been said already in this debate about the reasons for our engagement and involvement in Afghanistan and about al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Centre towers in the United States on 11 September 2001. Over 3,000 people were killed in those attacks, people from virtually all over the world, including Australia. The horror of these attacks will live forever in our minds. We literally watched it happen and at first many of us could not believe what we were seeing. The horror of those collapsing buildings was almost too great to comprehend. We have also grieved for over 100 Australians killed abroad through terrorist attacks,

not only in New York but also in Bali in 2002 and 2005. These attacks killed people from my electorate. The effects on their families, friends and local communities have been profound and lasting.

The history of Afghanistan, both ancient and modern, is one of conflict not one of peace. The historic conquerors of Afghanistan are simply too numerous to list today. The only constants are the lack of peace and the lack of self-determination. What we know from more recent history is that the Taliban imposed a horrific regime on the Afghani people during their rule. It also harboured and fostered terrorism and terrorists through al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, terrorists who planned and trained for their attacks.

The question we face here today, however, is how the world, with Australia playing its part as a responsible world citizen, induces and supports peace and self-determination in a country that has known so little of it. We are here to debate not only what our role is in Afghanistan but also what Afghanistan's future could be and what role Australia should be playing in that future. I believe that role is to continue to provide the people of Afghanistan with the tools they need to help deliver peace and good self-governance. We heard from the previous speaker about the practicalities of how and why that is a challenge. That is the key task of the Australian Defence Force in Afghanistan and it involves the two key functions that our ADF personnel are actively performing. Those functions are, firstly, to provide safety and security and to continue to engage the enemy and, secondly, to undertake the role of training, mentoring and equipping the local Afghan people to be able to provide safety and security for the community themselves. The training of the Afghan National Army's 4th Brigade in Oruzgan province is a long-term part of this commitment.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as you know and as members of this parliament know, our role will not be easy to achieve. But what should not be underestimated is Australia's well-respected history of training the security forces of other countries. In conflicts ranging from Korea and Vietnam to East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan, our widely respected Australian Army training teams have acquitted themselves with absolute distinction and have a reputation that is second to none. It has even been suggested that our training teams in Vietnam not only taught local Vietnamese troops but many of the Americans, who were our allies. This is the standard our training troops have attained and that is what they bring to Afghanistan. They are world leaders in helping other nations and the people of those nations to actually help themselves. Our individual service men and women are widely respected for their practical, generous and genuine willingness to roll up their sleeves, to engage genuinely and directly with local people and to physically rebuild communities as well as build and support local governance. But we do not underestimate the extent of that task in Afghanistan.

In spite of the conflicting views that we have heard, it is simply not logical to assume that, if the UN forces comprising the 47 nations in ISAF simply walk away tomorrow and abandon the training, the support and the development processes, peace and good governance will just automatically happen as a matter of process in Afghanistan. It will not. We cannot forget the difficulties faced by aid agencies in the past, and we also heard that from the previous speaker. Aid has had to be withdrawn because aid workers, including those from UNICEF, were not safe and aid services could not reach their target. Equally, should the nations withdraw, terrorism and persecution in Afghanistan will not automatically cease. There are also those who believe that someone should help Afghanistan, just not Australia. Our choices are

quite stark: withdraw now and leave Afghanistan and its people to fend for themselves or, in some people's view, leave and let someone else do the work.

Giving up or not extending that helping hand is not what Australians do. It is not the way we tackle the tough issues, and no-one would doubt that our involvement in Afghanistan is an extremely tough issue. Equally, we have not won wars in our own nation on drugs, on deaths on roads or on suicide. If winning is measured only by a measure that none of these will ever occur, then possibly we will not ever win. But who in this chamber would suggest that we should give up the fight on drugs, on road death and on suicide and that we should walk away?

Military leaders from nations around the world have said that now is not the time to pull back. Our own ADF leaders, for whom I have the utmost respect and in whom I have the utmost confidence, are telling us that we need at least four more years to deliver the outcome of self-protection and determination that we as a nation have aimed for. According to Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston in August this year:

We will still be there supporting them beyond the two to four years for a period of time.

... ..

And I know that at the end of the training period they—
the Afghan soldiers—

will be a very—a very good fighting formation, and that will be the legacy we leave ...

Air Chief Marshal Houston even had to warn others about the dangers of ignorant debate. He said:

... it's very dangerous for people in Canberra to be talking about circumstances on the ground when even I do not have all of the detail ...

That is a great lesson for us here. We simply cannot leave Afghanistan without the tools and processes to run the country effectively or to protect its own citizens. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has recognised that military supported support is needed to obtain the joint objective of social improvement. Social improvement is really important. The bishops conference noted that 'commitment to a just war in Afghanistan necessitates a commitment to uproot the structures that support intolerance, heighten insecurity and perpetuate debilitating poverty that undermines the dignity of men, women and children in Afghanistan'.

One issue I would like to raise is the question of what would be happening today in Afghanistan—and in relation to additional terrorist attacks—if we were not involved, if the 47 NATO countries and the International Security Assistance Force had not decided, in part of what they wanted to achieve, to defeat the Taliban, al-Qaeda and factional warlords in Afghanistan. What would be the growth in al-Qaeda's terrorist activities in that nation? How would women, children and local people be treated? How different would their lives be? I think that is something we need to look quite seriously at in this debate. What would Afghanistan look like if not for the intervention? How many people would have had an education? How many people would have been recruited and trained by al-Qaeda? How many additional terrorist attacks would have occurred around the world? I have no doubt that we would have lost more Australians if those attacks had occurred, as we did in previous attacks.

My final comments are again in offering my greatest respect to the 21 Australian soldiers who have been killed in action, as well as the 152 soldiers who have been wounded in action

in Afghanistan. I send my deepest sympathy to their families and friends. I am acutely and personally aware of what our decisions in this parliament mean to the members of the Australian defence forces: the very real prospect of further fatalities and the wounding of our personnel. I am well aware of the effect this has on wives, partners, families, friends and fellow ADF mates. My mother and older sisters lost their husband and father in World War II. Our family has lived with that loss, and it has been a huge loss all our lives. It has never been easy and it is something that stayed with my sister and my mother to their deaths.

I know exactly what we are committing our ADF members to by that decision in this House. That has been given further clarity recently with the news that three Australian special forces soldiers were wounded during a serious gun battle with Taliban fighters in Kandahar province. It is a daily reality that we are aware of, and so are they. This is the reality. In conclusion, I hope that future debates in this place will also focus on the best way to achieve the goals that we have set for Afghanistan and not be debates about whether we should abandon these goals and abandon the people of that country.

Mr MARLES (Corio—Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs) (12.09 pm)—In the late nineties Andrew Knox was an industrial officer with the South Australian branch of the Australia Workers Union. By the year 2000 he had become a senior industrial officer with that branch when he decided to take a year's leave of absence to travel the world, to visit the United Kingdom and the US. In America he landed an office job with a construction company which had its offices in the World Trade Centre. On 11 September 2001 Andrew expected to have lunch with Cheryl Scopazzi, the training officer of the South Australian branch of the union, who was having a holiday and was looking forward to catching up with her colleague. Andrew Knox, on that morning, did something which all of us do in the most ordinary course of events every working morning of our lives. He got ready for work, left his apartment and went to his office. And there he died. He was murdered as part of the appalling September 11 attacks on the United States.

Death is painful. It is particularly painful when it happens to a person so young and in such tragic and traumatic circumstances. Obviously that pain was felt most keenly by Andrew's family and friends, but it was also felt by the Australian Workers Union, who established a scholarship in his name at the University of South Australia, in partnership with the university and the government of South Australia, for a student pursuing studies in industrial relations. They also named their training centre and a garden at the union after Andrew. The then National Secretary of the AWU said:

The loss of Andrew was not only a personal blow to all of us at the AWU but on a higher level we lost a man who was destined to do great things. I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to Andrew than the dedication of a facility which will help workers ensure that they get a fair go at work.

In the preparation of this speech today, I was talking with my chamber neighbour the member for Makin, Tony Zappia, who also knew Andrew Knox well. As it turns out, Andrew was a member of the Makin FEC of the South Australian branch of the ALP. Tony felt Andrew's death very keenly. I know that in his contribution to the debate he will mention Andrew, I am sure in more personal and better terms than I have.

There is nothing particularly special about the organisations I have mentioned other than that they are special communities and Australian communities. The point that I am trying to make is that, as much as September 11 happened in New York, in Washington and in Pennsyl-

vania, it also happened in the Australian Workers Union. It happened in Adelaide. It happened in the Makin FEC of the South Australian branch of the ALP.

On 12 October 2002 terrorists conducted a bombing in Bali. Four residents of my hometown, Geelong, lost their lives in that terrorist attack. Bronwyn Cartwright, a nurse, hailed from Grovedale. Tragically, the three other Geelong residents who lost their lives in the Bali bombing came from a single family: Aaron Lee; his brother, Justin; and Justin's wife, Stacey. Aaron played footy for the South Barwon footy club, a team in the Geelong Football League which, as it happened, played off in the final of the GFL this year. Justin did his apprenticeship as a chef at the Corio Hotel. Stacey grew up doing Little Athletics at Landy Field. In an added pang of tragedy, Stacey and Justin were expecting their first child and were having a holiday, thinking that this would be their last chance to escape before children bonded them to home—which people will be familiar with.

Grovedale, the South Barwon footy club, the Corio Hotel, Landy Field—these are all places I have been. They are a part of my world, as they are a part of the world of everyone who lives in Geelong. They are not war zones and they are not battlefields, yet, as much as the Bali bombings happened at the Sari Club, they also happened in Grovedale, at the South Barwon footy club, at the Corio Hotel and at Landy Field.

I do not presume to know what any of these five victims of terrorist attacks thought about public policy or indeed what contribution they would have made in this debate had they had the chance. I simply make the point in mentioning their stories that terrorism attacks the innocent. Terrorism attacks civilians, noncombatants. They may be attacked overseas but they live in Australia, and so in the process terrorism touches us all.

Both the Bali bombings and the September 11 attacks were carried out by people who were trained by al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was the home base for al-Qaeda. That is why Australia is there. That is why it is so important that Australia stays in Afghanistan until we are safely able to say that Afghanistan will never, ever again be used as a base for terrorism.

Our authority for being in Afghanistan stems from two sources—firstly, the United Nations Security Council, which has moved a number of resolutions over the years. The first was resolution 1386, moved in December 2001, which established the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, whose original mandate was to provide security in and around the Kabul region. Among the resolutions that renewed that mandate was resolution 1510 in October 2003, which extended that mandate to the entirety of Afghanistan. The second source of our authority for being in Afghanistan is the ANZUS treaty, articles 4 and 5 of which were invoked by the parliament back in 2001 in support of our ally the United States. The mission of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan is:

... to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development, in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.

We are part of an international effort in Afghanistan which consists of 80,000 US troops, 10,000 from the UK, 4½ thousand from Germany, 4,000 from France, 3,000 from Italy, 2½ thousand from Canada, 2½ thousand from Poland, 1,500 from Turkey and Spain, with other countries making a total of 47 who are participating in the mission. Our contribution is 1,500 troops and our task is now principally in Oruzgan province. We are there to train and mentor

the 4th Brigade of the Afghan National Army so that it can assume responsibility for providing security within that province. We are there to build capacity within the Afghan National Police so that it can conduct civilian policing within Oruzgan province. We are there to improve the Afghanistan government's capacity to deliver services and build an economy within the country and within Oruzgan. We are also there to disrupt insurgent operations and supply routes by utilising our special operations task group.

Our campaign is of course a military one, but it is also more than that. It is an effort which is based on development assistance as well as civilian assistance. In the time I have left to speak, I really want to focus on the development assistance which is being provided to Afghanistan, because that country has made enormous leaps forward since 2001 as a result of the assistance provided by the international community, of which we have been a part.

Thirty-nine thousand separate community based infrastructure projects, from roads to health clinics to wells, all done through the Afghan led National Solidarity Program, are changing the face of Afghanistan. When you look at education, you see that school enrolments, which were at a million people in 2001, are now at six million today. Most importantly, in 2001, girls were not allowed to attend school; today we have a situation where there are two million girls enrolled in school. Basic health services were available only to about 10 per cent of the population in 2001; today it is 85 per cent of the population. Ten thousand kilometres of roads have been rehabilitated over the last nine years, employing hundreds of thousands of Afghan workers through the National Rural Access Program. There has been nothing short of a revolution in telecommunications: in 2001, only 20,000 Afghans had access to telecommunications services; today that number is 10 million, and in the process 100,000 jobs have been created. Since 2002, we have seen their economy grow by an average of 11 per cent every year—indeed, in 2009-10 there was an increase of 22 per cent in that year alone. We have seen two elections and, importantly, what has come from the new process is a mandated minimum requirement for women of 27 per cent of the seats in the lower house and 17 per cent of the seats in the upper house. Free speech had been attacked by the Taliban, but now people can express their views through 400 print outlets, 150 FM radio stations and 26 TV stations.

Australia's aid commitment in 2001-02 to Afghanistan was \$26½ million; now it is \$106 million and, importantly, half of that is being delivered through the Afghan government itself, in the process building really important capacity within the government.

As I said, our focus has been on Oruzgan province, one of the least developed provinces within Afghanistan. For example, literacy rates today in Oruzgan province are estimated to be 10 per cent for men and zero for women. In 2010-11 Australia will contribute \$20 million to Oruzgan province, through a leadership role in the Provincial Reconstruction Team there which is seeing great achievements, such as basic health and hygiene education being provided to nearly 1,800 primary school kids, 34 per cent of whom are girls. We are seeing community de-mining projects and, with them, mine-risk education projects. We are seeing improved food security, including, for example, a program for take-home rations for girl students at school. We are helping the central Afghanistan government deliver its programs in a way that they reach Oruzgan province. All this is changing the realities of people's lives in Afghanistan. None of this could be done without the security that is being provided by the

Australian and international force commitment in Afghanistan. All of it involves meeting our original mission in Afghanistan.

There are those who argue against our involvement in Afghanistan, saying that our being there incites extremism, that perhaps we are doing nothing more than moving terrorists elsewhere and that maybe, at the end of the day, this is a lost cause. It is valid to raise concerns, and from those concerns come very important questions, but I believe there are answers to those questions—for, as we stand here in 2010, the fact is that there are fewer terrorism events now than there were in the early part of the last decade. We do live in a safer world. While Afghanistan is far from being the totality of the international effort to deal with terrorism around the globe, denying al-Qaeda what was its home base is a very important component of that effort. And of course, as I said, there has been real progress in Afghanistan itself.

Questions were raised in the media yesterday about the Afghan government itself. It is true: that government is not perfect. But it is also true that transparent democracies do not happen overnight. They evolve over years and decades. What is important right now is that significant steps are being taken down the right road by the Afghanistan government.

The cost to the world and to our country has been great: 2,000 coalition force deaths along with many others belonging to the Afghan National Army itself who have died. There are 21 Australians in that number, and 156 Australians have been injured. In this debate, our thoughts are primarily with them and their great sacrifice. Those 21 are forever cherished and remembered Australians. This debate honours them, as it does the more than 100 Australian lives that have been lost to terrorism, including Andrew Knox, Bronwyn Cartwright, Stacey and Justin Lee and Aaron Lee. What is needed now is for those doing the dangerous, the courageous and the wonderful work in Afghanistan to be able to do that work with the support of their country men and women. I think this debate makes clear that they most definitely have the full support of the Australian government and they have the overwhelming support of this parliament. While there may be some confusion in the Australian public about our role in Afghanistan—and I sincerely hope that this debate goes a long way to clarifying that—when it comes to the soldiers, the aid workers and the civilians performing work on the ground in Afghanistan themselves, I have absolutely no doubt that that work is carried out with the full and unqualified support of the Australian people.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (12.23 pm)—I think it is safe to say that we are at a crossroads when it comes to the debate surrounding Afghanistan, and in relation to military conflict it is not the first time we have faced this type of dilemma. History is littered with conflicts that have started out as the right thing to do but over time have lost the public momentum from when they first started. Afghanistan runs the risk of being no different.

In the federal seat of Solomon we have always had a very strong historical link to our Defence Force. From the early days of World War II to our intervention in East Timor in the late 1990s to our current day involvement in Afghanistan, Solomon has played a key role. I recently visited both NORCOM at Larrakeyah and 1st Brigade at the Robertson Barracks in my electorate. Our Defence Force presence in Afghanistan is substantial and has been that way since the conflict first began. Currently we have a number of troop deployments in the Oruzgan province. Through my visits I have gained a sense of how our own troops view their role and of the way they see Afghanistan unfolding. From the outset let me say I support our role and our troops in Afghanistan. I believe we have the most highly trained, highly skilled,

dedicated and committed Defence Force, and as an Australian I am grateful for their commitment and service to our country.

Regrettably, the Australian Defence Force has suffered 21 combat deaths and 156 combat injuries. The young men and women who join our Defence Force today know that there is a strong likelihood that they will be deploying for warlike conflict and peacekeeping missions. They are making the choice based on what can only be described as the right humanitarian desire to help other countries and, in particular, the people of Afghanistan to experience what we take for granted in this country—that is, democracy. From my briefings, I understand that our troops are comfortable with their mission objective of mentoring. They feel they are properly equipped for such a role, but they hasten to add that if the mission objectives change then the level of logistics needs to be re-evaluated.

Where there are concerns, they relate directly to the level of support when our troops return from Afghanistan. At present when our troops return they are required to go to Brisbane to be debriefed or rehabilitated, depending on what is needed. In the seat of Solomon we do not have adequate resourcing to support our troops, and that is a major concern. If we were to adopt the role of debriefing and rehabilitation in my electorate then we would use all available resources of counsellors in the seat of Solomon, and that would have further implications in itself.

Sadly, as the mission continues I do not think I am speaking out of turn by suggesting that there is a possibility of more casualties and, heaven forbid, even more fatalities. Both our leaders have indicated we will be in Afghanistan for some time yet, so it stands to reason that this may be the case. It is an unintended consequence that by sending troops to Brisbane for debriefing and rehabilitation we are in fact delaying their return to their families in the Top End. So I would like there to be more support for our troops and their families in the form of counselling during their deployment and also when they return from their deployment. It is critical that we extend this support to the families. The support to the troops is unconditional, and so our support to the families must be equally unconditional. We must provide them as much support as they require. We need to explore the possible extension of the Defence School Transition Aide Program, which assists students whose parents are serving overseas. I have spoken to the shadow minister for defence science, technology and personnel, who has undertaken to meet with the Defence Community Organisation and discuss options to expand the program.

Australia's military commitment in Afghanistan is relatively modest when you compare it to those of other countries. Still, our 1,550 soldiers have the lion's share of security responsibility in a province that has long been Taliban heartland, making this our most serious fight since Vietnam, and Afghanistan has been a central front in the most important civilisational struggle of our time. The war in Afghanistan is now three years longer than World War II and is rapidly approaching the stigma, through the attitudes adopted by some in the place, of the Vietnam War. This now leads me on to another area of concern for our troops and one that those who oppose our involvement may in fact be feeding. Our troops want to know that the Australian community supports them. We cannot afford to have a situation unfold, just like it did following Vietnam, where men and women sent to do a job are treated so poorly by a large chunk of Australian society on their return. I for one would be sickened if, as a result of this debate, we suddenly saw the men and women of our Defence Force bearing the brunt of

public criticism. We must proceed with extreme caution in how we set about portraying the need for this conflict. By all means question the need for our involvement, but do it in such a way that removes the emotional rhetoric. We see through public opinion polls a waning of support for our involvement in Afghanistan, but we must not make the mistake of translating that into a lack of support for our troops. They are doing a mighty job. They are well trained, they are well thought of and they are widely respected. God help us should the troops who serve in Afghanistan suffer the same type of indignity that those who served in Vietnam had to endure on their return. I caution those in this place that we must stand united behind our troops. I will be supporting our troops and I will be supporting coalition forces to try to build a better future for the people of Afghanistan.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen) (12.30 pm)—I rise to lend my support for the government's continued commitment to Australia's mission in Afghanistan, one which should not be underestimated, because I believe this mission is vital to our nation's own security interests and the international community at large. We have rightly made the decision to stop the scourge of terrorists having a safe haven in another land, a base to foster and grow their activities of harm to us and international communities. The Prime Minister should be thanked for giving us all here and in the other place an opportunity to have our say on this issue that has created very strong opinions on both sides. Despite which side of the debate we are on, we all agree that at the forefront of this debate is the welfare and the safety of our troops and civilian personnel who are doing their bit to make our world a safer place.

The Prime Minister told us that there is no greater task than defending our nation, its people and our ideals. I believe it is a task that no Prime Minister takes very lightly—not now, not before and not in the future.

The government and this country alike are immensely proud of the work our troops continue to do. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the families, the friends, the colleagues and the loved ones of our troops who have served and are still serving our country in Afghanistan and in other places of conflict, protecting our country and protecting the lives of innocent people here and around the world to give them an opportunity to build a life and a country that is free from tyranny and persecution.

There have been comments likening this mission to the Vietnam one. Although people will differ in their opinions of the Vietnam War, I personally want to put on the record my total admiration, respect and thanks to all those who bravely went to war and how sorry I am for their mistreatment on return. Our troops deserve our unqualified support and respect, as these brave men and women are the ones who are prepared to pay the ultimate sacrifice for their country and the beliefs we hold so dearly. For that courage and bravery I say thank you.

We must remember at the forefront of this debate that a lot of progress has been made in Afghanistan. It has come at a great cost—at great cost to our civilian and military personnel, at great cost to our international partners and at great cost to the Afghan community—but the cost of doing nothing would be greater than the cost of doing something. I pay tribute to the sacrifices that have been made by our troops, who put their lives on the line every day in a hostile and hazardous environment.

It is in our national interest to be in Afghanistan, as we are not exempt from attack. As we are all aware, many Australians have been killed in terrorist attacks over the years. It is our duty and the duty of this place to ensure that this does not happen again. As I said, I do not

believe any prime minister has taken the decision to send our citizens into conflict lightly, and nor do I believe one ever will, but when they do it is our duty to support these missions and stay until it is safe and secure before we bring the troops home. Our role should continue to be one which continually involves providing military support to mentoring, operational and reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. It is important that Australians understand this critical mission and understand why we are there and why it is crucial for us to continue to play our part.

The government's commitment to Afghanistan is crystal clear. Since the deployment of Australian troops in Afghanistan the government has regularly reported our progress. We continue to acknowledge the difficult and dangerous situation and the importance of our commitment to the region. Our primary goal in Afghanistan, as stated in June this year by former Minister for Defence John Faulkner, is to combat a clear threat from international terrorism to both international security and national security.

Our involvement in Afghanistan is part of upholding our national interest in keeping safe all Australians from any threat or attack. By eradicating terrorist activities we are securing a safe future for all Australian families and future generations. The Bali bombings that killed 202 people, including 88 Australians, were carried out by terrorists with direct links to Afghanistan. The same individuals were involved in the 2004 attack on the Australian Embassy in Indonesia and the Jakarta hotel bombings last year that killed more Australians. Terrorist organisations that receive Taliban support have proven to have a global reach so in turn are a global threat. That is why we remain committed to achieving our mission in Afghanistan with the objectives of denying terrorists a sanctuary and denying them an opportunity to threaten and attack innocent civilians all over the world.

We remain committed to fighting insurgency and to assist in stabilising the region. This government stands firmly by our alliance commitment to the United States. Australia cannot, must not and will not stand back and let terrorist organisations threaten and attack countries. We must, therefore, be proactive in our approach to erasing terrorist organisations, not be reactive. Acting now minimises the risk of having to react to any form of terrorist activity in the future. We must strive to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a breeding place for terrorist organisations and we do this by building a more secure, safer and more democratic Afghanistan.

Our strategy cannot be for the short term. It has to be for the long run and in turn for the future of our nation, its safety and our liveability. We remain committed to helping train the Afghan National Army to a point where they can take on security responsibility alone and then it will be time for us to leave. Australia, along with many other countries and international organisations, is strongly committed to working with the Afghan government to stare down terrorism. As part of the international community we have a role to play to ensure that we and other nations are safe from harm or attack.

Our service men and women continue to do a great job in Afghanistan. Our achievements and progress abroad are not confined to one category. We have seen progress in military work, educational work, infrastructure work and health services. Indeed, our assistance in rebuilding the Afghan community covers a wide range of projects. In 2009, our support for the National Solidarity Program saw 71 village-level infrastructure projects rolled out in Oruzgan. Other projects have delivered 11 healthcare centres, 15 schools and 1,000 microfinance loans.

Therefore, it is evident that our work in Afghanistan is paramount to the lives and the future of so many of the Afghani people.

Throughout our time in Afghanistan, Afghan and coalition forces have successfully pushed Taliban insurgents out of numerous strongholds, towns and villages. Last year the government contributed significant additional aid to Afghanistan worth an additional \$200 million over a three-year period. The Asia Foundation's 2009 survey found that approximately 64 per cent of respondents gave a positive assessment of the security situation in their area. The number of Afghans surveyed, who identified security as the biggest risk in 2009, had dropped by eight per cent.

Australian troops have made a lot of progress in mentoring the Afghan National Army, which is responsible for combat support tasks like engineering and artillery and vehicle maintenance. Progress is also being made in our aid and reconstruction work through our Provincial Reconstruction Task Force. Our progress also includes training the Afghan National Army artillerymen and officially opening the School of Artillery in Kabul. The school will prepare Afghan soldiers to become skilled artillerymen and is a great advancement towards Afghan security forces taking full responsibility for security in the future.

Our progress is evident in the Australian-run trade training school at the multinational base in Tarin Kowt. Commanding Officer of the First Mentoring Task Force, Lieutenant Colonel Jason Blain, said that the trade training school was improving the lives of local Afghans by providing opportunities for further community and economic development in the area. I quote:

These young men are receiving first class training in trades that are needed in the local community. The flow-on effect is further employment opportunities and economic growth for Tarin Kowt and Oruzgan Province.

We all agree that education is the cornerstone for a prosperous nation and we should share our knowledge and our ability to help others around the world to grow and to prosper like we do.

There is still a lot of work to be done. However, we hope by training the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police that Australia can transfer control of the security situation in Oruzgan to the Afghan army. Countries, including Australia, contributing to the International Security Assistance Force have endorsed the Afghan government's plan to take control in 2014. However, we must remember that this time frame depends on the Afghan army and police being adequately trained and capable of accepting responsibility for security in the region. In turn, this will ensure Afghanistan does not become a place that is home to violence, terrorism and attacks on innocent civilians.

One life lost in an attack is too many and we have seen far more than one Australian life lost in recent times to terrorist attacks. We have the responsibility as elected representatives of this country to ensure that our constituents and all Australians have the right to feel safe and to have a safe life. It is in our national interest to protect the lives of our people and to ensure that no harm comes their way. For this reason, governments are installed. We must not stand by, let an attack take place and then react. We must continue to act proactively, as this government is doing, against terrorism at its roots. If we help erase the chain of terror, we in turn safeguard our security interests here today, tomorrow and into our future.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (12.41 pm)—We all know what the war movie is about. There is a clearly defined good guy, an equally clearly defined bad guy, clearly marked lines and rules of engagement and a finish to the conflict which everyone understands. The conflict in Afghanistan is not as simple as that and, as a consequence, it is right for the elected parliament of Australia to reflect on the support and concerns of the people by having this debate. Just as our coalition partners are reassessing their roles in this conflict, we should be appraising the state of our role and the consequences of our actions.

When discussing the Afghan conflict I believe it is important to reflect on the situation that led to 47 nations joining together to take action by way of force in that country. In 1996, an extremist group called the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan. Between 1996 and 2001, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan with no regard to justice and no eye to protecting the most basic of human rights that all of us enjoy in this great country of Australia. Not long after the Taliban took power, many thousands of horrible testimonies of atrocities against their own people began to filter out to the international community. Men and women were often publicly executed without trial and simple things that we take for granted in the West such as music, dancing and flying kites were outlawed.

Just as disturbing was the Taliban's often open support for terror-training camps and its material support for acts of terrorism. It is undeniable that numerous acts of terrorism were planned and financed by the Taliban directly or they allowed the planning and financing of these acts in their country. The most notable of these terrorist attacks relates to the events in New York city on September 11, 2001. On that day, nearly 3,000 people lost their lives when large passenger jets were used as weapons of mass destruction. Most of those killed in the three attacks that day were not service men and women on active duty; rather, they were everyday people, office workers, tourists, police officers, firemen, husbands, wives, parents and children. Thousands of people around the world suffered great loss that day.

Australia's involvement in the war in Afghanistan has had a dramatic effect on the people in my electorate of Herbert, centred on the garrison city of Townsville, home to Australia's largest combat ready defence forces. The people of Townsville understand the ramifications of war better than most. Throughout the conflict in Afghanistan, Townsville has played a pivotal role in seeing Australia meet its contribution to the coalition of nations in Afghanistan. I pay tribute to the men and women of the following Townsville based units who have served with distinction and who all deserve mention in this place: 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment; 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment; 5th Aviation Regiment; 10th Force Support Battalion, Joint Logistic Unit, North Queensland; and 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment, which is part of the special forces task group.

At present there are no Townsville based units in Afghanistan yet that does not diminish the way my city and region feel about the men and women of Australia's defence forces that are there today. I cannot emphasise enough the extent of the broad base of support that our service men and women enjoy in Townsville. The civilian population has embraced the men and women of Australia's defence forces as part of one big family living together in the garrison city of Townsville and when one of them falls the whole region feels the impact.

I note the strong contributions of both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in this debate. I agree with the Prime Minister in that there are inherent difficulties and challenges in relating to Afghanistan. I also agree with the Leader of the Opposition when he said

we are faced with the risk of losing the PR war just as we are making gains in the ground conflict. There will not be any victory scenes in Afghanistan like the victorious flag-raising following the historic and bloody Battle of Midway during the Second World War. This conflict must end at the negotiating table. There will be no formal surrender or victory claim on either side.

No matter what changes are made, and regardless of the outcome of the military operation, we must all stand 100 per cent behind our troops. There can be no room for wishy-washy, mealy-mouthed statements aimed at political point-scoring or for preparation of a fallback position at our troops' expense. My community has an extreme position when it comes to the way our troops are treated. There are more than 5,000 service people in Townsville. There is a significant retired Defence Force population in Townsville. They are mums and dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. They are parents at school. They are members of the swimming and golf clubs. They are members of the Rotary and Lions clubs. They are families in my city and they must be supported. It is hard enough for anyone to have a family member away from home let alone serving in a war-torn country.

The community service that people in the defence forces do in our city of Townsville should also be noted. There is not a weekend that goes by where we do not see guys in uniform going around the city collecting money for the Red Shield appeal, the blood bank or any other form of charity that goes on around the place. The defence forces are there front and centre doing it for everyone. The 1RAR band plays regularly at community events for retirees and is a significant part of my city.

Australia's defence forces have built an enviable reputation in many theatres of war and peacekeeping missions around the world. The war in Afghanistan rates as one of the most difficult operations in which our young nation has been involved. Our men and women fighting in the dusty desert are not engaged in a traditional combat situation—far from it. The threat of death or serious injury is all-encompassing and cannot and should not be underestimated. This nation owes the men and women of the ADF a great debt of gratitude for the sacrifices they have made, and continue to make, in an extremely hostile environment. The very least we can do back here in the relative comfort of this great nation is to use this House and every available forum to send the loudest and clearest message to our troops and their families that they have our unconditional support.

I do not believe, as others in this place have asserted, that we should abandon the people of Afghanistan, abandon our obligation to rebuild this nation and pull out the troops now or on a set date. To do this would create great unrest and place our troops in danger of increased insurgent activity. It would also send a signal to our enemies that we are not committed to the principles of freedom and democracy for the long haul. We have made a commitment to the people of Afghanistan and to the fight against terror. If we were to walk away now because it is all too hard, we would be abandoning our friends in Afghanistan and playing into the hands of our enemies. It would not be long before Afghanistan was once again a safe haven and a training ground for radical terrorists whose stated aim is to undermine the very freedoms that our troops are fighting for right now. It would also send entirely the wrong signal to our brave troops who have served this nation with distinction in Afghanistan, 21 of whom have paid the ultimate price.

The free world has to be a beacon of hope for oppressed peoples around the world. If we walk away from our commitment to the task we have undertaken in Afghanistan, we may harm our reputation as a defender of democracy and of the basic freedoms that we hold dear in our society. Looking to the future, I believe that Australia must set clear goals for our troops and only after they have been achieved bring them home. By ensuring we have clear goals to achieve for the nation of Afghanistan, the sacrifices of our soldiers and their families will be remembered long after the end of this conflict. These goals should be determined with Australians at the negotiating table along with the Afghan government and other coalition forces representatives—but Australia must be central to any negotiations.

When I talk of our troops working towards set goals, I am not talking about a flag-raising ceremony. I am talking about ensuring everyday Afghani men, women and children are able to go about their lives without the threat of persecution. The goals we should insist on include: ensuring that girls have the right to an education on a par with boys; the right to due justice and a trial; the right to freedom of religion; ensuring that the government has a bureaucratic infrastructure to operate effective governance; that the Taliban is starved of training grounds and no longer intimidates villages; and the right to vote for an elected government.

As a representative of Australia's most important military facility and centre in Townsville I welcome this opportunity to publicly recognise the wonderful job our troops have done and continue to do in Afghanistan and around the world under extremely difficult conditions. I again urge all Australians to stand shoulder to shoulder with our brave service men and women and their families. We must never forget the sacrifices made by our troops and by their families in the service of this nation.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper) (12.54 pm)—Before I suspend the sitting of the Main Committee, I would like to recognise Major Anastasia Roberts of the British Army, who is in the gallery today. She is part of an Australian Defence Force exchange program. She is here for two years. She has served in Afghanistan. I certainly hope that Major Roberts enjoys her experience visiting the Australian Commonwealth parliament.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

Sitting suspended from 12.54 pm to 4 pm

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Afghanistan

Debate resumed

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (4.00 pm)—I want to start by clearly stating that I support our Australian troops in Afghanistan; I support the work they are doing. I have great confidence in their role. And I know that every other member of parliament in their own way supports our troops. People might have different outlooks as to how that is represented, but I know that is the case. We wish them all well. We wish all of them a speedy and a safe return home, as I know their families do.

It is great to have the opportunity to have this debate in the House, but the reality is that, over the past nine years, there have been unlimited opportunities for debate on Afghanistan in this place—opportunities in the address-in-reply, adjournment debates, grievance motions,

private members' business and 90-second statements, and in related bills in terms of defence and foreign affairs. There is no question that this debate is important. But let us not be mistakenly thinking that this is somehow the only debate or the first opportunity for one. There have been countless and unlimited opportunities for any member who has wanted to express their view on this particular conflict over the past nine years to do so. That does not mean that this particular debate is not important, because it is important. But the debate should be taken in context—in the context of the work of our Australian troops and in the context of the previous nine years.

Our troops are in Afghanistan, they have been there for quite some time, and they may be there for quite some time to come. Nor is it, I believe, the place of any member or senator in these chambers to express views that in some way take away from our troops—and I say that from the perspective of someone who is not an expert. I am not an expert; I do not know that anyone in this place truly is an expert. It is very hard to be expert on these matters without either having been there or having devoted many, many years to these particular issues. I do understand the difference though. Everyone has a personal view, or an electorate view that represents their constituency, and I believe very strongly in members and senators taking the opportunity in this place to express those views fully and openly, whether those views be their own or representative views from their area.

I think it is important to recognise what our involvement over the past nine years has actually been, because it appears to me, from reading and listening to some of the debate, that there may be some confusion. In October 2001, an Australian Special Forces Task Force was deployed to Afghanistan. This was in direct response to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Afghanistan was being used at that point as a safe haven for al-Qaeda. From December 2002 to September 2005, there were no Australian units deployed in Afghanistan. From March 2006, two Chinook helicopters were sent to support the Special Forces Task Force. In August 2006, the first of four reconstruction task forces were deployed in Oruzgan province. They worked on security and reconstruction under the Netherlands-led task force in Oruzgan. In April 2007, we sent in a Special Operations Task Force to enhance security and to disrupt Taliban operations. From August 2007 to July 2009, the ADF Control and Reporting Centre was deployed to Kandahar airfield to assist in managing airspace. In October 2008, the first of two Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force crews deployed to play a new role in mentoring support to the 4th Brigade of the Afghan National Army. In May 2009, we sent in a mentoring and reconstruction task force with increased and additional support for mentoring, security and engineering elements, and in July we sent a further 120 personnel to provide further security during the Afghan presidential elections. In February of this year, we sent a further mentoring task force, replacing the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force, containing additional operational mentor and liaison teams. These are really important events. These are really important parts of our contribution to the coalition of forces in Afghanistan. It is important work and should be recognised as such.

A question, and an obvious one, is: why are we there? What role do we play? Well, Australia has two national interests in Afghanistan. One is to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorists—a real possibility, and one that we should fight against. The second is to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies, our friends, the United States, and honour our alliance commitments to a whole range of other nations.

Australia went to Afghanistan directly in response to the September 11 attacks, to support our friends and to support the work that was being done globally. Al-Qaeda was dealt a severe blow, but it has remained resilient. Terrorism is still with us. But we should not be deterred from the work that we have begun and the support that our troops bring to the important role being carried out by a coalition of many nations.

In our current role, Australia has provided 1,550 personnel to Operation Slipper, part of our contribution to the International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF. Our goal in Afghanistan is to enable transition—transition to peace, and transition to proper government and governance. Our goal is also to prepare the government of Afghanistan to take the lead in and responsibility for its own security. We do not want to be there beyond what is necessary, and we should enable the Afghan government to take control of its own security so that our troops can return home. I do not know that anyone could disagree with that.

Australia has a key role in providing training and mentoring, particularly to the 4th Brigade of the Afghan National Army. This can only be a good thing. It is something that is supported and it is an important task. It is anticipated that this may take two to four years, but it could take longer. I do not set a time frame. I am not an expert in terms of a day, a date, a month or a year. I know that in these circumstances, when there is a conflict of this magnitude, that time lines are dangerous instruments. We need to be there until we have completed our mission, until our job is done. As well as front-line ADF personnel, Australia has provided a number of other personnel. We are there fighting a battle on many fronts. We have provided expert officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. AusAID are focusing on health, education, agriculture, water and basic infrastructure projects. The Australian Federal Police have been there to help train and mentor the Afghan National Police in Oruzgan, and the Australian Defence Force has managed work teams and trade training schools, giving young men in Oruzgan new skills to keep them occupied but also help them rebuild their country and stay out of the grasp of the insurgents. These are all good things. They are things that our troops and our officials are doing in this country.

We need to acknowledge, though, that there has been a cost. No war comes without cost. Australians in Afghanistan are doing a very dangerous job. There is cost in terms of human lives, and we have heard many people speak in this place of the 21 lost lives of brave young men who have made and paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country doing something that they believed in, something that we as a government ask of them. We ought to give them and their families every possible support that we can. Of course, on Monday we also learnt that there were four more Australians who had been wounded, and we hope for their speedy recovery. There has also been a financial cost; this needs to be acknowledged. To date, it stands at \$6.1 billion, but you have to take all of these costs into context and ask yourself the broader question, which is: what is the alternative cost of sitting back and doing nothing? What is the alternative cost to us, to the world and to that particular region?

We are making progress. I know that we read reports of the disasters, of problems continuing and of not having necessarily won the war, but progress is being made. It is good progress but it will take time. Our primary mission of training and mentoring of the Afghan National Army is on track, and it is a job that we are doing well. The 4th Brigade recently completed resupply operations between Tarin Kowt and Kandahar. They have also provided security for parliamentary elections without direct support from Australian troops. The coalition is taking

back areas such as Gizab and Mirabad Valley that were long held by the Taliban, and high-tempo special forces operations continue to place pressure on the Taliban and insurgent leaders. There are a whole range of other successes in terms of us making progress in Afghanistan. We do not want to be there, I believe, beyond what is necessary for us to achieve our goal and our mission.

I started by saying that this was an important debate, that I support the troops and that I believe that there ought to be a place, there ought to be a right, in this House for people to voice their views, whatever those views might be. I think that is a healthy part of our democracy in terms of these debates, but it ought not be taken out of context. People ought not try to make this debate into something which it is not or give the impression that it is the first opportunity or that somehow this is about whether we stay or do not stay. This is not a debate about that, no matter how the question is framed. I have great respect for everybody's personal views in this place, but their personal views may not be the representative view of their electorates, the Australian constituency or, for that matter, what needs to be done, rather than what some people would like done. There are often difficult decisions for governments to make, and that is why governments are elected. The most difficult of decisions is that of a government to send its own troops to war. These are not decisions that are made lightly. I remain firm in the view that, in the end, that responsibility and that decision rests with the Prime Minister, it rests with the executive, it rests with the government of the day and it remains the responsibility of the government of the day, whatever colour that government might be. It is a very important responsibility, one that should not be taken lightly.

We should also not lose sight as to why we are there, what we are trying to achieve and how that will be achieved. We will play our role. It is a significant role. Nonetheless, it is a part of a broader coalition, part of a team effort in Afghanistan to, in the end, bring about peace and a form of parliamentary democracy—whatever that may look like in different parts of the world—in particular, in Afghanistan. Most importantly for me, it is to give freedom to the people of Afghanistan, people who have suffered for many, many decades. I do not think it is fair to compare what is happening today and the role that our troops, or the coalition forces, are playing with past invasions or other conflicts that have taken place, particularly in Afghanistan. For me, the conflict in that country is not so much about territorial borders, lines on maps about geography. It is much more about ideology. It is much more about a terrorist force—whether it be al-Qaeda, the Taliban or other extremist and terrorist organisations around the world—who have no borders, who use particular places of safe haven to train, to organise and to inflict pain on innocent civilians all around the world.

Much of that we know from what has happened in the United States, but Australia has not been alone. We know of the attacks directly on Australian citizens. We are not in this alone. We are not somehow extracted out from the things that happened globally. We are not there as some sort of token force. We are there because we have a real contribution to make. I think that is the case and that is what we are making. I believe that Australians have a right to voice their support, their opposition and their views about how long any country should remain in a war and the reasons for that. But, in the end, the responsibility rests with government. In the end, government must make that ultimate decision: the Prime Minister, the executive, the cabinet.

The question of going to war cannot, in my view, be a position that is debated in the House, where it is left to individual members of the House to decide whether we go into war or not go into war, or to decide whether we stay or whether we leave. These are not matters of conscience in the same sense that you would have a parliamentary debate on legislation in other areas. These are much higher order principles that are couched in the right framework. Today they remain so, and I support those frameworks that have stood the test of time and ought to remain. I am confident of the ability of the government of the day and the Prime Minister of the day, whoever that might be and whatever government that might be, to make the right decision on behalf of all Australians. That is why Australians elect a democratic government to act on their behalf and to do these things right.

There are many questions in terms of our engagement and the solutions, and people will sometimes talk about solutions. But I have to say that, for all the debate and all the great contributions, and the respect that I have for the members and senators who have contributed to this debate, the central question remains: when do we leave Afghanistan? I am afraid I do not know the answer to that question. I am not sure that anyone else does either. My view is that we leave when we believe our mission is complete—and we ought to give enough space for our military and our troops to decide, in terms of capacity and the form that the involvement takes once they have been deployed—it is not necessarily always the case for parliamentarians to—(*Time expired*)

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (4.15 pm)—On September 11 2001 the world stopped and watched the aftermath of a terrorist attack on the United States. The media ran continuous coverage, and we mourned across the world at the loss of life and the loss of freedom from fear. On that day, all of us will remember that the world changed, and we remember where we were. Nearly 3,000 people, including 19 terrorists, died in the attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre, on the Pentagon in Virginia, just outside Washington DC and in a field near Shanksville, rural Pennsylvania. The overwhelming majority of casualties, as we all know, were civilians, including nationals of 77 countries. Eighteen of those were Australians.

We watched the tragedy unfold before our very eyes. We heard the mobile phone recordings—the anguish, the heartbreak, as people said goodbye to loved ones. And we glimpsed a terrifying and repulsive future of random terrorism, of senseless violence and of living in fear that any day could be our last. That day galvanised the Free World into action and Operation Enduring Freedom was launched in response to the fight against terrorism. A coalition against terrorism was established and, by 2002, 136 countries had offered a range of assistance. Australia, for its part, invoked the ANZUS treaty, to underline the gravity of the situation and to demonstrate a steadfast commitment to work with our allies in combating international terrorism. We recognised that Australia would not be safe if we did not play our part in repelling terrorism. We committed to the fight but still, over the past 10 years, over 100 innocent Australians have been killed by terrorist attacks—but none on Australian soil.

The more recent planned attack on Holsworthy Army base is a reminder that terrorism is real and that we must forever remain alert to the dangers. There is a common thread between the threat to Holsworthy Army base, the attacks on September 2001 and terrorist attacks in various parts of the world: al-Qaeda, a terrorist organisation based in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Following the identification of al-Qaeda as responsible for the September 11 attacks,

allied forces initiated military action against the Taliban, conducting air strikes against the Taliban forces and al-Qaeda terrorist training camps.

Australia has provided military support in Afghanistan since October 2001. Over the last nine years the fight against terrorism continued, but it has taken on a different tone. From 2006 to 2007 a major part of Australia's support has been reconstruction and population protection tasks, while Australian special forces continued to find and destroy terrorist training camps. A year later we added a Mentoring and Construction Task Force, to mentor and train the Afghan national army and police, with a view to Afghani self-determination and our withdrawal at the appropriate time. The move towards more mentoring and training has become the dominant focus. The Australian efforts in Oruzgan province, training and mentoring the 4th Afghan Battalion, has had its challenges, but is gradually reaping rewards. The focus now is to strategically deny Afghanistan as a training ground and operating base for global terrorist organisations and to stabilise the Afghan state through a combination of military, police and civilian efforts, with an objective of handing over responsibility in a reasonable time frame to the Afghans themselves.

Our deployments are doing an incredible job, in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. Progress is being made, according to the commander of US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, General David Petraeus. The goal is Afghani self-reliance, to enable the Afghans to control their own destiny and to have a safe and secure place where their people can live without fear of reprisals from the Taliban and other criminal elements. There is still much to be done, and while I, like many people, have seen the impacts of war on individuals and families, and our men and women, there are compelling reasons to stay the course. Both the operations to eliminate terrorist training camps and efforts to train and empower Afghans to work towards self-determination are goals requiring our support and commitment.

I have met and spent much time with members of the SAS, the 2nd Commandos, 6RAR and their families, either while they have been training or, unfortunately, in the tragic circumstances of our men returning home. Members of that RAAF base at Richmond, whom I have also spent time with, have been deployed. Our Defence men and women and their families, particularly families of those service personnel deployed in Afghanistan, or the service men and women themselves who have been deployed, have on many occasions expressed their view that we need to finish the job. Does that mean it is not painful or challenging for them during and after deployment? No. This is where, as a nation, and successive governments who have made the decision to send our men and women into harm's way, need to take responsibility and do whatever we can to respond to their needs. It is important that we continue to improve and look at ways of increasing the effective response to the impact of operations overseas, on both the individual on the unit and also on their families—whether it be relational, psychological or physical. In their own words many of them say that to pull back now would be to devalue the effort and the sacrifices of the last nine years.

I have recently spoken to Mrs Worsley, the mother of Private Luke Worsley, the fourth Australian soldier to be killed in action. Mr and Mrs Worsley live in my electorate. I have spent time with the family since Luke, a private from 4RAR Commando unit, now known as 2nd Commando Regiment, was killed in action on 23 November 2007 in a battle with Taliban fighters. He was only 26 years old. The family was devastated at the loss of a young man in the prime of his life. I spoke to Luke's mother last week, knowing that I would speak during

this debate, and Luke's mother told me then that, although it was hard for the family to accept the circumstances, they accepted it because it was what Luke wanted to do.

Many people question why our defence personnel are there in a country far removed from the comfortable life and safety that we enjoy here, in a conflict they did not start or have any control over, for a cause that is global. Luke believed that the strategy to help the Afghan people to become masters of their own destiny was the right one. Luke's family supported that view. I want to thank Mrs Worsley and Mr Worsley for the time that they have shared with me and for the way that they have expressed, in a quiet and dignified way, that if we were to pull back now Luke's life and sacrifice would be in vain. Marjorie pressed home to me—if I may say—that it is important that we stay the course and finish the job.

The men and women deployed in Afghanistan and their families have made enormous sacrifices, some the ultimate sacrifice. I acknowledge the deepest respect for the 21 Australian soldiers who have lost their lives and for their families and also for those more than 150 personnel who have been wounded in action. I also acknowledge the returned service men and women and their families who may or will feel the impact of this service in many ways in the years ahead. The direct consequence of war is not always the loss of life. It is often the loss of quality of life, and that hits hardest. I have seen the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on individuals and on their families.

I want to honour and pay my deepest respect to the commitment of our defence forces to carry out the work that they are called on to do. They know there is a job to be done and they will see it through. That is what motivated both the Anzacs and those during the Second World War. That is what saw Australian soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses in the theatres of conflict in Europe, Singapore, the Torres Strait and New Guinea, Japan and the Pacific. They fought and died, were wounded and returned home, but their legacy was freedom.

Since that time Australian peacekeepers have been deployed in many parts of the world. They are respected and accepted because they have the capacity to build relationships with local communities and earn their trust. That is a breakthrough for building local confidence and the transfer of responsibility for self-determination. Trust and respect are necessary for this process, and Australian Defence Force personnel are renowned for their capacity to help local communities rebuild and take ownership. Their weapons are there if needed, but the real weapon in the war against terrorism is the capacity to communicate, to empathise, to train and to empower people to rise to the challenges and to overcome.

That same spirit is the foundation for Australia's commitment to Afghanistan. We are at war with terrorism. There is a job to be done, and our nation should be proud of the way our Defence Force men and women are carrying out their duties.

We are not alone with that support. Other nations are also contributing to troop and training resources. There are now 47 nations in Afghanistan assisting the rebuilding and training process. Afghanistan is a country that suffers chronic poverty, violence from extreme militants, unstable food security, health and education challenges and a culture where women do not enjoy the freedom and opportunity that we take for granted. It is obvious that long-term efforts are needed to help the Afghani people rebuild their confidence, their independence and their capacity to be self-reliant and manage in their own right the security, stability and prosperity of their nation.

It is important that the Labor government make a strong and unequivocal statement about the mission and objectives in Afghanistan and outline what still needs to be done to achieve self-determination in that nation. Such a statement is necessary for several reasons: firstly, to assure the Afghani people of our continuing support; secondly, to demonstrate our commitment to our allies; thirdly, to be a public expression of support and appreciation of the men and women of Australia's defence forces serving in Afghanistan; and, fourthly, to honour the 21 soldiers who have been tragically killed in Afghanistan doing their duty, as well as to express support to the many defence personnel who have been wounded. I honour our service men and women and their families to see the job through, and I support the efforts of the Australian Defence Force in reconstructing, protecting, mentoring and training the Afghan people.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation) (4.28 pm)—I rise to support our troops in Afghanistan. I rise to support our Prime Minister's views on our conduct of the war in Afghanistan. I support what is being done and I support the purposes outlined by our Prime Minister, how it is being done and how it will be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. But, having said that, I wish to turn to our long duty which will come from this long war.

The long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the war on terror will exercise, I predict, a great and continuing presence in community and political attitudes over the next 50 years. The human and financial cost will last for the next half-century. We can pinpoint when the Afghan war started but not when it will finish, and, for some 21,000 Australian service personnel so far, the end of the war is far less clear or demarcated.

I would like to acknowledge the influence upon my thinking today of the insightful book *Anzac legacies: Australians and the aftermath of war*, edited by Martin Crotty and Marina Larsson. This book, studying the history and the travails of returned servicemen over 100 years, in its foreword captures the reality of long duty when it says:

... it is a process and a journey not a point in time ... private experiences of repatriation are a more complex and individualised matter.

I wish to put on record my acknowledgement of the fine work of the nurses, the physiotherapists and the doctors, the counsellors and the psychologists who are always there for our troops in our medical repatriation and care centres in Melbourne, in Adelaide, in Sydney, in Brisbane or in Perth. Their efforts are remarkable.

Many of our men and women in uniform return home and will do well. Following demobilisation they will be reabsorbed into the emotional security of family and community. Sadly, some will do it much harder. War experiences remain with all service personnel for all of their days. War experience does not simply conclude when the war ends or demobilisation occurs. Australians who served can have physical impairment, psychological impairment and illness for many years. I think it is incumbent upon us in this place at this time to look over the parapet into the distance to the often overlooked feature about service in Afghanistan: what will happen to our returned service personnel over the next two, three, four or five decades? There is much high-blown rhetoric about support for our troops, and the troops believe it. But when they do return if the reality does not match the rhetoric then trouble will follow. Our troops will be cynical if promises or services fail to live up to expectations. Inevitably unresolved anger will follow about government and politicians of all political stripes. Poor experiences will lead to resentment and hostility, which could be layered over five, six, 10 and 20 years

time and beyond. The important issue, I suggest, is what happens to our sons and daughters, friends and neighbours who serve in the ADF when they return. It is a question for me, this war in Afghanistan, of support at how people who are and people who surround our soldiers deal with the exposure of war. I want veterans to know that their fellow troops are of good morale. I want veterans to see the support for them within the people significant to them. These significant people are their family and friends. These significant people are the government of Australia. I want our ADF veterans to be able to answer that the risks they faced on our behalf were worth the cost to them.

This war is not a new Vietnam; at least in several ways it is certainly not. Our servicepeople are at war in a time when information exchange is so much faster. Email is so quick. The upside of this, of course, is a closer connection to home. If Vietnam was the television war, Afghanistan and the war on terror are surely the internet war. The downside of this technological phenomenon is that bad news travels quickly. The media legitimately report frustrations and grief. The internet can also allow unfounded rumours about operations and indeed the conduct of our troops. This can be pretty hurtful. Information is having a profound effect. We do not want our troops to win the conflict and be lost in peace. We do not want the nation to disappoint the expectations of our returned service personnel. I believe it is very important to pick up people after their return to Australia, resilience within the ADF, and support both people who have been wounded and those who finish outside the service.

I believe it is important to understand that psychological injuries can take some time to manifest. Conditions do not always present straight away at exposure. Tremors of the mind can take two years and beyond to build. People seemingly all right can subsequently develop a condition, a trouble or an anxiety that erodes their wellbeing. Neil James of the Australian Defence Association has advised me that 53 per cent of Vietnam veterans have presented with some form of psychological condition. He advises me that nearly three-in-four of every peacekeeper who served in Rwanda deal with demons of the mind from what they saw there. One expert has advised me that at least three per cent of returned service personnel from Afghanistan are guaranteed to have a psychological condition but that this number could be higher if the purpose of the conflict and the existing support for the war changes. The mental wellbeing of servicepeople will deteriorate if social support in the community for the war fails. If the fall is expressed in the media, this could be a negative reinforcer of psychological problems.

The transition of service personnel to Australia and to civilian life can be very hard, but it is very important to get right. When people leave the military and return home, often in a different location from the barracks where they have been based, they potentially move into socially isolated existences. If there is insufficient support to help our troops transition to civilian life, to help our troops adapt, they will be maladapted.

It is appropriate and fitting and right that the funerals of our 21 troops who have died tragically receive recognition. Theirs was the ultimate sacrifice. But I worry about the wounded soldiers and their families. One hundred and fifty-six of our best and bravest have been wounded in Afghanistan, and this figure does not include those with psychological wounds. We need to look after them and we need to look after their families; to be true to our returning veterans we need to look after their families as well. Over and over again we need to ask: what can we do for their children, what can we do for the partner of those who have been

wounded, those who now have a disability? These families can do it very hard. Yet the cornerstone of care for veterans is families. Governments help, and we have an obligation to help, but those with the primary emotional relationship to our demobilised soldiers have to do the most work. We do not want their children and their grandchildren to suffer damage. When dad comes home a hero but shocked and hurt by battle, it is his family who are the unsung healers. Yet they are also suffering. We venerate the soldier, appropriately, but what about the families? They have to deal with the emotional trauma and I do not believe that the damage and pressure on families is sufficiently appreciated. Support mechanism for defence families can be overlooked.

There are unique features of this current conflict. I have said it is not Vietnam all over again, and I certainly do not believe it to be so in terms of our domestic politics. There is by and large bipartisan support. We have a complete volunteer and professional force, unlike Vietnam. The modern serviceman by and large does not get ridiculed by the public but receives public support. Again, and thankfully, this is acutely unlike the unfair treatment experienced by returning Vietnam veterans. I note, however, reports that through the internet the lunatic fringe has been able to denigrate with irresponsible criticism our returned servicemen. I believe that another difference is that since Timor our army reservists can be signed on full time as formed units, mainly in peacekeeping but now in Afghanistan and serving with distinction. From infantry to commandos and beyond, our army reservists deploy with the regulars. They go overseas, they return and come back to normal civilian jobs. Although the same system of decompression exists for reservists as it does for regulars, it is possible for some to miss the regulars' debriefs. Reservists need support services too because they are not immune from having a bagful of problems. There is a real possibility of post-traumatic stress disorder. There can be drug-taking to mask the anguish and then sometimes we have rebuild our wounded veterans from scratch.

Another difference between today's diggers and those before them are the multiple rotations for our professional soldiers. Young men 26 or 27 years old may have served twice in Afghanistan, twice in Iraq and once in Timor or the Solomon Islands. Our special forces are doing even more rotations in Afghanistan. We are talking about several rotations with the constant pressure in war zones where there are no safe places on deployment. This increase in operational tempo will be the source of burgeoning challenge.

I recognise our soldiers are great professionals. When they are home they do the exercises and the training and then there is the deployment, all at the price of increasing separation from the lives of their families. After this, our service personnel can do it hard when they enter civilian life. These dedicated diggers do not always seek the help they need, despite their needs. We need to engage their families in the transition to civilian life and the future. It is not just a question of transitioning soldiers but also their families, including of course their partners.

In military life our service personnel are treated separate, as professional soldiers who are highly accomplished. The change to civilian life is a massive identity change. They discover that sometimes the things that they have used to measure themselves in the forces do not matter as much in civilian life, or that some civilians are simply just not interested.

We need to appreciate that when our troops come home they may have spent extended periods in a Third World country, places where life can be cheap and where poverty, sickness and disease can be prevalent. When our people come to civilian life they perhaps find the

conversations in our suburbs unreal—the retirement age, the latest model Monaro, the PlayStation or the interest rates. It does take time to adjust. It is a big journey to go from a war zone in southern Afghanistan to a family home in suburban Australia. The soldier has had life- and personality-changing experiences. I am told that we witness too much marriage breakdown after deployment. I am told that after Cambodia, for instance, there was a 60 per cent divorce rate in the first 12 months. Households can fall apart and sometimes they fall apart slowly. Even if an injured soldier remains in service after deployment they can be moved from their unit, reallocated somewhere else, and they can feel dumped and isolated. Sadly, some service people still fall through the cracks of the system.

It is the case that after the First World War over 264,000 men returned. The sheer weight on our systems meant that some people were missed and overlooked, even if we regret what happened to those ANZAC diggers. But in 2010 it is just too difficult to either understand or accept that people can fall through the system. Let me be clear and on the record. The ADF and the government have and continue to take significant steps to ensure our system of support becomes one without cracks. Ministers Smith and Snowdon and other esteemed parliamentarians like the member for Bruce, the member for Eden-Monaro, the member for Dunkley and Senator Faulkner are passionately seized of these challenges. Good work was done by the member for Bruce and the member for Dunkley in ensuring there was a single medical discharge test rather than the two that used to happen prior to their intervention.

But I wish to use this important debate as an opportunity to remind all that promises must be kept. We do need effective transitional case management with switched-on empathetic and appropriate case managers. We need a focus on our invisible families and carers that has to be far greater and far more effective. Veterans with disabilities need access to services despite their impairment. Disabled veterans need assistance finding work. There is still too much discrimination in Australian society against people with a disability, generally. Veterans' counselling services, which are doing a good job catering to pre-1975 veterans also need to understand that, increasingly, they will be dealing with younger veterans, young widows, people who have performed as peacekeepers through to fighting in high-intensity, multiple-rotation conflict zones. I recognise that the Department of Veterans' Affairs does do a very fine job, but more will need to be done in the next 50 years. We need to remove any misplaced stigma in the minds of our diggers that interaction with government services is somehow a second-class outcome.

I said at the outset that the war in which we are engaged is a long war. Our men and women who fight it will have an even longer journey ahead when they return home. Let us use all these fine words about Afghanistan and our debate about our role there as a signpost that for the next 50 years we will maintain the same level of interest and commitment to our returned servicemen, who will number more in the future than those who served in Vietnam. Our practical resolve to honour their duty for the rest of their days should always match our spoken gratitude for our diggers' duty, honourably served.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (4.42 pm)—I would like to begin by commending the member for Maribyrnong on his contribution as one of the most thoughtful and, I believe, heartfelt contributions we have heard in this debate. I would also like to begin my contribution, like so many others in this place, by recognising the 1,550 Australian men and women currently serving in Afghanistan. There is no greater service than to put on the uniform of your country and

be prepared to put yourself in harm's way. We must respect them for the service they provide for our community.

I grew up in Sale and my electorate now includes the community of Sale, which is home to the East Sale RAAF base. I have met a lot of people over the years who have served or are continuing to serve in uniform. I believe they are the true patriots of our nation. Their willingness to put themselves at personal risk for a greater cause is something that I have always admired. It is dangerous and difficult work and I would like to commend the men and women in our forces for their bravery and for the compassion that the Australian service personnel are renowned for in the field. I wish them all a safe return at the completion of their mission. To their families, friends and loved ones: my thoughts are with you at this extraordinarily difficult time in your lives.

I think it is fair to say that the thoughts of all members of the House are with the families as they await the safe return of their loved ones. Naturally, my thoughts and prayers are also with the family and friends of the 21 men who have lost their lives in this conflict. It is a terrible price to pay, and our nation is forever indebted to the men for that service. The honour roll in the War Memorial just down the road from here in Parliament House tells the tale of the thousands of young lives that have been lost in conflict in the relatively short history of our nation. That human capital that has been lost from our nation gives one pause to think exactly what those people could have achieved had they have been able to return to our nation and reach old age. What great achievements and discoveries might their lives have led to? The loss of human capital is one of the things I often reflect on when we have such young and brave people put in harm's way. So we honour their memory and we must never forget their service.

It is also critical, whatever happens in this debate over the days, weeks and months ahead, that there be no condemnation of or any sense of alienation for the men and women who are currently serving in Afghanistan. Our nation made that mistake once in the past, as we have just heard from the member for Maribyrnong, in relation to the conflict in Vietnam. We made that mistake once in the past; it must never be repeated. The men and women on the front line have my enduring respect and they must be supported when they return. I take up the contribution from the member for Maribyrnong where he rightly raised concerns about the support for the troops on their return. Like him, I want to be able to look the soldiers in the eye and know that we supported them while they were in Afghanistan and also for them to know that we will support them as they readjust to peacetime, and also support their families. The promises that are made in this place and the fine words that have been spoken must result in deeds in our community.

I believe that the conflict in Afghanistan, although it has divided public opinion, has great support in our wider community and there is an acknowledgment of the tremendous service of our personnel. I want to reflect briefly on a lady in my own community who contacted my office in the wake of the deaths of two soldiers, Sappers Darren Smith and Jacob Moreland, in June this year. Jean Hey has two children serving in the Army herself. She wanted, as a mark of respect, to show their families that people cared beyond their immediate circle of family and friends. She initiated in our local community a campaign called 'Leave a light on.' The idea was to leave a porch light on until the soldiers were repatriated home. We hope that we do not have to do that again, but the Prime Minister has obviously made it very clear to us in her address to the nation that we are there for the long haul and we can expect more casual-

ties. I believe that is something symbolic we can all do for our soldiers if we do have more casualties—leave a light on until the soldiers are repatriated back to our homeland. I congratulate Jean Hey in South Gippsland for that initiative.

This is an emotionally charged debate, and I agree that it is long overdue. We as members of parliament do owe it to the Australian people to explain our position on this particular issue and also to explain our role in Afghanistan and to publicly state our views. I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment that there will be regular updates. I think she said there would be an annual update. I would suggest that a more frequent update may be appropriate. Perhaps every three to six months would keep the Australian public better informed.

I believe that over the past decade we have failed to make the case in a public sense, and I am not surprised that opinion polls reflect a waning of support in the wider community, particularly in the aftermath of any casualties. As much as it is an emotional debate, it is also a very complex debate and there are no simple answers. The decision for us to engage in armed conflict must always be taken with the utmost seriousness and after consideration of all the alternatives. I believe that was the case on this occasion. On balance, I am convinced that its involvement in Afghanistan was an appropriate step by the Australian government. It is an issue that I have thought very deeply about. I have no hesitation in telling the House that from time to time I have had some grave doubts and some serious reservations about our role in Afghanistan. With each death—like most MPs, I would think—I have asked myself, 'Why? Why are we there and what are we achieving?' I think that is only fair in the circumstances.

Like many others in this place, I have been moved to tears when our party leaders have spoken about lives lost in Afghanistan and the House has stood to attention as a mark of respect. It is for that reason that I must express my extreme dismay at one section of the contribution made in this debate by the member for Denison. I believe that the member made a very valuable contribution. He expressed a view which is contrary to many others and he expressed it with passion and all the energy he could muster. He was right to ask questions. He was right to raise his concerns and he was right to come to his own conclusions and forcefully argue that case. But his reference to other MPs sacrificing their souls for their party's political self-interest was an appalling slight. It was the wrong thing to do and I am offended, and the House should be offended. We can argue our positions with all the determination we like, but we must demonstrate respect for each other. The member for Denison has been in this place for about five minutes and his lecturing and hectoring of others is unwarranted, unfounded and beneath contempt. He should apologise to all members at the first available opportunity.

The first member he should apologise to is the member for Eden-Monaro. In his contribution to the debate, Dr Kelly gave some insights from a man whose courage has actually been tested under fire. Dr Kelly told of watching men die in conflict, of losing friends and of washing their blood from his uniform. I say to the member for Denison: do not come in here and lecture other MPs about sacrificing their souls. Show us the respect that we have shown you.

Dr Kelly also referred to the contribution that previous generations of Australians have made on battlefields throughout the world, and I would like to quote from his speech:

Those generations did not succumb, they did not shirk; they kept faith with those who were asked and who volunteered to assume the greatest risks, and they did their bit to support the national effort. We venerate their fortitude and salute their service. But are we worthy of them? Are we made of the same stuff? Are we prepared to carry the torch they have passed to us with the same courage? This gen-

eration is facing tests that are forcing us to ask these questions. One of these tests is the threat of Islamist extremism.

I agree with Dr Kelly that this is a test of our resilience and our fortitude in the face of extremism. It has been said many times that the world changed on September 11. Of that there is no doubt. It has also been said many times that the atrocities committed in Afghanistan by the Taliban are many and the treatment of women in particular is appalling and oppressive. I note the presence of the Minister for the Status of Women in the House. Having made the decision to participate as part of an international community effort which has been sanctioned by the UN Security Council, we have an obligation to the Afghan people to finish the job that has been started. I do not believe that now is the time to cut and run. That is exactly what the Taliban would be hoping for.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs also made a valuable contribution to the debate when he referred to the risk of terrorism attacks. I want to quote from that speech. He said:

The truth is that our continued operations in Afghanistan against the Taliban to deny the return of al-Qaeda and its allies to Afghanistan, combined with coordinated counterterrorism operations around the world, have helped in preventing a repetition of a series of large-scale September 11 type attacks. Of course there have been many near misses—in fact, many more than the general public is ever likely to know about. The problem is that the success of an effective counterterrorism strategy is much harder to recognise than its failure.

I raise those points because we just simply cannot assume that the risk of terrorism has passed and that there are so many people working around the world to remain vigilant to protect innocent people. Preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorist training is another important consideration in this debate.

It is for all these reasons, and because of the fact that it is in Australia's best interests to maintain and enhance its alliance with America, that I support our current involvement in Afghanistan. A strong alliance with the US is fundamental to Australia's national security. While that should never be used or be seen as a blanket excuse to follow the US into battle, it is an important consideration in the context of the debate.

I would caution that just because I am convinced in this case about Australia's continued involvement, that does not mean I am necessarily comfortable with our role. I suspect that like many Australians I would rather see our service men and women back on our shores as soon as possible, as soon as their mission objectives will allow. In a perfect world there would be no reason to take up arms in this manner, but in a perfect world Australians would not have been murdered in terrorist attacks. I can only imagine the worry and the uncertainty in the many thousands of homes throughout Australia who have loved ones currently serving in Afghanistan. I believe it is important for us to have this debate and it is important for our armed forces and their families to know that their mission has the overwhelming support of members in this place. As I said, I respect the members with differing views, but I think the overwhelming majority of members in this place have stated on the record their support for our current involvement in Afghanistan. I believe it is important for the armed forces, for the personnel on the ground, but also for their families and friends in the wider community.

I think it is also important that the government continues to keep informing the Australian public as the mission develops. As I mentioned previously, it is the one area where I believe we have let our community down. We have not been able to make the case in a way which is

clear and concise so that people understand the mission, what our objectives are and what can be achieved by our work on the ground. This is not just about fighting. It is also about the work that is going on in the community to try and assist the Afghan people to govern in their own right in the future.

Having said all of that, it is hard to know what winning looks like in this conflict. We have to be realistic and acknowledge that Afghanistan is not going to achieve a model society at any stage in the near future, perhaps not in my lifetime, perhaps not in my children's lifetime. It is widely accepted that the military can only do so much and that the war can only be won by the Afghan people themselves. We are effectively, I believe, buying more time for them to get their own house in order. It is inevitable that there will need to be a negotiated outcome, but it is far better for the moderates to be negotiating from a position of strength. I fear that leaving now will not give Afghanistan the best chance to achieve a peaceful, respectful, tolerant and modern society.

To our service men and women I can only say: the majority of members in this place clearly believe you are doing a difficult and dangerous job to the absolute best of your ability, and we are committed to supporting you in that role. You are there to help innocent people. You are there to protect us from those who would do us harm. Your government is indebted to you and I believe that we as individual members of parliament are also indebted to you. Our nation's heart aches for your return.

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide—Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare and Minister for the Status of Women) (4.55 pm)—It is widely accepted that the decision to commit a country to war is one of the most difficult decisions a government will ever make. The magnitude of this responsibility is indeed sobering, and it is significant and appropriate that this House takes time to reflect on the conflict in Afghanistan, on its impacts and on its future. Whether soldiers are engaging across borders or whether combatants are struggling for control within regions, there is an inevitable level of tragedy associated with any conflict. So of course it is absolutely right for us to assess why we go to war, whether our grounds are sound, whether there remains an ongoing task and at what time it is right to leave.

We went to Afghanistan, as the Minister for Defence outlined recently, for a range of reasons. We are there because we are strongly of the view that we cannot allow Afghanistan to become a breeding ground for international terrorism once more. Importantly, we are also there as part of the United Nations mandated International Security Assistance Force, and this UN Security Council resolution was unanimously renewed this month. Thirdly, we are there working with our allies, including the United States.

The abuse of women under the Taliban regime is not of itself why we committed to the war in Afghanistan, but I believe that it is another important reason why we should stay there. Last week I launched the United Nations Population Fund's State of the World Population 2010 report. The report, *From conflict and crisis to renewal: generations of change*, detailed some shocking examples of the abuse of women in conflicts around the globe. We know that war frequently exacerbates gender based violence. As the UNFPA report stated, women are:

... disempowered by rape or by the threat of it and by HIV infection, trauma and disabilities that often result from it. Girls are disempowered when they cannot go to school because of the threat of violence, when they are abducted or trafficked, or when their families disintegrate or must flee.

But, as we also know from the UNFPA, conflict and crisis can also create opportunities for the empowerment of women and new avenues to address gender inequality.

We know from UN analysis that after conflict there is an opportunity for change, a chance for countries to be rebuilt, a chance to break cycles of crisis and oppression and replace them with structures that foster success and growth. This critical period provides space for the long-term development and empowerment of women that gives nations the best chance of being rebuilt with the genders on an equal footing and with rights and opportunities for all. This is no more so than in Afghanistan. We know that, through the process of rebuilding the country, Afghan women can challenge gender inequalities and that we must do everything we can to help them. To those that suggest we can do this without any military intervention, I say that we need to be realistic about exactly the sorts of forces that we are up against.

Afghan women are among the most vulnerable in the world. The life expectancy for women in Afghanistan is 44 years. Maternal mortality is the second-highest in the world due to a lack of access to and quality of prenatal and maternal healthcare facilities, early marriage age and high fertility rates. Literacy rates among Afghan women, especially in Oruzgan province where the Australian military efforts are focused, are estimated to be as low as 0.1 per cent. Afghanistan is rated the second-last in the world on the United Nations Gender Development Index, which measures inequalities between men and women in terms of life expectancy, literacy rates and standards of living.

These women do not suffer this disadvantage by accident or by neglect; they do so because it has been and it remains the will of the Taliban. Prior to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, women were protected under law and increasingly afforded rights. Women received the right to vote in the 1920s. As early as the 1960s the Afghan constitution provided for equality for women. In the early 1990s women were 50 per cent of government workers and university students, 70 per cent of schoolteachers and 40 per cent of doctors in Kabul. But all of this changed when the Taliban came to power and immediately started to dismantle the status of women in Afghanistan. They instituted a regime that has been likened to gender apartheid, effectively thrusting the women of Afghanistan into a state of virtual house arrest. The Taliban locked women out of the universities, forced nearly all women to quit their jobs, restricted access to medical care for women, brutally enforced a restrictive dress code and constrained their physical freedom to move about the cities. The Taliban perpetrated hideous acts of violence against women, including rape, abduction and forced marriage. Some families tried to send their daughters to Pakistan or Iran in order to protect them. The Taliban ended education for girls, with girls over the age of eight prohibited from attending school. The Taliban required windows to be painted over so that women could not be seen from outside their houses. They burned health posters and they prevented doctors from examining a woman unless she was fully clothed. Women's health was so appalling that childbirth could indeed be a death sentence.

Now, nine years have passed since the Taliban's fall from power. We know that there has been some progress in restoring Afghan women's rights but that the situation in Afghanistan does continue to be fraught. In 2008 Taliban insurgents were arrested for throwing acid in the face of schoolgirls in Kandahar. In 2009, 150 schoolgirls were hospitalised after three suspected gas attacks on their schools. In April 2009, Sitara Achakzai, a member of Kandahar's provincial council, was gunned down outside her home—her murderers likely to receive the

equivalent of \$2,500, which the Taliban has offered to anyone who murders a council member. In September last year Colonel Malalai Kakar, a woman who has risen to become the head of Kandahar's department of crimes against women, was assassinated. In August this year, five campaign staffers who were supporting the campaign of MP Fawzia Gilani were kidnapped and killed. So the Taliban are still a threat. They are still a threat to women, especially women who have the courage and the determination to claim equality and who are working to rebuild their nation.

We need to seize the opportunity arising out of Afghanistan's post-conflict recovery to ensure not just that the country is rebuilt but that Afghan society is better, with women and men on an equal footing, with rights and opportunities for all and a foundation for a just and equitable society. We need to sow the seeds of long-term development and peace. We must continue to invest in the women of Afghanistan so that they can enjoy an unprecedented age of social and economic progress and empowerment.

There is a protective effect that arises from equality. The more equal the society the less violence that is experienced by its citizens. There will only be sustained peace in Afghanistan if we can help them to improve the status of women and engender equality across the community. And we are starting to see this. The Afghan police force is attracting recruits, particularly in Bamyam province in central Afghanistan. This is a special province, that of Habiba Sarabi, who was Afghanistan's first female governor. This region now claims the lowest levels of violence and some women in the region have now been allowed to drive. Indeed, there is evidence that Australian support to Afghanistan is having a significant impact on the lives of Afghan women, that we are helping these women to break a cycle of crisis and oppression and replace it with opportunities for success and growth.

Over the past week, we have heard from many of our parliamentary colleagues about Australian initiatives that have been transformative in Afghanistan. The Basic Package of Health Services program, which Australia supports, has effectively doubled the number of functioning primary healthcare facilities across the country and led to a 26 per cent reduction in infant mortality. The Education Quality Improvement Program, which Australia supports, has seen girls' enrolment in school increase from zero under the Taliban to over two million in 2009. Since April 2009 Australia has supported the school attendance of some 3,655 primary school students, including 71 per cent girls in seven provinces across Afghanistan through Care International's Community Organised Primary Education program. We are constructing and fitting out a new provincial girls school in Oruzgan that will provide a secure learning environment for around 600 girls. Through the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan, which Australia supports, almost 440,000 Afghans have access to over 1.5 million microfinance services across 26 provinces, and 66 per cent of these clients are female.

For the 2009 elections, Australia supported the training of 132 Afghan female election observers. Contrasted with life under the Taliban only a decade ago when women were denied education, work, health care and movement, it is clear that our work is making a difference. Yes, we still have a long way to go, but we cannot allow the Taliban to continue to attack women and girls as they strive to improve themselves and their community. We cannot have them live in fear. We must support the creation of conditions that will allow for them to flourish and engage in the economic and social life of their nation.

The most compelling words that I believe I can offer to this debate on why we should remain in Afghanistan in fact belong to the women of Afghanistan themselves—the words, for example, of Dr Sakena Yacoobi, who runs the Afghan Institute of Learning, an organisation working with women to improve health and education in seven Afghan provinces. She said earlier this year that a military presence was needed for at least another five years ‘in a conflict where extremists deliberately poison the drinking water at schools to scare away the children’.

Dr Yacoobi, who ran underground schools for girls in the 1990s, says:

At this moment, I think it would be unfair for the people of Afghanistan—especially for the women and children, who have been suffering for 20 and 30 years—to just leave them and walk out. As soon as allied soldiers walk out and leave Afghanistan, the first blood shed will be the blood of women and children.

She says that for years women in Afghanistan have been abused and are very submissive, but, in reality, ‘the women of Afghanistan are very intelligent—brilliant’. She said:

... once you give them the opportunity ... they are taking action and trying to solve problems on their own.

Similarly, Ida Lichter, in her book *Muslim Women Reformers: Inspiring Voices Against Oppression*, has said:

If foreign troops leave prematurely ... much progress for women’s rights could be squandered.

We know that the women in Afghanistan are ready for change. The history of suffering and abuse under the Taliban is a deep horror but also a great motivator for Australia to contribute to creating the conditions in which these women can indeed thrive.

Given the service that we have demanded of Australians deployed in Afghanistan, I return to the central question of this debate: should Australia be in Afghanistan? Is our presence in that country justified? It is true that the Afghan people are the architects of their own society, but, given the history of this conflict and the danger that women still face, our role is to help to create the conditions in which this can be achieved. The rebuilding of Afghanistan cannot take place without advancing its women, who are a major social, political and economic resource for their country. We are not in Afghanistan simply to protect women from violence, but we are in Afghanistan to ensure that the people have the security and the civil stability which will enable women to become agents of change in their own country.

So how will we know when our work is done there? For us to be successful in our overall mission, one clear indicator will be that change must be felt in the lives of the women of Afghanistan. It must be felt by girls on their way to school. It must be felt by female health workers, teachers, public servants and politicians. I believe that this, absolutely, will be a true measure of our success. In contributing to this debate I also want to give credit and pay tribute to not only the Australians who have sacrificed their lives in this cause but also all of those men and women who continue to serve within the ADF and who are doing a fine job representing our country and a significant cause.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (5.09 pm)—The debate about Afghanistan, to me, seems in a lot of ways to be a situation where members of parliament, whichever side they might be on, need to explain to the people of Australia why we as a government have made decisions which not everybody agrees with. But the consensus within the parliament, quite obviously, is that we need to be there and that we are doing the right thing in putting people’s lives very

much at risk. I am talking about young Australians who are very good at what they do. I think it is incumbent upon us not just to be members of parties, members of government or opposition or parliamentarians; we actually have to lead in convincing people in our electorates and Australia generally about why that is.

The feeling is that the war is less popular, for want of a better word, than it used to be. I do not think there is anything odd about that, and I do not think that means that a great percentage of Australians do not want us to be there. Nobody wants to put a considerable number of young Australians at risk. Quite obviously, only a lunatic would think it was a good thing to have Australians overseas fighting for their lives. I do think it is incumbent upon us, though, to explain why we believe it is a good thing for them to be there for us and for the world at large. I think that is what it boils down to.

For me, there is no bigger decision that a member of government or member of parliament can ever make than to send our troops off into a war situation. There could be no other decision you would ever make that could compare with it. Both my parents, who are no longer with us, were veterans of the Second World War. They both spent almost five years of their lives in the Middle East and the Pacific Islands during the Second World War. They fought overseas, against an enemy that was not in Australia, and there are some comparisons with the situation today. People say that life is more complicated now. I doubt that that is true. I think that if we had been around in the forties, during the war, we would have thought that life was just as complicated as it is today. But the point is that both my parents went overseas because they thought it was better to deal with the threat to the world and Australia where it was, rather than waiting for it to come here.

Without doubt, the threat has already affected Australians very directly—let alone our soldiers—as we all know. There is no point in going through what happened in Bali and various places around the world. Australians have already been killed by the current threat. Terrorism may be less upfront, but it is just as deadly as any other war. For us as a country to deal with the threat that has affected us very directly already at its heart, as it were, rather than wait for it to land on our shores—as it inevitably will if we do not do anything about it—makes very good sense. We should deal with it in the same way my parents did 60-odd years ago.

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, where the Taliban reign with al-Qaeda, I am one of the very few people outside the military who has had the privilege of going there. I was there for a week two years ago. I was there on Anzac Day. I guess I am speaking now to the people most affected by seeing their sons, their brothers, their daughters, their relatives there. I have spoken about the big picture and why I believe we should be there, but I think we need to speak to the people most affected.

On Anzac Day in Kandahar, which is the main base in Afghanistan where our troops stay before they go into Oruzgan province to the camp at Tarin Kowt, every single nation represented in Afghanistan, plus the Afghan National Army, came to our dawn service—not because it was a big day for them but because they knew it was a very big day for us. Till the day I die I will never forget being there at the dawn service in Kandahar with our troops and with the British, the Americans, the French, the Canadians, the Dutch and the Afghan National Army, who our people train. The various groups were all there. It was a very big moment.

It is in Tarin Kowt that our men and women are living it and going out into it daily. I think everybody who has relatives or friends over there in particular should be aware just how good and how well trained our troops are and how much they believe in what we are doing there. They are extraordinarily good. Our special forces and our mainstream forces, who are part of the reconstruction task force, are the two sides of it. As the people whose job it is to go out and seek the Taliban and deal with bomb makers and the Taliban leaders, our special forces are extraordinarily good at what they do. I have actually been to their selection trials in Western Australia, and no athlete has ever gone through what these blokes go through. So it was not a surprise to go there and find out how respected and how good our special forces are. It was a bit more of a surprise to go there and find out that, with regard to the mainstream Army personnel who work on the reconstruction task force—and we have got personnel there from all three defence branches, doing various things—and work with the Afghans, teach them how to build hospitals and schools, teach them trade skills and train the Afghan National Army, even the special forces say that what the special forces do would mean nothing without what the reconstruction task force is doing. That can give people comfort as to the moral rightness of us being there—and I do not mean the big picture, which we have already spoken about; I mean comfort that their sons, daughters, brothers and sisters are there for good reasons on a local level.

I was amazed when an ordinary soldier—well, he was Australian, so he was not ordinary; we had been there a few days and I had got to know him—said to me one day, quite out of the blue, ‘You know, if there’s one thing I could change in this world, it would be sharia law.’ I was rather taken aback, because he was not an intellectual, he was not a philosopher; he was a soldier, obviously a good one. Our military people over there know more about Afghanistan and the Taliban than the rest of us because they are talking to them and working with them. I thought it was an incredible thing that the thing that mattered most in this bloke’s life—and he was a bush bloke—was to get rid of Taliban law. It is not, as people think, just about women; it is a way of life. But, to Australians and others like us, it is the way it treats women that hits us in the face.

When I was there, at the hospital at Tarin Kowt—which is staffed by Australians, Singaporeans and Dutch, or it was then—the head of our hospital mission, an Australian doctor, said to me: ‘The other day we lost a girl who was brought in by the locals. By the time they brought her in we couldn’t save her. She died from what is a common, ordinary infection. They waited till she was nearly dead before they brought her in. If she’d been a boy, they would have brought her in very early. They didn’t think she was worth worrying about until it was too late.’ He was still incredibly upset by it. That sort of statement gives you an idea of just what it is we are dealing with. He also told me that about once a month they bring in a young boy who has lost his hands or whole arms because he has been forced to go and lay an IED that was not well constructed and it blew up on him. If there is one thing that gets you about this ‘modern’ terrorism, it is that old men send off young men and women and others to die—whether they are suicide bombers blowing everyone up or they are laying an IED—but will not do it themselves. Obviously, a lot of them are dying if they are bringing in a boy every month who is missing his hands. So nobody should feel that there is not a huge moral issue in Afghanistan, let alone us along with our allies trying to deal with terrorism at its heart and at its core.

I will never forget the week I spent with our troops in Afghanistan. I can only say to the parliament and also to the friends and relatives of everybody that is over there, and to the Australian people at large, that I do not think this is very different from our people going overseas to fight the Japanese and the Nazi threat during the Second World War, because, sooner or later, if we do not deal with this, it will come here. Yes, it means pain and grief for a lot of people, but it is something we have to do and I do thoroughly believe that. Let us hope it is dealt with as soon as possible. Thank you.

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (5.22 pm)—It is a good thing to debate our military and civilian involvement in Afghanistan. I welcome this opportunity to put forward my views and the views shared with me by the people I represent.

At the forefront of every Australian's thinking about the war in Afghanistan must be the tragic loss of 21 brave men who lost their lives serving in the Australian Defence Force, men who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the beliefs and interests of our nation. In the nine long years that we have been engaged in Afghanistan, longer than our eight-year involvement in the war in Vietnam, 186 Australian Defence Force personnel have been wounded. With ten deaths since June, we have shared the grief and intimate loss of families, friends and comrades at funerals held in our communities. It has been a particularly sad time and for those most affected by this terrible loss, it is important that we acknowledge these events, extend our sympathy, express our gratitude and provide some serious reflections on the events that have transpired since our involvement in the war in Afghanistan.

In the community, the debate centres on several key questions: why are we in Afghanistan, what is our purpose or mission, how will we know when the task is done so that we can bring our troops home and what legacy will we leave the people of Afghanistan? There is no doubt that, in the minds of most Australians, our involvement in Afghanistan stems from the terrorist attacks that devastated New York nine years ago—an event indelibly imprinted on the psyche of the civilized world. Good people who saw that devastation wondered at the minds that could so coldly and clinically cause the deaths of their fellow men and women and bring about misery for so many more. Good people will always, and should always, take a stand against such evil, and that is what occurred.

In response to the September 11 attacks, the UN Security Council in December 2001 passed resolution 1386, legally authorising an international security force in Afghanistan—a mandate that has been renewed ten times since then, most recently on 13 October 2010 for a further twelve months, relying upon UN certainty that the situation in Afghanistan still posed a significant threat to international peace and security. At that time, the United Nations sanctioned this war as just and called upon all nations to contribute to the International Security Assistance Force in partnership with the Afghan government. Along with 46 other states, including 19 non-NATO members, we acceded to this call.

It is worth noting that this was in distinct contrast to the Howard government's decision to invade Iraq in 2003. That war was not supported by the United Nations and it was not supported by the Australian people. The United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, subsequently declared the US led war on Iraq to be 'illegal' and contrary to the text and spirit of the United Nations founding charter. I think that President Obama encapsulated the sentiment of the Australian people well when he said: 'I am not opposed to all wars. I'm opposed to dumb wars.' That is why we opposed the Iraq war when we were in opposition, and why we com-

mitted to withdrawing our troops from Iraq at the 2007 election. And fortunately we delivered on that promise.

Whilst I do think it is important to be guided by the UN Security Council positions, we have a responsibility to always test for ourselves the tenets that underpin the UN position against our own knowledge of the situation in Afghanistan and against what we assess to be in the best interest of both the Afghan people and our own serving personnel. I hope that we will always get the balance right between self-determination and supporting our international alliances. I hope that we get that right in Afghanistan. But by joining the ISAF we committed to eradicating the threat to international peace and security posed by Afghanistan. As to the nature of that threat, clearly the control the Taliban gained in most of Afghanistan had made that country a safe haven for terrorists. Taliban control of people, resources and vast spaces put Afghanistan at the centre of Islamic extremist terrorism. This control provided the freedom for al-Qaeda to establish an extensive global financial network and an extensive terrorist training network in Afghanistan.

In my electorate of Newcastle we have felt keenly the consequences of that successful incubation of terrorism. On 1 October 2005, 22 people were killed and 84 injured in a terrorist bombing in Bali by individuals with links to Afghanistan. Three people from Newcastle were killed and nine more injured. Many more were traumatised, left confused and bereft. Two young men face life without their parents; a family faces life without its mother, wife and sister; and too many families battle with physical and emotional disabilities that impact still on their daily existence. I applaud their courage. They and I remain determined to protect others from similar terrorist attacks.

At a personal level, although my values always drive me to oppose war, my experience with the innocent victims of terrorism insists that we do need to take a stand with our international friends against terrorism. We cannot forget the atrocities of the Taliban, not least the hangings, shootings, amputations and stonings. We cannot forget the brutality of this regime. I do not want to see al-Qaeda re-establish their hold in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban, and I want our efforts to signal to al-Qaeda that there will be no comfort for them there. The best way, of course, to remove that comfort is to strengthen the ability of the Afghan people to defend themselves against the Taliban and resist the presence of terrorist networks on their soil. Although some say al-Qaeda has found new homes to sustain their networks in Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan, and that our efforts in Afghanistan will inevitably fail, there is now indeed a greater global effort to combat terrorism wherever it emerges.

Recently I spent three weeks in Europe. I had not anticipated reading every day in the newspapers—in Italy, France and Ireland—accounts of terrorist activity uncovered or of attempts foiled by the international antiterrorism effort. We are much more discreet in Australia and some would say that we are much more sheltered in Australia. It was a salient reminder that there is quite a way to go in eradicating extremist motivated terrorism from our world and that every day we should acknowledge the success of our own Australian Federal Police and security agencies for the part that they play in keeping us safe.

Returning though to Afghanistan and the other reason why we are there, Article VI of the ANZUS treaty, invoked by then Prime Minister John Howard in October 2001 after the September 11 attacks, committed Australian military personnel to Afghanistan in support of our alliance with the United States of America. It has always been my belief that the alliance with

the US is one based on honest negotiation, not blind allegiance. I respect the significance of the US alliance but I am not a supporter of the pre-emptive warfare stance adopted by John Howard in 2001 and would always hope that our decisions in these matters will be more informed and more considered than just that presumption. I am also sure that America will decide its path regarding withdrawal from Afghanistan, and I think that we should do the same.

That brings me to the mission we face in Afghanistan and how will we know when the task is done so we can bring our troops home. Veterans in my electorate of the Vietnam War have warned that we need to get out, that we should bring the troops home. They warn that we risk re-running the Vietnam War, that we do not always know who the combatants are and who the civilians are. Others are equally worried about Pakistan, citing the need to counter violent extremism in that country to ensure regional stability. On Monday, I note, the *Melbourne Age* reported that 49 per cent of Australians oppose our involvement in Afghanistan, while 45 per cent support our ongoing intervention there. This war has divided the community, but no matter what, as a party, as a government and as a people, we must remain committed to supporting our troops. Although we might frequently disagree in this parliament, each holding different views as to the legitimacy or the worth of our involvement in this war, we remain united in support of our troops on the ground in Afghanistan.

The Australian task force in Afghanistan is concentrated in the Oruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, working in partnership with forces from America, New Zealand, Singapore and Slovakia. Oruzgan is one of the least developed provinces in Afghanistan, and in this region the literacy rate among women is less than one per cent. Among men, it is only 10 per cent. This is in part because the Taliban prohibited women from working and they were withdrawn from the education system, with a resulting loss of 70 per cent of Afghan teachers. In areas under their control, the Taliban continue to restrict the rights of women, including their rights to freedom of movement, to political representation and to education. The implications of these policies, sadly, will outlast all of us in this current parliament. A generation of Afghan children will have grown up brutalised by this regime and lacking any education. Yet experience demonstrates that empowering women empowers communities.

Our mission in Oruzgan is tripartite. First, we are providing training and mentoring to the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade, to allow them to assume responsibility for the province's security. Second, we are building the capacity of the Afghan National Police to assist with civil policing functions. Finally, we are helping the Afghan government to better deliver core services and create an environment in which the Afghan people can prosper socially, culturally and economically. In each of these areas we have already made progress. The 4th Brigade is increasingly expanding its operations in key population centres in Oruzgan, creating a safer environment in which the Afghan people can live and work. In partnership with civilian volunteers, our forces have assisted the Afghan government to create a more prosperous society. Since 2002, economic growth has averaged 11 per cent. Basic health services are now available to 85 per cent of the Afghan population, rather than to only 10 per cent of the population, as under the Taliban regime. Since 2001, and I think this is particularly important for the future prosperity and stability of Afghanistan, primary school enrolments have increased from one million to around six million, of which two million are girls—girls who were prohibited from receiving an education under the Taliban. This has only been possible because of the presence of our forces in Afghanistan and because of our International Development Assis-

tance Program administered by AusAID. Through AusAID we have provided \$120 million in 2010-11 to support education, health, infrastructure and good governance. This is in addition to the more than \$82 million that we already provided between 2007 and 2009.

The achievements listed provide some concrete measures of what we have achieved and put a more human face to Australia's contribution. If those achievements are sustained by the Afghan people when we leave Afghanistan then that will be a legacy of which we can all be proud. But it must be asked: will the legacy that we leave to the Afghan people also be more civilian deaths than all terrorist attacks combined? If that were to be the only legacy then we would have visited upon the people of Afghanistan a much greater tragedy. General David Petraeus, the Commander of ISAF, has said that 'every Afghan death diminishes our cause', and I agree.

It remains my hope, and I believe the hope of all Australians, that we will succeed in bringing a higher degree of security and civility to the people of Afghanistan so that they experience safety and peace in their daily lives, providing for them the necessary foundation for achieving their individual and shared aspirations. Then we can bring our troops home with the knowledge that they and their fallen comrades completed their missions and served well the interests of the people of Afghanistan and Australia. That outcome would be the direct result of the efforts of ISAF to banish the insurgents and increase the capacity of the Afghan military and police to resist the rise or return of those insurgents. But perhaps heightened security and safety will arise from an accommodation struck between the Afghan government, the Taliban and partners to the UN Security Council, given that these talks are now underway. If that is the case, we must prepare ourselves because it will hardly look like democracy as we know it, but it will represent an increased degree of self-determination. As we saw from the parliamentary elections held in Afghanistan last month, democracy is terribly fragile, relying on the consent of the governed.

We have an obligation to the Australian people to fight terrorism at home and overseas. It is not easy, but we came to government in 2007 to make hard decisions about who we are as a nation. At home, here in Australia, we must continue to be an open, accepting and welcoming country, with strong international and intercultural ties. The threat of terrorism should not, and will not, diminish the resolve of this country to foster the values of freedom, liberty, equality and democracy, and will not diminish our commitment to a multicultural, tolerant Australia. I think it was Martin Luther King Jr who said that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, and that is the dilemma we face. We need to ensure that our region is stable, free from the threat of terrorism and just. May we continue to succeed in Afghanistan so we can plan the withdrawal of our troops and bring them home safely.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (5.35 pm)—We parliamentarians tell the public that the 21st century struggle to overthrow the world's first terrorist sponsored state—the al-Qaeda financed, Taliban run Afghanistan—is a direct consequence of the shocking mass murder in New York on 11 September 2001. This is only part of the narrative. We claim our long-term commitment to Afghanistan's peace and stability is honourable because we are resisting those forces who wish to keep its people poor, its women ignorant, and we are making it a safe and modern democratic state that can deliver its own security. All this is true, but it is not the whole truth. Just as our schools do not teach that the German invasion of Poland adequately explains the causes of the Second World War, we should not limit our justifications for wag-

ing war to the emotive events of 2001. The war in Afghanistan, in which many thousands have been killed, would be completely out of moral proportion if we reduced its gravity to revenge for a few thousand people tragically killed in New York.

The seeds of the Second World War lay in the imperfect peace embodied in the Treaty of Versailles and the subsequent failure of Western nations to confront fascist adventurism. The seeds of this war in Afghanistan lay in the complacency since the fall of the Berlin Wall 21 years ago. The collapse of the Soviet empire provided greater collective security and liberty for humanity: the rapid expansion of democracies; greater access to human rights, technology and new markets and the reduction of nuclear stockpiles between former adversaries. The West may have been pre-eminent, but it failed to adequately deal with the hydra-headed struggles facing collective security: failed states led by rogue leaders, nuclear proliferation and threats arising from non-state transnational terrorism.

When the US retreated from its humanitarian work in Somalia, Islamic terrorists were emboldened. When Europe and the United Nations failed to respond to the Rwandan genocide, black-hearted leaders in Zimbabwe, Sudan, Burma and the Congo were invigorated. When the US and its allies kept Hussein in power after the first Gulf War our enemies were again emboldened. And when the US withdrew its engagement in Afghanistan in the 1990s it deluded itself that its strategic interests no longer applied to that part of the world. With all the benefits of hindsight we can say that the decision left the world with a dangerous vacuum. India, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran ran its proxy wars against each other's and Afghani interests. By the 1990s, the Taliban-backed Wahhabists, the Pakistani security establishment and the battle-hardened Pashtun warlords had won out. It is a salient lesson to those in Australia's strategic establishment who think American military presence in the western Pacific is outdated or undesirable. They only invite the central Asian syndrome to our region. The Taliban, financed and advised by al-Qaeda, ran a terrifying sharia regime so harsh that the Saudis and ayatollahs winced, and so intolerant of minorities that Balkan war criminals blushed. The international community shrugged its shoulders and presumed itself to be impotent. Then al-Qaeda awoke the world's sense of outrage and justice in 2001.

This war is nine years old and is fought on many fronts, including against corruption, literacy, ethnic division, poverty, as well as Islamofascists. We are also fighting to reduce the destructive role of Pakistani and Iranian meddling. But there is one front closer to home we must consider. There is a minority of parliamentarians and those in civil society who put their hands on their hearts in a gross display of apprehension for the Afghan people and claim their interests can only be upheld through Western retreat and isolationism. Like Iraq, they erroneously claim our involvement is a quagmire, a lost cause. They fetishise the suffering of those in the Middle East as victims of Western adventurism. Their arguments are only designed to delegitimise all Western involvement among failed states to suit their weak and outdated ideological positions to oppose capitalism and imperialism. This attitude was evident in the speech by the Greens member for Melbourne in this place. All we have to do, according to him, is increase aid to civil sector institutions that foster democracy, sustainable development and human rights and the murderous Taliban will lay down their arms and preach peace to all. It is as naive as it is fantastic.

When we see so-called peace activists aligning themselves with the causes of violent Islamic radicals, they are inviting us to condemn their conspicuous compassion as moral myo-

pia. With no regard for Western interests, let alone those among predominantly Muslim nations who want to live in peace and security, they prefer the ensuing chaos from our premature departure from Afghanistan to national and regional security. Their opposition to the war in Afghanistan is a thinly veiled self-hatred for their own society, for its successes and traditions. Fortunately, their war against Australia's noble mission in Afghanistan is as shallow as it is transparent. I am confident that this war in Afghanistan was *jus ad bellum* and *in bello*, and will be *jus post bellum*.

When viable Afghan independence, with the capacity for its own security and accountability, has sufficiently taken root, then our work will have been done militarily. The argument that the war cannot be won and necessitates an early withdrawal is misplaced. Peace can also be achieved by inflicting sufficient damage on the Taliban that they realise that violent aggression is no longer fruitful. It is in this regard that we must acknowledge the work of our military forces. They are there to train the local forces. But, more significantly, they are there to remove the military leadership of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. As George Orwell is claimed to have once said, 'People sleep peacefully in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.' Our soldiers are not rough men and women, but the sentiment is true. Peace, human rights and a world free of terrorism will not be achieved by capitulation and appeasement.

No war is good, but some war is necessary; and, if so, leadership in a democracy demands an explanation of why it is the case. The continuing presence of our troops in Afghanistan will bring greater collective security to the immediate region and assist Australia's long-term interests in defeating extremism in our own region. As a nation, we will continue to demonstrate the courage of our convictions that Afghani security matters for all humanity and that it is worth the sacrifices. The vast majority of parliamentarians, who support this mission, must now get behind the executive, our military commanders and our troops and let them complete their vital but perilous mission.

Sitting suspended from 5.44 pm to 5.49 pm

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (5.49 pm)—I appreciate the Main Committee giving me time to get here to speak in this debate on the ministerial statement on Afghanistan. I extend my gratitude and thanks to the Prime Minister for speaking openly and freely on Australia's involvement in Afghanistan. I think it is important for all of us in this place to talk about our views and thoughts on where we are heading, what is happening in Afghanistan and how we feel about it. As members of this parliament—and some of us represent over 100,000 people in our electorates—I think it is important to have this discussion and to air the thoughts and views that we have.

Many members have already spoken about Afghanistan this week. Members have spoken of what Australia has provided in terms of military deployment, reconstruction and training work being performed in Afghanistan. I am sure all Australian personnel, military and other, are doing an excellent job under extremely difficult circumstances. I congratulate all who have been involved, especially those on the ground in Afghanistan. We can talk as much as we like about it, but we will never know what it is like for all those Defence Force personnel and others who are actually on the ground in Afghanistan.

We all regret the loss of Australian personnel. We have supported and continue to support all of our personnel. We thank the families of the brave and selfless soldiers who have paid the ultimate price for Australia's involvement in this conflict.

It is difficult to speak on Australia's involvement in Afghanistan now and in the foreseeable future without being able to reflect on the detail of the deployment, the composition, the task, the allocation, the objectives and the time frames of the coalition as a whole. Without information from the ground—the detail of what in particular, for example, the US is doing towards various tactical objectives—it is hard to offer specific comments on the timely resolution of coalition activity in that country, but I suppose I can offer my own views in broad terms.

In my view, I think we should approve the concept of a sustainable nation-state of Afghanistan run by Afghans, and we should do what we can to help them establish this ongoing state of existence. By 'sustainable' I mean defensible, a nation-state that is strong enough to rebuff the coordinated attacks of insurgents, as we have seen in the past, and strong enough to uphold its laws and bring those who break them to justice. We have had any number of commentators airing their views on the potential outcomes of engagement in that war—whether we can win the war, for example, or what will happen if we lose the war. Again, in my view, the only loss would be the loss of the nation-state of Afghanistan, such that it currently is, and all that has been established by people of Afghanistan over the last decade and all that they are working towards which would be laid to waste, burned to the ground and replaced by the whim of an inherently destructive, sadistic and ideologically perverse force.

Toward this end I do not expect there to be peace and tranquillity throughout the region immediately before or after our engagement in this particular effort comes to an end. It will end sooner or later and there will continue to be those with rifles or explosives and a desire to destroy, just as there are in many, many other countries around the world. That is something we cannot control. But I hope that Australia and the coalition parties continue to strive with renewed vigour and determination for the realisation of an Afghani military and security force capable of successfully dealing with and resolving Afghani problems as they arise over time. That is fundamental. Whether it be likely or unlikely in the case of Afghanistan; whether it is even assessable at this point, I cannot say. I am deeply concerned by the thought of a force assuming effective control over large areas of populations within Afghanistan instituting a purge of people, the hundreds of thousands currently supportive of the development of the nation-state as it currently exists.

I am also deeply concerned that the greatest letting of blood would come after the withdrawal of coalition forces, if that were to occur, prior to the Afghans being ready to defend their state. The potential for human beings to be sickeningly brutal is common knowledge, and we saw it just a few years ago on our own doorstep, in East Timor and in other places. I recall Laurie Brereton was up in East Timor at the time and he witnessed hordes of frenzied people wielding machetes et cetera running around hacking people to bits, and we can all remember those horrendous pictures on our TV. We have seen systematic brutality around the world in many countries over the years including the deep and bloody trauma that occurred on the subcontinent after the British partitioned India and withdrew effective control. We saw what happened there. At that time the loss of one million lives occurred. So I deeply, deeply hope that Australia and other coalition forces persist with their support of the training and the

development of effective Afghani military and security forces in order to prevent, as best any force realistically can, any bloodletting into the future. To this end I stress the importance of doing all we can. I stress the importance of all coalition parties doubling and redoubling their effective efforts to help Afghanistan develop the demonstrated and proven capacity to defend itself and make itself secure.

Of course we know this will take time. The front-line battles that continue to take place clearly show that much more is needed in combating the enemy forces prior to coalition forces departing for home. To those who say that our presence is just making things worse, I say that the obvious task is to progressively deploy the Afghani military as they are trained and as they are able to be deployed, whether there be 100,000 for 200,000, as many as they need. Their ownership of their defence of their state is what sustainable countries do, and that is the way to go, after all.

All participants in this debate would no doubt have done quite a bit of soul-searching in preparation for this debate. We have all been considering the situation specific to Afghanistan. There have also been the strategic considerations of problematic areas in other countries and some of those have been mentioned in this debate by other members. There have also been examples of other Australian deployments over the last decade or so, peacekeeping forces in our own region and the like.

I would like to briefly look at a number of questions about us—Australia, our values and where our values place us in the world and how they guide our engagement in countries around the world. Will Australia help impoverished, underdeveloped and developing peoples and countries improve their lot in life? Will Australia respond favourably to countries' explicit requests for our direct assistance? Will we assist people to resist violent takeovers of their people, region or country? Will we oppose oppression in all its forms—oppression of people on the basis of their race, ethnicity, sex, political views or religious beliefs, and government by terror? Will we stand by and allow systematic extremist violence to be perpetrated against the innocent? Each of these questions is applicable to our connection with Afghanistan. To varying degrees each question is applicable to our engagement with other countries in the world and in our region. Each of these questions points to the type of country and people we are—our ethics, our values, our degrees of self-centredness and our active compassion towards others. So I would hope that we as a people and as a nation are secure enough in our society and in our place in the world to be able to give assistance to those less fortunate than ourselves or facing much greater threats than we do. I hope that we would do such things anywhere around the world to the best of our ability wherever assistance is needed. And we have many agencies that do this. Through AusAID, for example, we help nations in our immediate region and beyond in the areas of health and disease prevention, infrastructure, training and the development of skills necessary for their improved self-sufficiency, and it is good and right that we do.

On the question of responding favourably to countries' explicit requests for our direct assistance, where assistance is sought to avert or respond to grave or disastrous outcomes, in all honesty I cannot see how, as a member of the international community, we can morally decline requests for our assistance. Whether we assist in response to the damage caused by tsunamis or other natural disasters, or in the conduct of a nation's first election, as was the case in Cambodia some years ago, or in the establishment of a new and secure nation, such as in-

dependent East Timor, I believe we must provide help when it is requested, as we are able. This is especially the case in response to the third question. We should, I believe with all my heart, assist people to defend themselves from violent assault; help people to defend themselves, their region and their nation; and help people to resist violent takeover. Australia should oppose oppression. There is nothing more abhorrent and contrary to us and our values than sadistic, dictatorial rule. We should defend and promote the ideals for which we stand, share the freedoms we enjoy with those who aspire to similar freedoms, and support those around the world who similarly aspire to ongoing peace within a just society, free of systematic and barbaric violence against and denial of sacred human rights.

Mr COULTON (Parkes) (6.01 pm)—Before I commence my contribution on the motion to take note of the Prime Minister's statement on Australia's commitment to Afghanistan, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my colleague the member for Hindmarsh, a very well considered presentation. I concur with what he said.

I have some difficulty in speaking about this. When I speak on issues in this place, I like to feel that I have a full array of knowledge, that I completely understand them. Because of the very nature of a military presence in another country, someone who is not directly involved cannot have all the facts. In that regard, I am no different to the other members of this place, but I do feel a level of frustration. I have discussed this issue with many of my constituents. I do not purport to speak today for all my constituents—there are a variety of opinions on this—but I think it is important that the people I represent understand what my thoughts are on this issue.

It is important that we go back 10 years to the terrible time of the attack on the World Trade Centre, where many thousands of people were killed, including some Australians, and, not long after that, the two attacks in Bali, where Australian citizens were killed and maimed by terrorists who were trained in Afghanistan. One of the problems with this is that we are getting further away from the issues of the day that framed the thought process that took Australia into this conflict. It is important that we cast our minds back. One of the most indelible images in my brain, apart from all the sights of Bali and the attacks on the World Trade Centre, is from a television report—I cannot remember when it was but it was some time ago—that showed a woman being stoned to death in a soccer stadium in Afghanistan. There may have been charges of adultery. I distinctly remember the images. The Taliban were stoning people to death in a public arena. We need to remember that that was the environment at the time when this decision was made.

As a free nation that was directly affected by people who were trained in Afghanistan, we did have an obligation. I was not a member of this place then, but I would like to think that we went to Afghanistan in the interests of Australia and not, as has been stated by some, to follow a world superpower. I believe that Australia at the time had enough interest of its own in going to Afghanistan. We have an obligation for stability in that region. Not only has Afghanistan been traditionally an unstable place but it adjoins Pakistan, and there has been much said in this debate about the threats that could unfold in Pakistan. It is important that we have a stabilising influence in that area.

We also have an obligation to the people of Afghanistan. My scant knowledge of the history of Afghanistan is that the Afghans are a people who have seen foreign armies come and go, and more often than not, when they go, the country is left in total chaos. Troops from Aus-

tralia and other countries have worked hard over the years to gain the trust of the citizens of Afghanistan. I would hate to think that, if the troops were removed prematurely, those citizens would be caught up in a period of retribution. That would be most unfair, because a lot of them, from my understanding, have put their own safety on the line in making the decision to support a new Afghanistan, to support a new government and to work towards a clear future. A premature withdrawal would be detrimental to those people. That is the problem. Some people in Australian society would like a clear indication of a date for removal of our presence in Afghanistan. The very nature of our presence there means that we cannot indicate that. If we indicated a time when our troops were going to be removed, those who would like to see the old rule of Afghanistan reinstated and the instability return would have a date to work towards. I do not think that should happen.

I believe that we should maintain our presence there and that we should focus on nation building. I do not underestimate that task. I understand that there are issues with the government that is in place there, and I understand that when a country does not have full faith in its government it is very hard for objectives to be achieved. But I do think that the objective of a permanent peace in Afghanistan is an honourable one, and I certainly hope it can be reached.

Another reason for my standing here today is to give my support to the troops that are serving there now and to salute those who have in the past. In speaking with someone on this subject last week, I was surprised to find that some of our troops are on their seventh rotation in Afghanistan. That is a huge commitment by those individuals and their families and it is important that they know they have the support of this parliament and the Australian people. I am also aware of the importance—even given my limited knowledge in military matters—of the proper resources needed to do the job. It would be very frustrating for them to be restricted in their objectives by a set parameter of resources. Whilst I understand that this is a difficult situation to overcome, I would hope that they are given the full resources they need—whether it is in the form of physical resources or whether it is a necessary set of orders that enable them to do what needs to be done.

Finally, I would like to touch on the issue of the soldiers who have fallen and to address, in particular, the loss affecting one family—that of the family of Lieutenant Michael Fussell. Michael Fussell was a personal friend of my daughter and indeed, on his last weekend in Australia before going to Afghanistan, my daughter, together with a group of friends, farewelled him. I was also acquainted with Michael through his being the best friend of my nephew when they were at school together. I was at Michael's funeral in Armadale and I have to say that going to the funeral of a young man—I think at the time Michael was 25—is a very sad occasion.

My thoughts go out to Michael's parents, Ken and Madeline. Their son Dan, Michael's brother, is in Afghanistan seconded to a British unit. I ran into Ken and Madeline as they were en route to Europe—as Dan is training there with his British unit—to spend time with him when he takes leave in his deployment. That family's situation is repeated right across Australia and, while we might stand up here and speak in philosophical terms about it, those families are really living the reality every day. The Fussells are having to come to terms with the loss of their son, a bright young man who had his future ahead of him, a future that may not necessarily have entirely resided in military service—as young men like Michael Fussell can

choose what they do with their lives. He had ability, drive and personality—a fact that was made clear by his friends at his funeral.

It is important that the soldiers who are there, and their families, know that they have the support of their government and their people. While the deaths of our soldiers are not the sole justification for continuing an engagement, I think it is important that we remember those sacrifices that were made. I have welcomed the opportunity to speak on this matter. While I believe that it is important to commit to staying the course, I certainly hope that our troops can be brought home sooner rather than later.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (6.12 pm)—Like the member for Parkes, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this debate. I have had the opportunity, both while in the chair and during the progress of the debate, to hear a great many very fine contributions—and I would like to put that on the record. All the contributors to the debate have genuinely—and in depth—considered the challenging issues facing any nation when it addresses matters of war. Such issues are amongst the most difficult any society has to struggle with, but even those in this debate with whom I profoundly disagree have, I believe, arrived at their views in a considered and very genuine manner.

The same is true of people in my own electorate who have contacted me on the subject. I am sure we have probably all experienced the differing views in our communities but I am very, very confident, from the conversations, letters and emails that I have had, that people are genuinely applying intellectual rigour, along with a well-intentioned heart, to what are some of the most difficult matters that can confront societies and communities. I do welcome the opportunity to make my own contribution to the debate.

I want to say at the outset that whilst I have listened to the argument as to why we should withdraw from Afghanistan, I do not agree with it. I firmly believe that we should remain alongside our allies to try to ensure that Afghanistan is able to escape from its long modern experience of war and its place as a safe haven for terrorism. I firmly believe that the majority of the people of Afghanistan, like the majority of the people of our nation, long for peace, and that they long for peace for their children. I believe that what we are undertaking there is a contribution towards achieving that for them.

Many people have outlined—and I want to put it on the record in my statement too—the circumstance in which we find ourselves in Afghanistan. I think it is important to challenge the view that is sometimes put that it is only a small group—the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia—fighting in Afghanistan. That is not the case. In this united effort of countries from around the world there are 44 other countries involved in this task, including Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Turkey, Spain and New Zealand. There is a combined coalition force and some 120,000 troops from 47 countries in total. We are not alongside only our traditional and historical allies of the United States and the United Kingdom in this conflict, as is sometimes portrayed.

I think it is also important to remember that in 2001 the United Nations sanctioned this military intervention. I am a strong believer in the historical role of the United Nations, which arose out of the terrible world wars of the previous century, and the principles it put in place. Those were principles that said we would take actions to avoid war at all cost but that, when we needed to, we would come together with a common purpose and take military action. Australia has had a tradition of participating within the United Nations from its very inception,

and I take that very seriously in our assessment of our international actions and our commitment to those actions.

United Nations Security Council resolution 1386 was adopted at its meeting on 20 December 2001. Among other things it called on its member states to contribute personnel, equipment and other resources to the International Security Assistance Force and authorised the member states participating in the International Security Assistance Force to take all necessary measures to fulfil its mandate. This resolution has been reviewed by the UN Security Council on 10 occasions, and the resolution has been renewed on each occasion.

I believe Australia is either serious about the UN Charter, especially its obligations for member states to defend international peace and security, or not. The International Security Assistance Force, of which we have been a part since 2001, with varying levels of engagement, is fulfilling a UN Security Council resolution and this fact should not be forgotten nor downplayed. Although there has been to some extent domestic electoral pressure within countries that are acting in Afghanistan under this mandate to withdraw forces, many of the countries initially involved in the conflict remain with us even though it is nine long years later. That fact should also not be forgotten.

The challenge and focus at present is quite often about, 'Where to now? Why are we still there? What is our task?' From my perspective, as I prepared for this debate I concluded that Australia's objectives remain consistent with our first involvement nine years ago. We act in concert with our allies to protect innocent citizens from murder by terrorist activities, and many people have outlined the history of those since those tragic events in 2001. We act to fulfil our obligations as a founding member state of the United Nations, and we act to fulfil our obligations under the ANZUS treaty to assist a longstanding ally—the United States. I reject the claim that Australia in this instance is, as critics suggest, simply subcontracting its foreign policy to the United States. Australia has always stood up for itself, and I do not accept that this occasion is any different. I would point out as an example that this government, the then opposition, opposed the Iraq war. I supported that position, primarily because the war was not sanctioned by the UN Security Council. We promised we would withdraw Australian troops from Iraq and this pledge was fulfilled.

I do not underestimate the difficulty of the task. There has been much evidence presented in many speeches of both the challenges and problems in Afghanistan and the achievements and progress. I believe both of those stories can be and are true. I believe that what has happened positively in some areas has not been repeated throughout all of Afghanistan. I understand the size of those challenges. I understand the history that some have outlined of attempts to have foreign forces in Afghanistan and the less than sterling success of some of those. I understand fully the difficulty of the task that we undertake. But I do not judge the commitment to a task by its difficulty. I continue to believe that what we are doing is worthwhile.

Afghanistan is a complex country and it is in a strategic position in Central Asia. Its population of 28 million is split amongst a tribal structure which is best described as Byzantine. It is complex. I was able to hear the member for Werriwa's speech and he gave an extraordinarily fluid description of the complexities of that tribal structure. I think we all understand the challenges that that in itself creates when you are trying to deal with a country such as Afghanistan. It is poor. It is underdeveloped. It has a history of violence. UNICEF estimates that 80 per cent of females and 50 per cent of males have no access to education. Information and

news is conveyed by village elders, and tribal meetings establish who has the authority to speak for the community. It is beset by three groups responsible for savage violence—the foreign Taliban based in Pakistan, the local Taliban and gangs of criminals.

I have, as you may have noticed, tried to steer clear of the use of ‘war’ in my speech. War, in our traditional sense, implies two or more sides opposed by armed forces of more or less equal capability. War also implies that one side or the other will win by deployment and cunning of its military strategists. I think our modern struggles are more reflected by the developing notion of counterinsurgency that is complex and multistranded, and I think that is what we are engaged in in Afghanistan. After nine years I think we are realising that this is not a conventional war. Most of the ISAF casualties have been through the deploying of improvised explosive devices. The 14 September 2010 quarterly report to the UN General Assembly by the UN Secretary-General indicated that the reporting period recorded a rise in the number of incidents using IEDs by 82 per cent compared to the same period in 2009.

Many colleagues have cautioned in their contributions that we need to reflect on how this conflict really ends. I believe the new international strategy starts to address that very critical question. It has four key parts: counterinsurgency measures to win the hearts and minds, transition to the Afghan government taking responsibility for its own security, negotiation with moderates to develop and establish a political settlement, and engagement with Pakistan.

In the few moments I have left in this debate, I want particularly to make a point about something that is close to my own heart and that has been reflected in many speeches. I profoundly believe that societies are transformed into free, functioning and democratic societies by education, at the end of the day. I think all of these other tasks are important and, as I have indicated in my speech, I believe that military action, including the training and raising of security forces in that country to do its own tasks, is important. But at the end of the day I believe—not surprisingly, as an educationalist—that education is what transforms society in ways that last. I am encouraged by the progress in Afghanistan along that line.

Infant mortality has decreased by 22 per cent since 2002. Where we just say a statistic and do not really understand the reality of this sort of infant mortality, this is a really difficult issue for many, many families and the suffering is significant. Getting more children to survive past five is an aim of many local community organisations in developing countries, and no more so than here. The Prime Minister outlined in her speech, and many others have also made the point, that primary school enrolments have increased from one million in 2001—and, as many have indicated, one million boys only at that time because girls were not entitled to an education—to nearly six million today. Two million of that six million are girls. None of them would have had an opportunity to go to school previously. And I know that an educated girl—as I am sure the opposition whip will agree—can be a powerful force for transition in societies and communities.

The UN Secretary-General’s report I mentioned earlier also indicated that a total of 97,145 Afghan refugees have voluntarily returned, with UNHCR assistance, so far in 2010. That includes 91,583 from Pakistan and 5,515 from Iran. If we want people displaced around the world from Afghanistan to voluntarily return to their homeland, we have to give them hope, and part of that hope is education. We should also not underestimate how force protection is important for aid workers and other civilians in Afghanistan. The UN Secretary-General made the point that attacks against aid workers continued and they represented a worrisome trend

impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance. I think the work that our aid workers do is often underrecognised. I would like to pay tribute in this speech to the aid workers in Afghanistan, but I also believe that they need security to go about their task.

In conclusion, I believe that Australian ADF personnel—as has been so eloquently expressed in this House, including by the opposition whip, whose speech I heard, and by the member for Parkes—have much to be proud of. And those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice leave behind families who will only have pride in the efforts that they have put in on behalf of this nation. They are fulfilling an important obligation under the UN and the ANZUS treaty. While we need to constantly examine the nature of our role, and our performance of it, I continue to believe in the purpose of that task.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson) (6.27 pm)—Many views will be heard in this debate but the most important message is to our enemy. So to those who seek to terrorise and impose an ideology on us and our friends, our message is clear: know that, with all our might, our country and this parliament will continue to provide unquestionable support to our troops. Our country is forged on principles that arm us with the determination to defeat our enemy—principles of decency, perseverance, respect and resolve. These are some of the characteristics in the make-up of our men and women in uniform. And that, in the main, is why our nation can be confident of success. Importantly, these are characteristics we share with our main allies: the people of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada, amongst others. We can be proud of our friendship with those nations and others, and we take the opportunity to strengthen, not diminish, that relationship. We reaffirm that commitment today.

Our troops are right to be in Afghanistan and they were right to be in Iraq. It is right that they were in East Timor. It is right that they will participate in future missions that are in the national security interests of this country. Given the troubled history of Afghanistan, only long after this chapter has closed will we be armed with all the facts that will enable us to form a true judgment of the current offensive. The men and, in particular, the women of Afghanistan deserve to live a free life and to at least give the next generation a chance. For generations they have lived in troubled times. They have lived with hope and despair and they must today be questioning whether our current occupation will stay the course; whether their future should be viewed more optimistically or whether a return to the barbaric behaviour of their oppressors is imminent.

In January 2002 I was in the United States for a Young Leaders Dialogue and I took the opportunity to visit New York City. It was indeed my first trip to New York and to the country. Right across the country people were reeling from the callous attacks only four months prior. Viewing the site where the Twin Towers had stood was sobering, and the feeling of heightened patriotism was palpable right across the country. People around these debates often conveniently forget the impact on the American psyche of those early days.

One person who understood that sentiment well was John Howard. He was, of course, on the ground at the time of the September 11 atrocities, and there is no question that this shaped his response and ultimately the response of our country. But importantly it strengthened our relationship with the United States. Our relationship with the United States and the way in which we view the world and the way in which we will do so in the future is absolutely crucial to this debate. When Robert Gordon Menzies signed the ANZUS agreement in San Francisco in September 1951 it embodied much of what our two nations are about, the history that

we shared together and the way in which our history will be made in years to come. Our two countries share common purposes and that is part of the reason why we are fighting alongside the Americans in Afghanistan at the moment. We have to recognise that our future is dependent in many ways upon those strong security ties with the United States and the United Kingdom, with other NATO allies and with people within our own region. We have to recognise that it is in our national interest to be in Afghanistan alongside our friends. As part of this debate, the need for that continued presence will be underscored to the Australian people.

We have to fight terrorism at every turn. We have been blessed in this country that we have not been given up to the same atrocities that occurred in September 2001. We were of course touched by Bali, and at other times around the world Australians have been killed in callous terrorist attacks. So we have one eye on that current danger but also one eye on what might lie ahead. Many people make predictions about what the next 50 or 100 years will hold militarily in our region or by way of security risk to our country, but in the end nobody knows. The insurance that we have in place, the peace of mind that we have knowing that we are allied with some of the best people in the world, must be recognised as part of this debate.

We have to recognise that this is a debate about the Afghans and their future and the future of many people within the region, not the least of whom being the Pakistanis. There is great volatility in that country right now and there will be in the future, particularly if we were to have a premature exit from Afghanistan. We have to recognise the incredible importance of security in other parts of the Middle East. We have to make sure that we protect the interests, and the security interests in particular, of our friends in Israel. We have to make sure that we fight terrorism at every turn, particularly where the breeding grounds have been in the past and where they will germinate in the future if we do not continue the course that we are currently on.

We have to make sure that this remains a bipartisan position in our country. Many people on both sides of this debate and from both sides of this parliament have expressed different views, but in the end there is an abiding bipartisan approach to our military and strategic interests, both in the present day and into the future. We have to make sure that the Labor Party continues its fine tradition of support of the situation that we find ourselves in with our allies. I believe one of the current threats in our country as we look forward over the next decade or two is a lurching to the left, which I think would be a grave mistake by the ALP. If they were to believe that, for political purposes, they will be drawn to the left by the Greens—and this is very much a contemporary debate—that would be a great mistake for the Labor Party, past, present and future. That is a debate that they will have internally. These are issues that have received bipartisan support and they must do so in the future. Nobody should bring into question those alliances and nobody must abandon what is ultimately going to be in the best interests of our country.

Much of this debate is centred on the men and women in our uniform in Afghanistan and the enormous sacrifice that many of them have made but, importantly, that their families have made as well. I have a large presence in my electorate of Defence Force families in areas like Eatons Hill and Albany Creek, around Bray Park, Warner, Samford and otherwise across the electorate. These are thoroughly decent people and families. As I said in my opening remarks, they embody much of what we are as Australians. They are proud to see their mums and dads go off to fight for and defend their country. They are of course anxious, as loved ones, about

the safety and security of those that they hold near and dear, but in the end they are comforted, at least to some degree, in knowing that these are fine people and the finest that we can put on the front line to defend the interests of this country by fighting terrorism where it breeds and making sure that the long-term safety of our country is intact. We talk to these families and we see them on occasions at local schools. We see them as part of the RSLs and sub-branches, like the Bray Park sub-branch and the Kallangur sub-branch of the RSL within my own electorate—the fine people who have fought in past conflicts, who support their brothers and sisters in the current conflict, who will always have at the core of who they are what is in the best interests of this nation and who will always defend the right of our country to engage in conflicts which are in the long-term interests of this country. So, whilst this debate is about the present conflict in Afghanistan, it is very much about what is going to serve us well into the future.

We need to make sure that our focus remains on the needs of our troops in the field. We need to make sure not only that they receive the best training in the world but that they receive adequate resources, and that is of course something that both sides of politics support. We supported it when we were in government and I know the current government supports it as well. Where there are problems and glitches from time to time, where there are extra demands made, then we should be generous in our approach to granting those extra resources, because these are men and women who fight in our name. They fight to protect who we are. They fight to protect who we are going to be into the future. So I want to say to those young students right across the electorate who have mums and dads in Afghanistan at the moment: be very proud of who they are. It is difficult when they are away from you for so long, but know in your hearts that the work that they are doing in Afghanistan makes us as a nation very proud. As a son or daughter of one of those serving men or women you too should be equally proud of who your mum or dad is and the work that they do.

It is tragic that we have lost lives in Afghanistan and in recent conflicts in Iraq and other parts of the world. That is the sad reality that goes with having to defend one's nation and one's honour. So we need to ensure that we maintain a level of respect in this debate whilst always honouring the great character of those men and women who don the Australian uniform. We have to make sure that ultimately we as a parliament and as a people are acting in the nation's interests. I believe very strongly that by our presence in Afghanistan we are doing two things. Firstly, we are fighting terrorism and the evil scourge that it is, not just for the betterment of our own country but for countries in the Middle East as well. Secondly, we are strengthening our relationship with the United States, which is incredibly important for the future of this country.

Nobody 10 years ago could possibly have imagined the terrible circumstances that played out in September 2001 in the United States and the countless terrorist attacks since on embassies or national assets around the world. We need to make sure that we stay the course, that we do not discredit those who have lost their lives in Afghanistan by leaving early. I strongly believe that if we were to cut and run from Afghanistan now, as some advocate, we would not be doing the service required to those people who in recent months and years, since our engagement in this conflict, have given up their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice.

In closing, as I said at the start, ours today is a very strong message to the enemy of this country and to the enemy of friends of our country. We will not be persuaded to change the

course from what is right. As a nation we have always stood for what is best in humanity. We want to provide a bright future for the people of Afghanistan. We want to provide certainty for people as best we can, not only in the Middle East but around the world. I believe we are making a significant contribution as a country and I believe that into the future our country will be well served by our action in Iraq and also in Afghanistan. If we are to provide a brighter future, particularly for women in that region, then it is absolutely essential that we redouble our efforts and make sure that we continue the bipartisan approach. That is something that I am personally committed to and that I know the coalition is thoroughly committed to. We will not give in to those who seek to destroy what we are.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (6.41 pm)—At the commencement of my contribution to this debate, I would like to place on record my thanks to the Prime Minister for her statement on Afghanistan and for committing to make a similar statement to this House each year that we are involved in the Afghan conflict. The worrying thing about this commitment is that the Prime Minister expects the war to continue and that Australian troops will be fighting there for some time to come. I would like to place on record my thanks to our Australian soldiers serving in Afghanistan. Their commitment to our country makes us all proud. Our troops have my full support, and I am not questioning our alliance with the US. However, I question our involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan.

I ask myself: how has our presence in Afghanistan made either it or Australia a safer place? I am afraid the answer is that it has not. Civilians are still being killed, wounded and traumatised. Australian soldiers are dying. Twenty-one young Australians have lost their lives and a further 156 soldiers have been wounded. Even more have suffered trauma and psychological damage. I put on record that I do not apologise for the position that I am taking in this debate. But in taking this position I must say that I fully support our troops and the veterans who will come back to Australia after this war.

The conflict has not led to a decline in militant Islamism, nor less death and destruction. Rather, it has led to more civilian deaths and more devastation in a country that struggles to feed its people and has the worst child and maternal health outcomes in the world. It remains a country where 28 per cent of the population are illiterate and where corruption is rampant. An article by John Kerin in the *Australian Financial Review* on 19 October this year highlighted the inconsistencies in Australia's involvement in Afghanistan. He pointed out that the Karzai government is one of the most corrupt governments on earth and that the only more venal government is Somalia's. I question that we are sending our troops to protect such a government. I ask: is it worthy of our protection? I question a government that oversees state organised drug-running, fraud and bribery and one that reportedly maintains power through election fraud and violence. I refer to that same article, John Kerin's article in the *Financial Review*, where he states:

An election in late September was riddled with fraud in up to one-third of Afghan provinces. Both Hamid Karzai and his brother Ahmed Wali were accused of trying to fix the result.

The Taliban and other insurgent groups made good on their promise to disrupt the elections by mounting rocket attacks and intimidating election workers.

The attacks led to the closure of 1000 of the 6000 polling stations.

I feel that that really puts into question the level of democracy that exists in Afghanistan. It would appear that it is a government that mirrors the Taliban and that Australians are involved

in a conflict that is propping up a corrupt government to prevent another corrupt government coming to power, in the hope that this corrupt government is less inclined to direct terrorism towards Australia and our allies.

I question whether it is worth the loss of life, the devastation and the destruction in a country that has a long history of being plagued by conflict and civil war. Afghanistan is a dysfunctional society. Our intervention has not changed this, nor will it in the future. I ask: are the lives of the Afghani people any better as a result of our involvement in the war in Afghanistan? The answer is no. Is the world a safer place? The answer is no. Is there less likelihood of a terrorist attack? The answer is no. If this cannot be achieved through the conflict, how then can it be achieved? I strongly believe that it can be best achieved by winning the hearts and minds of the Afghani people, by improving literacy, ensuring better health outcomes, addressing the issue of food shortages—by spending money on aid, not bullets.

Australia's commitment to the war in Afghanistan commenced in October 2001 with the deployment of a special forces task force which was withdrawn in November 2002. Up until 2005, Australia maintained a relatively small presence in Afghanistan. Since 2005, however, troop numbers have been boosted, and currently we have almost 1,500 soldiers deployed under the International Security Assistance Force. The sacrifice of all these soldiers is to be admired, with special thought given to the 21 Australian soldiers who, tragically, have been killed in the conflict.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 6.47 pm to 7.21 pm

Ms HALL—The terrorist attacks on September 11 were a terrible tragedy, a horrible event that shocked the international community. The response by the United States was a natural path in retaliation against the deaths of 3,000 American citizens. Australians will remember the horror of the Bali attack in 2002 and the many Australians who were killed there. However, the legality of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan is questionable. I refer to a statement by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, where they say that 'central to just war theory is the protection of innocent citizens, the preservation of life and the supremacy of human dignity, in addition to a high probability of success and that the use of force is the absolute last resort'.

The war is in its ninth year and 2010 is arguably the most violent year yet with the growing Australian death toll. Abandoning the Afghan people would only prove doubts over the legality of the war true; however, if Australia were to formulate a timely and reasonable exit strategy to withdraw its troops, we would not be abandoning the Afghan people but quitting as some contributors to this debate have suggested.

According to a study commissioned by the Australian Council for International Development Afghanistan working group, the Australian defence budget at approximately \$1.2 billion is estimated to be 10 times that of the Australian aid budget. By withdrawing the troops Australia would not be giving up; it would be an opportunity to expand our foreign aid efforts to Afghanistan and the region while not putting any more Australian lives at risk. In particular there would be an opportunity to support the cause of non-government organisations like Caritas Australia who are known for their close relationship with the Afghan communities. The Australian Council for International Development has also called for a decoupling of Austra-

lian aid and defence spending. On 1 October 2001, in his address to a special week-long session of the General Assembly on terrorism, United Nations then Secretary-General Kofi Annan said:

As we summon the will and the resources to succeed in the struggle against terrorism, we must also care for all the victims of terrorism, whether they are the direct targets or other populations who will be affected by our common effort. That is why I have launched an alert to donors about the potential need for much more generous humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

During 2008 the life expectancy at birth in Afghanistan was 44 years. This is close to half that of Australia. The war has contributed to this low life expectancy. According to recent United Nations reports to the UN in New York by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations, the civilian death toll is up by 31 per cent this year due to an increase in insurgent attacks. Indeed much of the death toll is unknown and will never be known. It is impossible to come to an exact figure of how many people have lost their lives, but estimates suggest a figure in the vicinity of 44,000—and they are civilians.

Afghanistan ranks 181 out of 182 countries in the UN Human Development Index as corruption runs rife within the Karzai government, highlighted by the outcome of the recent election which I touched on earlier. The continuing deployment in Afghanistan is often justified on the grounds that it is supporting stable and democratic government. I question whether the Karzai government could be described as either. All reports show that it is a government that is rife with corruption and that it is perpetuating many of the problems that have been long seeded in the Afghan society. Al-Qaeda is virtually non-existent in Afghanistan in 2010, and with the diminishing influence of al-Qaeda on the Taliban it is time for diplomacy and to negotiate with the Taliban. This will help end the bloodshed, will actively promote the cause of democracy in the region and end the culture of corruption within the Afghan government.

The Australian community is becoming more and more sceptical about our prospects of success and increasingly doubtful about the merit of our involvement in Afghanistan. If our constituents do not support putting Australian lives at risk, we should endeavour to bring our troops home safely. The Netherlands left Afghanistan earlier this year and Canada has announced plans to withdraw its soldiers from the country next year. The purpose of our involvement was to prevent further terrorist attacks and to halt the spread of terrorism. Arguably, Australia's involvement has increased the terrorist threat to Australia. If that is the case then it is time to consider our exit strategy from this war where there can be no winners, only loss of life and destruction. A time frame for the withdrawal of our troops needs to be set and a discussion as to how this will occur needs to commence. New strategies need to be developed that will lead to Afghanistan becoming a functioning, viable society where extremism is a thing of the past.

The Prime Minister, in her statement to the parliament, highlighted our aid commitment to Afghanistan. I believe this is the answer to terrorism. By improving people's lives and lifting them out of poverty and fear the need for fanaticism and radical solutions will be removed. I conclude by thanking the Prime Minister for allowing this debate. I put on record the fact that I question our involvement in this conflict, but whilst questioning our involvement I give my unconditional support to our troops.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Rishworth**) adjourned.

BUSINESS

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (7.29 pm)—I move:

That order of the day No. 7, private members business, be returned to the House for further consideration.

Question agreed to.

Main Committee adjourned at 7.30 pm