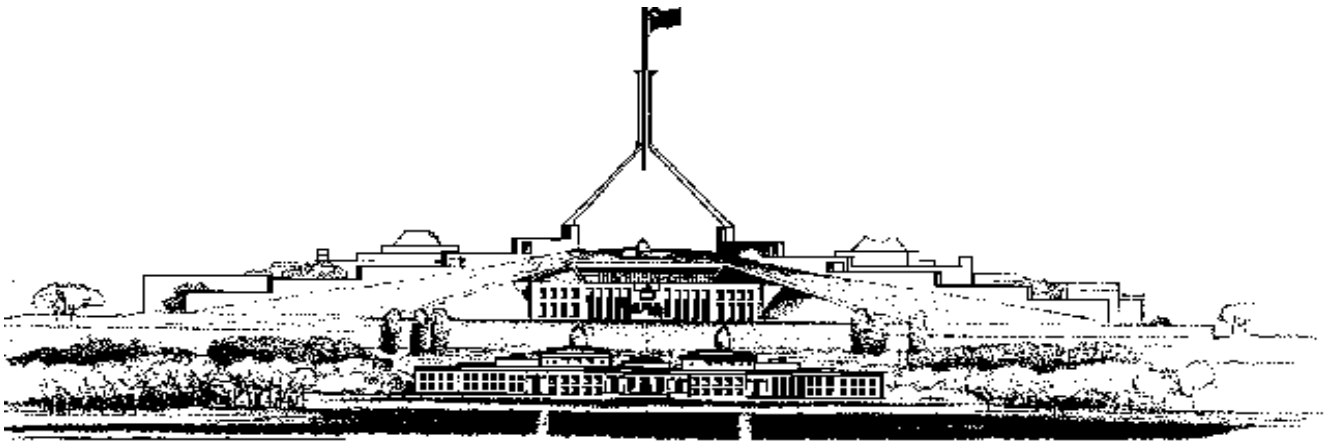




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



Senate

Official Hansard

Monday, 21 November 2022

FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

**FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

Governor-General

His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley AC, DSC, FTSE (Retd)

Senate Office Holders

President—Senator the Hon. Susan Lines

Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Andrew McLachlan CSC

Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Allman-Payne, Bilyk, Chandler, Cox, Fawcett, McGrath, O'Neill, O'Sullivan, Polley, Pratt, Reynolds, Dean Smith, Marielle Smith, Sterle, Van and Walsh

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

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Donald Farrell

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash

Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Katherine Gallagher

Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm

Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam

Senate Party Leaders and Whips

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

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Donald Farrell

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash

Leader of the Nationals in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie

Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate—Senator Perin Davey

Leader of the Australian Greens in the Senate—Senator Larissa Waters

Chief Government Whip—Senator Anne Elizabeth Urquhart

Deputy Government Whips—Senators Raffaele Ciccone and Louise Pratt

Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Wendy Askew

Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Paul Scarr and Matthew O'Sullivan

The Nationals Whip—Senator Ross Cadell

Australian Greens Whip—Senator Nicholas McKim

Printed by authority of the Senate

Members of the Senate

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Allman-Payne, Penny Jane	QLD	30.6.2028	AG
Antic, Alexander	SA	30.6.2025	LP
Askew, Wendy	TAS	30.6.2028	LP
Ayres, Hon. Timothy	NSW	30.6.2025	ALP
Babet, Ralph	VIC	30.6.2028	UAP
Bilyk, Catryna Louise	TAS	30.6.2025	ALP
Birmingham, Hon. Simon John	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Bragg, Andrew James	NSW	30.6.2025	LP
Brockman, Slade	WA	30.6.2025	LP
Brown, Hon. Carol Louise	TAS	30.6.2025	ALP
Cadell, Ross	NSW	30.6.2028	NATS
Canavan, Hon. Matthew James	QLD	30.6.2028	NATS
Cash, Hon. Michaelia Clare	WA	30.6.2028	LP
Chandler, Claire	TAS	30.6.2025	LP
Chisholm, Hon. Anthony David	QLD	30.6.2028	ALP
Ciccione, Raffaele	VIC	30.6.2025	ALP
Colbeck, Hon. Richard Mansell	TAS	30.6.2025	LP
Cox, Dorinda Rose	WA	30.6.2028	AG
Davey, Perin McGregor	NSW	30.6.2025	NATS
Dodson, Patrick	WA	30.6.2025	ALP
Duniam, Hon. Jonathon Roy	TAS	30.6.2028	LP
Farrell, Hon. Donald Edward	SA	30.6.2028	ALP
Faruqi, Mehreen Saeed	NSW	30.6.2025	AG
Fawcett, Hon. David Julian	SA	30.6.2025	LP
Gallagher, Hon. Katherine Ruth	ACT		ALP
Green, Nita Louise	QLD	30.6.2025	ALP
Grogan, Karen ⁽¹⁾	SA	30.6.2025	ALP
Hanson, Pauline Lee	QLD	30.6.2028	PHON
Hanson-Young, Sarah Coral	SA	30.6.2025	AG
Henderson, Hon. Sarah Moya	VIC	30.6.2028	LP
Hughes, Hollie Alexandra	NSW	30.6.2025	LP
Hume, Hon. Jane	VIC	30.6.2025	LP
Lambie, Jacqui	TAS	30.6.2025	JLN
Liddle, Kerrynne Jeanette	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Lines, Susan	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
McAllister, Hon. Jennifer Ryll	NSW	30.6.2028	ALP
McCarthy, Hon. Malarndirri Barbara Anne	NT		ALP
McDonald, Susan Eileen	QLD	30.6.2025	NATS
McGrath, Hon. James	QLD	30.6.2028	LP
McKenzie, Hon. Bridget	VIC	30.6.2028	NATS
McKim, Nicholas James	TAS	30.6.2025	AG
McLachlan, Andrew Lockhart, CSC	SA	30.6.2028	LP
Molan, Andrew James	NSW	30.6.2028	LP
Nampijinpa Price, Jacinta Suzette	NT		CLP
O'Neill, Deborah Mary	NSW	30.6.2028	ALP
O'Sullivan, Matthew Anthony	WA	30.6.2025	LP
Paterson, James William	VIC	30.6.2025	LP
Payman, Fatima	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
Payne, Hon. Marise Ann	NSW	30.6.2028	LP
Pocock, Barbara Ann	SA	30.6.2028	AG
Pocock, David Willmer	ACT		IND

Senator	State or Territory	Term expires	Party
Polley, Helen Beatrice	TAS	30.6.2028	ALP
Pratt, Louise Clare	WA	30.6.2025	ALP
Rennick, Gerard	QLD	30.6.2025	LP
Reynolds, Hon. Linda Karen, CSC	WA	30.6.2025	LP
Rice, Janet Elizabeth	VIC	30.6.2025	AG
Roberts, Malcolm Ieuan	QLD	30.6.2025	PHON
Ruston, Hon. Anne Sowerby	SA	30.6.2025	LP
Scarr, Paul Martin	QLD	30.6.2025	LP
Sheldon, Anthony Vincent	NSW	30.6.2025	ALP
Shoebridge, David Martin	NSW	30.6.2028	AG
Smith, Dean Anthony	WA	30.6.2028	LP
Smith, Marielle Feuerherdt	SA	30.6.2025	ALP
Steele-John, Jordon Alexander	WA	30.6.2025	AG
Sterle, Glenn	WA	30.6.2028	ALP
Stewart, Jana Naretha Anne	VIC	30.6.2028	ALP
Thorpe, Lidia Alma	VIC	30.6.2028	AG
Tyrrell, Tammy	TAS	30.6.2028	JLN
Urquhart, Anne Elizabeth	TAS	30.6.2028	ALP
Van, David Allan	VIC	30.6.2025	LP
Walsh, Jess Cecille	VIC	30.6.2025	ALP
Waters, Larissa Joy	QLD	30.6.2025	AG
Watt, Hon. Murray Patrick	QLD	30.6.2028	ALP
Whish-Wilson, Peter Stuart	TAS	30.6.2028	AG
White, Linda	VIC	30.6.2028	ALP
Wong, Hon. Penelope Ying Yen	SA	30.6.2028	ALP

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

Territory	Senator	Party	Senator	Party
Australian Capital Territory	Gallagher, K.R.	ALP	Pocock, D.W.	IND
Northern Territory	McCarthy, M.B.A.	ALP	Price, J.Y.N.	CLP

⁽¹⁾ Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice A Gallacher), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party;
 CLP—Country Liberal Party; IND—Independent;
 JLN—Jacqui Lambie Network; LNP—Liberal National Party;
 LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
 PHON—Pauline Hanson's One Nation; UAP—United Australia Party

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
 Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
 Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
 Parliamentary Budget Officer—S Helgeby

ALBANESE MINISTRY

TITLE	MINISTER
Prime Minister	The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for the Public Service	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Women (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Indigenous Australians	The Hon Linda Burney MP
Cabinet Secretary	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
<i>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</i>	<i>The Hon Patrick Gorman MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy</i>
Minister for Defence (Deputy Prime Minister)	The Hon Richard Marles MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Defence Personnel	The Hon Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Defence Industry	The Hon Pat Conroy MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
Minister for Foreign Affairs (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Trade and Tourism (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
Minister for International Development and the Pacific	The Hon Pat Conroy MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Trade</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon Tim Watts MP</i>
Treasurer	The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Minister for Small Business	The Hon Julie Collins MP
Assistant Treasurer	The Hon Stephen Jones MP
Minister for Financial Services	The Hon Stephen Jones MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>
Minister for Finance	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Special Minister of State	Senator the Hon Don Farrell

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (Leader of the House)	The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Skills and Training	The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Education	The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Early Childhood Education	The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP
Minister for Youth	The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Education</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>
Minister for Health and Aged Care (Deputy Leader of the House)	The Hon Mark Butler MP
Minister for Aged Care	The Hon Anika Wells MP
Minister for Sport	The Hon Anika Wells MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care</i>	<i>The Hon Ged Kearney MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>	<i>The Hon Emma McBride MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health</i>	<i>The Hon Emma McBride MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy</i>
Minister for Climate Change and Energy	The Hon Chris Bowen MP
Minister for the Environment and Water	The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister</i>
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government	The Hon Catherine King MP
Minister for Communications	The Hon Michelle Rowland MP
Minister for the Arts	The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Northern Australia	The Hon Madeleine King MP
Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon Kristy McBain MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Carol Brown</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Regional Development</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>
Minister for Social Services	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Minister for Government Services	The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Minister for Housing	The Hon Julie Collins MP
Minister for Homelessness	The Hon Julie Collins MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</i>
Attorney-General	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
<i>Assistant Minister for the Republic</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>

Minister for Resources	The Hon Madeleine King MP
Minister for Industry and Science	The Hon Ed Husic MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Home Affairs	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Cyber Security	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Emergency Management	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs	The Hon Andrew Giles MP

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there can be two departments in one portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a Minister in all cases. Ministers are sworn to administer the portfolio in which they are listed under the 'Minister' column and may also be sworn to administer other portfolios in which they are not listed. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the Ministers of State Act 1952.

SHADOW MINISTRY

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
Leader of the Opposition	The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Shadow Minister for Women	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Cabinet Secretary	Senator the Hon Marise Payne
Shadow Minister for the Public Service	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians	Julian Leeser MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition</i>	<i>Senator the Hon James McGrath</i>
Shadow Minister for Industry, Skills and Training (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Resources	Senator Susan McDonald
Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy	Ted O'Brien MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy</i>	<i>Senator Hollie Hughes</i>
Shadow Minister for Agriculture (Leader of the Nationals)	The Hon David Littleproud MP
Shadow Minister for Water (Deputy Leader of the Nationals)	Senator Perin Davey
Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry	Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs (Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Shadow Minister for Trade and Tourism (Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	The Hon Kevin Hogan MP
Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific	The Hon Michael McCormack MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Trade</i>	<i>Rick Wilson MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	<i>Senator Claire Chandler</i>
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Education	The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Education	The Hon Andrew Gee MP
Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education	Angie Bell MP
Shadow Minister for Youth	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education</i>	<i>The Hon Nola Marino MP</i>

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
Shadow Treasurer	The Hon Angus Taylor MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Shadow Minister for Financial Services	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	<i>Senator Dean Smith</i>
Shadow Minister for Government Services and the Digital Economy	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Shadow Minister for Science and the Arts (Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	
Shadow Minister for Social Services	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	
Shadow Minister for Housing	
Shadow Minister for Homelessness	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>Pat Conaghan MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Home Affairs	The Hon Karen Andrews MP
Shadow Minister for Child Protection and the Prevention of Family Violence	
Shadow Minister for Emergency Management	Senator Perin Davey
Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Shadow Minister for Community Safety, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs	The Hon Jason Wood MP
Shadow Minister for Cyber Security	Senator James Paterson
Shadow Minister for Countering Foreign Interference	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>Pat Conaghan MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care	Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
Shadow Minister for Sport (Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)	
Shadow Minister for Regional Health	The Hon Andrew Gee MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>	<i>Melissa McIntosh MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, Aged Care and Indigenous Health Services</i>	<i>Gavin Pearce MP</i>

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development (Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
Shadow Minister for Communications	Senator the Hon Sarah Henderson
Shadow Minister for Northern Australia	Senator Susan McDonald
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon Andrew Gee MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Development</i>	<i>Dr Anne Webster MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</i>	<i>Tony Pasin MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Defence	The Hon Andrew Hastie MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Industry	The Hon Luke Howarth MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Personnel	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Phillip Thompson OAM MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Finance	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
Shadow Special Minister of State	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Finance</i>	<i>Senator the Hon James McGrath</i>
Shadow Attorney-General	Julian Leeser MP

Each box represents a portfolio. **Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.**

CONTENTS

MONDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2022

DOCUMENTS	
Tabling	1807
COMMITTEES	
Meeting	1807
BILLS	
Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022	1807
Second Reading.....	1807
In Committee.....	1819
STATEMENTS BY SENATORS	
Northern Territory: Domestic and Family Violence.....	1840
Workplace Relations: Amazon.....	1841
Youth Voice In Parliament Week	1841
Human Rights: Myanmar	1842
Workplace Relations.....	1842
World Economic Forum.....	1842
Qantas.....	1843
Youth Voice in Parliament Week.....	1843
Tibet	1843
Victoria State Election	1844
COVID-19: Vaccination.....	1844
Tasmania: Self-Help Workplace	1844
Human Rights: Qatar	1845
Climate Change.....	1845
HMAS Sydney (II)	1846
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
Energy	1846
Floods.....	1847
Workplace Relations.....	1849
Climate Change.....	1849
Turnell, Professor Sean.....	1851
Birthrate.....	1852
Workplace Relations.....	1852
Climate Change.....	1853
Workplace Relations.....	1855
Iran	1856
Trade	1857
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS	
Answers to Questions	1858
Climate Change.....	1862
NOTICES	
Presentation.....	1862
BUSINESS	
Leave of Absence.....	1865
Leave of Absence.....	1865
Postponement.....	1865
COMMITTEES	
Reporting Date.....	1865
CONDOLENCES	
Reith, Hon. Peter Keaston, AM.....	1865
REGULATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS	
Industry Research and Development (Golden Beach Gas Storage Acceleration Program) Instrument 2022	1873
Disallowance	1873
DOCUMENTS	
Climate Change.....	1874
Order for the Production of Documents	1874
Fuel Excise.....	1875
Order for the Production of Documents	1875

Jobs and Skills Summit.....	1876
Order for the Production of Documents	1876
Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022	1877
Order for the Production of Documents	1877
Questions on Notice.....	1878
Order for the Production of Documents	1878
MATTERS OF URGENCY	
Climate Change.....	1879
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	
Cost of Living	1884
DOCUMENTS	
Australian Building and Construction Commissioner	1890
Consideration	1890
Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grant.....	1891
Order for the Production of Documents	1891
COMMITTEES	
Cost of Living Select Committee	1891
Work and Care Select Committee	1891
Membership.....	1891
BILLS	
Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022.....	1891
Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022.....	1891
First Reading	1891
Second Reading.....	1891
Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022	1894
Privacy Legislation Amendment (Enforcement and Other Measures) Bill 2022	1894
First Reading	1894
Second Reading.....	1894
Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022.....	1901
Atomic Energy Amendment (Mine Rehabilitation and Closure) Bill 2022.....	1901
Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2022.....	1901
Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme Amendment Bill 2022.....	1901
Education Legislation Amendment (2022 Measures No. 1) Bill 2022	1901
High Speed Rail Authority Bill 2022	1901
Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget Measures) Bill 2022.....	1901
First Reading	1901
Second Reading.....	1901
Customs Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022.....	1909
Customs Tariff Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022.....	1909
Customs Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022	1909
Customs Tariff Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022	1909
Treasury Laws Amendment (Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022.....	1909
First Reading	1909
Second Reading.....	1909
COMMITTEES	
Electoral Matters Joint Committee	1911
Membership.....	1911
BILLS	
Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Lifting the Income Limit for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card) Bill 2022.....	1911
Supply Bill (No. 3) 2022-2023	1911
Supply Bill (No. 4) 2022-2023	1911
Supply (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2022-2023.....	1911
Aged Care Amendment (Implementing Care Reform) Bill 2022	1911
Australian Human Rights Commission Legislation Amendment (Selection and Appointment) Bill 2022.....	1911
Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (AFP Powers and Other Matters) Bill 2022.....	1911
Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2022.....	1911
Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022.....	1911

Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022	1911
National Health Amendment (General Co-payment) Bill 2022.....	1911
Treasury Laws Amendment (More Competition, Better Prices) Bill 2022	1911
Assent	1911
Crimes Amendment (Penalty Unit) Bill 2022	1911
Report from Committee	1911
Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022	1911
In Committee.....	1911
Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022.....	1913
Second Reading.....	1913
In Committee.....	1923
ADJOURNMENT	
Tasmania: Public Holidays.....	1927
Workplace Relations: Amazon.....	1927
COVID-19: Vaccination.....	1928
Youth Voice In Parliament Week	1929
Youth Voice in Parliament Week.....	1929
Youth Voice In Parliament Week	1930

Monday, 21 November 2022

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. Sue Lines) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The Clerk: I table documents pursuant to statute as listed on the Dynamic Red.

Full details of the documents are recorded in the Journals of the Senate.

COMMITTEES

Meeting

The Clerk: Proposals to meet have been lodged as follows:

Electoral Matters—Joint Standing Committee—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), followed by public hearings, from 9.10 am, on Wednesday, 23 and 30 November 2022.

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee—

private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) today, from 10.30 am.

public meeting on Monday, 28 November 2022, from 6.30 pm, for the committee's consideration of the 2022-23 Budget estimates.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade—Joint Standing Committee—

private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), followed by private briefings—

Tuesday, 22 November 2022, from 5.30 pm.

Wednesday, 23 November 2022, from 9 am.

Thursday, 24 November 2022, from 11.30 am.

private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), followed by a public meeting on Wednesday, 23 November 2022, from midday.

Intelligence and Security—Joint Statutory Committee—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), followed by public meetings—

Tuesday, 22 and 29 November 2022, from 4 pm.

Wednesday, 23 and 30 November 2022, from midday.

Thursday, 24 November and 1 December 2022, from 3.30 pm.

Treaties—Joint Standing Committee—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), from 11 am, today and on Monday, 28 November 2022.

The PRESIDENT (10:01): I remind senators that the question may be put on any proposal at the request of any senator.

BILLS

Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (10:02): I'm pleased to commence the contributions to the second reading debate on the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022 on behalf of the opposition. Much has been said by colleagues in the other place around the coalition's position, which I will restate now, and that is that we won't be opposing the bill, noting that we did support it in the House. It's important to outline from the coalition's point of view why we've reached that conclusion and also make it clear that, given the nature of our political foundation and our framework of beliefs, we do believe in choice and we believe that parents who engage in work or study should also be able to access care, whether that be through formal or informal arrangements. I think that's an important factor of this entire make-up of this sector of the economy—this service provision part of the economy—that hasn't been dealt with properly here.

In this bill, though, there is a lack of detail from the government. In particular, there's no plan to address a particular issue that is going to cause a high degree of concern for many—that is, the lack of a plan to address the workforce shortage and, of course, the pressures being faced by educators currently in the marketplace. I should

also indicate that, up until recently, my family and I had a formal involvement in this industry and we know exactly what educators are going through. It is something that we do need to take account of here. There's no plan to address access to care. Many parents know and anyone who goes out into the community knows—and I'm sure it's across this place—that many parents are struggling to find a place for care and education of their child. It might be part of the week that they require that is covered, or it could be only a day, but the fact is that it is a difficult task to find a place for care. There's no plan to address thin markets and childcare deserts where there are little to no services, and there's no modelling to show that this bill will actually deliver on what the government has promised. There's \$4.7 billion being spent through this legislation and not one single cent will be spent on creating additional places or services. As we've said previously, the bill we're debating today favours high-income earners over the rest of Australians.

In terms of workforce pressures, early childhood educators, who do an amazing job, have been under pressure for the last couple of years and have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic. Now that we're out the other side, workers are leaving this sector for other careers. A range of issues have contributed to that, but, at the end of the day, childcare educators have become burnt out. There are currently 7,200 vacancies in this sector, but there are pieces of recent data showing there could be up to 20,000 vacancies, which points to the concerns the coalition have raised around this legislation. We've asked the government on several occasions now how many additional educators will be needed under this policy, and we're yet to receive an answer. It's an important fact to put on the table so that we know what we are actually dealing with, how the problem will be resolved and what the plan or pathway is to get there.

Goodstart Early Learning, the largest not-for-profit provider, estimates an additional 9,000 educators will be needed by July next year to match the influx of children expected under this policy. The government has been doing a lot of talking but, based on the fact that we don't have these important pieces of information to allay concerns, not much listening. Back in 2019, in opposition the now government campaigned on a platform of higher wages for early educators. That seems to have been dropped from the platform and the minister won't commit to higher wages for early educators. When asked about it, the government points to its fee-free TAFE places, which won't deliver immediate relief for the workforce, especially when they need it most. As I've already said, the educators are not happy and leaving the sector in droves. Many centres are capping enrolments and asking families to keep their kids at home, because they don't have enough staff to operate at full capacity. We're seeing an increasing number of centres applying for waivers because they can't retain teachers who leave the sector for better pay and better conditions in the education sector. With more children set to enter the sector from July next year, we need to understand how the government plans to ensure there is workforce that meets these needs and offers the support these kids deserve.

In terms of childcare deserts, thin markets and access to care, a report commissioned and published earlier this year from the Mitchell institute showed that around one-third of Australian families, or nine million Australians, live in a childcare desert. A desert is described as being one place for every three children, so that's hardly making the mark. So 50 per cent of childcare deserts are located in metro locations and the other half in regional, rural and remote locations. This bill creates no extra places and there's no interest from the government in plugging that hole. Where are these new places going to open for all the new children entering the system? And what's the point of lowering out-of-pocket costs if you can't even get into care? These are key questions that need to be addressed here.

While the government has said it will continue the Community Child Care Fund, which provides much-needed funding through grant rounds for services in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, there's no money in this budget for the next round, nor can the government tell us when the next round of grants will open. Indeed, it's important to point out that, if there was a real sense of care from the government around improving access, it would address the areas struggling most.

In terms of cost, the last time the government was in government, childcare fees jumped by 53 per cent in just a six-year period. The price tag of this policy has changed four times. It started at \$5.4 billion, then went to \$5.1 billion, was revised down to \$4.5 billion, and is now back up to \$4.7 billion. That does make one wonder how much work has actually gone into this. I've already talked about the lack of modelling and the lack of clear data around how many places and new educators are needed and how certain issues will be resolved, but this jumping around of numbers—the revision of what the cost of the policy will be—speaks to the fact that that is undercooked. Labor's \$4.7 billion policy is, as I understand it, costed for three days a week. The average child attends early learning three days a week. If Labor really wanted to get kids attending care more days a week, it would have probably been prudent, I would have thought, to cost a policy for five days a week instead.

In terms of higher income earners being set to benefit over low-income earners, families with a combined income of up to \$355,000 are currently eligible for a childcare subsidy. Under this bill, that will blow out to \$532,000. There has been no modelling done on whether increasing the threshold to \$532,000 will actually increase the number of

hours worked by those families nor on whether it will increase the number of days they put their child in care. We don't know what the families in those brackets currently do. We don't know whether they access care five days a week, whether they use a mix of informal and formal arrangements or whether they have a nanny, an au pair or a stay-at-home parent. Under this bill, taxpayers will fork out an additional 22½ thousand dollars for a family on a combined income of \$360,000 a year with a minimum of two kids. Compare that with a family earning a combined income of \$80,000. Taxpayers will fork out \$2,488 a year for them.

It's clear there has been no due diligence and no modelling done on this policy. That is of great concern and should be for everyone. In terms of the out-of-pocket costs and the issue that all of us know our communities are dealing with—cost-of-living pressures—the last time the Labor party governed this country, childcare fees skyrocketed by 53 per cent in six years. Out-of-pocket costs are already rising, and fees will most likely rise before 1 July 2023. This will quite possibly erode a significant amount of the increased subsidies before they're even in place. While we were in government we kept out-of-pocket costs low.

The latest CPI data from June this year showed that childcare costs came down 4.6 per cent in the year to June 2022. While the minister has said that this policy will not have an impact on inflation, I'm not sure how one can stick to that. We know that it's just not true. The government has no plans to address rising out-of-pocket costs or rising cost-of-living pressures in child care. The 12-month, \$10-million ACCC inquiry that they announced is too little too late. The inquiry will do nothing to alleviate current pressures in the sector, including—importantly—workforce shortages and access. The inquiry doesn't start until 1 January next year and won't report back until the end of that year. That means that nothing will be done to address the rising costs until 2024 at the earliest. Australian families can't wait that long. They need relief now.

With early education costs set to increase under this government, Australian families deserve to know if they will really be better off under this government, as was promised. It's time that this government focused less on politics and spin and more on a plan to ensure a strong economy that supports Australian workers and their families. They need to ensure that the policies that are brought forward are properly costed, that we understand how many extra places will be created or will be needed and where they will be needed, that all communities that rely on these services have access to them and that they happen in a timely fashion. As I've already said, and I think it is an important point to focus on, the underpinning of any good policy is good research, good data and good modelling.

There has been next to no modelling done on this policy. No GDP modelling has been done and no modelling has been done on how many additional childcare places or how many additional educators will be needed under this policy. Where will the educators come from, what cohorts are we looking to to fill these spaces and how will we get them to where they are needed in the community? There has been no modelling on whether this will increase childcare attendance by children and their families. There is no understanding or knowledge around the make-up of those who will benefit most from this policy, how they currently use child care or whether they'd use it more under the revisions. There has been no modelling on whether the sector will be able to meet the influx of new children nor any modelling on what areas the majority of these children will come from. The only modelling that has been done is on how many women have children aged zero to five and are either in part-time work or no work, which doesn't consider their income nor whether they want to return to work or take on more work.

It's important to place on record the coalition's investment in this space and what it yielded. We almost doubled childcare investment, to \$11 billion, in the financial year 2022-23 and locked in ongoing funding for preschools and for kindergartens. We made the biggest reforms to the early childhood education system in over four decades. More than 1.3 million children from around one million families have access to the childcare subsidy. Under the coalition government, 280,000 more children were in early childhood education. We abolished the annual cap on the childcare subsidy, and around 90 per cent of families using CCS are currently eligible for a subsidy of between 50 and 85 per cent.

Since March of this year, we've provided a higher subsidy of up to 95 per cent for families with multiple children in early childhood education at once, increasing workforce participation and cheaper access to care. Our targeted extra support introduced in March 2022 made a real difference, and childcare costs actually came down—as I said earlier in my contribution—by 4.6 per cent in the year to June 2022. Importantly, we saw women's workforce participation reach record highs at 62.3 per cent in May this year, compared to 58.7 per cent when we came to government all those years ago.

In concluding, I indicate that I do have a second reading amendment that has been circulated, which I now move:

At the end of the motion, add ", but the Senate:

(a) notes that:

(i) this bill does nothing to address broader challenges for access to early learning in Australia, namely:

(A) child care service gaps in regional Australia, and

(B) early childhood education and care workforce shortages which prevent families from accessing the services they need,

(ii) the Government's cheaper child care package, which costs \$4.5 billion, does not add one additional place for families, and

(iii) early childhood education and care providers have already increased fees since the Government came to office and the additional demand placed on services as a result of this bill will put further inflationary pressure on fees; and

(b) calls on the Government to ensure that the promised savings for families will not be eroded by higher fees due to the additional demand for services as a result of this bill; and

(c) notes that the bill commits to higher ongoing structural spending; and

(d) calls on the Government to manage its spending commitments to improve the budget while standing by their promise to deliver legislated targeted income tax relief".

I encourage senators to consider supporting the amendment. It goes to the points that I've already made around the need to ensure that this bill, which does cost the Australian taxpayer a huge amount, does deliver benefits where they're most needed, and to make sure that this bill, which is costing the Australian taxpayer a huge amount, is founded on good policy and is therefore directed in a way that will continue to grow the economy and improve workforce participation for those in the community who currently need it.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (10:16): I rise to speak on the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022, and I'm going to start with the title of the bill itself. We heard during the Senate inquiry on this bill that the language of 'cheaper child care' undervalues the role of educators. In her submission, Tamika Hicks, on behalf of the United Workers Union early childhood education delegates, expressed bitter disappointment with the choice of words and questioned how educators could ever change the narrative about the value, recognition and importance they deserve without support from the top. We know early learning educators are some of the lowest-paid workers. Theirs was the first sector from which JobKeeper support was withdrawn by the coalition during the pandemic. But they ought to be highly respected, and their contribution to children's development, the community and society ought to be highly valued. When we talk about respect, language matters. The Greens support the view of UWU and other educators and consider the government should take a leading role in shifting public discourse by replacing the words 'cheaper child care' with 'more affordable early education and care' in the title of the bill. I will be moving an amendment to that effect. We should also commit to consistently using the term 'early education and care' instead of the term 'child care'.

I'll turn now to the bill itself. The bill increases the maximum percentage of child care subsidy, CCS, available to families and extends access to the CCS to all families earning less than \$530,000. The bill introduces a new base level of 36 subsidised hours of child care per fortnight for First Nations families, regardless of their activity levels. It also introduces new transparency measures requiring large providers to report annually on their financial information and lease arrangements to the Department of Education and enabling the department to publish this information. The bill enables providers to offer a discount on fees to their educators whose children also attend the centre. Finally, the bill introduces good governance as a core eligibility requirement for provider approval and imposes a new requirement for providers to submit accurate records, receive gap fees by EFT and keep proper records.

The Greens believe early childhood education and care is an essential service that should be universal, free, accessible, well funded by the government and never run for profit. While the bill does not go nearly far enough to achieve our vision of universal and free early learning and care, we support the bill as it represents a step in the right direction in making early learning affordable for more people. This was really such a good opportunity for the Labor government to fix the early childhood education and care system once and for all, but they unfortunately chose not to do that.

There are some key issues that still need to be addressed by the government, and the first of these is workforce. The early childhood education and care workforce is in crisis. It is estimated that around 9,000 more educators will be required because of the reforms introduced in the bill, and there are currently 7,000 vacancies already in the sector. Assuming attrition rates continue as they are, it is estimated that there will be over 10,000 vacancies next year. That would mean there would be a need for around 19,000 more educators in July next year, when this bill comes into effect.

A big driver of this attrition is poor pay, with degree qualified educators often being paid 20 to 30 per cent less than primary school teachers. But also governments have long failed to adequately value the profession. This is what early educators are telling us. I am now going to read what a few of them have told us in the United Workers Union's submission to the inquiry into this bill. One says:

I've been an early childhood educator for over 25 years and I'm now looking for another job not in child care as I'm so burnt out and over everything else I don't feel the quality of care is there anymore as I have so much paperwork we are just getting through the day.

Another says:

We have always been taken for granted, and after all that we went through during covid and all its implications where we were essential, we still are not recognised for what we did. We're so tired of being undervalued, underpaid, and overworked, we are over our profession.

The last one I'm going to read out is this:

With the cost of living rising, educators are leaving every day, as it is near impossible to survive on the wages we receive. After over 20 years in the industry, I've lost my mojo, mostly to the pay but also educators well-being.

This is an atrocious condition for those people who serve such an essential, respected and professional role in society—that is, the development of our children.

Currently, the only measure in this bill aimed at attracting and retaining educators is the provision of a permissible educator discount that providers may offer to their educators. Under this measure, early childhood education and care providers will be permitted to offer a discount on fees to staff engaged as educators without affecting the amount of child care subsidy payable for the educator. We support this measure and want it to be extended to all staff employed at centres, including cooks. But it is completely inadequate to address the scale of the workforce crisis.

Let's not forget that a vast majority of this workforce is women, who already face a huge pay inequality gap. We support calls from the sector that the government should provide an urgent interim wage supplement. The government should implement protections to ensure that the wage supplement is passed on in full to educators. For clarity, this measure should be interim while longer-term structural changes are undertaken to improve educator pay and conditions, such as proposed changes to the Fair Work Act to address gender pay equity and improvements to bargaining processes. As the inquiry into the bill heard, immediate action is needed to address workforce shortages and the pay and conditions that workers face before the bill commences in July to ensure at a very basic level that the policy aims of the bill can be realised. The government has been made aware of this fact loudly and clearly and cannot ignore it any longer.

Moving to the activity test, the Greens welcome the new baseline entitlement to 36 hours per fortnight of subsidised early childhood education and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children regardless of the activity levels of their parents. This change has been long overdue. The reality is that the activity test as a whole is cruel, punitive and beyond repair. It denies access to early childhood education and care for the most disadvantaged children and punishes families who have insecure casual work. The activity test should be abolished entirely, as many witnesses to the inquiry stated, including Early Childhood Australia, the Australian Childcare Alliance, UWU, The Parenthood and Lisa Bryant. As Lisa Bryant put it, the activity test is:

... a punitive measure introduced by the previous government more or less on ideological terms which said that only the deserving should get access to child care.

No child should be penalised for what their parents do or can't do.

According to an August 2022 report from Impact Economics and Policy, the activity test is also contributing to at least 126,000 children from the poorest households missing out on early education. The report found, because of the activity test:

- Single parent families are over three times more likely to be limited to one day of subsidised child care per week;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are over five times more likely to be limited to one day of subsidised child care per week;
- Non-English Speaking families are over six times more likely to be limited to one day of subsidised child care per week; and
- Low-income families earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 are over six times more likely to be limited to one day of subsidised child care per week.

Removing the activity test would represent significant progress towards delivering universal early learning and would ensure that the full benefits of the CCS increase can be realised by all families and children. Thousands of children from disadvantaged families are missing out on early education and care now. There is sufficient evidence to warrant abolition of the activity test immediately. The government does not need to wait for the outcome of the Productivity Commission's inquiry to act on this. I will be moving an amendment to abolish the activity test and encourage my colleagues to support it.

The Greens agree with the many stakeholders that supported a need for greater transparency in the early childhood education and care sector during the inquiry. Many early learning centres are run by large non-government

providers. There has been a proliferation of for-profit providers in recent years, and it is no coincidence that prices have risen by 41 per cent in the past eight years. Given the substantial public money that providers receive, there is a compelling need for a robust transparency regime. I therefore welcome new reporting requirements for large providers but believe that these requirements should be expanded to cover all providers and that this information should be publicly available. I also believe that for-profit providers should have to publicly report full finances, including their profitability, dividend payments, executive compensation, wages expenditure, investment in quality and inclusion, rental costs and fee increases. At the end of the day, education should never be for profit, and we should be phasing this out altogether. I will be moving amendments to that effect later on during our committee stage.

Once the bill comes into effect, it will increase demands for early learning. This needs to be matched with the corresponding investment and providing extra places. As pointed out by regional and rural stakeholders during the inquiry, waiting lists in many places are already too long. According to a report from the Mitchell institute earlier this year, 35 per cent of the population live in neighbourhoods classified as childcare deserts, where there are more than three children per one place. People in regional areas are more likely to live in this desert, while those in remote regions are highly likely to also be living in areas where there are limited places. The Mitchell institute report noted that areas with the highest fees also generally have the highest levels of accessibility, suggesting that providers are establishing services not only where there are greater levels of demand but where they are likely to make greater profits. The government must develop a plan to phase out for-profit early childhood education and care, which has clearly contributed to these inequities, and must work with states and territories to invest in greater availability of early childhood education and care.

The Greens will be pushing for the government to consider this issue in the context of the Productivity Commission's review of the sector, which will commence next year. I look forward to working with the government on this review, which is badly needed. The Greens will keep pushing for an early childhood education and care system that we can be proud of—one where every child in this country has access to high-quality, free, accessible early childhood education and care, no matter their postcode, their bank balance or their background, and every early childhood educator is respected and has better pay and conditions which reflect their profession and the responsibility they take on in the development of our children. I will be moving a Greens second reading amendment which will reflect this by noting that the bill only provides limited support for families that are currently paying exorbitant fees for early childhood education and care, only makes modest changes to the activity test and does not do anything to address the work force crisis and which will call on the government to make early childhood education and care universal and free and to address the workforce crisis by immediately funding an interim wage supplement.

High-quality early childhood education and care can give children the best start in life and is a critical component of lifelong learning. It also enables women to pursue career opportunities and ensures they aren't held back because early learning and care is too expensive or not available. As a migrant parent with no family in Australia, I would not have had the opportunity to study or embark on my engineering career, nor would my children have had the opportunity of early development, if it wasn't for affordable child care at that time. The government should scrap stage 3 tax cuts, which benefit billionaires and the wealthy, and instead invest in an early education system which is universal and free with higher wages and better conditions for workers.

Senator GREEN (Queensland) (10:31): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022. I rise to proudly speak on this bill today, because this is a bill that will make a system fairer. This is a bill that will make a system more accessible and it is a bill that recognises the importance and value of early childhood education. For far too long, under those opposite, early childhood education has been overlooked and undervalued. But it is so incredibly valuable. Early childhood education gives our youngest Australians the best start to life, and it enables parents, especially mothers, to get back into work when they want to.

I know a few of those opposite and in the other place may disagree with the value of this bill. It is particularly interesting to hear those opposite now concerned so deeply with access and workforce shortages and wages issues after spending ten years treating early educators so poorly and dismissing their continual concerns that the early education industry should be valued for what it is. Their disagreement is well documented from the last ten years and in the media. We've heard things from those opposite like, 'The best place for children is at home,' and, 'Working women are outsourcing their parenting when they use child care.' Well, these old, antiquated points of view do not belong in Australia in 2022, and they certainly do not belong on government benches. It is why this government is so proud to introduce this bill, to pass it through the parliament and to deliver our promises to early childhood educators and to parents across the country.

It was those opposite who ripped JobKeeper from dedicated early childhood educators during the pandemic. Early educators were the very first to be cut off when JobKeeper was ripped away. Early childhood educators were, at the time, at the forefront of the pandemic, in settings where being COVID safe was just impossible. Early educators were ensuring that other frontline workers could do their jobs, but they were completely dismissed by those opposite. So it is now completely shocking and disgraceful and absolutely shameful to hear those opposite trying to mask this behaviour when we talk about the lack of educators and the workforce shortages that are being faced.

Early childhood educators are underpaid. I don't think anyone on this side of the chamber is arguing anything other than that. They are also undervalued, and they were undervalued for almost a decade by those opposite when they were in government. Early childhood educators are leaving the sector in droves—we know this—because under the former government they were treated so poorly. They don't see the value in their work add up in their pay packets. That is unfair, and it is time for that to change. Our incredible early childhood educators aren't just caring for our youngest Australians; they're ensuring that our children are getting the best start to their lives and their education. It's why this bill will see more kids in child care and more mums participating in the workforce.

There is more work to be done to get wages moving for educators and to make the system fairer for educators. We don't pretend that this bill to deliver cheaper child care, more affordable child care, for every Australian who uses the system is a one-stop shop. We know that there is more work to do, and I'm really proud that in this sitting fortnight the Senate will get a chance to have its say on the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill, because, if you support early childhood educators getting a pay rise, then you can support this bill as well. I think early childhood educators would be pleased to hear those opposite finally concerned about their wages, finally concerned about the fact that their wages haven't kept up with the cost of living. It will be incredibly interesting to see what the crossbench and those opposite do when given the chance to support a bill that will deliver wage growth for workers like early educators.

It is only our government that understands the importance of early childhood education, and that's why we took this promise to the election. We know that making early childhood education more affordable and more accessible to families is an economic measure. During the election, we heard from those opposite that we had a lack of economic policies. They're so dismissive of this policy being an economic measure that they don't see the value in it. But we do—our government does—and that is why we are delivering through this bill. This is a policy that will make our entire country better. It will get more people into work, and it will mean that mums are, finally, not financially punished for wanting to work more, which is how the system currently operates. This bill makes sense. It works for Australians. It works for young Australians and it means better wages for Australians.

Finally, I say to those early childhood educators who have spent decades campaigning and getting out there to talk about the value of their work: you have finally been listened to. We value the work that you do. We thank you for caring for our children. We could not do our jobs in this place or, indeed, across the country without the support of early childhood educators. You are valued. We support the work that you do, and this bill brings delivering a better childcare system for every single Australian just one step closer. We need to deliver cheaper child care, and that is what this bill will do.

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Western Australia—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (10:37): I rise today to speak on the government's Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022. At a time when calls for this government to support families and businesses have fallen on deaf ears, particularly with the ramming through of their shonky industrial relations bill, let me reiterate the coalition's wholehearted support for real policies and measures that will help to ease cost-of-living pressures faced by families. The coalition fully supports giving families and parents the choice to be able to determine how best to raise and care for their children in whatever form will best work for them, whether through formal law, informal arrangements or the combination of both.

While in government, the coalition was able to deliver increased access to child care, almost doubling the investment to \$11 billion, locking in ongoing funding for preschools and kindergartens in 2022-23. Under the coalition, more than 1.3 million children had access to the childcare subsidy and we abolished the annual cap on the subsidy. Since March this year, we have provided a higher subsidy, up to a rate of nearly 95 per cent, for families with multiple children in early education, helping to increase workforce participation and providing cheaper access to child care. In doing so, we have continued with our track record of supporting the economic empowerment of women.

Women's workforce participation reached a record high of 62.3 per cent in May this year under the coalition, compared to 58.7 per cent when Labor were last in office. The gender pay gap has reduced—from 17.4 per cent under Labor to 13.8 per cent under the coalition. This is something that the coalition is very proud of achieving. We're very proud to have seen it occur under our watch. These are just a few of the achievements of the former

coalition government, but the fact is that the coalition have always supported Australian families. It's part of our creed. It's central to what we believe and it's central to who we are as a party. So we support this bill in principle, but we also have some valid concerns about the delivery of Labor's so-called cheaper childcare policy.

Over several weeks, as the deputy chair of the Education and Employment Legislation Committee, I attended hearings in Canberra and Melbourne, and we had a closer look at the fillings of this bill. At this point I would like to acknowledge the work of the committee and particularly of the chair who, I've got to say, does a very good job in keeping things running smoothly and in order. I think, so far in this parliament, this particular committee has had a huge amount of work to do. Of course, the real signature piece that's coming through at the moment is the industrial relations bill. Despite the huge disagreement across the committee in relation to some of the issues that come through the committee, we actually do work really well together.

On this particular bill, we were able to work exceptionally well together, so I acknowledge all of my fellow committee members and, indeed, the secretariat. The secretariat has had a huge workload, particularly in relation to the industrial relations bill, with only 22 days in which to consider a significant bill and report back. The hearing on this legislation was a truncated experience as well. It was very short in comparison to the traditional way that legislation is dealt with, certainly in my experience in the last parliament. Generally bills are given much more consideration, but we're seeing a pattern under this government of dealing with things very hastily. It's happening across many portfolio areas, and it's something that I hope this government doesn't continue with because I think it's a real discredit to this place—in particular to the Senate—and we've got to make sure that legislation is properly scrutinised.

Nonetheless, we did manage to go through this legislation, even though it was over a short time. We were able to highlight quite a few deficiencies in it, and I just want to take you through some of those right now. Again, we certainly support this legislation. We'll be voting to support it, but there are some issues that we must deal with. Why are we supporting this? We are a party that backs in business. We're a party that backs in families and supports families. We're a party of economic stability and empowerment, and we're a party of sensible economic management. It is concerning, however, that this policy that we're seeing in this legislation is lacking modelling. We heard from the department, and, sadly, we heard that there was no economic modelling and that there are, in fact, incorrect assumptions right throughout this bill.

At the hearing in Melbourne on Wednesday 2 November, Treasury confirmed that the only modelling that they've done is on the impact of the policy on mothers with children aged zero to five. The Albanese government has argued time and again that this policy will increase access to early learning for families, increase workforce participation and reduce out-of-pocket costs, but what has been put forward by Treasury has painted a completely different picture. When questioned about the modelling underpinning this policy, Treasury admitted that they had done no modelling on the impact of the policy on gross domestic product, no modelling on wage costs or increases, no modelling on the provision of early childhood educators and no modelling on the impact of rising fees. The government's policy also assumes that, by 1 July 2023, there will be enough places in the sector to meet the expected increased demand and that fees will remain at their current level. Yet we've seen no modelling—none at all—as to whether or not the sector will be able to meet the influx of children. The department took us through why it is difficult to do the modelling. If we accept that then how is it that this government is out there proclaiming the virtues of this policy and yet we are seeing Labor members of the House of Representatives in their own electorates claiming that this policy will increase X number of places, will assist X number of families? The member for Kingsford Smith said it's going to help 7,000 families in his electorate. How is it they're able to claim these sorts of figures and these sorts of stats when there's no modelling? There's no modelling to demonstrate any number at all, so there's a real vacuum there.

Many educators have raised important issues, such as low wages and mental health stresses, and Senator Faruqi took us through some of that in her contribution. We're seeing an increase of red tape and burnout as their top concerns, and the sector suffers from a high attrition rate. Providers are struggling to attract and retain educators. Centres are having to cap their services at 70 per cent to 80 per cent capacity, sadly due to a shortage of educators. Goodstart Early Learning, a terrific provider and the largest not-for-profit provider in Australia, estimates an additional 9,000 educator will be needed by July 2023 to meet increased demand as a result of this policy. There are currently 7,200 vacancies in this sector. But once again, there's been no modelling done by the government to show how many educator will be needed or how they will address the current workforce crisis that we have. It's absolutely mind-boggling that no real modelling regarding access and educators has been done by the government.

All of this is of on top of nothing being done to address thin markets and childcare deserts where there are little to no services available to families. I asked a question throughout the inquiries time and again, said you don't have to go far out of Perth, where I live, you don't have to go even to the outer suburbs, and you start to see childcare deserts, not to mention the absolute dearth of provision in regional Australia and certainly in some of the more

remote parts of our country. You go across the Kimberley and it's almost impossible to find a childcare place. Even in the Pilbara, in the more populated cities like Karratha, there's a massive shortage and you can't get access to child care. This makes it difficult for these towns to attract people to come and base themselves there, bring their families and work in these places. Often these places have a fly-in, fly-out environment, so how do you attract workers when you can't get access to childcare in these places?

Unfortunately, this bill does nothing to address those sorts of issues. The Mitchell institute reported earlier this year that around a third of Australian families live within a childcare desert, where there is only one place available for every three children. I can say that \$4.7 billion is, of course, an incredible amount of money and yet not a single cent of that \$4.7 billion is going to be spent on creating any additional places or services. If you're one of those families that can't access a childcare centre, who can't get a place, then how is it possible that this policy is addressing your cost-of-living issues? The government is saying that this bill will address that—and I remember throughout the campaign them saying, 'We're going to address the cost of living by reducing childcare costs.' They were elected on that platform, I get that, they've got the mandate. But how is it that you can still say that this bill is going to address the cost of living when we know that this bill is not going to actually deliver an additional childcare place anywhere in the country? If you can't access child care, how is it possible that it's going to reduce your cost of living? All this is not to mention the accessibility challenges that are facing young families living in rural and regional and remote areas. This is a critical issue and, sadly, the government have shown so far that they're just about the headlines and they're not interested in addressing these big challenges. Instead, they've presented this half-baked, undercooked, very expensive policy, with zero modelling that's been done to back up their claims, expecting it to be some magic bullet to solve cost-of-living pressures for families.

The last time Labor was in government, childcare fees skyrocketed by 53 per cent. That's their record: a 53 per cent increase in just six years. Out-of-pocket fees are already rising. Inflation is rising; we've been seeing that. Fees will most likely rise before 1 July 2023, before the impact of the implementation of this bill is felt. Fees will already have risen by then, and the government have no modelling on how this could potentially erode the impact of subsidies before they're even in place.

I studied economics when I was at school. I didn't do it post school, but one of the 101—I know Senator Scarr has his book there. Basic economics, supply and demand—I'm sure it's there. Senator Scarr will point to the particular page it's on. We know that when you increase demand, you see that there will be an increase in cost. This is going to impact families, and there's nothing in this bill, nothing in what the government have demonstrated to us so far, that is going to protect families from rising childcare costs. This subsidy could easily just be eroded. It could easily just be taken up without there actually being any impact on reducing the cost of living.

Our families need to know if they are really going to be better off under this bill. They need to know whether they will be better off under this Albanese Labor government. So far they haven't been. Everything's going up. Everything's going up except for wages and the money in people's pockets. Our families, the backbone of our society, are counting on this government. Our families, the future of our nation, are depending on them. It's time for the Albanese Labor government to come up with some real policies that are actually going to support families, that are actually going to impact on the ground and that are going to deliver for the workers of this country.

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (10:52): I start by saying how welcome the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022 is. Improving access to more affordable early childhood education has so many upsides for people: for families in our communities, for our communities and for society more broadly. There are upsides for children in terms of their learning and development as well as their socialisation skills. There are upsides for parents because it will enable a significant increase in workforce participation. And, of course, there are flow-on upsides in terms of the economic benefits and productivity improvement from this.

As the minister noted in his second reading speech, some 1.26 million families are estimated to benefit from this, with just over 23,000 of them here in the ACT. Treasury estimates that this bill will increase the hours worked by women with young children by up to 1.4 million hours per week in 2023-24. In the midst of a tight labour market and the high cost of living, the extra work, coupled with lower costs for early childhood education, will make a big difference.

Of course, with better access comes higher demand, as pointed out by Senator O'Sullivan. In many areas, waitlists are long and workforce shortages are acute. There is huge concern across the sector that, with the welcome and long-overdue increases to pay rates in the residential aged-care sector, competition for early childhood educators will only become more acute.

With this legislation, clearly, the need for early childhood educators to receive a pay rise is important. It is crucial. It is urgent. As people in the ACT have said to me, you can earn more working at Bunnings than educating and

caring for the next generation of Australians. We need to change that urgently. The government's proposed industrial relations changes to what is proposed to be the supported bargaining stream—as I've told the government, this is the part of the legislation that has my full support—aims to do that, but we need to do more. If there is to be an increase in early childhood educator salaries, the government needs to come to the table and fund it. It also needs to ensure that taxpayer funded increases are flowing through to workers and not simply being absorbed as profits.

I'm proposing a number of amendments to this bill. I would like to thank the government, specifically Minister Clare and his team, for their open and constructive approach to considering the changes to the bill. The first change I'm proposing is to the name of the bill. I note that Senator Faruqi has also raised this issue. Pay rises for early childhood educators are essential, but there is more to recognising and valuing the critical work they do than just money. Language is important and influences the way we think and behave. That's why I support calls from the sector to amend the name of this bill to be about providing more affordable early childhood education and care. After talking to early childhood educators, there is a lack of recognition for the work that is done in this sector. I hope that this is something that will begin to address this and begin to place more value on the important work that early childhood educators are doing. There are few things more important than playing a role in shaping the lives of children.

It's also important to recognise the way that centres operate and the valuable roles different staff play. After talking to the government, I'm pleased that the government has agreed to expand the scope of the optional discount that can be offered on fees to the children of educators working in centres to include cooks. This bill is a really important step forward, but there's more work to be done in pursuing this reform, especially when it comes to improving access for disadvantaged children, reviewing the activity test and sector workforce requirements.

The government has committed to tasking the Productivity Commission with undertaking a comprehensive review of these issues and the sector more broadly. I believe this will serve a more constructive material outcome than a statutory review for this particular piece of legislation. I note concerns about the lack of modelling and the need for more thorough modelling, and particularly how important reviewing the legislation is to ensure that it's doing what it sets out to do. I can't think of too many other places where you simply try to deal with an issue, set it, and then largely forget about it. We need to be actively reviewing, monitoring, and, when needed, amending and ensuring that we are heading down the right path.

Delivering the aim of implementing a universal 90 per cent subsidy for all families is a worthy goal. I look forward to supporting the government's effort to implement this on behalf of the people of the ACT.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (10:58): I rise to speak on the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022. Under the reckless governing by those opposite, childcare costs were allowed to increase by 41 per cent over the past eight years, and the cost of living was allowed to skyrocket. This has had a devastating impact on Australian families and their ability to send children—their children—to early education and care. It is also a further reflection of the lack of importance and value that the coalition places on women in the workforce and the benefits of childcare and early childhood education.

The cheaper childcare bill is an important and necessary bill that will help make a meaningful difference to the lives of Australian families, to the Australian job market and to the Australian economy. It is a multibillion dollar commitment to Australian families and to our children, and it holds another Albanese government election commitment. We value families and children, and we want to see them thrive. As a mother myself, I understand just how important it is to have the options available for affordable early education and care for our children. This bill is a crucial step in helping women return to the paid workforce.

I make the reference to paid work because, as everyone who is a parent will agree, parenting is one of the hardest and most underpaid jobs you will ever do, and I don't want to diminish the value of that important work. But, for those parents who want to return to the paid workforce, this bill will make it more accessible for them. It is widely known that in Australia mothers are typically the parents who spend more time raising their children. In 2016, the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that approximately five per cent of families had a stay-at-home father compared to 27 per cent having a stay-at-home mother. It was also estimated that fathers spent approximately 13 hours a week on child care compared to a mother's 27 hours. This is a huge difference, and mothers who want to return to work need affordable child care. Otherwise, it simply isn't a feasible option.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics announced in February 2022 that there were approximately 745,000 people who wanted to work and were able to begin that work within four weeks but were still unable to. Of these people, 113,600 were unable to work due to childcare constraints, and 106,800 were women. Better enabling the approximately 106,800 women who have been unable to join the workforce will contribute to gender equality by accelerating work to close the workforce participation, pay and, very importantly, superannuation gaps. According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, the national gender pay gap is currently 14.1 per cent. This bill will help

reduce this and will allow women to better support themselves now and into the future. This is a win for women, for their families and for the Australian economy.

This bill will enable more children to access early childhood education and care. This is so important when it comes to helping set up our children for formal schooling in later years. This bill will support approximately 16,400 Tasmanian families. They will get the help that they need. This is a significant step in filling these gaps. It will also reduce the cost-of-living pressures. Parents who want to will be able to return to the workforce, where their skills and knowledge will be greatly appreciated.

With the timely passing of this legislation, these changes should come into effect by July 2023. This will be such a relief for Australian families. This bill is not a handout; it's an investment in women, in children, in families and in the Australian jobs sector, and, most importantly, it will enable these women and these families to contribute to our economy. Supporting families and children in Australia should be a bipartisan issue. We shouldn't be them versus us, so I urge those opposite and around the chamber to support this very important piece of legislation.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (11:03): I thank those senators who've spoken on the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022 for their contributions to this debate. It's a bill which is good for children, good for families and good for our economy. It will support the development of our youngest Australians in those crucial early years. It will provide more choice to parents, in particular women, in choosing to re-enter the workforce and work more hours, which is so desperately needed in the economy.

Treasury estimates that these measures will unlock the equivalent of up to 37,000 full-time workers in the first year alone. It will make early education and care cheaper for more than a million families. It will introduce a base level of 36 subsidised hours per fortnight of early childhood education for First Nations children as well. It will improve transparency and integrity measures in the sector, and it delivers on a key commitment made to Australian families in the 2022 federal election.

I thank Senator Pocock for his contributions to this bill, and the government will support those amendments. This bill has won widespread support from families, the business community and the early childhood education and care sector, and I commend it to the chamber.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the second reading amendment moved by Senator Duniam be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [11:09]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes25
Noes33
Majority.....8

AYES

Antic, A.
Canavan, M. J.
Colbeck, R. M.
Fawcett, D. J.
Liddle, K. J.
McKenzie, B.
O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
Rennick, G.
Van, D. A.

Askew, W.
Cash, M. C.
Davey, P. M.
Henderson, S. M.
McDonald, S. E.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Scarr, P. M.

Brockman, W. E.
Chandler, C.
Duniam, J. R.
Hume, J.
McGrath, J.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Payne, M. A.
Smith, D. A.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Brown, C. L.
Cox, D.
Faruqi, M.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Payman, F.
Polley, H.

Ayres, T.
Chisholm, A.
Dodson, P.
Green, N. L.
McCarthy, M.
Pocock, B.
Pratt, L. C. (Teller)

Bilyk, C. L.
Cicccone, R.
Farrell, D. E.
Grogan, K.
McKim, N. J.
Pocock, D. W.
Rice, J. E.

Sheldon, A. V.
Steele-John, J. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.
Waters, L. J.

Shoebridge, D.
Sterle, G.
Urquhart, A. E.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Smith, M. F.
Thorpe, L. A.
Walsh, J. C.
White, L.

Question negatived.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (11:12): I move:

At the end of the motion, add ", but the Senate:

(a) notes that this bill:

(i) only provides limited support for families that are currently paying exorbitant fees for early childhood education and care,

(ii) only makes modest changes to the activity test, which restricts access to early childhood education and care for the most disadvantaged children and families, and

(iii) does not do anything to address the workforce crisis; and

(b) calls on the Government to:

(i) make early childhood education and care universal and free, and

(ii) address the workforce crisis, including by immediately funding an interim wage supplement while taking action to ensure educators permanently receive better pay and conditions in the longer term".

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the second reading amendment moved by Senator Faruqi be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [11:13]

(The President—Senator Lines)

Ayes12
Noes47
Majority.....35

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Rice, J. E.
Thorpe, L. A.

Cox, D.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Shoebridge, D.
Waters, L. J.

Faruqi, M.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

NOES

Antic, A.
Bilyk, C. L.
Canavan, M. J.
Chisholm, A.
Davey, P. M.
Farrell, D. E.
Grogan, K.
Liddle, K. J.
McDonald, S. E.
McLachlan, A. L.
Paterson, J. W.
Pocock, D. W.
Rennick, G.
Smith, D. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.
Walsh, J. C.

Askew, W.
Brockman, W. E.
Cash, M. C.
Ciccone, R.
Dodson, P.
Fawcett, D. J.
Henderson, S. M.
Lines, S.
McGrath, J.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Payman, F.
Polley, H.
Scarr, P. M.
Smith, M. F.
Urquhart, A. E.
White, L.

Ayres, T.
Brown, C. L.
Chandler, C.
Colbeck, R. M.
Duniam, J. R.
Green, N. L.
Hume, J.
McCarthy, M.
McKenzie, B.
O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
Payne, M. A.
Pratt, L. C.
Sheldon, A. V.
Sterle, G.
Van, D. A.

Question negatived.

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (11:17): I move:

At the end of the motion, add ", and the Senate:

(a) notes that:

- (i) this bill will improve affordability of early childhood education for families,
(ii) workforce shortages are an important issue for the early childhood sector, and
(iii) Treasury has forecast that this bill will increase workforce participation, and therefore demand for early childhood education and care will increase; and
- (b) calls on the Government in the forthcoming Productivity Commission review to include consideration of activity requirements, education outcomes, addressing access for disadvantaged children and sector workforce requirements as part of its work".

Question agreed to.

Original question, as amended, agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (11:20): I move Greens amendment (1) on sheet 1738:

(1) Clause 1, page 1 (line 6), omit "*Cheaper Child Care*", substitute "*More Affordable Early Education and Care*".

This amendment is about changing the short title of the bill. The reason for that is that cheaper child care is a way of framing a sector which is not respectable. I did speak a bit about it in my second reading speech, but educators have really been disrespected and undervalued for a very long time. As I said earlier, language really does matter. My amendment changes the short title of the bill from 'cheaper child care' to 'more affordable early education and care'. I understand that Senator Pocock has a similar amendment for the long title of the bill. These should really be taken in conjunction. There is no reason that both the titles should not be changed.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (11:21): I thank Senator Faruqi for her discussion on this, and we had a question in estimates about it two weeks ago. I can certainly say that this is a government that respects the role of early educators in the community. We value the role that they play in the community and I think we've demonstrated that by our actions in government, in supporting a pay rise, in our efforts to tackle the workforce shortage that we have underway.

As I said in estimates, there is obviously a collision here with messages that we took to the election, that we intend delivering on, so we will oppose this amendment from Senator Faruqi. But I can assure Senator Faruqi and the public in general that this is a government that respects the role of early educators. Every time I hear Minister Clare talk about this issue, he's very respectful of early educators. I think he has a cousin who's been very good at letting him know what the official job title is. So we're very much respectful of it, but we don't believe that a name change is the appropriate thing to do.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Sterle): The question is that Greens amendment (1) on sheet 1738 moved by Senator Faruqi be agreed to.

The committee divided. [11:27]

(The Temporary Chair—Senator Sterle)

Ayes14
Noes33
Majority.....19

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Pocock, D. W.
Steele-John, J. A.
Waters, L. J.

Cox, D.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Rice, J. E.
Thorpe, L. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Faruqi, M.
Pocock, B.
Shoebridge, D.
Tyrrell, T. M.

NOES

Antic, A.
Brown, C. L.
Cash, M. C.
Colbeck, R. M.
Farrell, D. E.

Ayres, T.
Cadell, R.
Chisholm, A.
Dodson, P.
Green, N. L.

Bilyk, C. L.
Canavan, M. J.
Ciccione, R.
Duniam, J. R.
Grogan, K.

Henderson, S. M.
 McCarthy, M.
 Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
 Polley, H.
 Sheldon, A. V.
 Urquhart, A. E.

Hume, J.
 McKenzie, B.
 O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
 Pratt, L. C.
 Smith, M. F.
 Walsh, J. C.

Lines, S.
 McLachlan, A. L.
 Payman, F.
 Roberts, M. I.
 Sterle, G.
 White, L.

Question negatived.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (11:31): by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) and (2) on sheet 1731 together:

- (1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 1), omit "3", substitute "4".
- (2) Page 3 (after line 5), after clause 3, insert:

4 Review of this Act

- (1) The Minister must cause an independent review to be conducted of the operation of the amendments made by this Act.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the review must consider the impact of the amendments made by this Act on:
 - (a) the cost of child care fees and the loss of subsidies to price increases and inflation; and
 - (b) the creation of new and additional child care places; and
 - (c) changes to service gaps across Australia, particularly in rural, regional and remote Australia; and
 - (d) changes to Indigenous children's attendance, specifically any increase in the number of Indigenous children attending child care; and
 - (e) the number of early childhood educators and any workforce gaps; and
 - (f) any increase to the workforce participation rate; and
 - (g) any increases in productivity.
- (3) The persons who conduct the review must consider both quantitative and qualitative research in conducting the review.
- (4) The review must commence no later than 1 July 2024.
- (5) The persons who conduct the review must give the Minister a written report of the review within 3 months of the commencement of the review.
- (6) The Minister must cause a copy of the report to be tabled in each House of the Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the report is given to the Minister.

In the contribution I made earlier, I outlined a range of reasons the coalition is moving these amendments to the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022, and I know other colleagues have also spoken to this. It comes down to the need for information to understand whether this policy and the expenditure attached to it will hit the mark, whether this policy will do what has been said that it will do in terms of providing extra places and enabling more people to return to work.

To that end, there was a significant portion of debate that took place in the second reading stage around modelling—what had been modelled and what had not. We know that there was not a great deal of modelling undertaken. This has been made patently clear by the lack of response from the government throughout this entire debate, not just here or in the other place but publicly, and the lack of effort that has gone into understanding the impact this policy would have and, indeed, whether there would be benefits flowing. I was able to cite just one example of a small demographic that had a small amount of modelling undertaken relating to the impact on them but, at the same time, talked to a huge range of areas that had not even been considered.

The amendments that we're moving here, in terms of a review of the act, mean that the minister would need to cause an independent review around the operation of the amendments made by this act, and there are a list of items there which I think are central to understanding the success or otherwise of this legislation. Understanding the impact of this bill through what we're debating now, on issues like the cost of childcare fees and the loss of subsidies to price increases and inflation, is important to properly understand exactly what impact may be felt by the household, by the end user, by the working parent or by the client of the childcare service and the education service.

What impact will be felt there? Can there be guarantees made that will enable a negative outcome in this area not to be felt by households? We know, based on the information provided to us to date, that there hasn't been modelling undertaken on these issues. I would have thought that we're all in the business of problem solving, we're all in the

business of making sure that Australia is a better place, so that those who seek to work can do so more freely and those who want to take advantage of this great service in the early childhood education and care sector are able to do so. But we don't know whether there will be a loss of subsidy due to price increases and inflation, and whether the cost of childcare fees will go up. It is important to understand what impact will be felt by the policy levers being pulled in this legislation, and that's one of the elements that this review would look into.

Importantly, we also need to understand, through this review, what additional childcare places would occur. We know that there is a huge amount of demand out there, and we've heard figures raised in various elements of this debate. Up to 20,000 places were cited as being the shortage in parts of Australia, so we need to understand what new childcare places will occur as a result of the amendments in this legislation. It has been said in the debate—and whether or not these amendments give effect to this is a different question—that in theory this will occur, but no one can tell us how many places, no one can tell us where, and that is a problem. That is why having a review to look at this as well is incredibly important.

The changes to service gaps across Australia, particularly in rural, regional and remote Australian communities—and I know that Senator McKenzie will probably have some remarks to make about this, perhaps with other colleagues as well—are important. We talked about childcare deserts where services are thin to non-existent on the ground and the demand outstrips supply by three to one—are we going to see these gaps filled? Are we going to see these holes plugged? Are we going to see the problems for these communities when it comes to access to this vital economic service solved as a result of this legislation? Again, because there was no modelling done, we don't know. We can only assume based on what we know to be the experience under our time in government, that a lot more needs to be done. But we need to understand what impact will be had, and we don't know what impact will be had as we go to spend in excess of \$4 billion on this policy resulting from this legislation.

There is no modelling done on Indigenous children's attendance—specifically, on an increase in the number of Indigenous children attending child care. It's an important area of policy and an important consideration, in the deliberation of this legislation, for those communities out there in regional and particularly remote communities. How will these changes specifically impact on them, the needs they face and the improvement of life outcomes for them? Every senator who has spoken on this legislation has pointed to the importance of a solid early childhood education sector and the foundation it provides for young Australians, no matter where in the country they live. We know that there are improved outcomes for those who gain access to a good system that provides needs, but we don't know what changes there will be to Indigenous children's attendance—specifically, whether there will be any increase in the number of Indigenous children attending child care or early childhood education. It's something that I think is very important in relation to the passage of this legislation.

One thing that has been spoken about a lot—but that we again don't have any detail around—is the number of early childhood educators and any workforce gaps that exist. The review we're proposing here would take us through that. We'd understand exactly where the gaps are and what problems are faced. In gaining that information, we would then be able to support the government in creating solutions to any impediments to finding those childhood educators and where those workforce gaps exist. Understanding those issues, hurdles and impediments is central to ensuring that we can address the problem, but here we are today, passing legislation with no modelling and no understanding of these gaps, who we're looking for, how we're going to attract them, what additional pressure might be applied to the workforce and what increasing of the gap might occur as a result of these changes. It's important to have a review into this particular part of the legislation.

We also want to make sure that we look at any increases to the workforce participation rate and, in addition to that, any increases in productivity. There's been a lot of talk about the economic outcomes of this legislation and what it will mean for communities and for an economy that needs every bit of a boost it can get. I think understanding what impact this injection in excess of \$4 billion of expenditure to support and augment this sector will have on the economy is an important part of what we should be considering here. As I've said already, we don't know because the modelling hasn't been done. There have been varying figures around even the cost of this bill. As we move forward, all of us want to be solution providers and problem solvers. Understanding how this policy will translate into increased workforce participation and increased productivity is, I think, exceptionally important. I don't think it's something that we should be forgetting as we go into this. In everything we do, particularly with the pressures that we face across the economy, across society and across every region of our country, we should understand what improvements would be made to economic outcomes in terms of workforce participation and productivity.

In calling for this review, we want to ensure that both quantitative and qualitative research is conducted. It's important to understand not just the numbers and stats but also the improved outcomes for people across the country—households and families that want to take advantage of this service. As I said right at the beginning, we all want to make sure that this sector is functioning as best it can to support the needs, wishes and dreams of

Australians, with better outcomes for young Australians and a good foundation. It's an important amendment, and I hope colleagues will look to support it, because having data is central to a good outcome.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (11:41): It's hard not to be cynical about whether this Labor government has any commitment whatsoever to those nine million of us who don't live in capital cities in this country. We have before us a piece of childcare legislation that doesn't add one single additional place to ease the overall burden in our country and, more significantly for those of us that live in communities where we are in a childcare desert, there's no creative thinking about how families and particularly women who live in rural and remote Australia are going to be able to access child care so that they can actually get back into the workforce.

Everyone in this place talks a big game about the workforce participation of women and how they're so keen to facilitate that. But do you know what? It just matters where you live with these guys. It absolutely matters where you live. If you are a woman who lives in one of these childcare deserts then you can't actually access the childcare places that you need. As Senator Duniam made clear, these are thin markets. They are not necessarily communities that can support the long and expensive daycare model. So it actually required a little bit of thinking other than just tapping into United Voice and saying: 'What do you need? We're in government. Let's make sure you have everything you need as one of our key stakeholders and constituencies and basically do nothing to assist rural and regional women, rural and regional families and children with their childcare needs.'

The government have announced \$4.7 billion in the budget. It's quite incredible. That's a hell of a lot of money to spend in a policy area where they won't make a fundamental difference to the most marginalised and most vulnerable in these communities. They're more interested in helping out middle-class suburbs in capital cities—and we might ask why they're more interested in assisting those families—over people who cannot actually access this service at all.

I would seek the Greens' support for the opposition's amendments here. These are sensible amendments that seek to hold a timely review into this legislation to see if it actually does deliver the types of outcomes that we all want to see with our childcare system.

We want to see greater workforce participation by women but we also need to make sure that these services don't depend on geography, on where they're being delivered. Minister, could you please tell me how many extra childcare places are being delivered in your home state of Queensland as a result of this bill?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (11:45): I will respond to the points from Senator Duniam and Senator McKenzie as well. In terms of the substance of these amendments, we've been very clear about where we think the review should take place. We believe that there are challenges in this sector, which is why we have asked the ACCC, and why we've provided them with \$10.8 million, to undertake a price inquiry into child care in 2023. This will consider the effectiveness of the existing price regulation mechanisms, the drivers of rising early education costs and the impact of these childcare subsidy changes on out-of-pocket fees. We've asked the ACCC to do that and we think it's complementary to the legislation that we hope to pass today. The government has also committed to tasking the Productivity Commission with conducting a comprehensive review of the sector. That review will commence in the first half of next year. Both of these reviews, we think, are comprehensive, and therefore additional reviews are not required at this time.

There's no doubt that there are challenges in the sector. It's obviously not for other politicians to lecture colleagues on self-reflection, but surely those opposite have to be a little bit self-reflective. They've just concluded 10 years in government, and we've inherited a mess that we are trying to fix. They make no mention of that in their contributions here. They say that they support this bill. I have not heard one positive comment out of any of them in their contributions to this bill, which is what we took to the election and are hoping to implement here today. We know that there are challenges in many communities around workforce, which is why we are actually delivering a workforce action plan.

We also, in the budget, committed almost half a billion dollars to the Community Child Care Fund, which obviously goes to supporting many childcare places in communities where they don't have the necessary support. That's something we are going to continue. This helps ensure families have access to early childhood education in areas where there are not a lot of services. I also note that some state governments have announced substantial reforms in the space, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, which will be around establishing new services in areas of need.

Through the provision of more subsidies to families, there will be an increase in demand, and obviously that will go towards the market responding and creating more spaces and services at the same time. And our workforce initiatives, which are comprehensive, including fee-free TAFE and additional higher education places, will increase the availability of educators to meet demand. So there's a combination of things happening in terms of the

government's response. They go to the Community Child Care Fund but they also go to the increase in demand that will come from this legislation, meaning that the market will respond and create more places at the same time.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (11:48): I note the minister refuses to accept the fact that this bill will not add any additional places in his home state of Queensland. Minister, you talked about the reviews that you're proposing: ACCC and Productivity Commission. For those of us who don't live in capital cities, it is our lived experience that unless you explicitly ask bodies to examine the impact of government policy on rural, regional and remote communities, on workforce participation of rural, regional and remote women, on the development and growth of country kids and on our future prosperity then it just doesn't happen. And, unfortunately, our experience under your government thus far shows that it doesn't happen. You've in fact cut the very funding mechanisms that have built childcare centres and facilities in country communities—the Building Better Regions Fund and others, that you want to typify as wasteful spending in our communities—which have led to families being able to access child care, often for the very first time. So excuse me if I'm not dancing in the streets over \$4.7 billion to satisfy middle-class income earners in capital cities and your union mates from United Voice.

I particularly want to put on the record in the time that I have available to me, the hard work of Anne Webster, the National Party member for Mallee, who has championed this issue for so many of her country towns and regional centres. Seven towns in the Mallee right now are without child care: Birchip, Boort, Cohuna, Murtoa, Pyramid Hill, Rainbow and Wedderburn. In other larger centres there are long waiting lists. One centre in Mildura has a waiting list of 200 kids, and this is a regional capital that exports to the world. There is latent capacity, particularly of women in that community and, all bar for the access to child care, they cannot pursue their careers and their jobs to provide for their families as a result of this. You say that many state governments are stumping up. Well, cooee Daniel Andrews, you've got five days.

Labor has not only ignored the need for services in the Mallee but deliberately scrapped the funding provided for this, as I said, in the form of round 6 of the Building Better Regions Fund and the Community Development Grants Program. Anne Webster has people in Mallee who want to go back to work—professionals who offer their towns vital experience and skills but who can't, simply because there is no place to place their children safely to receive quality childcare education in a safe manner. Minister, how many additional places as a result of \$4.7 billion of funding are going to be available in rural and regional Australia as a result of your government's legislation?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (11:52): As I said, Senator McKenzie, we know that there are many challenges in many parts of the country around access to early childhood education, which is why we are confident that making it cheaper and more affordable will see more families take up that option. We also see that there will be a response from the market to increase these facilities, because they know there will be more demand. We've also got the commitment that we made to the Community Child Care Fund; that will obviously go some way towards tackling some of these challenges.

You mentioned some of our regional funding. Well, we do have a focus on that and a fund is being set up that will be available for regional communities to apply for. But, unlike your funds, ours will be transparent, ours will be accountable, they will open at regular times and there will be guidelines for people to follow. So communities know when they can apply, they know the rules that will apply, they know how they can apply and when they will be successful. That's rather than those ones that yourself and the former Deputy Prime Minister dreamed up, that suited you but didn't actually suit the majority of Australians. We take these issues seriously. We take integrity and accountability seriously, and that's why we're setting up appropriate funding mechanisms for regional Australia that can benefit from those funds.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (11:53): Through you, Chair: Minister, as a former minister who actually funded a round that was supposed to open in August this year to support these types of facilities being supported in communities—such as I've mentioned in the Mallee—I find it the height of hypocrisy that you have the hubris to stand in this place and call out, somehow, a lack of integrity around how our government administered childcare funding and grants programs across the board. You've failed. You've actually failed in your attempt to categorise spending in rural and regional Australia as wasteful, because it's not. It's not in your seats. It's not where people vote for you, because they do vote for the Liberals, the Nationals, the Country Liberal Party and other independents. They're never going to be voting Labor. Do you know why? Because every time you get into the Treasury seats, you show exactly the kind of disrespect you are with this legislation—and others—and you turn your backs on the very needs and critical investment required for the nine million of us that don't vote for you. We are still Australians and deserve equitable access to services.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (11:55): I want to make a few comments on the amendments that the coalition have put up—Senator Duniham's amendments. First up, I must say it's pretty rich for the Liberals and the Nationals to stand up here and suddenly start caring about early childhood education and learning when it was their

government that took early childhood educators off JobKeeper. That was the first sector they took off JobKeeper, showing their disrespect for the sector and the people who work in it. Also, in the ten years they were in government, costs for early childhood education and care became the most expensive in the world. Affordability and accessibility did not improve one single bit. If you want to talk about hypocrisy, let's talk about that.

Having said that, the Greens will support the amendments before us. They are about accountability. As Senator David Pocock said earlier, we make these changes here and then we forget about them. These amendments are about making sure the changes that are made today and that come into effect in July next year are changes that actually have an impact. If not, then things will need to be changed. What's being proposed in these amendments is a targeted review on the impact of this bill, in particular. Given the concerns we have had about some of the provisions of the bill in terms of how it will meet what is needed to be met, such as more places and wage rises and making sure educators are available for those places, I think this review is pretty appropriate. There is no reason why a targeted review can't take place alongside the more expansive reviews the government is intending on doing anyway, like the ACCC and the Productivity Commission reviews. The Greens, on principle, will be supporting these amendments.

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Western Australia—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (11:57): I acknowledge the Greens' support for these amendments and thank them very much for it. It's absolutely critical that this review happens, and I'm pleased that, on the strength of their support, this review will happen. It's very disappointing that the government don't accept these amendments and won't be opening themselves up to scrutiny on the impact of this bill.

I want to speak very quickly about the importance of looking at Indigenous children's attendance in child care, noting that this bill does increase the number of hours that Aboriginal families are able to access child care from 24 to 36 hours across a fortnight without having to undergo the activity test. We asked questions in the committee stage which weren't able to be answered and still haven't been answered. They included: what is the average number of hours that Indigenous children are taking up already? They're already eligible for 24 hours, so what's the average number that is being taken up? Given this bill will open it up to 36 hours, if the current average is below 24 hours, then just increasing the number doesn't change anything. There needs to be a much greater emphasis put on activation and engagement in Indigenous communities, in helping people. And, of course, you need to have places for those people to go to in the first place. This review is really critical to ensure that the objectives of this bill are met. It's a lot of money—\$4.7 billion—a lot of taxpayers' dollars, going into this program, and we have to make sure that it's targeted and meeting needs.

Right now, in Western Australia, we have an absolute crisis going on in Indigenous communities, not just in remote and regional parts but even in the capital city of Perth, where there are young people—young teenagers, in particular—who are committing crimes. They are out and about, particularly in the remote parts of the country, in places like Kununurra and even in Broome. You wouldn't consider Broome to be remote, but there are now barbed wire fences that have been put up around premises to stop young children from going in and breaking into those places at night. I'd hazard a guess that the issues that are occurring in these communities are a result of a failing in the early years of those children's development.

I'm not in any way saying that we need to institutionalise children by just sending them off to child care, but I think there is a real need to make sure that investment is made into the development of children, particularly in those early years. We know that children's brains grow by 300 per cent in the first three years of their lives. We know that, by the time they're five, their brains have already grown to 90 per cent of the size of an adult's brain, and, in those early years, the frontal lobe of the brain is developed. Development of reasoning and of emotions like empathy occurs in those early years. If children aren't given the very best chance at life by being provided with the right environment to enable them to grow and develop, we know that they will be impeded for life.

Right now Banksia Hill Detention Centre, the juvenile correction centre in Perth, is at a crisis point, and it's sadly filled with too many Indigenous kids. I used to go in there as a youth worker many, many years ago, and I would encounter children with no empathy and no sense of the impact of their crime and what they had done. A lot of that stems back to what happened when they were very young children and the environment they were exposed to. Sadly, for many, it's the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder that they were born with because of the consumption of alcohol in utero.

These are issues that need to be resolved. I think early learning and early childhood development play a critical role in helping families, particularly young families. We have situations where children are having children—young teenagers are now mothers and are struggling to raise their children. Having the services there in communities to help them is absolutely vital to ensuring that those children can go on to live productive lives. If the mothers themselves weren't provided that opportunity when they were infants and when they were very young children, then we've got to make sure we stem the flow and we break that cycle. It's really, really critical.

I'm hoping that the \$4.7 billion that is being put in will go, as Senator McKenzie was saying, into regional and remote Australia. We can't be sure that it will, because no modelling has been done, but I'm pleased that this review is going to happen. We'll actually be able to check the progress to see whether or not it has an impact on the ground where it's necessary so that we're able to ensure that young families, and young children in particular, in disadvantaged communities are given the very best chance at life. It's important to have a review that will look into this and check whether or not there is access and that that access does actually lift from 24 to 36 hours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. That is the number of hours that they can access services without going through the activity test. Seeing if this change actually does make that impact is a very good thing.

I urge the government to consider joining with their partners in government to support this amendment because I think it's going to be very important. It would be a good show of faith to the Australian people and, indeed, to regional and rural Australia that you are on their side.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE (Northern Territory) (12:04): Along with my colleagues I concur with the concerns Senator O'Sullivan is expressing with regard to ensuring that some of our most marginalised children in this country get the best start in life. It is a deep concern with regard to attendance rates, whether it's in child care for Indigenous children or it's in schooling for Indigenous children. The educational relationships between families and schools begin with early child care. In a former life I was very privileged to bring messages about education and health and a better way of living to early childhood audiences throughout the Northern Territory in remote communities, throughout Queensland in remote communities, throughout New South Wales and throughout South Australia. I understand how important it is for those relationships to begin. During my previous life on the road presenting to children in musical fashion, I engaged with those families to ensure that those families started their relationships while the parents were attending and the wonderful Yamba the honey ant was presented to those children. Often it kicked off the importance of those relationships between parents and schools and child care. That's where it all begins, so I concur with my colleague and his concern.

It also offers the opportunity to intervene early in a child's life. We know that Indigenous children experience some of the highest rates of domestic and family violence in their homes. They are experiencing the highest rates of child sexual abuse, which is why our leader of the coalition is calling for a royal commission into the sexual abuse of Indigenous children. It is much needed. These are all issues that Indigenous children are confronted with, particularly our most marginalised in regional Australia. It would be in this government's best interests to ensure that they are keeping these children front and centre with this particular bill and ensuring that they are getting what they need.

Another issue that concerns me is that this bill seeks to legislate a new definition of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in the family assistance act. This appears to be the first use of such a definition in Commonwealth primary legislation. Some concerns have been raised regarding this new definition as it doesn't exist in the family assistance act currently and it is different to the definition within the Social Security Act. Currently, the Commonwealth programs define an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person as one who is: first, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent; second, identifies as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person; and, third, is accepted as such by the community in which they live or have lived. This definition has been used by the courts as the ordinary definition in many cases, including the Mabo versus Queensland case and the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. There seems to be little research or evidence as to why changing this definition to a person who identifies as a person of descent and is accepted by the community in which the person lives as being of that descent should come into effect.

The government haven't been able to demonstrate how they're going to increase the attendance numbers of Indigenous children, and I would hope that this isn't an activity to allow parents and caregivers to tick that box to claim Aboriginality. This is a huge issue of concern amongst Indigenous Australians. It's been brought up very recently. SBS ran an *Insight* program on it, and there are deeply concerned members of the Indigenous community who have seen an influx of individuals in this nation claiming Indigeneity. In fact, in the 2021 census 92,300 Australians ticked that box for the very first time in their lives.

So what does this mean when, in this new definition, a child doesn't necessarily have to be of descent but can be accepted by our community? There are huge questions around this and huge implications that I don't think this government has taken into account. We don't just give Indigeneity out of cornflakes boxes, do we? It's deeply insulting for Indigenous Australians with true identity. It certainly might be able to boost the numbers of what appear to be more Indigenous children attending child care, but it doesn't get to the heart of the point that some of our most marginalised, in regional Australia, are being forgotten about. That's because people in the cities can tick that box. Resources are drawn away from people in regional Australia. They are left high and dry—they're out of sight and out of mind. This idea of a voice is apparently about giving them a voice, but this is another push by the elites to continue to control circumstances for our most marginalised Indigenous Australians.

I would like to understand from the minister: can the government provide their justification for this new change, and can the minister clarify whether a non-biologically related child adopted by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family qualifies under this new definition?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:11): The definition of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in the bill is based on the definition in the Australian Education Regulation 2013 that has been in place since 2014. It's a three-part test and it's consistent with the common law approach of descent, self-identification and community acceptance. We referred the cheaper child care bill to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee, and the report came back with no concerns raised over the definition in the draft legislation.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE (Northern Territory) (12:11): What was the input from any Indigenous members of community? Was there any such input from significant Indigenous members of the community or organisations, or was it purely the education department?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:12): We did consult with First Nations advocacy representatives with whom the department were tasked with consulting.

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland) (12:12): I briefly wanted to comment on this bill. I didn't get the opportunity for a second reading speech. I do support the amendment being put forward by Senator Duniam but I don't support the bill as a whole, and I briefly wanted to outline the reasons for that. I do support more assistance for families needing to fund child care, especially those on low incomes. Of course, this bill does also provide significant assistance to families earning up to \$530,000 a year, which is not a poor man's wage.

I am opposed to spending another \$4½ billion on extra childcare assistance while we apparently cannot fix the issue of an underfunding and a grossly unfair tax system for families that look after their own children. We've spoken a lot today about the lack of child care in parts of our country. There's a whole workforce out there that could be used to look after children. They're called parents—they're called mothers and fathers—but they are penalised by our tax system every day if they are to make a choice to look after their own children.

Right now, if you're a single income family on \$150,000 a year, you will pay \$17,000 a year more tax than a family that splits that income—say 60 per cent or 30 per cent, or \$100,000 and \$50,000, across each parent. It's the same household income: \$150,000 a year. It's the same number of kids. And the difference in tax is \$17,000 a year. The decision to look after your own child should not be the most expensive financial decision you have to make in your life. We should be encouraging that, because all of the evidence shows that a child who can be looked after by their mother or father, especially in the young years of their life, does really well. It's really good for them to have that parental care, especially in their first year of life.

I just want to quote from some research done by some researchers, including Dr Baum, where he says:

This article identifies the effects of maternal marketplace work in the initial months of an infant's life on the child's cognitive development. Results suggest that such work in the first year of a child's life has detrimental effects. Where significant, the results also indicate negative effects of maternal employment in the child's first quarter of life.

They are the stats. We spend so much money on education, on schools and all these things, and the people we have out there who can do some of the best things for a child's community development—the mothers and fathers of those children—are discouraged from looking after their own children.

I want to read into the *Hansard* an excellent article written by Virginia Tapscott in the *Australian* a few months ago. Senator McKenzie obviously read the same article. Virginia is a stay-at-home mum, somewhat unexpectedly—I don't like using the term 'stay-at-home mum'; they're really 'work-at-home' mums. They were working at home before it was cool. It's much harder work than I do. Whenever I've had to look after my five kids and needed a break, I could come here to this place and get a break from them. My wife doesn't always get that. She works a lot harder than me. Virginia says:

I think it's a ridiculous notion that women need to position themselves in a workplace in order to be valued and earn respect. The unfinished business of feminism is demanding respect for women in all their roles. Before becoming a mother I championed individual success and completely envisioned myself as a working mum. I was socially conditioned to expect this by the "women can have it all" movement and it made my transition to motherhood awkward as hell. When my first son turned one I felt a sense of urgency and panic that I should be getting back to work, that if I didn't go back now I'd never be allowed back in.

We are perpetuating that psychology across our community, which ridiculously places work ahead of the home. The home is the most important thing in our nation. Every profession out there is actually there to defend the homemakers. They're the ones who bring up the next generation. It's the most important job in our community. Anyone thinking that staying back late, working for a big investment bank or a consulting firm, doing spreadsheets

or PowerPoint slides, is somehow more rewarding in their life than changing nappies or making lunches has a warped sense of priorities.

This bill perpetuates that warped sense of priorities. We should be respecting motherhood, we should be respecting fatherhood and we should be funding it through our tax system.

Question agreed to.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (12:18): by leave—I move Greens amendments (1) to (8) on sheet 1720 together:

(1) Schedule 2, item 6, page 12 (lines 7 to 9), omit the item, substitute:

6 Division 4 of Part 8A (heading)

Omit " **relating to large centre-based day care**", substitute "**in relation to financial information etc**".

(2) Schedule 2, item 10, page 12 (line 21), omit "**large child care**".

(3) Schedule 2, item 10, page 12 (lines 23 and 24), omit subsection 203BA(1), substitute:

(1) A provider that is an approved provider at any time in a financial year must give the Secretary a report in accordance with subsection (2).

(4) Schedule 2, item 10, page 13 (after line 2), after paragraph 203BA(2)(b), insert:

(ba) if the provider carries on a business for profit—include the financial information set out in subsection (2A) in relation to the period that applies under paragraph (b) of this subsection; and

(5) Schedule 2, item 10, page 13 (after line 7), after subsection 203BA(2), insert:

For-profit providers required to provide additional financial information

(2A) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(ba), the financial information is the following:

(a) the total amount of the provider's profits or losses;

(b) the total amount of any dividends paid by the provider;

(c) details of expenditure attributable to staffing costs, including:

(i) remuneration of executives; and

(ii) salaries of staff employed, contracted or otherwise engaged by the provider; and

(iii) any other compensation paid to staff; and

(iii) training and development of staff; and

(d) the amount of expenditure attributable to investment in quality and inclusion for child care services provided by the provider;

(e) the amount of expenditure attributable to rental costs for premises used by the provider to provide child care services;

(f) details of any increases to fees charged by the provider for child care services;

(g) any additional information of a kind prescribed by the Minister's rules for the purposes of this paragraph.

(2B) The Minister's rules may prescribe methods for the purposes of calculating amounts mentioned in subsection (2A).

(6) Schedule 2, item 10, page 13 (lines 13 to 17), omit "large child care" (wherever occurring).

(7) Schedule 2, item 14, page 14 (lines 26 and 27), omit "if the approved provider is a large child care provider covered by paragraph 4A(1)(a) or (b)—".

(8) Schedule 2, item 14, page 14 (after line 30), after subsection 162B(1), insert:

(1A) The Secretary must, under subsection (1), publish information mentioned in paragraph (1)(d) (together with any related information mentioned in paragraph (1)(e)), or information included in a report mentioned in paragraph (1)(f), as soon as practicable after the information or report is given to the Secretary, together with information mentioned in paragraphs (1)(a), (b) and (c).

These amendments are to ensure that early childhood education and care providers are subject to a strong transparency regime that families can have confidence in. We heard during the inquiry to this bill that stakeholders supported a need for greater transparency in the early childhood education and care sector. The bill makes a start on that, definitely, by introducing new reporting requirements for large early childhood education and care providers and allowing the secretary of the department to publish the information. But there is no reason that these requirements should be arbitrarily limited to large providers.

As the Centre for Policy Development argued in their submission, they should apply to all early childhood education and care providers. This amendment that I am moving will extend the reporting requirements to all early childhood education and care providers and will require the secretary to publish the information reported to them. It shouldn't be left up to their discretion whether they publish the information or not.

Though education—this is what the Greens believe—should never be for profit, the unfortunate reality is that there has been a proliferation of for-profit early childhood education and care providers in recent years. These providers receive substantial public money, and there is so little visibility and accountability as to how they spend that money. There is a compelling need for them to be subject to stricter disclosure requirements than those which apply to community and not-for-profit early childhood education and care providers.

We are therefore moving amendments which respond to recommendations from the Centre for Future Work and the United Workers Union to require for-profit early childhood education and care providers to report their full finances, including profits, dividend payments, other disbursements to shareholders, executive compensation, wages expenditure, rental costs and fee increases. I think this is absolutely necessary, when huge amounts of public money are now being used for profit. Again, the secretary will be required to publish this information to contribute to this greater public awareness of how for-profit providers are using public money.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:20): **The government is committed to improving transparency in the sector. Large early childhood education providers will be required to report financial information, including profit and revenue, which will be published online. During the committee's inquiry, this approach was described by some stakeholders as essential and completely reasonable. Large providers account for over a third of the early childhood education and care sector, but the government is conscious of the need to balance increasing transparency with the regulatory burden, particularly that which is imposed on small businesses.**

Separate to the bill, work is underway to further enhance the Starting Blocks website to ensure it is a reliable one-stop shop for families seeking information about their early childhood and education care options. We believe we have the appropriate transparency mechanisms in place and don't support the amendments put forward by Senator Faruqi and the Greens.

The CHAIR: The question before the committee is that amendments (1) to (8) on sheet 1720, moved by Senator Faruqi by leave of the committee, should be agreed to.

The committee divided. [12:26]

(The Chair—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes13
Noes30
Majority.....17

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Pocock, D. W.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Cox, D.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Rice, J. E.
Thorpe, L. A.

Faruqi, M.
Pocock, B.
Shoebridge, D.
Waters, L. J.

NOES

Bilyk, C. L.
Chisholm, A.
Dodson, P.
Gallagher, K. R.
Hanson, P. L.
McLachlan, A. L.
Polley, H.
Scarr, P. M. (Teller)
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Brown, C. L.
Cicccone, R.
Duniam, J. R.
Green, N. L.
McCarthy, M.
Payman, F.
Pratt, L. C.
Sheldon, A. V.
Urquhart, A. E.
Watt, M. P.

Canavan, M. J.
Colbeck, R. M.
Farrell, D. E.
Grogan, K.
McKenzie, B.
Payne, M. A.
Roberts, M. I.
Smith, M. F.
Van, D. A.
White, L.

Question negatived.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (12:30): I move:

That the House of Representatives be requested to make the following amendment:

(1) Schedule 3, page 16 (line 1) to page 18 (line 31), omit the Schedule, substitute:

Schedule 3—Abolishing the activity test*A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999***1 Subsection 3(1) (definition of activity test result)**

Repeal the definition.

2 Subsection 3(1) (definition of child wellbeing result)

Repeal the definition.

3 Subsection 3(1)

Insert:

circumstances test result has the meaning given by clause 11 of Schedule 2.

4 Subsection 3(1) (definition of deemed activity test result)

Repeal the definition.

5 Subsection 3(1)

Insert:

deemed circumstances test result has the meaning given by clause 16 of Schedule 2.

6 Subsection 3(1) (definition of extended child wellbeing period)

Repeal the definition.

7 Subsection 3(1) (definition of low income result)

Repeal the definition.

8 Subsection 3(1) (definition of paid work)

Omit "(other than in paragraph 12(2)(a) of Schedule 2)".

9 Subsection 3(1) (definition of recognised activity)

Repeal the definition.

10 Subsection 3(1) definition of recognised activity result)

Repeal the definition.

11 Subsection 3B(1)

Omit "(other than in paragraph 12(2)(a) of Schedule 2)".

12 Subsection 3B(1) (note)

Repeal the note.

13 Clause 1 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 1)

Repeal the step.

14 Clause 1 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 5, paragraph (a))

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

15 Clause 1 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 5, paragraph (b))

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

16 Clause 1 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 6)

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

17 Clause 1 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 7)

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

18 Clause 4 of Schedule 2 (heading)

Omit "Activity-tested", substitute "Circumstances-tested".

19 Subclause 4(1) of Schedule 2

Omit "*activity-tested amount*", substitute "*circumstances-tested amount*".

20 Subparagraph 4(1)(a)(i) of Schedule 2

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

21 Subclause 4(2) of Schedule 2

Omit "activity test" (wherever occurring), substitute "circumstances test".

22 Clause 4A of Schedule 2 (heading)

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

23 Paragraph 4A(1)(a) of Schedule 2

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

24 Subclause 4A(2) of Schedule 2

Omit "*adjusted activity-tested amount*", substitute "*adjusted circumstances-tested amount*".

25 Paragraphs 4A(2)(a) and (b) of Schedule 2

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

26 Clause 8 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 1)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

27 Clause 8 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 4)

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

28 Clause 8 of Schedule 2 (method statement, step 5)

Omit "activity-tested", substitute "circumstances-tested".

29 Clause 10 of Schedule 2 (heading)

Omit "Activity-tested", substitute "Circumstances-tested".

30 Subclause 10(1)

Omit "*activity-tested amount*", substitute "*circumstances-tested amount*".

31 Paragraph 10(1)(a) of Schedule 2

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

32 Subclause 10(2) of Schedule 2

Omit "activity test" (wherever occurring), substitute "circumstances test".

33 Part 5 of Schedule 2 (heading)

Repeal the heading, substitute:

Part 5—Circumstances test**34 Division 1 of Part 5 of Schedule 2 (heading)**

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

35 Clause 11 of Schedule 2 (heading)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

36 Subclause 11(1) of Schedule 2

Omit "*activity test result*", substitute "*circumstances test result*".

37 Subparagraph 11(1)(b)(ii) of Schedule 2

Repeal the subparagraph, substitute:

(ii) the result worked out in accordance with paragraph (a) for the individual's partner in relation to the child.

38 Subclause 11(1) of Schedule 2 (table heading)

Repeal the heading, substitute:

Individual's circumstances test result**39 Subclause 11(1) of Schedule 2 (table items 1 and 2)**

Repeal the items, substitute:

1	100	100	100
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40 Subclause 11(1) of Schedule 2 (table item 4)

Repeal the item.

41 Subclause 11(5) of Schedule 2

Omit "activity test" (wherever occurring), substitute "circumstances test".

42 Clauses 12, 13 and 15 of Schedule 2

Repeal the clauses.

43 Division 2 of Part 5 of Schedule 2 (heading)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

44 Clause 16 of Schedule 2

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

45 Subclause 16(1) of Schedule 2

Omit "*deemed activity test result*", substitute "*deemed circumstances test result*".

A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999

46 Subparagraph 67CE(1)(b)(ii)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

47 Subparagraph 105D(2)(a)(ii)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

48 Subparagraph 105E(1)(c)(ii)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

49 Subparagraph 108(5)(b)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

50 Paragraph 111(2A)(b)

Omit "activity test", substitute "circumstances test".

51 Paragraph 157(2)(k)

Repeal the paragraph.

52 Application of amendments etc.

(1) The amendments of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999* and *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999* made by this Schedule apply in relation to sessions of care provided to a child in a CCS fortnight that starts in the income year in which this item commences or in a later income year.

(2) A reference to an individual's circumstances test result in the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*, as amended by this Schedule, is taken, in relation to any period occurring before the start of the first CCS fortnight in the income year in which this item commences, to include a reference to the individual's activity test result, within the meaning of that Act as in force immediately before that commencement.

Statement pursuant to the order of the Senate of 26 June 2000

Amendment (1)

Amendment (1) is framed as a request because it amends the bill to remove activity testing for the child care subsidy. The amendment would enable individuals to access up to the full 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight regardless of whether they have engaged in recognised activity such as paid work or study. This would result in increased payments of the child care subsidy.

The effect of the amendment would therefore increase the amount of expenditure under the standing appropriation in section 233 of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999*.

Statement by the Clerk of the Senate pursuant to the order of the Senate of 26 June 2000

Amendment (1)

If the effect of the amendment is to increase expenditure under the standing appropriation in section 233 of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999* then it is in accordance with the precedents of the Senate that the amendment be moved as a request.

This amendment is about abolishing the activity test.

As I said during my second reading speech, the Greens support, obviously, the new baseline entitlement to 36 hours a fortnight of subsidised childhood education and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, regardless of the activity levels of their parents. This change has been a long time coming. But, really, it also leaves so many other families and children out in the cold. It does not go far enough; the activity test needs to be completely scrapped—it is causing harm now. We heard from so many witnesses during the Senate inquiry on this bill who told us how the activity test was cruel and punitive, that it really was beyond repair and that it had to go. This is because it denies access for the most disadvantaged children and then punishes families who are in insecure or casual work.

Some 126,000 children from the poorest households in the country are missing out on early education because of the activity test. The activity test denies access, as I said, to the most disadvantaged children. Many witnesses to the inquiry completely supported the abolition of this test. So this is what this amendment does: it abolishes the activity test and takes us a long way towards delivering universal and fairer access to early childhood education and care. I do really ask my colleagues in the chamber to support this. If we do care about access for many families, and especially for disadvantaged children and families, then this activity test really has to go. We have the ability to do that today.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:32): **The government believes that the activity test needs reviewing, but we think the most appropriate way for that to be done is through the Productivity Commission, which the government has tasked with looking at the sector and providing a comprehensive review of the sector. We think that the review should look at whether those activity test settings are**

appropriate, and that's what the government will do. That's what we think is the appropriate way to deal with the activity test.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (12:33): Minister, will the government please explain to me the activity test now—as it stands at the moment?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:33): Thanks, Senator Hanson. The activity test that we're focused on here today is the one where the government have said we've tasked the Productivity Commission with conducting a comprehensive review of the sector, which will include whether the current activity test settings are appropriate.

We expect the review to commence in the first half of next year. However, we thought that there was an urgency to act in the current environment, particularly to support education outcomes for Indigenous children. In 2021, for the first time, the proportion of First Nations children on track developmentally in all five domains went backwards, so the gap is actually getting bigger and not smaller. We need to turn this around, and that's why this bill provides a minimum of 36 subsidised hours a fortnight for First Nations children, benefiting at least 6,600 families.

According to the Australian early development centres, in 2021 two in five Indigenous children were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains when they started school. That's compared with one in five children who are from a non-Indigenous background. Last year the proportion of Indigenous children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains was 34.3 per cent, which is a drop from 35.2 per cent in 2018. As the Prime Minister has said, we've tasked the Productivity Commission to investigate affordable—

The CHAIR: Excuse me, Minister. Senator Hanson, a point of order?

Senator Hanson: Yes, on relevance. The minister is not answering my question. I asked: what is the activity test at the moment? He has not gone anywhere near explaining what the activity test is at the moment.

The CHAIR: I draw you back to the question, Minister.

Senator CHISHOLM: The activity test is: for less than eight hours, the subsidised care each fortnight is zero hours if you earn above \$72,466 and 24 hours if you earn \$72,466 or below; for more than eight hours to 16 hours, the subsidised care each fortnight is 36 hours; for more than 16 hours to 48 hours, the subsidised care each fortnight is 72 hours; and, for more than 48 hours, the subsidised care each fortnight is 100 hours.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (12:36): Can you explain this to the chamber: how much care is given to people who are not working, those people who are not employed? Do they have to do charity work or be studying? What are the requirements for them to get that child care?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:36): There are a lot of other factors involved there, Senator Hanson. It would also depend on whether they're studying or doing some type of training. It's really hard to give a simple answer to that question because there are other factors at play.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (12:36): I ask the question: is child care, paid by the taxpayer, given to families who are not working at all? And how much?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:37): If they're not working then they don't get any subsidy.

The CHAIR: The question is that the request for an amendment be agreed to.

The committee divided. [12:42]

(The Chair—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes12
Noes29
Majority.....17

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Rice, J. E.
Thorpe, L. A.

Cox, D.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Shoebridge, D.
Waters, L. J.

Faruqi, M.
Pocock, B.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

NOES

Bilyk, C. L.	Brown, C. L.	Cadell, R. (Teller)
Canavan, M. J.	Chisholm, A.	Cicccone, R.
Colbeck, R. M.	Dodson, P.	Duniam, J. R.
Farrell, D. E.	Gallagher, K. R.	Green, N. L.
Grogan, K.	Hanson, P. L.	McCarthy, M.
McLachlan, A. L.	Payman, F.	Payne, M. A.
Pocock, D. W.	Polley, H.	Pratt, L. C.
Roberts, M. I.	Sheldon, A. V.	Smith, M. F.
Sterle, G.	Tyrrell, T. M.	Walsh, J. C.
Watt, M. P.	White, L.	

Question negatived.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (12:45): As a servant to the people of Queensland and Australia, I note that this bill makes some useful updates to the administration of the federal government's childcare subsidy. One Nation largely supports those changes. One Nation, though, opposes many of the provisions in the bill.

Before moving my amendment, I'll put it in context and ask four questions of the minister, because this bill has not been thought through. This bill will add \$4.5 billion over the forward estimates to the cost of child care to the federal government, taking the annual cost above \$10 billion. Child care, or early learning, is an industry worth \$14 billion a year, employing 133,000 Australians to care for 1.3 million children.

The government is promising that this bill will make child care more affordable, and the expectation is it will allow more families to put more children in child care. But it's difficult to see how. Remember that subsidies always make services and goods more expensive. A family earning Australia's median wage of \$52,000 will see an increase in the government subsidy from 85 per cent to 90 per cent of the cost of child care—just a five percentage point increase. At an average cost of \$80 a day for a preschool place, this saving will amount to \$4 a day, and for long day care a saving of around \$8 a day.

How fast will this benefit be eaten away through inflation? Well, it has already been eaten away. Childcare centres started to put their prices up straight after Labor's election victory, with the expectation of this increase in the government subsidy. As rising energy prices, wages, insurance and overheads impact cash flow, childcare centres will raise their prices further. According to a Mitchell institute study, child care was unaffordable for 386,000 Australian families, and this was keeping 73,000 people out of the workforce. What's missing from the explanatory memorandum, the *Bills Digest* and the committee report is any proof that making child care \$4 to \$8 a day cheaper will have any effect on childcare uptake.

Did anyone ask why these everyday Australians could not afford child care? Had this question been asked, we would have found that everyday Australians not only find child care unaffordable but can no longer afford their electricity bills, their rent, their mortgage payments and weekly grocery bills. Did anyone, Minister, ask if these families could not afford child care because they can't afford a car to get there, or the petrol to go in that car?

My first question is: why has the government advanced this bill as a solution to childcare affordability without actually doing the work to prove this bill will make child care more affordable? What about tax reform to enable families to look after their children—the best form of care: respect for families and parents. What about the modelling? I'm pretty sure that this bill won't do a damn thing for everyday Australians.

Thanks to the economic policies of the previous Liberal-National government, which Labor supported from opposition, inflation is now running at eight per cent. I've spoken previously about the inflation that resulted from wasteful COVID spending, funded through increased debt and money creation using electronic journal entries. That's where the problem is: wages going backwards from runaway inflation due to government spending—government spending that's already out of control. What does this bill do? It adds another \$4.5 billion to government spending. If everyday Australians are not benefiting from this bill to any useful degree, where's the \$4 billion coming from?

Figure 1 in the *Bills Digest* is a handy chart that is most instructive. In this bill the biggest financial benefit to existing recipients goes to families who are earning \$170,000 a year. The biggest winners overall are families earning between \$360,000 and \$530,000, who did not get the childcare subsidy before and now will. Does this sound like a measure to help working Australians? No, it does not. To One Nation it sounds like the government is spending billions to make themselves popular with urban professionals who voted Greens and Teals in the last election. What about rural and regional Australians? Urban professionals are the winners in this bill; workers and regional Australians get scraps. That is a cynical political decision from Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

One Nation is compelled to raise a second issue arising from this legislation. Qualification for free, taxpayer funded child care is being based on race rather than need. While we fully support evidence-based measures to improve Aboriginal workforce participation, childcare support should be based on the needs of the individual, not the colour of the individual's skin. Aboriginals and all Australians are worthy of respect and fairness. I support Senator Nampijinpa Price's comments on the definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This bill has not been thought through.

Thirdly, this bill includes a provision that will have the effect of prohibiting the million or so Australian families using child care from paying for their child care in cash. By cash, I mean cash or cheque. Australia's two million small businesses often deal in cash. Rural Australia still needs cash. Anyone in a flood, in a blackout or with a hacked bank account has to pay in cash. Family members help each other out in cash. Yet the globalist billionaires have told Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Minister Stephen Jones to ban cash, and now we have snuck into this bill a provision that all payments made to childcare centres must be made using electronic funds transfers—no cash allowed! This continues the Liberals' and Nationals' war against cash. The Reserve Bank of Australia admitted to me in estimates hearings that it is working on a CBDC, or central bank digital currency, for Australia, and working with other nations' central banks to develop a global digital currency. The predatory billionaires said, 'Jump,' and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said, 'How high?' Now, an entire industry, worth \$14 billion a year, can no longer accept cash payments unless the minister writes a specific exemption—which they will not write, because the whole idea of banning cash payments is to ban cash. There is no reason for this new provision. The King's currency—our national currency—is by law legal tender across the nation and must be accepted. If this government wants to stop Australians using cash then it should have that conversation and bring on that legislation.

I understand some childcare centres are not collecting the gap fee and are instead relying on the 85 per cent—now 90 per cent—government payment as their full revenue. Taking payment for the gap in cash—or any other measure—and not declaring it is already illegal under the law. Not taking payment for the gap is already illegal under subsection 201B(1) of A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999. Criminal and civil penalties are provided—\$12,000 per offence. Under subsection 201B(1A) of the same act, the minister can prescribe rules that could be used to ban a childcare centre from accepting cash if they are caught rorting the system. However, if they are caught rorting the system through use of cash, or any other method, they lose their license anyway for failing the 'fit and proper person' test to work in child care. Some welfare groups raised concerns with this provision in the committee inquiry. I suggest more would have if they had been more aware that the measure was hidden away in the bill. I note that the word 'cash' is not even used—that's sneaky.

The provision to ban cash payment in the entire childcare industry makes no sense if judged on the reasons the government states. It does make sense if the intention is to make another incremental removal of cash from common use as part of a wider agenda to force every Australian onto a central bank digital currency linked to a digital identity. Last week, the New South Wales government announced a digital identity for New South Wales that is not linked to government paperwork but to be used for liquor purchases—government and the private sector working together like one big corporate state!

One Nation was successful in fighting the cash ban bill in the previous parliament with help from the Citizens Party. The Senate rejected a cash ban in 2021 and I ask the Senate to reject a cash ban again today. Countries in Europe that have tried a cash ban are now winding measures back. What makes sense to inner-city elites makes no sense at all in the real world. I foreshadow that we need to remove this provision that will stop Australians paying for their childcare gap in cash. We have one flag above this building, we are one community, we are one nation, and the King's currency cannot be refused. Minister, in addition to the previous questions: why is Labor joining the Liberals and the Nationals in banning cash? Your dwindling grassroots members said resoundingly last year, 'No, keep cash.' Why are you banning cash?

I move, firstly, my amendment (2) on sheet 1735:

(2) Schedule 4, Part 2, page 21 (lines 1 to 24), **to be opposed.**

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:55): **Thanks, Senator Roberts, for that contribution. The cost of early childhood education is a concern, and it's gone up 41 per cent over the last eight years. What this bill seeks to do is cut the cost for over one million families. That is what we are doing, that is part of our plan. We are tackling the cost of living and the challenge that we inherited on that front. The complementary measure that we have in place to ensure that we have fairness in pricing is the government has committed \$10.8 million for an ACCC inquiry to commence next year as well. The inquiry will work in a complementary fashion with this legislation, if it passes. The ACCC will investigate the drivers of rising early education costs. It will examine the impact of these childcare subsidy changes on out-of-pocket fees and it will consider the effectiveness**

of the current mechanisms designed to put pressure on fee growth. That is our response, and we think it's the best response to tackling that challenge when it comes to the cost of living and ensuring that charges are responsible.

In terms of who will benefit from these changes, if you are a family on an income of \$60,000, you will get a 90 per cent subsidy, which is worth \$14,580 a year. That, for me, shows the substance of the package that we put forward before the election. What we're delivering on in government is that those people on a modest income of \$60,000 will be the ones who get the most subsidy as a result of these changes, if we are to get them implemented.

In terms of the electronic payment of gap fees, this, from our point of view, is purely an integrity measure. The government is making a significant investment to cut the cost of child care, but we must protect this investment from fraud and ensure families receive the benefit and that taxpayer funds are used appropriately. The bill sets out a requirement for electronic payment of gap fees. This will allow the government to test whether gap fees have been paid, and it will present a significant obstacle for fraudulent services that try to claim childcare subsidy for care that isn't occurring. For anyone who's concerned about the use of taxpayer money and the fact that it should be used appropriately, this is an important measure that goes to tackling that problem to ensure that people can have trust in the system as well. Many key peaks and providers support this move, including Early Learning and Care Council of Australia and Outside School Hours Council of Australia as well. There are many forms of electronic payment that parents can choose from which do not incur costs, and that is what we think is an appropriate way to deal with any potential fraud.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (12:58): Minister, could you tell me why you haven't done the analysis already? Why is this bill being pushed through without the analysis being done? You're saying we'll have the analysis next year. Why not do it now and understand the cost pressures of childcare centres? Why not do it now so that we can face up to the fact that your government is putting huge cost-of-living pressures on people through energy policies, taxation policies and other policies already? Give people a break.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (12:59): As we've been very upfront about from the beginning, this is something we talked about in opposition for many years and we're committed to delivering on in government. For us, there obviously is the economic focus of these reforms that will enable more people to get back into the workforce. I've spent much time in rural and regional Australia, and I know workforce shortage is acute in the cities but it's also acute in regional areas.

For me, this policy is one that will benefit so many communities across the country because it will enable more people to get back into the workforce, which will help ease the labour shortage that we've got in so many communities around the country. It does reduce the fees for one million people, who'll be better off from a cost-of-living point of view, but the longer term economic benefits to so many communities will be widespread. That's why this government is committed to delivering on it. It was an election promise. It also helps restore integrity and trust with the Australian people after oppositions went to elections and just promised things—we'll be delivering on them in government. That's what we intend to do today.

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales) (13:00): I want to ask the assistant minister a question in relation to his response to Senator Hanson earlier. In relation to Senator Hanson's question about whether you needed to be working to receive subsidy support, as I understand it the assistant minister said that that was not the case—you would not receive subsidy support if you were not working. But you'll see that the Services Australia website, apart from any other instructive piece of information that I'd point the assistant minister to, does talk about accessing, for example, up to 36 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight if your activity is volunteering or actively looking for work, for example. It talks about the receivers of the carer allowance. It says that when you have mutual obligation requirements you can access 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight. It also says that is true if you are actively seeking work, if you are doing training to improve work skills or employment prospects, or if you are doing an approved course of educational study—all of which point to the matters that were being raised by Senator Hanson. I wondered if the assistant minister would like to correct the record.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:01): I was responding to Senator Hanson's question, which was what happened if people were doing nothing. I made the point that if people were training and doing other things, and met the activity test, then they would be eligible. It's entirely consistent with what I said.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:02): Minister, your government can keep its pre-election promises and provide good governance simply by doing the analysis upfront. Do the homework and get the job done properly so that we have a proper bill before us. Why aren't you doing that?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:02): We have.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (13:02): I want to make some comments on Senator Roberts's amendment. The Greens will not be supporting this amendment because, as the minister said earlier, these changes to prevent gap fees and payment by cash are needed so that providers do correctly report, and to prevent any fraud caused by them not reporting correctly. We do acknowledge, though, that there needs to be exceptions for cash payments for disadvantaged, vulnerable families, which I understand will be in the regulations. If the minister could confirm that, I'd really appreciate it. We will work with the government to ensure that these exceptions are fair.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:03): Yes, that is the case.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:03): Minister, isn't it true that not taking payment for the gap is already illegal under subsection 201B(1) of the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999? Criminal and civil penalties are provided—\$12,000 per offence. Under subsection 201B(1A) of the same act, the minister can prescribe rules that could be used to ban a childcare centre from accepting cash if they are caught rorting the system. You already have this power. Why do you need to ban cash from everyday Australians across this country when it is absolutely essential?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:04): Those measures are in place in an attempt to prevent fraud, which is why they're in the legislation you just described.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:04): Exactly, Minister. These provisions to stop fraud are already in the bill. You can apply them. You don't need to ban cash to do that. Banning cash is being driven by another motive, which is the same motive that the Liberal-Nationals use: to get rid of choice and freedom for people. Why are you banning cash?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:05): There are penalties for fraud in the system, but this is also focused on the prevention of fraud, which is what we've sought to do in this legislation.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:05): Minister, surely the purpose of having a law and enforcing that law is to prevent criminals from perpetrating the breaches. Surely that's the case. Why don't you just enforce the law instead of banning cash for all Australians?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:05): We think that there is fraud in the sector and we think that this is the best way to deal with it. That's to ensure that taxpayer funds are being used appropriately and for the measures that the government intends.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:06): Your government's responsibility is to enforce the law. If you've already got the law, enforce it. You don't need to tack on something else that's got nothing to do with it just to take cash away from Australians. Why won't you enforce the law? You've just admitted you won't.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:06): That is complete nonsense, Senator Roberts. This is about the prevention of fraud. Surely the best way to deal with fraud is to prevent it from happening in the first place, which is what we intend to do with this legislation.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:06): We already have these under section 201 of the act I just spoke about. You already have them. You're admitting that you won't enforce them.

Minister, you talked about the shortage of workers in regional and metropolitan areas around the country. We agree. Why don't you let those mandated without getting injections back to work? That's where a lot of people are trapped right now. They can't collect welfare, they can't get an income and they're a burden on society for simply not agreeing to put something in their bodies. This needs a comprehensive approach—taxation, energy, cost of living—not just fiddling with a few people. While you're at it, please answer the question: why are you supporting welfare for the top one per cent of income earners?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:07): As I said earlier, if your family is on an income of \$60,000, you'll get a 90 per cent subsidy, worth \$14,580 a year. Those income earners are the biggest beneficiaries of the reforms that we are making. That will ensure that more people can get into affordable child care, which will be good for not only children but also the economy at the same time, throughout rural and regional Australia, as well as in the cities.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:08): The big winners overall from this bill—your government's bill—are families earning between \$360,000 and \$530,000 a year, who do not get the childcare subsidy until now. Why?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:08): That just isn't the case, Senator Roberts. As I've said, the biggest beneficiaries are those who are on lower and middle incomes. They'll get a 90 per cent subsidy, worth almost \$15,000 a year. That is who we believe are the biggest beneficiaries of these changes.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:09): The fact is that families currently earning between \$360,000 and \$530,000 do not currently get the childcare subsidy. Yet, if this bill passes, they will get it. Why are you giving welfare to the top one per cent of earners?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:09): I think the key point of difference here, Senator Roberts, is that we don't see this as welfare. We see it as an economic reform, and we've been upfront about that for many years now and particularly in the lead-up to the budget, when we announced our plan to implement these changes. If you can't understand the economic impact of this reform given what the country currently confronts, then I don't think you'll ever understand it. It is going to be so beneficial to so many people and their ability to get back into the workforce, and that will predominantly be women. But it also goes to those challenges that I've talked about now repeatedly with you, about the impact in many communities where there is a labour shortage. This bill will have a significant impact on ensuring more people are available to work in the industries that we need them to, and that is why it is an important economic reform.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:10): I just want the minister to clarify something for me. Did you or did you not say that people in excess of \$360,000 a year won't get childcare subsidies whatsoever? Is that the case?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:10): No, I never said that. I said the biggest beneficiaries are those on lower and middle incomes.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:10): Alright. Then I'll ask the question. Will people on incomes in excess of \$360,000 receive child support benefits under your legislation?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:11): Absolutely. Someone on that wage will, and that is why we are focused on this important economic reform—because it will enable more people to get back into the workforce. That's exactly how we've detailed and talked about this for years. We think that is important in any economic situation but particularly now, given the challenges the nation confronts.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:11): Up to what income amount are you going to be giving child subsidies, in excess of \$360,000?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:11): Up to \$529,999.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:12): Will you give me an explanation of the variance of the childcare subsidies that will be paid out to people on that income? As a matter of fact, just tell me and the people of Australia: for someone on over \$500,000, what childcare subsidy will they get?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:12): There are obviously many components to that, but, if they have a single child, their subsidy would be six per cent or \$970 annually.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:12): I want to ask you another question. Were you actually saying that for fraud reasons cash won't be used again? Can you also clarify: is it everyone who uses childcare who will not be able to use cash at all? Is that for everyone, across the board?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:13): There will be provision for exceptions made in consultation with the sector.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:13): Explain who.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:13): There'd obviously be consultation with the department, but we envisage potentially there are remote Aboriginal centres or remote geographic locations where it would be necessary.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:13): So they can use cash, but other people throughout the country can't use cash. So, basically, we're going to say it's for Aboriginals. We have white families—not just Aboriginal families, but everyone else—who do live in remote areas as well who possibly may need to use cash. Are you going to make provisions for them as well?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:14): It doesn't take long for Senator Hanson to try and play the race card. What we've done in a sensible way is say that there may need to be exemptions made in consultations with the sector. They would be dealt with by the department. For instance, it could be someone in a domestic violence situation where they don't want to make an electronic payment. So there would be a level of commonsense that is applied, in consultation with the sector, and I'm sure that is appropriate. But the fundamental aim of the change is to ensure that there is no fraud in the system. So that is what we are focused on in delivering this measure.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:15): Under section 51(xii) of the Australian Constitution, it talks about legal tender and coinage. Therefore it's for the government to allow that to be used by the people of this nation and for good governance. Did you receive legal advice before putting this into your bill—that people of Australia cannot use legal tender?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:15): I am advised that we did, yes.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:15): Could you please present to this chamber that legal advice that was given to you?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:15): As you know, Senator Hanson, the government does not provide its legal advice on issues such as this.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:16): You've got to be kidding me, surely! You put this in the bill—that people cannot use legal tender—and you are saying that should not be provided to this chamber, for the people of Australia to know where you got that legal advice? Or is this something that you've come up with on the hop, just to satisfy me or to put me off from asking this question? You are denying people the right to use legal tender in this country and you're going to make it be up to you or the department who you allow to use it or not. I'd like to see—and I think you have an obligation to this chamber and to the people of Australia to give—that legal advice. You stated there was legal advice. I'd like to know and see that legal advice. And we have a right to actually see that.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:16): Minister, the family is the best form of care for raising children. Mothers and fathers should have the option to work. Let's get away from the word 'welfare'. Can you please explain to me why families earning between \$360,000 and \$530,000 a year who do not currently get childcare subsidy will, if this bill is passed, receive a gift from the government of a childcare subsidy?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:17): Because it's an economic reform, Senator Roberts, as I have been over previously with you.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:17): Just on that point, of it being an economic reform—and I accept that; I think supporting families who seek to work to be able to do so is important—if I can just go back to the modelling around the economic outcomes of the bills we're looking to pass here, could you give me an indication of the increasing workforce participation as a result of these bills passing?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:18): **What the Treasury analysis indicated is that there would be 37,000 additional full-time workers as a result of these changes. We think that is a significant boost to the economy. We think it's particularly acute now, given, as I have said repeatedly, the challenges that we face as a nation and the labour shortages that are holding many parts of the economy back. We do feel as though—we do believe—that this is an important economic reform. It's part of a suite of changes that we took through the budget process as well, that deliver partly on cost-of-living relief but do so in a responsible way, to ensure that we don't put additional pressure on inflation at the same time. That is what we set out to achieve. That's why we're proud to talk about these reforms and we're absolutely determined to deliver on them in government.**

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:19): Just further to that: have Treasury or the department of education modelled the impact of this policy change to GDP?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:19): What I can say in regard to the modelling is that the analysis that was done by Treasury used similar modelling to that used by the previous government for the higher child care subsidy. That is what we've been relying on in terms of how we've been talking about the economic impact and the number of people who will be allowed back into the workforce as a result of these changes. That, for us, is the significant factor; that's what has been motivating us; and that's why we think it is good for the economy and the country as a whole.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:20): Just to confirm: you have conducted no new modelling for a very big new policy. I'm pleased the amendment about the review passed earlier. Has the Treasury or the Department of Education modelled the supply-and-demand impact of this policy?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:20): As we went through in detail at Senate estimates, our focus has been on delivering the policy. We know the work that Treasury have done on some of their analyses. What we also know is that, when you make these changes around making child care more affordable, you will see more people wanting to take up these services. That is what we are confident of and that is what we are aiming to deliver on. That's why we're making some of those other changes, like having the ACCC or the Productivity Commission look at this policy and the impact.

The other focus we have is on tackling some of the workforce issues that we are confronting. They are large now, but they are going to be more challenging in the future. That is why we have substantial plans around providing fee-free TAFE places and an additional 20,000 Commonwealth supported places at university. Some of those will go to early childhood educators as well. We've got many prongs in terms of how we're tackling this challenge, and we intend to deliver while in government. We expect that there will be an uptake in accessing services, given that it will be more affordable for families to get their children into early childhood education.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:21): So we have a major economic policy, but we don't have modelling on the change to GDP or the supply-and-demand impacts. Can the minister outline specifically whether the Treasury or the Department of Education has modelled—and you referenced changes to workforce requirements in your contribution just then—the additional workforce that will be required to meet the demand? Some numbers would be helpful.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:22): What we know is that, when it comes to early childhood educators, we inherited a significant mess and a lack of a plan from the previous government. The National Skills Commission repeatedly told the previous government that over 20,000 educators would be needed for the next few years, and the previous government took no action. What we're doing is delivering more university places, teacher bursaries and fee-free TAFE places for early childhood education. That will be a real focus for us in terms of rebuilding the TAFE sector.

We also supported the Fair Work Commission's minimum wage increase, which resulted in a 4.6 per cent pay rise for around 113,000 early childhood educators. I believe the current opposition opposed that wage increase. We are legislating to remove unnecessary limitations on access to multi-employer agreements, which has resulted in some of the highest paid early childhood educators in the country. In Victoria, 70 centres combined in pay negotiations and, as a result, are paid at least 16 per cent above the award. These centres still had to register the agreement 70 times, and this is the kind of thing that multi-employer bargaining reform will make easier. We're strengthening the ability of the Fair Work Commission to order pay increases for low-paid workers in female dominated industries.

Given the immediate challenge that we're confronting, migration has to be part of the mix as well. That is why we have increased the number of permanent migration visas available this financial year from 160,000 to 195,000. We're also looking at more substantial migration reform next year, with a comprehensive review due by the end of February. Additionally, National Cabinet has tasked the Minister for Education and the Minister for Early Childhood Education with identifying further opportunities for collaboration to address workforce shortages. That work is underway now to achieve the changes that we need to ensure that we have the workforce in the future.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (13:24): Minister, this bill is going to cost Australian taxpayers another \$4.5 billion a year and it is going to then cost over \$10 billion. Has the government done an audit on childcare centres to extrapolate out how much it actually does cost the centres for child care or are you just coming up with a figure and saying, 'We're going to pay you more money?' Has an audit been done of childcare centres of how much it actually costs for child care, and can you justify what is going to cost Australians \$10 billion a year?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:25): What we know is that, if these changes are passed, there will be around 1.26 million families better off. We also know that part of the plan that we are delivering on is that every family and every child who have benefited from our election promise benefits from the cheaper childcare bill, and we are committed to delivering that promise in full.

In terms of the points you make around—

Senator Hanson: I rise on a point of order on relevance. The minister is talking about something I didn't ask. I asked him a direct question: was an audit done into the childcare centres on the relevance of this increase of \$4.5 billion? You say that cost of living has gone up. That's understandable, and everyone knows that. But we are looking at \$10 billion a year in taxpayer subsidies going to this. I believe some of this is a childcare industry that's going on out there, and we have known that people have actually ripped the system off.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Cox): Senator Hanson, can you please clarify your point of order.

Senator Hanson: My question is: has an audit been done on these childcare centres to justify an increase of \$4.5 billion and a full cost of \$10 billion to the Australian people?

Senator CHISHOLM: That's why I have spoken repeatedly around the \$10.8 million that we have provided to the ACCC to undertake a price inquiry into child care which will consider the effectiveness of the existing price regulation mechanisms, such as the rate caps, and provide recommendations to the government. That is what we think is the appropriate way to deal with those issues you raise.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:27): Minister, it seems we agree on something. You inherited a significant mess from the previous government with inflation, and you are continuing their policies. You have not thought this through. This is no part of a comprehensive plan for managing this economy, freeing people up, freeing the economy and supporting families. How many families currently earning \$360,000 to \$530,000 a year will be among those families better off?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:28): What we know is that 96 per cent of families will be better off as a result of the changes that we are making in this legislation. That is why we think it is of benefit to the economy, but it also goes to that important challenge that many families are facing at the moment around cost of living. I am sure that it has been done in a responsible way, without putting further inflationary pressures on the budget.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:28): Minister, you didn't answer my question. How many families currently earning \$360,000 to \$530,000 a year will be better off? And can you justify taxpayers on far lower incomes paying taxes to help these wealthy families that are in the top one per cent of Australian earners?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:29): What I can confirm is that only around two per cent of families who'll benefit from the changes earn over \$360,000.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:29): Thank you, Minister. What about the other part of my question? Do you think it's fair that taxpayers earning far, far less than this amount are paying a gift to these families that are currently in the top one per cent of Australian income earners?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (13:29): As I've detailed significantly, 96 per cent of families, or around million 1.26 million, will be better off as a result of these changes.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Cox): It being 1.30 pm, we will move to two-minute statements.

STATEMENTS BY SENATORS

Northern Territory: Domestic and Family Violence

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE (Northern Territory) (13:30): Recently, the ABC's *Four Corners* program highlighted the prevalence of homicide and domestic and sexual violence faced by Aboriginal women, particularly in places like the NT. While the ABC should be commended for the program highlighting a crisis of epic proportions, it was wrong to frame this issue as if it has never been highlighted before. It was in fact one of the reasons for why the Howard government initiated the Intervention. The ABC failed to consult former NT Minister for Women's Policy, Bess Nungarrayi Price, who worked alongside my fellow senator, Michaelia Cash, to develop the first national action plan to address DV.

As part of the former Country Liberal Party government, she made 23 separate media releases and five presentations on the floor of parliament on the issue. Over the last two years there have been approximately 82

separate occasions where DV against Indigenous women has been mentioned in a speech, a question or a response to a question in the Senate and House of Representatives. Yes, the justice system needs to be better to better support victims, but every single one of us needs to be honest about the contributing factors that myself and women like my mother are vilified for highlighting, and why the media, like the ABC, pretend we don't exist. We live the cultural factors that contribute to the violence and demand responsibility from our families, communities and perpetrators.

I commend the work of the Tangentyere Womens Family Safety Group; it disappoints me, however, that their CEO in 2016, Walter Shaw, attacked me after my 'Ending the Violence' National Press Club address, by calling me an oxygen thief and putting me on notice. He has accused me of politicising DV and has stopped me from speaking at White Ribbon Day events in my hometown, while obstructing any involvement to support the Tangentyere women. It's no wonder Aboriginal women cannot come together to demand change, when we're not only victimised at 40 times the national rate but constantly being controlled by the Aboriginal patriarchy, who get away with their behaviour because they too are classed as victims because of colonisation. Let the Aboriginal women have our feminist movement, not just white leftist women!

Workplace Relations: Amazon

Senator STERLE (Western Australia) (13:32): I want to highlight to the chamber, and to anyone listening, that this week the SDA and the TWU are calling out the disgraceful behaviour of Amazon worldwide in this nation and around this country. The owner of Amazon is worth no less than \$117 billion—and good luck to him! I wish I had \$117 billion, because I wouldn't be sitting in here whingeing about him and Amazon!

I have no problem with people earning money, but I have a serious problem when they make huge amounts of money off their workforce. It is a well-known factor around the world and in this nation that Amazon workers are too frightened to bargain collectively—to come together—through the threats of being dismissed. It is a well-known fact in this nation that, while some people applaud Amazon, it is stealing food off the table of workers from other retail companies, such as Woolworths and Coles, who do pay the right money to their people, who do pay the superannuation, who do make good paying jobs full-time and who do supply all the good stuff that goes around that in holiday pay, maternity pay, sick leave, rostered days off and overtime. So how the heck can we put our hands on our hearts and look up to Amazon?

The TWU and the SDA have had an online retail campaign on this going for years. They work with other unions around Australia, and I would just urge every Australian consumer about this: we all want the same thing—we all want what's best for our children. There's not one person I've ever met who doesn't wake up in the morning saying that they want to deliver for their children. If you want to deliver for your children—and I'm not preaching to you—then we know they have to have a good education and good paying jobs. But not every Australian kid wants to go to university—not that they can't. I know I didn't want to; I couldn't think of anything worse! I wanted to get out and start working, and I wanted to be rewarded for the effort I put in.

I commend the TWU and the SDA, for keeping the campaign going against the greed of Amazon in Australia and worldwide.

Youth Voice In Parliament Week

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (13:34): Today I'm going to read out a speech by 11-year-old Ida Adams from my home state of South Australia. In fact, she goes to primary school just around the corner from where I live in the Adelaide Hills. It's been written as part of the Raise Our Voice in Parliament campaign, which amplifies the voices of young people and their visions for the future. Ida says:

I'm passionate about making this place a better world for humans and animals alike.

There are many significant problems in the world, including world hunger, homelessness, violence and lack of biodiversity. But by far the most important is climate change.

Australia is an amazing country and we are all so fortunate to live in it.

But, it may not stay one. Our leaders need to understand what climate change is and take action.

It is no longer just plastic pollution but overuse of electricity, fossil fuel mining, vehicles, food production and so, so much more.

These things tragically result in multiple consequences such as weed and pest invasion, salt invasions, extreme temperatures etc., resulting in an unliveable climate for humans, plants and animals alike.

Australia can't stay this way and if we keep polluting it will just get worse. This problem is major and you can't ignore it.

We need to figure out further solutions and replacements for oil, gas, water and other resources.

But importantly, we need more government funding for this research to happen.

We created the problem so we can fix it together for a strong and healthy Australia. But the leaders of today need to have insight—see what is wrong and step up for what is right.

The solutions to problems of tomorrow are in the hands of the politicians today.
That's the statement from Ida Adams in South Australia.

Human Rights: Myanmar

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia) (13:36): Meeting the human rights challenge across the world can at times be overwhelming, and sometimes it can be difficult to find progress. But last week we heard the fantastic news that Professor Sean Turnell, an Australian citizen, was released with almost 6,000 other political prisoners in Myanmar. This is the time to harden our resolve against the military regime in Burma. Over a million people have been displaced, thousands of children have been killed, tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed, villages have been burnt to the ground, and it is now time for Australia to do more. Professor Turnell's release is great news, and we should take that as a demonstration that Australia can now do more to support the Burmese people in Myanmar but give life to the aspirations of the Burmese diaspora in this country.

This is the time for Australia to strengthen its voice with its regional partners. This is the time for Australians to do more in demanding greater international effort. This is the time when Australia can do more to support those people on the ground in Burma, refugees in India, refugees in Thailand, so that they can see in Sean Turnell's release hope for themselves. I call on the Australian government to now act harder. I congratulate them on their efforts and the efforts of our ASEAN neighbours and everyone that was involved—indeed, the many thousands of Australians who argued for Sean Turnell's release. But now is the time for the Australian government to do more; not my wish but the wish of the Burmese diaspora in our country.

Workplace Relations

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (13:38): Australian workers have suffered through a decade of declining wages and working conditions, and it is unprecedented. But this plague is not an act of God. It hasn't fallen from the sky; it is a deliberate outcome of antiwages, antiworker and antiunion policies by companies like Qantas and Amazon. If your wages have gone backwards, you can thank Alan Joyce and Jeff Bezos, corporate thugs who have pioneered new ways to game our industrial relations system. If we continue to let Amazon and Qantas drive a race to the bottom then every other employer in Australia will be forced to do the same to survive. Around the world governments and workers are standing up to these corporate guerrillas. Governments from New Zealand to the European Union are moving to back multi-employer bargaining, to give workers a voice and a say over their wages and conditions, to give workers a voice to make sure they can have that say.

This week, in the lead-up to Black Friday, workers and unions around the world, including the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association and the Transport Workers Union here in Australia, are telling Jeff Bezos that enough is enough: no more starvation wages, no more union-busting, no more worker surveillance, no more tax avoidance and no more workers being forced to urinate in bottles to meet deadlines. We say no more to American Amazon's Flex, with workers being paid below the minimum age. We say no more to the Americanisation of wages and working conditions in Australia. Amazon's 19th-century work practices are not welcome here. It's time to make Amazon pay.

World Economic Forum

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (13:40): In a previous speech, I called for Australia to reject the World Economic Forum's Great Reset and instead mount a 'Great Resist'. These were not idle words. Video is circulating online of World Economic Forum crook and mastermind Klaus Schwab bragging about penetrating the cabinets of western democracies with his young global leaders. Some Klaus Schwab disciples are in this Senate, and one is in the cabinet. How this has not triggered a national security investigation is beyond One Nation. We certainly would be taking a much closer look, given the coordination we are seeing in the policies being enacted by WEF disciples like Jacinda Ardern and Justin Trudeau.

One Nation will resist the transfer of wealth from everyday Australians to predatory billionaires. This was the inevitable and deliberate outcome of profligate government COVID spending that the Liberals, Nationals, Labor and Greens waved through this parliament. One Nation will resist exposing our children to adult sexual content in their libraries and school textbooks and, now, in kids programs on the ABC. One Nation will resist the dehumanisation of women through genderless language that erases the very concept of a woman and a mother. We will not allow the family to be undermined. One Nation will resist the reduction of sex to a soul-destroying, meaningless transaction—the very thing Aldous Huxley warned us about in *Brave New World*. One Nation will resist the war on farming that seeks to destroy family farms, rewild the bush and shift food production to corporate owned, near-urban, intensive factories producing chemically driven food-like substances for everyday Australians to eat while the elite gorge themselves on red meat and seafood—something they did again last week at COP27 in Egypt, indulging in luxury while spreading poverty. Disgusting! We are one community, we are One Nation, and parliaments belong to no-one but the Australian people.

Qantas

Senator McDONALD (Queensland) (13:42): I rise to congratulate the people of my home town of Cloncurry and all the descendants of Qantas's founders for making this month's centenary of the first Qantas flight so remarkable and memorable.

Country Australia is responsible for so many great ideas and inventions, and Qantas is one of them. Qantas's story began in 1919 with a grazier, Fergus McMaster; his broken-down car in the bed of the Cloncurry River; and a veteran World War I pilot, Paul McGinness, who stopped to help. You can just imagine how the conversation went, Madam Acting Deputy President: McMaster perhaps saying, 'Wouldn't it be great if we didn't have to drive cars so far over such rough country out here? I think an air taxi service would be ideal,' and McGinness perhaps saying, 'When I was flying in the war, we could cover distances the poor blokes on the ground could only dream of.'

From this chance meeting, Qantas was born, with first passenger Alexander Kennedy, when it flew its first commercial flight in November 1922. From Qantas came the Royal Flying Doctor Service and a partnership with Australia Post, and all are still going strong today. I was incredibly honoured to be invited to the centenary this month, a celebration of an idea and of the Anzac spirit that was born in a town that has given Australia so many great institutions. I've mentioned the flying doctors, but Cloncurry was also the first Queensland site for School of the Air, an organisation I'm proud to have been educated by.

I want to acknowledge Cloncurry Mayor Greg Campbell, all the councillors and all the council staff, who did a terrific job with the centenary. It is important that we celebrate our heritage, and Qantas is an important part of that. Cloncurry and many other places in remote Australia have always been home to dynamic, hardworking families. I pay tribute to them, both those in the past and those who are still there, for their pride in their towns and their willingness to carry on the spirit of positivity and determination embodied so admirably by the Qantas founders.

Youth Voice in Parliament Week

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia) (13:44): I'm grateful for this opportunity to deliver a speech written by Keira Fuller, a 16-year-old from Western Australia, as part of the Raise our Voice program, and she says:

Imagine what Australia could look like—and feel like—within the next decade if Parliament listens to diverse perspectives and actively seeks out young people's assistance in decision making.

I believe there should be more opportunities and connections for young, First Nations, people of colour and LGBTQIA+ people to be involved in decision-making in Parliament.

Politicians have so much power over the legislation, laws, and opinions of Australians, however these views and opinions are often from the same types of people.

As young people, we cannot vote until we turn 18 but we have so much to contribute.

There is a stereotype that young people are uneducated on 'the real world' that I whole-heartedly disagree with.

Australia's youth have access to so many different resources that keep us informed and in touch with environmental and humanitarian problems we are facing.

We have so much knowledge and experience on what it's like to live in our modern-day Australian society. We question everything and have the determination to change things.

Our voices are so valuable if only people in power are willing to listen.

If only they are willing to work with us, not just for us.

With accessible channels open to communication, we could have a more wide-spread, current view on many topics and ensure they are actively resolved.

Creating a more equal, inclusive Australia, for the world to be inspired by.

Our voices hold so much value, and we are right here, ready for the opportunity to share that with Australia.

Thank you, Keira. I am so proud to read your words in parliament and can assure you that this government takes your voice very seriously and I look forward to meeting you.

Tibet

Senator RICE (Victoria) (13:46): Today is an important day. It's Tibet Lobby Day. Tibetan delegates are in the building today, meeting with members of parliament from across the political spectrum to advocate for peace, for freedom and for human rights in Tibet. I particularly want to acknowledge the delegates who are seated in the gallery today, including Mr Tenzin Phuntsok Doring, the member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile for the electorate of Australasia, and Mr Karma Singey, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Australia. I had the privilege of travelling with Mr Singey to Washington DC in June this year for the 8th World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet.

One of the issues that the Tibetan delegation are raising with members of parliament, which I spoke to them about this morning, is the succession of the Dalai Lama. In 1995, Chinese security forces kidnapped a year-old Tibetan child, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, following his recognition by the Dalai Lama as Tibet's Panchen Lama. Tragically, he hasn't been heard from since. Today, he would be over 30 years old.

Tibet's traditional practices, culture and Tibetan Buddhism are under threat. Carrying or possessing a photo of the Dalai Lama brings with it harsh penalties, including imprisonment.

The Greens believe that universal human rights are fundamental and must be respected and protected for all peoples in all countries, and that applies here in Australia as well. We will speak out about human rights abuses wherever they occur. We urge the Australian government to oppose any effort to interfere with the practices of Tibetan Buddhism and to only recognise the Dalai Lama appointed by Tibetan Buddhist traditions and practices. I have lodged a motion to this effect on the *Notice Paper* today, and it is something I will continue to raise in this place through every means possible.

Victoria State Election

Senator BABET (Victoria—United Australia Party Whip) (13:48): Do you want to know how desperate Daniel Andrews is? I'll tell you how desperate. He has taken to labelling his political opponents Nazis and racists—that's how desperate.

Now, when Andrews said at the weekend that there was no place for Nazis, racists or bigots in the Victorian parliament, I could have been forgiven for thinking it was a resignation speech! That's what I thought!

Now, sadly, Andrews will not remove himself from power. He's dug in there like a tick.

Only the people of Victoria are able to do that. And that's exactly what you need to do this Saturday at the ballot box.

When you are an abject failure as a premier, all you've got left is to call your opponents names. And, less than a week out from the most important election in Victoria's history, that's where we are. Daniel Andrews can't talk about the health system; it's a disaster. He can't talk about Victoria's finances; they're a mess. He can't talk about integrity—not with five IBAC inquiries under his belt. He can't talk about unity; even his colleagues despise him. He can't talk about hotel quarantine—because he doesn't remember. He can't talk about his handling of the pandemic; it was brutish. So what has he got left?

The Victorian Premier has been reduced to funding woke netball teams and accusing anyone who doesn't approve of him of being a Nazi. He gave this woke netball team \$15 million—taxpayer money that could have paid for approximately 200 paramedics in a state where people are dying at home waiting for an ambulance to show up. Just when you thought he couldn't divide the community more, he starts defaming anyone who thinks differently.

What happened to the kinder, gentler politics federal Labor promised? Where is that in Victoria? There are no Nazis in the Victorian parliament—but there is a tyrant, who needs to go.

COVID-19: Vaccination

Senator ANTIC (South Australia) (13:50): If you've been paying attention you will have noticed the term 'myocarditis' and 'died suddenly' have featured a lot. We know that myocarditis and pericarditis are two heart inflammation conditions well associated with the COVID mRNA injections. Even the Therapeutic Goods Administration admits it. Despite this well-established fact, the injections were mandated to thousands of Australians, and speaking out about these incursions on freedom got one labelled an anti-vaxxer or a peddler of dangerous misinformation.

I've obtained data, through freedom of information, from SA Health regarding the number of cardiac presentations per month in South Australian public hospitals since 2018. The data reveals that cardiac related presentations for 15- to 44-year-olds remained steady at 1,100 per month from January 2018 but drastically spiked in July 2021 through November 2021, peaking at 2,172 per month just as these injections were rolled out. They almost doubled. There was another spike in February this year, right around the time the boosters were being mandated. These injections are harming and, in many instances, killing our young people. What does SA Health have to say about this? Nothing. They continue to roll out the injections. They continue to push the injection narrative.

This injection campaign will go down as the greatest scandal in medical history—and none of you said a single thing.

Tasmania: Self-Help Workplace

Senator TYRRELL (Tasmania—Jacqui Lambie Network Whip) (13:52): Doing this job, you come across some wonderful people doing really great things. It makes your heart warm and fuzzy. I had one of those moments last

week, when I went to visit the Self-Help Workplace in Youngtown. It is staffed by people with special needs. They started 60 years ago and have grown into a very successful business. They operate in five industries: timber production; hospitality; retail, and they run a mean op-shop; grounds maintenance; and commercial solutions, helping with mass mail-outs.

You can tell when you visit that this isn't just a workplace; they're a work family. Just take a look at Monica. She's been there for almost 45 years! That's a record in any workplace, I reckon. Whilst Monica made some little jabs about working there, it was clear that she wouldn't want to be anywhere else. Watching the employees work, it was pretty obvious that they loved what they do and felt empowered doing it.

There are over 50 employees at Self-Help Workplace. Almost all of them are on NDIS plans. The business doesn't just give them a job, it gives them a clear purpose to get out of bed in the morning. It helps them to interact with others and learn new things. The team also help their employees to learn life skills and be more self-sufficient at home. For example, doing laundry with donations from the op-shop can help them learn how to do their own laundry at home.

Politics is often about doom and gloom, but seeing businesses like the Self-Help Workplace reminds you of all the good that is happening in our state. I think if we all took a leaf out of their book, we'd be a lot better off. Donna, I know you need a bit of help with the weeding in the veggie garden. I promise I'll be there in the new year, bring a few veggies and help weed it out! Thank you for having me along. It made my week.

Human Rights: Qatar

Senator THORPE (Victoria) (13:54): Thank you to the amazing Acting Deputy President, Senator Allman-Payne. As the 2022 FIFA World Cup kicks off today in Qatar, human rights advocates, players, fans, football associations, migrant workers and their families are continuing to bring attention to the human rights violations and migrant worker deaths that have occurred in the lead-up to the tournament. Over a dozen national football associations and 15 countries have supported calls for FIFA and the Qatari government to establish a remedy fund of US\$440 million for migrant workers who have suffered human rights abuses and for the families of those workers who have died. It is currently estimated that at least 6,500 workers have died. This request has so far been dismissed by both FIFA and the Qatari authorities. Football Australia and the Australian government have not joined this call, instead choosing to remain silent. Shame! It is about time this country took its human rights obligations seriously. Again we are lagging behind in both our domestic obligations and our international advocacy.

Tomorrow I will table a petition, with 5,800 signatures from soccer fans, advocates and concerned citizens, calling on Football Australia to push more strongly for justice for migrant workers killed or injured in the preparations for the World Cup, and demanding that the Australian government step up and tell the truth about ongoing human rights abuses, in this country and abroad, and hold to account governments and international organisations like FIFA.

Climate Change

Senator VAN (Victoria) (13:56): Last week I had the privilege of attending COP27 in Egypt as part of a delegation of coalition members of parliament, thanks to the Coalition for Conservation. In what was an incredibly enriching experience, I was able to learn a great deal from legislators from all over the world and from both sides of the aisle, but particularly from those from the US Congress and the UK parliament. Two of the key messages that were continually repeated were on the importance of not putting all our eggs in one basket and on how the transition to a net zero future will not be easy. This means we must have a diversified source of options to allow this transition to occur.

That is why it was a shame that, despite the coalition being so well represented at the conference, the government seemed to be missing in action. Yes, the minister showed up for a couple of days—the last couple of days—and that was quite embarrassing. My key takeaway from Egypt is that the transition ahead of us will be long, hard and expensive and there will not be any one solution that works for every country. It is also that, while they are an important part of the solution, renewables are not the whole solution. Why? Because you can't have renewables without some form of firming technology.

It was interesting to stand no more than a few feet from the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry, who was emphasising how important small modular nuclear reactors will be, and to hear the Icelandic government talk how important carbon capture and storage will be. This government needs to wake up to the fact that this transition will have to occur, and this means us investing in options for diversified sources of energy right now.

HMAS Sydney (II)

Senator McCARTHY (Northern Territory—Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians and Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health) (13:58): On 19 November 1941, 645 sailors lost their lives on HMAS *Sydney* (II) while it was defending Australia. The ship was sunk by the *Kormoran*, a German merchant raider. On the weekend, I was able to join commemorations with the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, and the acting administrator for the territories. I'd like to express my thanks to the Christmas Island residents, and especially to the Shire of Christmas Island, for coming together.

In 1941, when the ship sank, three months later a life raft turned up on Christmas Island with a body inside. That person was unknown, but the Christmas Islanders were able to bury him there knowing that perhaps he was the unknown sailor from HMAS *Sydney*. His body lay buried on Christmas Island for many decades, until it was exhumed in 2006 and taken to Western Australia. Only last year, in November, were we able to identify who that sailor was. I would just like to say that Seaman Thomas Welsby Clark will always be remembered. (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: The time for two-minute statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Energy

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Gallagher. The Treasurer has stated that the government is acting with 'some urgency' in relation to the soaring cost of gas. Minister, will you bring about an end to the uncertainty of the government's policy on gas prices by the end of this sitting fortnight?

Senator Watt: Uncertainty? How many energy policies did you have?

The PRESIDENT: Senator Watt, I have got the minister on her feet.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:00): I thank Senator Hume for the question, even though I am a little bit surprised at the way it was framed. Will we end the uncertainty? We ended the uncertainty with the election of an Albanese government. We ended a decade of energy policy uncertainty. How many times did you try and land a policy? Twenty-two and counting. You didn't land any of them. You didn't. Everywhere we went, the private sector was saying: 'Can you provide certainty? We want investment certainty. We want to understand the approach that government policy will take so that we can make investment decisions.' And Senator Hume asks me about the uncertainty.

I will tell you what we have done since coming to government. Minister Bowen left the swearing-in ceremony to deal with the fact that the lights were going to go out. We then uncovered a 20 per cent increase in the price of electricity that Mr Angus Taylor had taken the unprecedented step of covering up and hiding before the election so it didn't become an election issue. Guess what? They were told that electricity prices were going to go up and they weren't honest with the Australian people. What we have done is put in the budget the information we have about the increase in energy prices. What the Australian people have is a government that's working hard to look at what options are available for us to deal with it.

Senator Birmingham: President, I rise on a point of order—

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Birmingham, just a moment. I will wait until there is silence from those on my right.

Senator Birmingham: on the question of direct relevance. Senator Hume's question was quite specific to the matters of intervention in the gas market and quoted the Treasurer as saying the government would act with 'some urgency' on that. Senator Hume purely asked whether the government would clarify its position by the end of this sitting fortnight. I ask you to draw the minister, who's had ample opportunity to traverse a whole range of other energy policy questions, to the specific direct question that was asked.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Wong, on the same point of order?

Senator Wong: President, on the point of order, I would refer you to some of the rulings of Senator Ryan, who made the point that opposition senators should not be surprised, if there's a political statement in the opening of the question, if the response to the question is somewhat wider. The senator chose to frame her question in terms of certainty or lack thereof. I put it to you, President, that, consistent with past rulings, the minister is entitled to pick up the issue of certainty, which she is doing.

The PRESIDENT: There was a preamble to the question and it did deal with urgency. I believe that the minister is being relevant. To the question of direct relevance, because there was a preamble there, I think the minister is entitled to canvass both the preamble and the specific question.

Senator Birmingham: Can I ask you to review the *Hansard* of that question, President? The only preamble related to quoting the Treasurer. Then the question—it wasn't a preamble—off the back of the Treasurer's statement around urgency went to uncertainty in the gas prices and the gas market. I advise you to look. It was a very tightly worded question, President.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Birmingham. There was a preamble to the question, however it's phrased, and the minister is entitled to go there. I will review the *Hansard*, but my ruling remains. Minister, you've got 22 seconds.

Senator GALLAGHER: The second thing we did was deal with the supply shortfall that we were advised about by the ACCC, and what we're doing now is to sensibly work through options to deal with ensuring we get reasonable prices into the market. That's what the government are doing right now.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, first supplementary?

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:05): Earlier today the Treasurer told journalists:

... we have made it very clear that we are interested in a temporary, meaningful, responsible, sensible intervention in the energy market ...

Minister, why is it that the government, which couldn't make up their mind prebudget, couldn't make up their mind before the sittings this week, now can't commit to doing so before the parliament rises for this year?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the minister, I'll remind senators that the person asking the question has the right to be heard in silence, as does the minister. Minister Gallagher.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:06): In terms of what this government is doing, we're keeping the lights on, we're addressing the supply shortfall and now we're looking at options around price. After nine years of delay, neglect and disorderly conduct from over there because no-one could agree on what to do, we are cleaning it up. In terms of power, we had four gigawatts of dispatchable power exit under your watch and only one gigawatt come in. We're dealing with all of these issues. In six months we have done more—much more—than you did in your three terms in office. We are working hard to resolve it. We are explaining, and I couldn't have put it better myself than the Treasurer, in terms of the language he used. It is complex. If there was a silver bullet, don't you think someone would have deployed it by now? We are working through the options sensibly and meaningfully in a temporary way, as was explained during the estimates hearings.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, second supplementary?

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:07): The government's budget actually cut policies and programs designed to increase Australia's future gas supply. At the same time, the government abandoned its promise to reduce electricity prices by \$275. Isn't it a fact that only gas market policies that have actually been announced by the Albanese government are making a difficult situation worse and not better?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:07): We are doing exactly what we said we'd do. Where we have cut programs, it was because there wasn't a business case, there wasn't information about what was going to happen with that money or they were decisions that were taken but hadn't been funded. We're cleaning up your mess again.

In terms of passing the climate legislation, we've done that. We're doing exactly what we said we would do: we're implementing Powering Australia. The simple fact of the matter is renewable energy is the cheapest form of energy. So, if we can get more renewable energy into the grid through our Powering Australia plan, then that will put downward pressure on prices. We are doing exactly what we said we'd do. And, in terms of these short-term pressures caused by the war in Ukraine and the neglect of the last nine years, we are working through options that will provide some relief to manufacturers, businesses and households where we can, and we're working with states and territories on that.

Floods

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (14:08): My question is to the Minister for Emergency Management, Senator Watt. On Friday last week I travelled to Forbes and Eugowra and saw firsthand the utter devastation caused by last week's flooding events. Minister, can you please provide an update on the recent floods across the country and what the Albanese government is doing to support impacted communities?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:08): Senator Sheldon, I recognise and thank you for your commitment to flood-affected communities, particularly as the government's special envoy for disaster recovery.

In Australia right now there are currently around 200 local government areas which are disaster declared and receiving state and federal support. Many of those are in New South Wales, where 75 local government areas have experienced severe flooding. That's around 60 per cent of all the council areas in New South Wales. These floods bring real tragedy, and our thoughts are with the family and friends of the 10 people who have lost their lives in New South Wales and Victoria to date. These floods are deadly, and, in many areas, they are repeated. These floods have a real human cost, and people are hurting. Senator Sheldon, I know that you visited central west New South Wales last week, as did the Deputy Prime Minister. We've all heard devastating and inspiring stories of resilience and survival.

Yesterday, I met with locals in Eugowra, where homes were literally washed down the road and roofs came to rest on cars, among much other damage. I spoke with Snow, who pulled 12 people out of flood waters to safety, and Kim, who was rescued from her roof by helicopter. I heard stories of neighbours checking on one another and helping with the clean-up. Understandably, the people I met with are deeply affected by these traumatic experiences. I know they have the support of this entire chamber.

I know other communities are going through similar horrors. While in Rochester in Victoria just over a week ago, I saw the damage from heavy rains on the local school. I've seen similar damage to homes, crops and businesses in Echuca, Moree, Forbes and Parkes, just since parliament last sat. I want to commend the heroic work we're seeing from local communities and from local SES, police and fire services. The federal government is currently deploying 200 ADF personnel in central New South Wales as we speak, and it's been terrific to see support from our international friends in New Zealand and Singapore. Everyone is supporting these communities right now. (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Sheldon, first supplementary?

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (14:11): Minister, I'm aware that over the past month you have visited communities across Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia, which are out of the immediate disaster and are now entering the long-term recovery. Minister, we know that flood recovery will take months, if not years, and these communities will be reliant on our support. What financial assistance is currently available for flood impacted communities?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:11): This severe weather is very widespread, with disaster declarations for the September-October floods and storms now in effect in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland. As I mentioned earlier, in Australia, there are currently around 200 local government areas which are disaster declared and receiving state and federal support. This includes a combination of support for individuals, financial help for councils and homeowners for clean-up and repairs of roads, bridges and other infrastructure, support for primary producers, assistance for small businesses, and hardship grants for non-profit groups. Currently, we're delivering support that will help communities' immediate needs as we continue to assess the longer term supports that will be necessary to help towns recover and rebuild.

The Albanese government continues to work very closely with state governments and councils to make sure that appropriate support is getting where it's needed. I'm very pleased to see such bipartisan spirit, and I acknowledge the contact I've had with Senator Davey, in her shadow role, along with other members of the National Party.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Sheldon, second supplementary?

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (14:12): While I was in western New South Wales, many community members raised the state of the roads and their concerns about getting produce in and out of flood impacted areas. What support is the Albanese government providing to help fix the roads in these communities?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:12): We understand that road repairs are a major concern for a lot of regions who have experienced flooding. Roads are the arteries of regional Australia, and we need to keep them open as quickly as we can. Support for road repairs is currently available in New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria through the disaster recovery funding arrangements, which are jointly funded by the federal and state governments. These funds provide immediate help for states and councils to repair roads, footpaths, bridges, tunnels, flood levees and stormwater infrastructure. The National Emergency Management Agency and Resilience NSW will meet with councils in New South Wales this week to help them with information about what support is available.

I am very conscious that these floods are not just happening in New South Wales. They've been happening in a number of other states, and our friends in South Australia are watching with concern about what might be coming

down the Murray River shortly. That support will continue to be in place for every state and every community to repair the roads and infrastructure that we're seeing destroyed. We are standing with these communities, and we will continue to do that for as long as is necessary.

Workplace Relations

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:13): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Gallagher. Minister, what modelling has been undertaken by Treasury into how much workplace productivity and real wages will increase as a result of the government's industrial relations legislation?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:14): I thank Senator Cash for the question. As the senator would know, Treasury does a range of detailed modelling on the economy, and all of that is presented in the budget. It's updated regularly to factor in changing economic conditions as well as policy decisions over time. The legislation—we went through this at estimates—that this chamber will hopefully debate before the end of the year hasn't been settled yet, so the modelling that the Treasury has done and the forecasts on wages assumptions et cetera have not taken into consideration the secure jobs, better pay bill because it hasn't been settled.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cash, first supplementary?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:15): By approximately how much will real wages increase as a result of the government's industrial relations changes?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:15): The government has made no secret about the fact that we want to get wages moving again after almost a decade of stagnant wages. We want to see wages grow in a responsible way. We're seeing early signs of that with the wage price index that was released last week, I think, which had wages increasing by 3.1 per cent. But you can see the wages forecasts, the wage price index forecasts that are factored into the budget in one of the budget books, and they have wages growing at 3¾ per cent in 2022-23, 3¾ per cent in 2023-24 and in 2024-25 at 3¾ per cent.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cash, second supplementary?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:16): Minister, given your government's budget papers show real wages are declining and productivity is decreasing, when will Australians see an increase in their real wages and which Australians will see an increase in their real wages?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:16): Again, if I can just go through the record of what happened under the previous government—

Senator McGrath: You're not directly relevant!

Senator GALLAGHER: Well, there's some context. I know it's an uncomfortable truth about what happened to wages because it was a deliberate design feature of your economic architecture to keep wages low. We are dealing with an inflation challenge at the moment, and no-one is pretending that wages should be growing at the pace of inflation. But we are seeing wages growth. We are seeing wages growth unlike when we look at what happened—2.2 per cent a year under the previous government—and we have already seen the minimum wage case deliver over five per cent. We've seen that for the aged-care workers and for all of the low-income workers that you fought against ever getting a pay rise—remember your submission had the benefits of low-paid work in it. We want to see low-income workers get a pay rise, and that's what they'll get under this government and under the laws that we're going to pass. (*Time expired*)

Climate Change

Senator COX (Western Australia) (14:17): My question is to Minister Wong, the Minister representing the Minister for Climate Change and Energy. This government went to COP27 telling the world that they are back, which begs the question: back from where exactly? This government has refused to commit to phasing out fossil fuels and continues to give billions of dollars to fossil fuel companies. Today, like every other day, the people in this place have the opportunity to stop billions of dollars being given to fossil fuel companies, particularly on First Nations lands to stop the destruction of land and sea country. My question is: when will this government actually commit to the global call to action by stopping public money to fossil fuel companies?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:18): Thank you to the senator for her question. She started her question by asking: from where are we back? We're back from the position—the illogical, irrational, ideological position—that was held by those opposite for so

many years. After we lost government, as people would know, there was no action at home when it comes to certainty for the energy markets and there was a very clear view about how to behave internationally, which I do not believe is shared by most Australians and certainly is not shared by this side of the chamber, including the Greens.

You asked about being back, and I'd make the point that we were represented by two ministers at the COP, along with the assistant minister, Senator McAllister, as well. I'm pleased to advise the senator that our increased ambition on climate and willingness to engage as a constructive and active global leader has been warmly welcomed by the international community, including the Pacific. We played a constructive leadership role at the COP, and we have made, as you know, climate change a priority.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cox, on a point of order?

Senator Cox: My point is relevance. My question was: when will this government commit to the global call for action on public money to fossil fuel companies?

The PRESIDENT: There was also a very long preamble, and the minister is entitled to answer those parts of the question as well.

Senator WONG: I understand, Senator, that the international narrative sometimes doesn't fit your domestic political objectives, but it doesn't. I want to tell you what Palau said. A member of the Pacific family singled out Australia for our help in delivering the loss and damage fund, saying, 'The tireless work by Australia and others reinforced our belief in multilateralism and our unwavering belief that we can solve global problems only by listening to each other and by working together.' This is Palau speaking.

I understand you want to put a particular position because of your domestic political agenda, but we're actually interested in being part of the solution internationally. I'll come back and talk to you about what Alok Sharma said at the COP as well because I think it's instructive and useful to understand how far out of touch those opposite were. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cox, a first supplementary question?

Senator COX (Western Australia) (14:20): Yesterday an agreement was reached, in the final text, at COP27 regarding the loss and damage climate fund, which will provide monetary support for countries hit hardest by the climate disasters caused by fossil fuels. Will the government commit to providing its fair share to the loss and damage fund, particularly to those here in Australia but also to the developing nations, especially our Pacific neighbours?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:21): I'll respond to loss and damage first, and then I might also give the senator, perhaps, the benefit of hearing what the Glasgow COP26 president, Alok Sharma, said. As I said in my primary answer, Australia did help deliver the loss and damage fund. As Palau said, we contributed to others and reinforced—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Minister, please continue.

Senator WONG: Wow, it's hard to know where to start, when we have the Pacific saying to us that they appreciate that we have contributed to the loss and damage fund becoming a reality in the multilateral system. We understand, of course, that loss and damage is about developed countries helping developing countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. It's obviously not about reparations or compensation. We contributed, respectfully, to the architecture— *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cox, a second supplementary question?

Senator COX (Western Australia) (14:22): This government has committed to co-hosting COP31 in 2026 with Pacific nations, and Vanuatu's climate change minister said their support will be conditional on no public money being given to fossil fuel projects. Will this government respect Vanuatu's position, and, if so, what is the time line for meeting this request?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:22): I know Minister Regenvanu, and I respect him. I would make the point that that is not a demand that has been publicly made, nor even privately made to me in the discussions with many Pacific islands, around the conference of the parties that we want to co-host. We understand the position that the minister and other Pacific island nations have put forward. We understand that they have seen Australia over and over again, over the years, take a position on climate which did not reflect the reality of their lives. But we want to work with them. We want to elevate their voices and the real, lived experience of Pacific island nations because they have a powerful voice when it comes to climate—and so they should. As Alok Sharma told a Pacific gathering, 'We now have in Australia

a government that is back on the front line of the fight against climate change, and I'd like us to cheer that now.' We're very grateful for that support.

Turnell, Professor Sean

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia) (14:23): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Wong. Professor Sean Turnell arrived back in Australia on Friday after 650 days in a Myanmar prison. What efforts were made to secure Professor Turnell's release?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:23): Senators will have seen, and I'm sure all of us welcome, that Professor Sean Turnell has arrived safely back here in Australia and has been reunited with his wife, Ha Vu, and family after more than 21 months of unjust detention in Myanmar. His return will be an enormous relief to family, friends and supporters of his across Australia and across the region. There have been enormous efforts across the Australian government to secure Professor Turnell's release, and we will continue to provide whatever consular support he and his family require.

Can I, at the outset, particularly acknowledge the tireless work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This outcome was the result of sustained strategic engagement and diplomacy by the government and by the department. DFAT officials in Canberra and across many posts in our region played a critical role in bringing Professor Turnell home. I particularly want to acknowledge the work of our head of mission, Angela Corcoran, her predecessor, Andrea Faulkner, as well as all of the Australian and locally engaged teams at posts.

Amongst their many duties, they delivered support packages to Professor Turnell in satchels with the Australian coat of arms, which, as he described to both the Prime Minister and I, in our separate calls with him, he proudly displayed in his cell. As he said to me, last week, his line was: 'Don't mess with the emu and the kangaroo'.

I also wish to thank DFAT's consular operations team, led by Ian Gerard, for their extraordinary dedication and focus and for their commitment and sensitivity to keeping Professor Turnell's family updated throughout the period of his detention.

One of the finest accolades that anyone could give was given by Professor Turnell, who told me that due to the work of DFAT and others he never felt alone. I commend DFAT and all those who had a role in this extraordinary result.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Payman, first supplementary?

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia) (14:26): What role did Australia's partners in our region play to help achieve the release of Professor Turnell?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:26): Whilst the efforts to free Professor Turnell were led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, there are many others around our region who played a crucial role in advocating for his release. So I thank, in this place, all those who have advocated for his release, including regional partners and, especially, members of ASEAN.

I particularly want to acknowledge Cambodia and Brunei Darussalam, the ASEAN chairs over the term of his detention—I know that Senator Payne also engaged with them—and the special envoy of the ASEAN chair on Myanmar. I acknowledge the roles of our friends outside of ASEAN who advocated on our behalf. They include India, Japan, the UK and the United States.

We appreciate the arrangements that were made by Myanmar authorities for Professor Turnell's release. We welcome, also, the news of the release of other prisoners alongside Professor Turnell, including Myanmar citizen holders and also foreign nationals from the United Kingdom, US and Japan. (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Payman, second supplementary?

Senator PAYMAN (Western Australia) (14:27): Can the minister outline to the Senate how the Albanese government will continue to support the people of Myanmar?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:27): I think we all remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Myanmar. We continue to condemn the regime's brutal behaviour at every opportunity, including in our regional and international advocacy. We will continue to advocate for the release of the remaining political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We will continue to speak up for human rights in our region, and that means we will continue to engage with those who do not agree with us.

I did decide to directly engage with the Myanmar military regime, in order to seek to secure Professor Turnell's release. I did so not because we agree with them but because we have to deal with the world as it is but seek to shape it for the better. That is why this government will continue to support the humanitarian response in Myanmar

and Bangladesh, including \$135 million this financial year to assist with the delivery of life-saving food, water, shelter and other essential protections. (*Time expired*)

Birthrate

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (14:28): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Senator Gallagher. It has been four weeks since the Australian Bureau of Statistics published data showing a 67 per cent reduction in Australia's monthly birthrate between July and December 2021 as compared to the long-term average—a startling decrease. I drew attention to this data during Senate estimates, hoping for some reassurance. None was forthcoming. Let me ask again: Minister, why has Australia's birthrate declined from 30 June 2021 to 31 December 2021, revealing a 70 per cent reduction?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:29): I thank Senator Roberts for the question and I recall the discussion that we had at estimates and the fact that we requested, from Senator Roberts, some time to go through the information that he tabled in that hearing. I haven't got that information back, but I think the advice given by the chief medical officer—who I was sitting next to—and me was that the data you were using didn't align with the information we had. We hadn't seen a drop-off of that size, which would be quite noticeable. In fact, that financial year of reporting, which incorporated births, actually showed the strongest birth record achieved so far—we had seen more births during that period. I'll have to come back to you, because you tabled some documents in that meeting and the Department of Health took them away. If there's anything further way in which I can advise you, I will do so.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Roberts, a first supplementary question?

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (14:30): Minister, that's not as I remember it, but we'll wait for your response. Is there any systematic information-sharing between the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Health to keep an eye on key indicators reflecting on our COVID measures, or does the Australian Bureau of Statistics just publish critical data like this in due course and hope that somebody notices at some time?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:30): I thank Senator Roberts for the question. The ABS work very closely alongside other departments with the data that they are collecting, and they keep an eye on tracking any significant changes. If the ABS saw something in their data that would concern them—and I would imagine the numbers you're citing about declines in birth numbers in one month would raise attention—it would be dealt with across government. In their cause of death publication the ABS reported that there had been 15 deaths due to the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021. That was against vaccinations of 42.5 million vaccines administered in that year.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Roberts, a second supplementary question?

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (14:32): Minister, what specifically is the government doing to get to the bottom of this staggering decline in births?

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (14:32): The first thing—and I remember this quite clearly from estimates—was that we undertook to look at the information you tabled in that hearing and align that with some of the data the ABS were collecting. They collect their births and deaths data as soon as it is available from the state and territory registries of births, deaths and marriages. The first thing we need to do is to get to the bottom of the numbers that you provided and make sure that the data that we got from the ABS, which I saw in that hearing, didn't align with the numbers that you tabled.

Workplace Relations

Senator McDONALD (Queensland) (14:33): My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister Watt. The mining industry has told the government that tens of thousands of jobs are at risk due to Labor's IR legislation and mining tax 2.0 thought bubble. Minister, will you admit that 33,000 jobs could be lost due to Labor's latest proposals?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:33): Again, I note that the shadow minister for IR has been banned from asking questions about IR issues, and that can only be because everyone remembers the work that Senator Cash did as the IR minister, when she inflicted conflict and low wages on the Australian public. But I'm happy to hear those questions. I'm happy to take questions from Senator McDonald, who I know has a genuine interest in the resources industry.

I completely reject the claims being made by some employer groups that the government's industrial relations plans will cost the sorts of job numbers that are being thrown around. In fact, one of the reasons the government is

pursuing these IR changes is they offer the opportunity to deliver a win-win to both employers and employees. Under the former government and the policies it pursued, we had persistently low productivity with a conflict based system being inflicted on employers and employees, while at the same time delivering some of the lowest wage growth that our country has seen.

We can have every confidence that, as a result of the government's IR changes, should the Senate pass them—and I sincerely hope they do—employers will win, through higher productivity, and that includes mining employers. And workers will win, through getting the pay rise that they were denied by the former government for far too long.

The kinds of claims that we are seeing being made by some groups in the community, backed in by the coalition, are not based on fact. They are not based on the experience of every other country around the world that has pursued the kinds of changes that our government is pursuing.

Our changes are about driving up productivity and giving workers the pay rise that they finally deserve after waiting so long.

The PRESIDENT: Senator McDonald, a first supplementary?

Senator McDONALD (Queensland) (14:35): The mining industry has told the government that \$77 billion of resources projects are now at risk, due to Labor's irresponsible IR legislation and mining tax 2.0 thought-bubble. Minister, how many of the 140 projects in the pipeline will not go ahead due to Labor's latest proposals?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:35): Thank you again, Senator McDonald. I respect the fact that the mining industry and other employer groups are out there, at the moment, running a political campaign against what our government is trying to do. They have every right to do so, but they also have a responsibility to put facts on the table, rather than to put 'facts' and figures out there that have no basis in reality.

Anyone who has any contact with the resources industry at the moment—and I'm sure Senator McDonald does, in her shadow capacity, and I certainly do, as a Queensland based minister—knows that the resources sector is incredibly excited about the opportunities that exist for investment in a range of commodities. Of course, in critical minerals there are massive opportunities, particularly in the north of our country. In some of the more traditional minerals, there are massive opportunities there as well. I have every expectation that, while ever commodity prices remain high, as they currently are, the mining industry will invest in those projects so that they can generate those profits.

The PRESIDENT: Senator McDonald, a second supplementary?

Senator McDONALD (Queensland) (14:36): With \$100 million budget cuts to critical minerals funding, irresponsible IR legislation and the mining tax 2.0 thought-bubble, can the minister confirm how many of the 46 critical minerals projects currently in the pipeline will not proceed under Labor?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:37): Well, I'm not the Minister representing the Minister for Resources, so I'm happy to come back with a specific answer, or perhaps Senator Farrell, as the Minister representing the Minister for Resources, is better prepared to answer a question of that nature.

But again, in this government, our position on critical minerals has been clear for some time. We've been the ones out there, for the last 10 years; while you guys have been arguing amongst yourselves about whether climate change is real and whether we should have renewable energy, we've been the ones actually calling for the kinds of investment in critical minerals that will allow those kinds of developments to occur. So, please, don't give us some lecture about critical minerals and who wants to actually bring on the transition towards renewable energy and batteries and all the kinds of things that critical minerals involve. Our government has been backing that ever since we were elected, and we were backing it a hell of a lot earlier than that.

Climate Change

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (14:38): My question is directed to the Hon. Penny Wong, representing the Minister for Climate Change and Energy. Minister, communities across the west of New South Wales are experiencing record floods, with lives lost, property destroyed and towns in shock, after an already devastating 12 months, with major flooding affecting the Lachlan, Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, amongst others. Residents in Forbes, Condobolin, Deniliquin, Eugowra, Walgett, Collarenebri—town after town—have been subject to major floods. Minister, do you accept that these major flooding events are being driven by and exacerbated by climate change?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:38): Senator Shoebridge, I think I'm on the record, for many years, in accepting that there—

An honourable senator interjecting—

Senator WONG: Actually, since I was climate minister in 2007 and in the 2007 campaign, where we campaigned for an emissions trading scheme, which you also supported at the time. I've been on the record for many years—well over a decade, which shows you I've been here a fair while—in accepting the scientific advice about the consequences of climate change. I recall reading a CSIRO report, many years ago, in the last decade, which forecast that unmitigated climate change would see the Goyder Line move south of Clare. For those of us who come from South Australia and understand what that means, that was horrifying. That is what has informed in part my commitment and our government's commitment—certainly in government last time—to implement an ambitious emissions trading scheme. I realise you weren't there, but your party voted with the coalition against it. That's why in government we delivered a climate scheme when the Greens did decide to vote for it. It was perhaps not quite as important, but it was ambitious nevertheless. And that is why for nine years we in opposition have argued each election, notwithstanding the challenge of that, for a clear, credible, ambitious position on climate. I am very pleased that after years of irrationality the Australian community has returned not only a government—

Senator Shoebridge interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Shoebridge, I have already drawn to your attention you do not start saying 'point of order' the minute you stand. You wait, I give you the call and then you tell me what the issue is.

Senator Shoebridge: It's relevance. We're a minute and a half into the answer on floods and the terrible floods that are happening now, and the minister has not once addressed them.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Minister, I remind you the question was about the floods.

Senator WONG: Yes, and as I said at the outset—I'm sorry if the senator needs me to repeat it—I'm on the record for over a decade—

Senator Whish-Wilson interjecting—

Senator WONG: Would you like to speak, Senator Whish-Wilson? I notice you always want to interject. You go right ahead, mate.

Senator Whish-Wilson: I did get an invitation.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Whish-Wilson, do you have a point of order?

Senator Whish-Wilson: No.

Senator WONG: He's always so keen to interject, particularly on some things. We'll give you leave, mate, if that's what you want. Senator Shoebridge, I was genuinely trying to answer your question. I have always accepted the scientific advice about the consequences of climate change. I also recognise—and this is where our parties do differ—that you need to have policies to meet a target and recognise that ensuring that you meet a target of reductions in emissions is a tough policy. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Shoebridge, first supplementary?

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (14:42): Minister, when Brisbane was devastated by flooding in 2011, we all had to pay to clean it up through a flood recovery levy. Now we're making our children pay through increased government debt, and all the while coal and gas companies are still making billions and fossil fuel subsidies are a staggering \$11.6 billion a year. Why won't your government make coal and gas companies pay for disaster preparedness and to rebuild and support these devastated communities, since they created the problem in the first place?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:42): I appreciate that the political object of that question is to try to suggest that only one part of the economy has responsibility, only one sector in society has responsibility. The reality is this is a whole-of-economy, a whole-of-society response. We'll be able to deal with it if we deal with it together. But if all we do is point the finger at different parts of our society, different parts of our economy, we will never get there. The hard reality is this country has prospered greatly. We have all prospered greatly, including through the education system that has been funded by government revenue from the exports we have made over decades. Now, what we have to do is transition our economy over time to a world that will be a net zero emissions world. That is a big challenge and is not one that's achieved by pointing the finger. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Shoebridge, second supplementary?

Senator SHOEBRIDGE (New South Wales) (14:43): Minister, many Australians are pleased to hear the changing rhetoric on climate, and I'm pleased to hear the changing rhetoric on climate, some of which you've repeated here. But how is that rhetoric going to protect us from the carbon emissions of the coal and gas projects

that your government keeps continuing to support? How are you going to answer that question for the people in western New South Wales who have climate induced flooding right now?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:44): We will do what we said we would do before the election—that is, to put this economy, which is a highly carbon intensive economy, on to an ambitious 2030 target, a 43 per cent reduction, and a 2050 target of net zero. What we will do in government is not simply rhetoric but policy that delivers it, because that is the key. We actually have to change the direction in which our economy, along with the global economy, is heading. As I said, no amount of blaming others, looking to the past and pointing the finger is going to actually achieve what is an ambitious transformation of our domestic economy and the global economy.

I wish that the world at Copenhagen had done more—I really do. It was one of the saddest moments I've ever been involved in in politics, for the reason to which you avert. But we are— (*Time expired*)

Workplace Relations

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (14:45): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister Watt. The government intends to reform Australia's workplace relations laws to get wages moving. Can you outline for us what the changes are, why they are necessary and what the urgency is?

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:45): Senator Grogan, I know you have a very long record in standing up for the interests of workers. It's great to see you've continued that work since you have been here in the Senate.

The Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022 delivers on the Albanese government's commitment to a fairer workplace relations system that provides Australians with job security, gender equality and sustainable wage growth. For nearly 10 years wages were kept low by the coalition as a deliberate design feature of their management of the economy. None of us will ever forget that infamous interview with former senator Mathias Cormann where he belled the cat on the economic policy of this government and its desire to keep wages low. In contrast, the Albanese Labor government are taking action to improve workplace conditions, wages and job security by implementing our election commitments and outcomes from the Jobs and Skills Summit, which brought employers, unions and the community together in a way we had never seen under the former government.

The truth is that the current workplace relations system is not working well for workers or for employers and it is not fit to meet our economy's current challenges. In particular, the bargaining system is broken. We've all heard over recent weeks members of the opposition, particularly Senator Cash, say that what we are proposing to do is terrible and will make the sky fall in and have all these kinds of consequences. If we don't make changes to Australia's bargaining system, if we persist with the regime that was in place under the coalition, the one thing I can guarantee is the same outcome—low wages and low productivity—well into the future. The current system, presided over by the coalition, is not delivering the fairness, gender equality or economic growth Australia needs and that Australian workers deserve. The bill aims to tackle insecure work, gender inequality and flatlining wages.

As to why this bill is urgent, Australian workers have waited long enough. They've been waiting a very long time for a decent pay rise and for wages to keep up with and help them with the cost of living. We are going to do something about it. (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Grogan, first supplementary?

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (14:47): Thank you, Minister Watt. That was very useful. You referenced the Jobs and Skills Summit, which I was honoured to attend. Since that time we have seen many scare campaigns, which I've been quite surprised about, regarding these proposed laws. Could you please outline for us where the errors are in these scare campaigns?

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:48): I'm not surprised that Senator Cash is feeling a bit sensitive about scare campaigns, because most of them have come from her. Here are a few facts for Senator Cash. Minister Burke took the National Press Club through this the other day. In case Senator Cash missed it, I'm here to repeat it.

The first scare campaign we have been hearing from the opposition is that this bill will produced coast-to-coast strikes. In actual fact the bill makes industrial action harder, with an additional requirement for mandatory conciliation before industrial action can be taken. Ballots need to be agreed on on an employer-by-employer basis, as per the current rules—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator WATT: And don't they react!

The PRESIDENT: Senator Watt, please resume your seat. I'll wait until there is quiet.

Senator WATT: And don't they react when the first of their scare campaigns gets called out. Do you know what? I have four more to go through. Their second scare campaign is about pattern bargaining. In actual fact the restrictions on taking industrial action when the bargaining representative is engaging in pattern bargaining are already in the Fair Work Act and they are not changing—not a word, not even a comma. In fact, what we're hearing from the opposition is a scare campaign about their own policy, and I have three more. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Grogan, a second supplementary question?

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (14:49): Minister Watt, I wonder if you would be able to step out for us the difference in the workplace laws from previous approaches? I think it may be very beneficial for those in this chamber to hear the detail of that.

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (14:50): I would be delighted, Senator Grogan, to point out how our plans for workplace laws differ from those that we've seen previously, because the contrast between the Albanese Labor government's approach and the coalition's when it comes to workplace laws could not be starker.

On the one hand we have Labor wanting to get wages moving again. On the other hand we have the coalition, for whom low wages was a deliberate design feature of the economy. Under Labor, you have higher productivity for businesses, under the coalition you have lower productivity. Under Labor you have more agreements and a workplace relations law system that encourages more agreements—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator WATT: Under the coalition you hear exactly what we're hearing over there, which is more conflict. They are addicted to conflict in the workplace, and they want to hang on to it. We actually want to bring in more agreements between employers and employees.

For the coalition, it is never the right time for a pay rise. For years they told us that low unemployment would deliver pay rises. We now have low unemployment and we're not getting the pay rises going on with it. We saw Senator Birmingham on *Insiders* yesterday, mumbling and fumbling his way through the answer to a question of how you get wage rises moving. *(Time expired)*

Iran

Senator CHANDLER (Tasmania) (14:51): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Wong. Over the last three months, the Iranian regime has been accused of killing more than 300 civilians standing up for human rights, particularly Iranian women and girls. When the Prime Minister was asked by the opposition two weeks ago why sanctions had not been applied to the officials responsible for the killing of its citizens, he said that the government was considering the implications of doing so for Australian businesses. The Iranian-Australian community has been calling for weeks for the Australian government to hold the Iranian regime to account. Has the government now applied any sanctions? And, if not, why not?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:51): The senator did canvas some of this in estimates, and I will repeat what I said to the senator on that occasion. That is that there is, I think, bipartisan, or multiparty, condemnation of what is occurring in Iran. That is also why the government has been very forward leaning in its public statements of condemnation and its engagement through DFAT with the charges here and also at the UN General Assembly. I took the senator through the interaction the government had had, including the statement at the General Assembly on the human rights situation in Iran. We supported calls for a special session of the UN Human Rights Council to address the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran. And on social media I expressed support for the Canada-Australia-New Zealand statement at the UN Security Council highlighting our concerns about Iran's membership on the UN Commission on the Status of Women, a body that Iran joined whilst the coalition was in government. We joined Canada and New Zealand in expressing those concerns to the UN Security Council and we delivered a further statement to the UN Third Committee Interactive Dialogue. And I can go back further. I have engaged with counterparts, including Melanie Joly, as recently as last week about this issue.

In relation to sanctions: as Senator Payne and Ms Bishop would have said before me, we don't engage in public speculation about sanctions—and you will understand why not. But I would encourage the senator: I understand that this is an issue that many people are concerned about. This isn't a partisan issue; this is an issue we are all—*(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Chandler, a first supplementary question.

Senator CHANDLER (Tasmania) (14:53): Since the Prime Minister's comments, the Iranian government has used its military to fire on and kill innocent civilians, including children like nine-year-old Kian Pirfalak, who died

after security forces opened fire on a car he and his parents were in. When will the government do more than give lip service to the women and girls of Iran and the Iranian Australians calling for Australia to take action?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:54): I disagree with the lip service point. That seems to suggest that the only way in which a government can express its view on the many regimes and countries with which we do not agree is by sanctions. If that is the case, then there were almost no expressions in support for human rights under the coalition. Almost none. So my point is this: there are a great many states in this world, some in our regions, whose actions we do not agree with. And sometimes you're right: sometimes we look at some of the hardest form of expression of that. The UN sanctions are an example. The sanctions on North Korea and Russia are an example. But what we should also do is what Australia has been doing, which is bilaterally and multilaterally add our voice in condemnation of what is occurring in Iran. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Chandler, second supplementary?

Senator CHANDLER (Tasmania) (14:55): Since the Prime Minister said Australia was still thinking about taking action, the international community, including the United States and the EU, have imposed sanctions on companies and individuals involved in the production or transfer of the uranium drones that have been used by Russia in attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. When will Australia catch up with the rest of the international community, and when will the government use the Magnitsky-style laws passed by this parliament for the express purpose of holding to account those responsible for the most egregious human rights abuses?

Senator WONG (South Australia—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:56): I thank the senator for her question. We actually implement the full suite of UN Security Council mandated sanctions on Iran and an autonomous sanction regime to prohibit the transfer of conventional arms to Iran. In fact, it's on this basis that we have previously imposed—I acknowledge this was Ms Bishop, from memory, but it may also have been Senator Payne who continued them—targeted sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a whole and a number of IRGC Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps linked officials' financial and travel entities, which I think may have been imposed by Senator Payne.

In relation to the provision of armed drones and missiles, that is a deeply concerning report. We condemn any arms transfers to Russia to support its illegal aggression against Ukraine. And we call upon all countries to refrain from supporting Russia. *(Time expired)*

Trade

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator Farrell. Could the minister outline the government's approach to trade policy?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:57): Yes, I can, Senator Polley. And thank you for the wonderful job you do on behalf of the people of Tasmania. I know you know all the benefits that come to Tasmania from free trade. Open trade is a net positive for Australia. Recent analysis showed that one in four jobs is related to trade in this country—and many of them are in Tasmania, I might add. Jobs in export industries pay five per cent above the national average income.

As outlined in my speech on 14 November to the APEC Study Centre in Melbourne, there are four principles guiding Australia's approach to international trade and investment under the government. The first principle is that to meet the challenges of our time we need to deepen and diversify our trading relationships. Placing all your trade eggs in the one basket has proved bad economic strategy. Secondly, Australia is working collaboratively with like-minded partners to support an open, rules based, multitrading system that works in Australia's interests. Thirdly, we're investing in ourselves, using industry policy to ensure Australia's exports are more complex, of higher value and more sophisticated. And, finally, the fourth principle is that trade must be a driver of inclusive economic growth and greater economic wellbeing for all Australians. More trade, not less is a key part of how we build the economic future that we want in Australia, a future of secure, high-paying jobs. *(Time expired)*

The PRESIDENT: Senator Polley, first supplementary?

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (14:59): Thank you for that informative answer, Minister. How will the new free trade agreement support the government's trade policy agenda?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:59): Thank you, Senator, for that question, and thank you, President, for the opportunity to answer a terrific question.

A key plank of our trade policy agenda is trade diversification. This means helping Australian businesses grow and develop new markets for their exports and find new and deeper sources of investment. Today, our government

is delivering this commitment by debating legislation in the House of Representatives which will bring the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement and the Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement into force. The India free trade agreement will eliminate tariffs on 90 per cent of Australia's exports to India.

An opposition senator: You're welcome!

Senator FARRELL: Well, you didn't do it! You had a chance to do it and you didn't do it. But we're doing the job. The Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement will eliminate— (*Time expired*)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Polley, a second supplementary?

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (15:00): The minister recently participated in trade negotiations to launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. What is the framework and how will participation support Australia's trade policy agenda?

Senator FARRELL (South Australia—Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:01): Thank you, Senator Polley. Recently, in Los Angeles, I joined ministers from 13 other partners across the Indo-Pacific to launch negotiations on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework—or IPEF, as it's known. IPEF members include eight of our top 10 trading partners and key regional allies, like the United States, Japan, Korea, India, Indonesia and, of course, our Pacific neighbour Fiji. The framework will cover new and emerging trade issues, including supply chains, clean energy, infrastructure, tax and anticorruption. IPEF is an important part of the Albanese Labor government's trade policy agenda that will help businesses expand and support high-paying jobs.

Senator Wong: I ask that further questions be placed on notice.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Birmingham, I was a bit incomplete before. I'll review that earlier question and, if necessary, come back to the chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Answers to Questions

Senator McGRATH (Queensland) (15:02): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by ministers to questions without notice asked by Opposition senators today. I'm going to begin with the question asked by Senator Hume in relation to gas policy, gas prices and energy prices. We shouldn't forget, and it's hard to forget, that the Labor Party promised 97 times—that is, 97 times—before the election—

Senator Cadell: How many?

Senator McGRATH: Ninety-seven times, Senator Cadell, they promised they would cut power bills by \$275. It was one of those core promises of the Labor Party. They were going to cut power bills by \$275. Ninety-seven times they said that. Yet we find in the budget papers—it was in very small font; I think it was font size eight or nine—that actually power prices under the Labor Party are going to go up by 56 per cent. That's not 15.6 per cent or 5.6 per cent or 0.56 per cent; that is 56 per cent. We have in power a Labor Party that promised to cut power bills by \$275. Instead, through Labor's policy inaction and through the decisions they are making—so it's an axis where any decisions they do make are going to be the wrong decisions and the decisions they don't make are also going to be the wrong decisions—we're going to end up with power bills going up by 56 per cent. Indeed, the average Australian family are going to be \$2,000 worse off by Christmas because of the policies of the Labor Party.

Labor are always going to cost you more. They're going to cost you more in your power bills. They're going to cost you more in your interest rates. They're going to cost you more when your rent goes up. They're going to cost you more when unemployment goes up—it is going up at the moment under the policies of the Labor Party. What we're seeing with the Labor Party and their radical and extreme industrial relations policies—

Senator Wong: Radical?

Senator McGRATH: Senator Wong is laughing, but the Labor Party have got radical and extreme industrial relation policies that are so anti small business. I stand here as a senator for Queensland and a strong and proud proponent of small businesses across all of Queensland. When I left home about a week ago, I was chatting to—I probably won't name them, because I don't want the Labor Party and the unions picking on them—some of the people I buy stuff from in Warwick, and they are terrified about the radical and extreme industrial relations policies that are going to come down. They don't want to get caught up in this vortex of the Labor Party paying back their union paymasters. That's what we're seeing with these radical and extreme industrial relations policies. So not only do the poor, poor Australian people have Mr Albanese as Prime Minister—heaven help all of us!—but they've got a 56 per cent rise in power bills and they've got radical industrial relations policies.

When you look into what the government is doing or not doing in relation to gas, you should be very scared. In its recent budget, the government not only reduced support for gas exploration and ensuring that we have reliable energy across Australia but gave \$10 million to the Environmental Defenders Office—\$10 million to the radical, extreme Environmental Defenders Office. Effectively, the Labor Party are funding extreme left-wing greenies to stop the progress of commerce, business and resource development in Australia. So, if you're wondering in about a year's time or two years time why your power bills have gone up so much, it is because of the policies of the Labor Party—the policies that the ministers today could not answer questions on in relation to what is going to happen, whether it's to your power bills or how much your pay may go up. We all want Australians' pay to go up, but the minister was asked a direct question today about how much people's pay will go up under the Labor Party, and all we got was a bunch of waffle. It was a lot of waffle. And it was not like the waffle that you can get and eat when it comes out of a jaffle iron; it was the waffle that just causes you to lose the will to live when listening to those answers. It is very, very sad that the Australian people will have higher power bills and actually will not get the pay rises they deserve because of the policy inaction of the Labor Party.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Government Whip in the Senate) (15:07): What a load of waffle that was, from the best waffler in this place, I must say! That was just absolutely ridiculous. Honestly, during question time we heard the most ridiculous questions coming from that side. We heard the question that Senator McDonald asked Senator Watt about the mining industry and the loss of 33,000 jobs. What a ridiculous statement to make—absolutely ridiculous. What they haven't listened to is the fact that the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations has listened to feedback. We on this side actually go out and talk to people when we form policy. We've gone out and listened to feedback about how to make sensible improvements to practical applications of the bill. That's what we're doing. We are continuing to consult as the bill progresses through the Senate, so those discussions are continuing to happen.

The minister for workplace relations and his department—putting you to sleep over there, am I, Senator Duniam? I'm making you yawn? Listen; you might hear something. We talk to people. We actually go out and talk to people.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Urquhart, resist commenting on the disposition of the members to my left. I don't need assistance, Senator Duniam.

Senator URQUHART: I couldn't help it; he was yawning while I was speaking.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Please continue, Senator Urquhart.

Senator URQUHART: And I thought I was loud enough to keep him awake!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Please don't reflect on the disposition of the members to my left.

Senator URQUHART: The minister for workplace relations and his department have consulted closely with businesses—the businesses that the people on the other side have pretended are scared—and with unions, who actually represent the workers in this place. Even though they don't like to use that word, they actually do represent the workers, and they have a place in businesses and civil society. We've dealt with all of those, we've consulted and we will continue to consult during the design of these reforms. As I said, we are continuing. We're continuing to have some consultations with stakeholders around concerns that small businesses have raised and around the better off overall test to ensure that no worker is left off.

I don't know why, on that side, they have a problem with workers getting a pay rise. Do they ever go out and talk to workers? We do. Workers like me, who used to work in a factory many years ago, are struggling today to make ends meet because for 10 years, while those guys were in charge, they had no wage increase. In fact, their wages were driven down. They had no ability. These are low-paid workers—aged-care workers, cleaners and childcare workers—who helped us through the pandemic and who worked day in and day out to provide for us and to get us through the pandemic. All those opposite want to do is suppress their wages and keep them down while the cost of living is rising. We know that.

There is an inflation challenge; Senator Gallagher said that in her answer to the question from Senator Cash. We know that, but there are times when workers need a wage rise, and they need it now. I think the scaremongering about job losses is simply that: scaremongering. It is not a reality. We know that under the previous government, over on that side of the chamber, wages had the lowest growth on record. Real wages went down for years and years under the guys over there, and workers really struggled. When workers get good wage rises, we know that they have higher productivity. That is demonstrated by workers who are paid proper wages, but, of course, those opposite don't know about that because they kept wages down for 10 years.

There were five days of hearings in this inquiry. That was more public hearings than for any other workplace related bill inquiry since the Fair Work Act commenced over a decade ago. So there have been more hearings on this bill than what those people over there had when they made changes to the act. We, the education employment committee that ran that inquiry, heard from employers, employer groups, the ACTU, individual unions, workers,

not-for-profit organisations, academics and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. As I said, we know there is consultation that is still happening as the bill moves through the Senate. We have consulted. Those guys should stop that scaremongering because it just frightens people. It's absolutely ridiculous.

People deserve to get wage increases. People look to us, and they will now get a wage increase through the Labor Party, through the government. They deserve it because, for 10 years, those opposite kept them suppressed and their wages suppressed.

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia) (15:13): In these final two weeks of parliament, the matter that will be top of mind for many senators will be discussions, debate and the resolution of the Labor government's new industrial relations platform. Western Australians are confused. The government, it's fair to say, enjoyed strong electoral support in Western Australia. It won the seat of Pearce, it won the seat of Hasluck and it won a Senate spot. So Western Australians can't understand why it is now that this Labor government has decided so quickly—and I think today marks the six-month anniversary of the election of the government—to turn its back on Western Australians and, importantly, to turn its back on what is a critical part of the Western Australian economy and, indeed, the most critical part of Australia's prosperity, and that is the mining and resources sector.

There are four words from Jim Chalmers that Western Australians should not forget: 'It's not our policy.' Before the election, Jim Chalmers said that wholesale industrial relations reform was not the policy of the government. Now, after the election, Jim Chalmers, the Prime Minister and Labor senators are saying it is the centrepiece of their so-called economic plan to improve wages in Australia. 'It's not our policy,' said Jim Chalmers for everybody to hear, and just six months later we are in the Senate chamber and it is the centrepiece of the last two weeks of this parliamentary sitting period.

Let's be very, very clear about why this is so central, and why it is so important for coalition senators like me, Senator Cadell and others to stand up and argue against this industrial relations plan, which will damage the mining and resources sector in Western Australia and, indeed, across the whole country. Let's be clear about this: the mining and resources sector earns for this whole country \$43 billion of export revenue. Secondly, it employs over 277,000 people. Thirdly—and importantly for the government, which makes it more surprising that it would be turning its back on the mining and resources sector—it generates just over \$43 billion in tax revenue for Australian governments. Western Australians have a right to be very distrustful. Why, so early on in the term of this government, having enjoyed such electoral success in Western Australia six months ago, are they now, in the final two weeks of this parliament, deciding to turn their back on such a significant—if not the most significant—industry in Western Australia. It's such an important industry across our whole country.

The problem with Labor is that you can't believe what they say. Coalition senators on the side of the Senate are surprised that so early in the term of this new government their mistruths, their lack of honesty, and their ability to wholesale-change policy commitments given prior to the election are now there for the whole community to see. Western Australians have seen it with great clarity that these industrial relations reforms will damage the mining and resources sector. The sector says 33,000 jobs are at risk as a result of the multi-employer bargaining changes in addition to new tax proposals from the government. We know—the industry tells us—that this will imperil \$77 billion worth of projects—140 projects subject to pre final investment decisions will now be at risk as a result of new taxes and this industrial relations reform. Labor has betrayed Western Australian voters.

Senator MARIELLE SMITH (South Australia) (15:18): It was pretty tough this question time to sit through the faux concern around Labor's policies on energy—particularly our policies on power prices—when we've just sat through a decade that had 22 failed attempts to deliver an energy policy in this country. Those failed attempts weren't just a catastrophic failure of policy aptitude; they also left businesses and many in our community without the certainty they needed to make investment decisions or decisions on behalf of their businesses to drive investment and growth. That lack of policy certainty has left us behind on an international scale when it comes to Australian businesses and our approach and our responses to climate change.

For a decade, we saw the other side argue about whether climate change existed—not doing the hard and detailed policy work required to deliver an energy policy that would deliver certainty to Australian businesses. That's what they now have under an Albanese Labor government. Already, we've legislated 43 per cent by 2030 and net zero 30 by 2050. These are policies enshrined by law to give that certainty to our business community and to drive investment in renewable energy and technology. That's backed up by our Powering Australia policy, which is designed to put more energy into the grid—renewable energy, which is our cheapest form of energy and which will put pressure on energy prices.

I would argue that the concern expressed in question time today was faux concern. If they were really concerned about getting the policy levers in place to make a meaningful difference on energy prices and, indeed, on climate change, they would have spent the last decade designing an energy policy they could deliver. That's not to say that

the impact of energy prices at the moment on the cost-of-living challenges before us is not very real and not serious—of course it is. That's something our government is looking at and work is underway, as Minister Gallagher said in question time today. That's in addition to other measures we're taking to address the cost-of-living crisis, measures like making access to early learning and education more affordable for over one million families. That piece of legislation is being worked through the Senate today. And we're expanding paid parental leave by six months to 2026, and delivering cheaper medicines and more affordable housing. And yes, as was discussed today, we're getting wages moving again.

Unlike the other side, where keeping wages low was a deliberate feature of the economic architecture, we are unashamedly keen to get wages moving again. We have supported an increase to the minimum wage and we've supported a wage rise for aged-care workers. But there is more work to do to fix the broken bargaining system that we are currently dealing with in Australia, and that's what the legislation—that I hope we would be debating in this chamber soon—will seek to deal with. It will address wages for workers like our early childhood workers, who do some of the most important work in our country: nation-building life-changing work. Their wages have failed to keep up with the value that they contribute to our community. We need to fix the broken bargaining system so we can support workers like our early childhood workers and, indeed, many low-paid workers across our economy who are being left behind by our current industrial relations system. So I welcome a debate on that and I welcome the debate which will happen in this chamber in the next few weeks.

The other Senator Smith mentioned that today is the six-month anniversary of the Albanese Labor government, and it's an anniversary which I think is worth celebrating. Already our government has taken significant action to fix the mess and the failures of the previous government over the past decade—failures in aged care, failures in early learning and failures in wages, and in fixing our overseas relationships. Overwhelmingly, what I hear most often as I travel around South Australia is that it finally feels like adults are in charge of the government and doing the work people expect their government to be doing. That's what our government is about, not feigning faux concern over policies. Those opposite actually had a decade to do something about it; if they really genuinely cared about getting wages moving then they wouldn't have made low wages a deliberate feature of the economic architecture. If they really cared about tackling energy prices and tackling climate change then they would have delivered an energy policy one time among those 22 attempts—a policy which actually worked and delivered for Australians. It's faux concern; we're doing real work.

Senator LIDDLE (South Australia) (15:23): It's now clearer than ever that Labor is not committed to the resources sector—that is, those jobs for many locals and associated industries, or FIFO workers. Mining companies are now warning that up to 33,000 jobs are at risk from a potential new mining tax 2.0 from Labor, as well as from their multi-employer bargaining changes.

Senator Watt rejected those numbers, so who are they listening to? Yes, their favourite unions. This would imperil projects valued up to \$77 billion, spreading investment uncertainty and contagion. Who would invest amid an environment operating in investment uncertainty? The mining sector has identified 140 projects subject to pre-final-investment decisions that would be at risk from new taxes and ill-thought-through industrial relations changes. Of those 140 projects, 46 of them are critical minerals projects—critical minerals which are supposed to be part of the renewal technology supply chain Labor keeps talking about. Mining companies themselves are saying that these changes will slow down Australia's energy transformation and that we need more lithium for batteries, more copper for solar panels and more cobalt for electric vehicles—not more uncertainty and risk, which will simply chase away investment from our shores at this crucial hour.

Multi-employer bargaining and Labor's rushed industrial relations policy will only lead to more strike action and put mine developments at risk of cancellation or delay. The proposed workplace changes represent the most radical shake-up of Australia's industrial relations system in decades. Such reform is taking place with so little consultation, except with the unions. Labor have made it clear they want to hand over all workplaces to the unions. Small, medium-sized and large businesses opposed it—I've heard it myself. Industry-wide bargaining will be devastating for the mining sector and the broader Australian economy, leading to widespread strike action, including potential sympathy strikes by those unrelated to a particular dispute, just like we saw in the 1970s.

In my own state of South Australia, mining production is worth in the vicinity of \$5.4 billion a year. What's the risk to that under this policy? The introduction of multi-employer bargaining is a breach of faith with all Australian businesses who took the Treasurer at his word when he said last year that industry-wide bargaining was not Labor's policy. I heard it, and so did the Australian public. This needlessly threatens the mining industry, which earns over \$413 billion in exports, employs over 277,000 Australians in high-paid jobs, and contributed \$43.2 billion in taxes in 2020-21. In the last 20 years, employment in mining has tripled and wages have doubled, benefiting hundreds of thousands of Australians, especially in regional areas.

In what is a recurring theme, Labor has no plan to support jobs and the economy; Labor is not supporting Australian families struggling with the increasing cost of living; and, clearly, Labor does not support the resources industry. While the coalition wholeheartedly supports mining and the jobs it creates, Labor is beholden to its own left wing and its allies in the Australian Greens who want to shut down the resources industry and the jobs of thousands of Australians, including those in regional and remote areas. Who are they listening to? Businesses actually delivering jobs for Australians in those areas? They don't like that you didn't consult with them on the common interest test, multi-employer bargaining or the removal of the ABCC. Your union masters like it, though.

Question agreed to.

Climate Change

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (15:28): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Senator Wong) to a question without notice asked by Senator Cox today relating to climate change.

Senator Cox spoke eloquently about the COP27 negotiations. We know that this last fortnight has been tough, not just for those negotiating the final text at COP27 but for the planet. What we saw come out of those negotiations were steps forward in some respects but terrible steps backward in others, and, of course, an intransigent attitude from those governments who continue to want to fund, publicly, the expansion and continued operation of fossil fuels. The reality is that, when we look at the science, it is crystal clear that we cannot continue to expand and open new fossil fuel projects if we are to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees. In fact, even if we want to keep global warming below two degrees there is no way we can continue to open more gas, coal or oil projects, not just here in Australia but around the world.

Australia, of course, has a huge role to play in this. We remain the third-largest exporter of fossil fuels in the world. Do you know what that means, Deputy President? That means we are the third-largest exporter of pollution—dangerous, climate-changing pollution—in the world, and we have to take some responsibility for that. That's why Senator Cox asked the government today in question time when we'll we stop funding fossil fuel companies to continue to expand and grow. When will we end the unneeded, unnecessary and dangerous fossil fuel subsidies in this country that litter our national government budget? Of course, we didn't get a response from Senator Wong. But what we did hear from both this government and others was a reluctance to do anything that is needed in relation to winding back those fossil fuel subsidies.

There was also a question that went to an important element of the discussions and negotiations that were had at COP27. This was in relation to the loss and damages commitments. This is an important step forward, that rich, wealthy countries—those who have done a lot of the polluting already—help to pay for those less-wealthy countries who are suffering now because the climate crisis is here and is only going to get worse. It is important that we have a proper commitment from the Australian government in relation to this.

I just want to make the point that while we were in Senate question time here in this place today, over in the other place the Leader of the Opposition, the man who thinks that he should be Prime Minister, decided to attack the world's poorest people—to attack the poorest countries on the globe over this particular clause that was negotiated at COP27. That, of course, was Mr Dutton, the same bloke who laughed at the suggestion of water lapping at the doors of our Pacific neighbours, laughing at the horrors that these countries now face because of the pollution that Australia continues to export and the climate crisis that our nation continues to drive to be worse and worse.

The man who wants to be Prime Minister in this country, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is laughing and now playing the dirtiest, lowest politics of all. He suggested that Australia should not play a role in this because charity 'starts at home'. Is this really the attitude from today's Liberal Party, that not only do they not believe in climate change but now they think that they can also rip off the world's poorest people? I'd like to know in this place today what the moderates in the Liberal Party say—Senator Birmingham, for example, from my home state in South Australia: what do you say?—about the fact that the Leader of the Opposition thinks the world's poorest should just drown.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Steele-John to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the *Customs Act 1901*, and for related purposes. *Customs Amendment (Banning Goods Produced By Forced Labour) Bill 2022*.

Senators Antic, Rennick, Canavan and Babet to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Aged Care, by no later than 3 pm on Tuesday, 29 November 2022:

(a) any contractual documents (without redaction) including any schedules, appendices or similar document (without redaction), for the supply, production, distribution or administration of any COVID-19 vaccine in Australia ('the vaccine contracts') executed by or on behalf of the Australian Government and any of the following ('the vaccine producers'):

- (i) Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd and/or its parent companies, nominees, agents or subsidiaries,
- (ii) AstraZeneca Pty Ltd and/or its parent companies, nominees, agents or subsidiaries,
- (iii) Moderna Australia Pty Ltd and/or its parent companies, nominees, agents or subsidiaries, and
- (iv) Novavax Inc and/or its parent companies, nominees, agents or subsidiaries;

(b) any other document referenced, referred to or incorporated into any of the vaccine contracts but not included in the contractual document;

(c) any other document evidencing any pre-contractual representations with respect to effectiveness, side effects, fitness for purpose, merchantability, warranties or exclusions of warranty related to the supply, production, distribution or administration of any COVID-19 vaccine in Australia by any of the vaccine producers; and

(d) any other document evidencing any indemnity, guarantee, waiver or release of liability, forbearance to sue or similar enforceable right provided by or on behalf of the Australian Government to any of the vaccine producers with respect to the supply, production, distribution or administration of any COVID-19 vaccine in Australia.

Senator Rice to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate only recognise a Dalai Lama appointed via Tibetan Buddhist traditions and practices, without interference by the Chinese Government.

Senator Cash to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business, by no later than midday on 25 November 2022:

(a) all submissions received by Treasury and associated agencies that were provided as part of the consultation process for the following:

- (i) Treasury Laws Amendment (Measures for Consultation) Bill 2022: Skills and training boost, and
- (ii) Treasury Laws Amendment (Measures for Consultation) Bill 2022: Technology investment boost;

(b) briefing materials, file notes and any written communication produced by Treasury that were provided to the Minister for Small Business and/or her office in relation to the consultation on the following bills:

- (i) Treasury Laws Amendment (Measures for Consultation) Bill 2022: Skills and training boost, and
- (ii) Treasury Laws Amendment (Measures for Consultation) Bill 2022: Technology investment boost; and

(c) briefing materials, file notes, ministerial submissions and any written communication produced by Treasury that were provided to the Minister for Small Business and/or her office to assist in decision making on the following bills:

- (i) Treasury Laws Amendment (Measures for Consultation) Bill 2022: Skills and training boost, and
- (ii) Treasury Laws Amendment (Measures for Consultation) Bill 2022: Technology investment boost.

Senator Lambie to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Amendment (Annual Members' Meetings Notices) Regulations 2022, made under the *Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993*, be disallowed [F2022L01162].

Senator Roberts to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following matter be referred to the Procedure Committee for inquiry and report by 1 February 2023:

(1) The appropriate terms to establish a procedure in the standing orders through which:

(a) senators can confidentially and privately review documents subject to an order for production that a Minister believes would be against the public interest to table; and

(b) after the documents have been made available for review, the Senate can reject a Minister's public interest claim against disclosure and order the tabling of the documents.

(2) Whether the procedure in paragraph (1) is appropriate having regard to the balance between the Senate's constitutional power as the house of review, the necessity of senators to be properly informed of sensitive issues to make informed decisions and the protection of the public interest from public disclosure of sensitive information.

Senator Canavan to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee meet from 9 am to 4 pm on Friday, 25 November 2022 to examine the estimates for:

(a) Outcome 1, Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts;

(b) National Intermodal Corporation Limited;

- (c) Civil Aviation Safety Authority;
- (d) Infrastructure Australia;
- (e) Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility;
- (f) Airservices Australia;
- (g) Australian Rail Track Corporation; and
- (h) Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Senator Gallagher to move on the next day of sitting:

That—

(1) The hours of meeting on Tuesday, 22 November and Thursday, 24 November 2022 be from midday till 9.30 pm and 9 am till 7.30 pm respectively, and the routine of business from 7.30 pm on Tuesday and from 5.30 pm on Thursday be:

- (a) government business only; and
- (b) adjournment without debate.

(2) Divisions may take place after 6.30 pm on Tuesday, 22 November 2022 and after 5.30 pm on Thursday, 24 November 2022.

(3) The Senate meet on Friday, 25 November and Friday, 2 December 2022.

(4) The hours of meeting on Friday, 25 November 2022 be 9 am till adjournment, and the routine of business be as follows:

- (a) government business only; and
- (b) adjournment without debate.

(5) If, by 2 pm on Friday, 25 November 2022, consideration of the following bills has not concluded, the questions on all remaining stages be put without debate:

Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022

Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022

Treasury Laws Amendment (2022 Measures No. 2) Bill 2022

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Incentivising Pensioners to Downsize) Bill 2022

Treasury Laws Amendment (Electric Car Discount) Bill 2022

Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

High Speed Rail Authority Bill 2022

Education Legislation Amendment (2022 Measures No. 1) Bill 2022

Atomic Energy Amendment (Mine Rehabilitation and Closure) Bill 2022

Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022

Customs Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Customs Tariff Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Customs Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Customs Tariff Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Treasury Laws Amendment (Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Narcotic Drugs (Licence Charges) Amendment Bill 2022

Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia Funding Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Maritime Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Reform (Closing the Hole in the Ozone Layer) Bill 2022

Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment Bill 2022

Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment Bill 2022

Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget Measures) Bill 2022

Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Amendment (Strengthening Land and Governance Provisions) Bill 2022

Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme Amendment Bill 2022

Broadcasting Services Amendment (Community Radio) Bill 2022;

Biosecurity Amendment (Strengthening Biosecurity) Bill 2022.

(6) Paragraph (5) operate as a limitation of debate under standing order 142.

(7) The Senate adjourn without debate after consideration of the bills has concluded.

(8) The hours of meeting on Friday, 2 December 2022 be 9 am till adjournment, and the routine of business be as follows:

- (a) government business only, followed by consideration of the Restoring Territory Rights Bill 2022;
- (b) adjournment without debate after consideration of the Restoring Territory Rights Bill 2022 has concluded, or on the motion of a minister, whichever is earlier.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Government Whip in the Senate) (15:33): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to the following senators:

- (a) Senator McAllister for today, on account of ministerial business; and
- (b) Senator O'Neill from 21 to 24 November 2022, on account of parliamentary business.

Question agreed to.

Leave of Absence

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:34): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to the following senators:

- (a) Senator Bragg for 21 and 22 November 2022, for personal reasons;
- (b) Senators Hughes and Molan from 21 to 24 November 2022, for personal reasons; and
- (c) Senator Ruston from 21 to 24 November 2022, for a parliamentary delegation.

Question agreed to.

Postponement

The Clerk: Postponement notifications have been lodged in respect of the following:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 2 standing in the name of Senator Hanson-Young for today, proposing the disallowance of the Broadcasting Services ("Broadcasting Service" Definition—Exclusion) Determination 2022, postponed till 28 November 2022.

General business notice of motion no. 39 standing in the names of Senators Barbara Pocock and Waters for today, proposing the introduction of the Fairer Paid Parental Leave Bill 2022, postponed till the first sitting day in 2023.

General business notice of motion no. 79 standing in the name of Senator Roberts for today, proposing an amendment to standing order 164, postponed till 23 November 2022.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:35): I remind senators that the question may be put on any proposal at the request of any senator. I note that no senator has made a request.

COMMITTEES

Reporting Date

The Clerk: Notifications of extensions of time for committees to report have been lodged in respect of the following:

Education and Employment Legislation Committee—Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022 [Provisions]—from 17 to 22 November 2022.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee—

Biosecurity measures and response preparedness—from 24 November to 8 December 2022.

Fisheries quota system—from 29 November to 7 December 2022.

CONDOLENCES

Reith, Hon. Peter Keaston, AM

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:35): It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death, on 8 November 2022, of the Hon. Peter Keaston Reith AM, a former minister and member of the House of Representatives for the division of Flinders, Victoria, from 1982 to 2001.

Senator WATT (Queensland—Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management) (15:36): by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep sorrow at the death, on 8 November 2022, of the Honourable Peter Keaston Reith AM, former Minister for Defence, Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business and Minister for Industrial Relations, and former member for Flinders, places on record its gratitude of his service to the Parliament and the nation and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

I rise on behalf of the government to express our condolences following the passing of former minister Hon. Peter Keaston Reith, AM, who passed away on 8 November 2022 at the age of 72. I do so as the Minister representing

the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations in the Senate, recognising the portfolios held by Peter Reith for the majority of his ministerial career. As I begin, I wish to convey the government's condolences to Mr Reith's family and friends. I particularly acknowledge members of the Reith family who have travelled to be present for condolence motions in the House of Representatives and the Senate today.

There's no doubt that Peter Reith was a controversial figure in Australian politics, particularly for those on our side of the chamber. I do not say this disrespectfully, but to recognise that for many people he was the personification of policies they opposed vociferously and tenaciously. But Peter Reith was equally as vociferous and tenacious in his promotion of those policies, particularly in industrial relations, and the extent to which some of them became entrenched in Australia's legislative architecture is a measure of his efforts. So, too, is the regard in which he is held amongst those on his own side of politics. Whilst his life and contribution will be remembered differently on different parts of the Australian political spectrum, today we all recognise his impact on our nation.

Peter Reith was born in Melbourne and was educated at Brighton Grammar School, and then at Monash University, from where he graduated with qualifications in economics and law. He worked as a solicitor in Cowes on Phillip Island and was then elected as a councillor and, later, as President of the Shire of Phillip Island. Active in the Liberal Party from his teenage years, he gained federal preselection after defeating, amongst others, Richard Alston, who would go on to become a senator and cabinet minister alongside him in the Howard government.

Peter Reith entered federal politics in 1982 after winning the seat of Flinders in a by-election to replace Sir Philip Lynch, serving first under the leadership of Malcolm Fraser. He lost his seat the next year but was then re-elected to the House of Representatives in 1984 and further returned in 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996 and 1998. Mr Reith retired prior to the 2001 election.

Some might say the timing of Peter Reith's election was unfortunate, given it coincided with a sustained period of Labor government under Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. But, in many ways, the time Peter Reith served in opposition was an extensive apprenticeship and preparation for a sustained period in government. He was a loyal warrior under four Liberal leaders: Andrew Peacock, John Hewson, Alexander Downer and John Howard. He held office as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party from 1990 to 1993, shoulder to shoulder with John Hewson.

In addition, Mr Reith filled a number of shadow ministerial positions in portfolios including housing, sport, Attorney-General's, Treasury, Defence, foreign affairs and industrial relations. In these, particularly as the shadow Treasurer, responsible for selling tax reform with a consumption tax as its centre piece, he travelled the hard road in pursuit of his beliefs. Paul Keating once described Peter Reith as 'one of those inflatable clowns with sand in the bottom and you knock them down and they bounce back up'. I am pretty sure that was a compliment. Mr Reith also earned a reputation as an indefatigable headkicker and strong policy opponent, such as through his part in defeating the 1988 referendum proposals.

The big defeat of the Keating government in March 1996 heralded a big change in Australian politics. Whatever you think, John Howard led a transformational government that would have a lasting impact on our nation. It was not a transformation that those of us on this side of the chamber agreed with, necessarily. Peter Reith stood alongside John Howard as a key lieutenant charged with implementing some of the most contentious elements of the coalition's policy agenda. He held the positions of Minister for Industrial Relations and then Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business from 1996 to 2001. In addition, he served as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service from 1996 to 1997 and Minister for Defence in 2001.

Peter Reith's political legacy is undeniably extensive and his pursuit of his vision for workplace relations reform was tireless. The reforms he put forward as the minister responsible for workplace relations made a significant impact on Australia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Although the Albanese Labor government has a very different vision for getting there, reforming the workplace relations system to underpin productivity is an important policy goal. It's fair to say that we will put as much energy into reforming our workplace relations system as Peter Reith did in his time.

Peter Reith will always be remembered for the role that he played in a series of waterfront disputes in the 1990s, one of the most significant periods in Australian workplace relations history. Under the Howard government, following the keystone 1998 High Court decision to prevent deunionisation of the waterfront, Mr Reith implemented significant workplace changes. It's fair to say that this decision, and this time, was one of the most polarising periods of Australia's workplace relations history. There are images and headlines that are seared into the collective memory of the union movement and of businesses, and these are not going to be forgotten, even though it happened more than two decades ago.

Outside of his ministerial responsibilities, Peter Reith campaigned for a republic prior to the unsuccessful 1999 referendum, its defeat welcomed as he reflected a preference for a directly elected president as opposed to the model put to the Australian people.

In the final year of his ministerial career, John Howard switched Peter Reith to the Defence portfolio, which placed him as a key figure in the contentious 'children overboard' affair during the 2001 election campaign in which the then government falsely claimed that asylum seekers had thrown their children out of a leaky fishing boat, later the subject of a Senate select committee inquiry. This was a regrettable end to a parliamentary career that had spanned nearly two decades.

Peter Reith was a well-respected colleague and mentor of many in this parliament—and in the Liberal Party, in particular—across four decades. His allies regarded him as a person of integrity and trust. I pay tribute to his undoubted commitment to his community, his dedication to his portfolios and the fact that he was always true to his beliefs. Any chronicle of the Howard government would be incomplete without extensive acknowledgement of the contribution of Peter Reith.

Today we also acknowledge he has passed away at a relatively young age and in circumstances that robbed him and those around him of years and further contributions in his post-political life. I acknowledge that the fight against Alzheimer's disease is incredibly difficult for individuals, their families and their friends. The government expresses its condolences following the passing of the Hon. Peter Keaston Reith AM and we again convey our sympathies to his family and those who knew him well.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:44): Peter Keaston Reith was one of the great Liberals of the modern era and, indeed, one of the great parliamentarians. He came to this parliament committed as a reformer, a man of principle, a man driven by policy, a man of courage in his convictions and a man of ambition for what could be achieved from his time in this place. He dedicated his life to public service and to the pursuit of a better, stronger Australia.

Born in Melbourne in 1950, Peter was educated at Brighton Grammar and had an early introduction to politics, joining the Sandringham branch of the Young Liberals at 15, and then went on to study law and economics at Monash University. Peter practiced as a solicitor in Melbourne and then in the small town of Cowes on Phillip Island. Peter's family had a history with Phillip Island that he too would build a lifelong connection to. At the age of 26, in 1976, Peter followed his brother in becoming a shire counsellor on Phillip Island and later became the shire president in 1981. In those few short years alone, he had an impact, having helped establish the independent school of Newhaven College and in setting up the Penguin research facility.

Peter almost didn't fulfil his political destiny, as is the volatile nature of politics. He was both the victim and the beneficiary of the early-calling elections. Peter had been successful in the by-election for the seat of Flinders, held late in 1982 following the retirement of Sir Phillip Lynch. However, Peter wasn't even given the chance to be sworn into the House of Representatives before the early calling of an election in early 1983, just months after Peter's election. And there, in that 1983 election, a national swing against the Fraser government saw Peter lose the seat of Flinders without having sat in this place. However, in his first demonstration in public life of rolling with the punches and his ability to withstand setbacks, Peter, having endured three election campaigns over a 27-month period to be the member for Flinders, won the second of those three and regained the seat in the early election of 1984. From there, he would continue to represent the people of Flinders for over 17 years.

In his first speech, he reflected on the ups and downs of those election campaigns, saying that it was indicative of the healthy political system we have in this country and that his election to this place had been brought about not by the efforts of a few but by the efforts of very many people in Flinders. Demonstrating a sense of humour, a little cheek and perhaps even a little effrontery, he also went on in that speech to thank and to say, 'Finally, I cannot overlook the contribution of the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, whose brief foray into Flinders probably put the matter'—of Peter's successful election—'beyond doubt.' He took the opportunity to invite Mr Hawke to the electorate of Flinders at the earliest opportunity and, at the very least, during the next election campaign.

That small quip aside, I'd encourage anybody who can to take the time to read Peter's first speech. It is clear and even raw in its honesty but also foretelling of the approach he would bring to the issues he would later tackle as a reformer within this parliament. He spoke, for instance, of the outlook of Milton Friedman and of the interrelationship between economic and political freedoms. Peter highlighted that the marketplace is distorted by the inefficiencies of the demands of government. While acknowledging that there is a role for governments to play in the maintenance of minimum standards, he was also very clear that demands go hand in hand with the parallel demand that governments should not impose upon the individual's right to have an economic system where effort is rewarded. There was a consistency from that first speech that would carry all of the way through Peter's years in politics.

Peter's analytical and sharp policy mind reflected the positions he would hold as shadow minister across a broad range of portfolio areas, from Foreign Affairs and Defence to Education and Sport to Industrial Relations to Treasury and more. He also operated as a powerful and effective manager of opposition business. His key, most notable and

memorable contribution during his time as shadow minister was undoubtedly the most ambitious policy manifesto ever presented by an Australian opposition to a federal election. That, of course, was the Fightback! policy manifesto presented in 1993.

An article from the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1992 recounts a moment when Peter, as then shadow Treasurer, earned the spontaneous applause of his colleagues after defending the coalition's Fightback! policy on *Four Corners*, following a leaking of Treasury papers planning an analysis of the coalition's policy. The article read: 'His performance in the interview was shrewd and calmly aggressive. He conceded nothing of any significance, undermined the government's case, questioned the credibility of the Treasury and cast doubt on the relationship between *Four Corners* and the government. It was Peter Reith's best performance, and one of which any politician would be proud.'

While Fightback! may have gone down in history as a failed election manifesto, Peter's loyalty and beliefs in his party's mantra did not waver. And, indeed, many of the policies within Fightback!, in particular the central tax reform agenda contained within it, would later become reforms to Australia's policy regime that last to this very day and that have enhanced Australia's standing. The policy ambition shown at that time was nothing short of inspirational at least to some—and indeed can I note that it was at that time that I joined the Liberal Party, first campaigning for the party in that 1993 election.

Peter served under Liberal leaders Malcolm Fraser, Andrew Peacock, John Hewson, Alexander Downer and John Howard. He demonstrated an ability to work with all but always to put policy and the agenda of the nation first. Whilst that 1993 election defeat was a setback, Peter Reith typically bounced back. As is common for many who enter the public life of parliament, your opponents, the media and the Australian people can perceive politicians in a very different light to who they truly are or indeed can see those perceptions change over time, depending on the circumstances and sometimes the luck that you face.

Senator Watt referenced the Paul Keating quote about Peter Reith. But by 1996 one article described Mr Reith, having taken on the ministry and become a leading figure in the Howard government, as: 'No longer the political write-off of his critics or the butt of Mr Keating's bouncing clown jokes, the bald and bespectacled politician has emerged as a respected operator who is shrewd, intelligent and tenacious.' It was those attributes that saw, under the Howard government, Peter have his most recognisable achievements in government.

As Minister for Workplace Relations and Small Business, he became the architect of pivotal workplace reform which put the interests of employers and employees first. The 1998 waterfront dispute became one of the most significant moments in Australian industrial relations history. Prime Minister from that time, John Howard, reflected that, however contested the outcome of the 1998 waterfront dispute may have been, it was undeniable that world-ranking productivity replaced the ruinous behaviour which severely damaged some of the most productive businesses in Australia. Standing up to the extreme intimidation of the unions didn't come without its own risks for Peter, whose management of the controversy saw him even offer his resignation to John Howard at one point. But, of course, Mr Howard declined, and despite the threats and the months of police protection, Peter Reith remained fearless. As John Howard said following Peter Reith's death, describing him as a great all-rounder, he had lost somebody that he admired, who gave enormously to be Liberal cause. Mr Howard acknowledged that Peter Reith did fight very hard, but, most importantly, he was there to bring about change.

Even having gone through tumultuous waters with workplace relations and waterfront reforms, Peter Reith, through the parliament, never lost sight of his time and responsibility to his local community. This was reflected by *The Age* in early 2000 who spent a few days with Peter Reith following him around the Flinders electorate, meeting with local constituents: a young couple who had bought their new home, visiting a nursing home, a visit to the local RSL and another to a group of people who wanted to acquire a submarine for a tourist attraction. While the article called the latter idea hairbrained, Peter Reith nonetheless acted as the effective local MP, picked up the phone and tried to help as best he could.

Peter Reith will be remembered for pivotal moments in Australian political history. Rightfully, he should be remembered for what he set out to achieve. He said in his first speech to the parliament:

Australia is a lucky country. Let us not allow it to become a fool's paradise. We have the people and resources to build up this nation and I look forward optimistically to the Australia of the future and commit myself to working hard for its improvement.

I would hope we can all agree, even if people disagree on some of the policies, that Peter Reith did just that. He committed himself to working hard for the improvement of Australia, doing so as the member for Flinders, as a shadow minister, as the parliamentary manager and leader, as the Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, and the Minister for Defence. He was a tough political warrior, but was always driven by the best of reasons and instincts.

As his family have indicated, behind the scenes he was a different character. His family remember a man who never lost his temper—a man of warmth, of care and of countless dad jokes. On behalf of the opposition and the Senate, to Peter's loved ones, to his wife, Kerrie, and to his four sons, Paul, Simon, David and Robert, we acknowledge the difficult few years you have faced, the challenges you have encountered, and the loss of time you wished you would have had with your husband and your dad. We extend our most sincere gratitude for his service to our nation and for the enormous contribution that he made, as well as our sincerest condolences, to all of you.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (15:56): On behalf of the National Party, I rise to contribute to the motion on the passing of former Liberal Party member, parliamentarian, minister and great Victorian, the Hon. Peter Reith AM. Elected to the seat of Flinders in 1982, he served our parliament for more than 17 years. He served under Liberal leaders Malcolm Fraser, Andrew Peacock, John Hewson, Alexander Downer and John Howard. His loyalty and dedication are renowned within the coalition, and even more renowned was his wicked sense of humour, I am told. Mr Reith was seen as the hard man of the Howard government not only on industrial relations but also as leader of the other place. He was a Liberal MP over six parliamentary terms, the party's deputy leader from 1990 to 1994, Minister for Workplace Relations and Small Business and Minister for Defence.

His time as industrial relations minister delivered significant reforms to Australia's workplace culture and laws, creating more prosperity and productivity, which set Australia up to deliver the longest period of sustained economic growth of any nation in recent memory. His reforms included changes to the structure of the Commonwealth Public Service, a significant reform package for small business and an innovative targeted program for the employment of Indigenous Australians. But he is best known for securing the significant productivity reforms which followed the 1998 waterfront dispute, where he fought alongside our primary producers, state organisations and the Victorian Farmers Federation for a more productive and more prosperous export industry. That is what rural and regional Australia and, indeed, our nation was able to benefit from, thanks to the work of Peter Reith, then agriculture minister Peter McGauran, and a whole suite of others from the private sector and beyond. They were fighting the stranglehold that militant unions had on our wharfs at that time, ensuring that we could never actually realise our true potential as one of the great exporting agricultural nations, that we have now become.

Mr Reith was an architect of pivotal workplace reforms which put the interests of employers and employees first. As John Howard said recently:

However contested the outcome of the 1998 waterfront dispute may have been, it was undeniable that world ranking productivity replaced ruinous behaviour which severely damaged some of the most productive businesses in Australia.

The resulting progress, productivity and reforms achieved in the workplace because of Mr Reith's political fortitude and conviction are now at risk with this current government's approach to industrial relations. They want to return us to the days of industrywide industrial chaos and drag us back to the dark ages of union thuggery, corruption and strikes when wharfs were strangled and our exports and imports were damaged and hindered. I hope we will remember Peter Reith's fortitude in taking on those unions and ensuring our wharves and our economy more broadly became more productive and prosperous for all. Richard Alston said that Peter's 'efforts in leading the reform of the waterfront mark him down as one of the best cabinet ministers of all time'. He said:

He was peerless in pursuit of the reform objective, despite having a 24-hour security guard. He never wavered ...

Throughout his public life he delivered a lot. My own family was a beneficiary of his time setting up Newhaven College. Both of my eldest sons graduated from Newhaven College. It's a great opportunity on the Bass coast. We have a choice of an independent Christian offering for families. It is really superconnected to the environment as well. It's a unique education. I thank Mr Reith for that as well.

Reith was the Liberal Party's deputy leader and had over almost two decades of involvement in federal politics. He emerged as one of the most significant and toughest coalition government ministers since World War II. During the 1993 federal campaign an onlooker in Broken Hill, Australia's toughest union town—and, yes, in the regions—was astonished to see Peter Reith alone on a street corner extolling the virtues of Fightback!, the coalition's offering at that election—a free-market policy credo. According to Andrew Clark of the *AFR*:

Initially he was ignored but eventually he was encircled by an increasingly angry—and subtext, typically Broken Hill—

crowd of burly miners and furious women denouncing his message. An imposingly big and snarling sort of man, Reith was undeterred and returned the crowd's hostility in kind, which eventually saw them disperse in disgust.

Peter's political legacy is extensive and lasting. Anyone who's interested in understanding his contribution in more detail should head upstairs to our own Parliamentary Library and check out *The Reith Papers*, which is an extensive body of work detailing his love of policy and reform across a whole raft of areas. He combined ideology with conviction, duty and diligence and relentless pursuit of reform. Michael Kroger said it best when he said that

he was a man of steel. While all ministers, backbenchers and others ran for cover when things got hard, Peter never wavered.

I want to conclude with a quote from Mr Reith, which I think sums up his achievements in public life and attributes of a conviction politician. He said:

You could say, well, the government took a beating. Well, every government has taken a beating in the past on waterfront reform. We took a bit more beating than usual but, then again, we're the only ones who ever got anything done either.

I think there's a lesson for all of us in that. On behalf of the National Party I extend my deepest sympathy to his wife, Kerrie; his four sons—Paul, Simon, David and Robert—and their families; and the very many friends that Mr Reith made whilst he had his time in this place. Vale, Peter Reith.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:03): I too rise to support and to speak to the condolence motion. Peter Keaston Reith is best described as an old-style politician, someone versed in the ways of negotiation when trying to achieve the right outcome for the nation and also as someone willing to meet fire with fire when needed. He was without a doubt a warrior and a stalwart of the Liberal Party.

Peter was born in Melbourne on 15 July 1950 and was later educated at Brighton Grammar School before he attended Monash University. He received a degree in law and economics and practised in Melbourne before opening his own practice on Phillip Island, where his family had a long and distinguished history in the local community. Peter and his brother, Sandy, were both elected to the Phillip Island Shire Council in 1976, and Peter became shire president just five years later.

As we have heard, Peter came into the parliament in 1982 and served for more than 17 years under Liberal leaders Malcolm Fraser, Andrew Peacock, John Hewson, Alexander Downer and John Howard before retiring from politics at the 2001 election. He was loyal to each leader as he was to his party, whether in government or in opposition.

Peter's political legacy was forged during the Howard government, where he had ministerial responsibilities for industrial and workplace relations, small business and defence. I'm sure Peter would have enjoyed the irony of the fact that his passing came at a time when we are involved in a critical debate about the industrial relations policy of this nation. As the industrial relations minister after John Howard's 1996 election victory, Peter was tasked with drafting and implementing the Howard government's industrial relations policy. In January 1997, Peter and the Howard government successfully amended the Industrial Relations Act. The aim of that legislation was to foster individual choice in workplace bargaining. This was achieved by reducing the powers of unions to intervene. The legislation also reduced the powers of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to arbitrate disputes, and introduced individual statutory employment contracts. Collective bargaining was also restricted.

Those reforms came into play during the 1998 waterfront dispute, in which Peter played a central and critical role. Out of that dispute, Peter was able to secure, importantly, significant productivity reforms and major improvements in work practices. While the exact levels of productivity gains have always been disputed, businesses involved have claimed that, within a few years, crane productivity doubled and productivity per hour of work more than quadrupled.

After Peter's death, John Howard described the waterfront outcome like this, as Senator McKenzie herself has already referred:

However contested the outcome of the 1998 Waterfront Dispute may have been, it was undeniable that world ranking productivity replaced ruinous behaviour which severely damaged some of the most productive businesses in Australia.

People often forget that during this time Peter had a 24-hour-a-day security guard and was under enormous pressure, but he never took a step back from the battle for reform.

Following his passing, Peter's cabinet colleague Richard Alston said his efforts in leading the reform of the waterfront made him one of the best cabinet ministers of all time. Alston said this:

He was peerless in pursuit of the reform objective ... He never wavered ... I always considered him the most impressive contributor in the cabinet among his ministerial colleagues—quick, creative, consistent, thoughtful, and well-informed.

During his time as industrial relations minister, Peter also introduced changes to the structure of the Commonwealth Public Service. He introduced reforms for small business and a program for the employment of Indigenous Australians.

It is interesting to go back over Peter's first speech in the other place. He talked about a vision for a better Australia. He said:

A vision of a better Australia of course needs the confidence that one can make a contribution to bring such visions to reality. To that extent I am idealistic. I believe that if Australians work together and pursue common goals we can achieve a better Australia for all Australians. I do not doubt that honourable members on both sides of this House share a vision of Australia

without poverty, where all Australians can have shelter, are well fed and clothed, can receive a good education and can reach their full potential in a country whose sovereignty remains inviolate.

It is obvious from the incredible service that Peter Reith provided to our great country over so many, many years that he always worked to live up to that vision.

He saw Australia as a lucky country, but he also knew that we have to work hard to capitalise on that luck. Many of his colleagues, including former prime minister Howard, have remarked on Peter's sense of humour, describing it in various ways, ranging from wicked to laid back. Former prime minister Howard said he had seen Peter about five weeks before his passing and that Peter had retained that sense of humour. It's a good reminder for all of us in this place that we can go about our duties with a positive attitude and a sense of humour.

I, too, offer my heartfelt condolences to Peter's colleagues, his friends and family, especially his wife, Kerrie, and his four sons, Paul, Simon, David and Robert.

Senator HUME (Victoria) (16:10): I, too, rise to lend my voice to the chamber's condolences to the Hon. Peter Reith. Peter truly was a giant of the Liberal Party. He had an enormous intellect, and he was what every Liberal minister aspires to be: a true reformer.

Last week's funeral was a fitting tribute to the life of an incredible man who left an indelible mark on our history. He embodied the values and principles for which the Liberal Party stands. His greatest work, of course, was the reform of the industrial relations system in the late 1990s and, in particular, on the waterfront, which has left Australia and Australians more prosperous and more productive. It certainly wasn't without struggle, though. The sheer audacity of this project, the foresight, the intellectual rigour, the personal effort and personal and safety sacrifice, and the self belief that went into it was really quite an undertaking. So it's little wonder that for policymakers and politicians and anyone engaged in civic debate the extraordinary life of such an exceptional man warrants acknowledgement and reflection and, indeed, reverence.

Peter was what so many of us hope we can be. There are lessons in his life for all of us. As a parliamentarian, he was respected and he was respectful. He was principled and steadfast. He was determined and he was effective, but he was also kind and encouraging. His staff tell the story that he never swore and never raised his voice. John Howard referred to Peter's team as 'always a functional office'. That's high praise indeed in a place like this.

As a professional, whether it was in politics or beyond, you could see in Peter's face that he just loved whatever it was he was doing. It didn't matter whether it was a small business portfolio or Defence or industrial relations, there was always a twinkle in his eye. You could see that when he became a commentator on Sky and during his time overseas at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He enjoyed that even if his first task apparently was to suggest that it be dismantled, much to the fury of his board co-members!

As a party man, Peter Reith was someone that we will all aspire to be. He was committed from day one—from his university days right through to the very end. In fact, in 2017, while he was campaigning to be the party president in my home state of Victoria was when he first had a stroke. He was a mentor, a guiding hand and a great friend to so many of us that came after.

Most importantly, though, he was quite clearly an extraordinary man outside of politics. He was committed to his family, first and foremost—his wife, Kerrie; his four sons, David, Simon, Paul and Robert; and his 13 grandchildren, who gave such a beautiful tribute to him at his funeral, who clearly love him so much and who he clearly adored in return. If the measure of success in life is to love and be loved in return, Peter Reith was a very successful man.

Farewell to our vanished but never vanquished friend, a man whose trumpet never sounded retreat. He was one of the very best among us.

Senator HENDERSON (Victoria) (16:14): Like all in his Liberal family, I'm very sad about the passing of Peter Keaston Reith AM. Peter was one of the finest Liberals ever produced by the Victorian division. He was an incredible warrior for Liberal values; he was a true reformer; and he was courageous. As we have heard in this condolence motion, especially from Senator Cash, his successful IR reforms following the 1998 waterfront dispute are legendary. When I was a Liberal candidate and then when I was the member for Corangamite, Peter provided me with wise counsel from time to time for which I was most grateful. He was practical, good humoured and refreshingly blunt. Those traits will be very much missed.

As Opposition Leader, Peter Dutton, said in paying tribute to Peter Reith:

Elected to the seat of Flinders in 1982, he served as a Member of the House of Representatives for more than 17 years. In his maiden speech, Peter described Flinders as 'one of the great places in Australia to live and enjoy'. He kept his promise of representing the people of Flinders to the best of his ability.

Peter served under Liberal leaders Malcolm Fraser, Andrew Peacock, John Hewson, Alexander Downer and John Howard. He was loyal to each leader as he was to his party, whether in government or opposition.

His analytical and sharp policy mind was reflected in the positions he held as a shadow minister, from industrial relations and education, to foreign affairs and defence, to education and sport, and more besides. Peter was a powerful and effective Manager of Opposition Business.

But his main achievements came under the Howard Government where he had ministerial responsibilities for industrial and workplace relations, small business, and defence. ...

Peter's political legacy is extensive. He will be remembered most, however, for his fearlessness in the face of extreme union intimidation—especially by freeing up the waterfront to ensure Australia had a more productive, forward-looking economy. He was an architect of pivotal workplace reform which put the interests of employers and employees first.

As we've also heard in this condolence motion, Peter Reith's work in Fightback! formed the basis of much reform that was to come in the years ahead.

I was honoured to attend Peter Reith's funeral and to listen to the special memories and tributes from his family, a former staff member, one of his closest friends and former prime minister John Howard, who described Peter Reith as 'the great all-rounder'. Mr Howard said:

I have lost somebody I admired a lot, who gave enormously to the Liberal cause ... He was there to bring about change, and he was an unrelenting person when it came to change.

In the montage of pictures of his life that we saw at the funeral, there were countless images of Peter with his beloved grandchildren. It was clear that he really loved his children and his grandchildren. Peter Reith died way too young from Alzheimer's disease—a stark reminder that life is short, so we should make it count. Peter Reith certainly never wasted a moment in making his life count.

I join with my fellow senators and members in the other place in offering my heartfelt condolences to Peter Reith's colleagues, his friends, his broader Liberal family and to his own family, especially his wife, Kerrie, and four sons, Paul, Simon, David and Robert. Vale, Peter Reith.

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia) (16:19): I also rise to add my voice to this motion on the significant life and legacy of the Hon. Peter Reith. Like his funeral in Melbourne, which brought together many distinguished Australians from all sides of politics, the tributes to Peter Reith in this place have reflected the high regard in which he was held. John Howard was correct to call Peter Reith 'the great all-rounder'. This well-deserved title represented Peter Reith's many achievements as a minister in the Howard government, as well as his prior service to the Liberal Party during years spent in the shadow of the Hawke and Keating governments.

As we've heard, Peter Reith began his political career by winning the by-election for the seat of Flinders in December 1982. John Howard is said to have jokingly remarked to Peter Reith that his victory in Flinders was the straw that broke the camel's back, leading to Bill Hayden being replaced by Bob Hawke. Peter Reith would lose his seat in the 1983 election, but came back in the substantial swing towards the Liberals in 1984. He was the deputy leader from April 1990 to March 1993, and would campaign with John Hewson for a broad based consumption tax which, in a policy document known as Fightback!, was the inception of the future GST. It was this work with Fightback! that made Peter Reith a household name amongst Western Australian Liberals. Western Australians endorsed the Fightback! reform agenda like no other state. In 1993, at the general election, it was the Western Australian Liberals, against the odds, that won the marginal seats of Stirling and Cowan—a great triumph for the Western Australian Liberal Party on the back of the great work of Peter Reith and John Hewson.

Of course Peter Reith will perhaps be most widely remembered for his roles as industrial relations minister, cleaning up Australia's waterfront and, as Minister for Defence, in strengthening Australia's borders. It's easy to forget what was actually achieved on the waterfront after April 1998. The Productivity Commission at the time had found that container stevedoring charges were higher than overseas, that ship loading and unloading was slower and that services were less reliable. But Peter Reith's reforms had worked, and by 2003 the Productivity Commission had reported net crane rate for terminals at Australia's five main container ports exceeded the 25 containers per hour target for the very first time.

Peter Reith's passing is an opportunity to remember the life of a great and wide-ranging parliamentarian. A long-time Peter Reith staffer had reminded his peers that Peter Reith had often championed lesser-known causes. One of those was a local constituent who had been sexually harassed while serving on HMAS *Swan*. A government inquiry, prosecuted then by Peter Reith in opposition, led to changes to how women were accepted and treated in the Navy. And, as we've heard, another was his low-key advocacy for Indigenous employment conducted during a series of trips throughout regional and rural Australia, without the media in tow. His staff have often said that Peter Reith was someone who believed that there was no point in being in parliament unless you were going to do something.

Peter Reith sometimes held unique and surprising positions on various topics, like being a supporter of citizen-initiated referendums and direct elections for an Australian head of state. But Peter Reith always took a very principled position and campaigned against the republic model in 1998-99, often copping criticism because he did

not believe it was the best form of governance for Australia. Of course, inside the Liberal Party opponents found it difficult to pin on him a faction or a camp, which again I think is why Peter Reith was a great all-rounder—someone who practiced pragmatic and practical politics but always delivering lasting, tangible results. After he retired from politics in 2001 he continued to be an active member of branch politics and, in 2010, Peter Reith chaired the Liberal review for the 2010 election and discussed the benefits of party plebiscites for pre-selection nearly a decade before they became a commonly accepted mechanism.

Our party is a stronger party for the contribution of Peter Reith, and this afternoon I add the condolences of every Western Australian Liberal to his family and acknowledge his tremendous strength of character, his policy foresight and, as has been mentioned, his tenacity.

Senator PATERSON (Victoria) (16:24): I rise to pay tribute to Peter Reith as a values-driven reformer and a great Victorian Liberal. In doing, so I want to associate myself with the remarks of other senators, in particular, my coalition Senate colleagues. Like many, I was the beneficiary of Peter's wisdom, his advice and his mentorship. What I admired most about Peter was that he did not review reform as a technocratic exercise or a process of planned consensus building; he believed it was an opportunity to put Liberal values into action. For him, those Liberal values were the dignity of individuals and the power of free markets, and he looked for every opportunity to be bold in implementing them in government.

Fightback!, of which he was the principal author and intellectual driver, is historically judged as a political failure, because of the way in which it contributed to the Liberal Party's loss in the unlosable 1993 election. But, viewed with the benefit of time, it is undoubtedly and unquestionably a policy success. Its agenda for the GST, industrial relations, privatisation and tariff reduction were all, ultimately, implemented by the Howard government and largely remain intact today. In fact, the only undealt with element of Fightback! that remains to be considered by future parliaments is his view that we should introduce a more user-pays system in the public health system.

It is very timely for us as Liberals to reflect on Peter's legacy now as we find ourselves in opposition. Peter is someone who used his time to reflect and think deeply about what we should do if and when we're returned to government—ultimately, in 1996. I think it's one of the key reasons why the Howard government was so effective when it finally returned to office. We should be very proud if we can use our time in opposition now as productively as Peter Reith did in the 1980s and 1990s. He also distinguished himself in that time, in opposition, leading the campaign on behalf of the coalition against the then Labor government's ill-judged and poorly thought out 1988 referendum proposals to change the Constitution.

My thoughts today are with his wife, his four sons, his many grandchildren and, particularly, his brother, Sandy, and his sister, Janet, who I am very proud to call friends. We have lost a great Victorian Liberal.

Question agreed to, honourable senators joining in a moment of silence.

(Quorum formed)

REGULATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS

Industry Research and Development (Golden Beach Gas Storage Acceleration Program) Instrument 2022

Disallowance

Senator COX (Western Australia) (16:30): I move:

That the Industry Research and Development (Golden Beach Gas Storage Acceleration Program) Instrument 2022, made under the *Industry Research and Development Act 1986*, be disallowed [F2022L00156].

I seek leave to make a one-minute statement regarding this motion.

Leave not granted.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (16:31): I seek leave to make a one-minute statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted.

Senator CHISHOLM: We do not support the disallowance of this instrument which would undermine the contractual arrangements already entered into by the Commonwealth and Golden Beach energy in good faith. The former government fixated on a gas-fired recovery, which has turn into a bin-fire.

The Albanese government is fast-tracking the uptake of renewables through its Powering Australia plan. What we won't do is to push over projects that have made commercial decisions on the basis of committed, contracted government funding that is already being delivered, all for the sake of political pointscoring. We look carefully at existing government programs through our audit of wasteful spending. The government has redirected more than

\$50 million in gas infrastructure spending from the previous government's accelerating priority gas infrastructure measure.

Agreeing to this motion would undermine existing contractual arrangements, pose risk for the Commonwealth and create sovereign risk for investors.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question before the chamber is one moved by Senator Cox, a disallowance motion.

The Senate divided. [16:36]

(The Deputy President—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes13
Noes32
Majority.....19

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Pocock, D. W.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Cox, D.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Rice, J. E.
Thorpe, L. A.

Faruqi, M.
Pocock, B.
Shoebriidge, D.
Waters, L. J.

NOES

Antic, A.
Bilyk, C. L.
Chisholm, A.
Farrell, D. E.
Grogan, K.
McGrath, J.
Payman, F.
Reynolds, L. K.
Smith, D. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.
Watt, M. P.

Askew, W.
Brockman, W. E.
Dodson, P.
Gallagher, K. R.
Hanson, P. L.
McLachlan, A. L.
Polley, H.
Roberts, M. I.
Smith, M. F.
Urquhart, A. E.
White, L.

Ayres, T.
Canavan, M. J.
Duniam, J. R.
Green, N. L.
McCarthy, M.
O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
Pratt, L. C.
Sheldon, A. V.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.

Question negatived.

Senator THORPE (Victoria) (16:36): (*In division*) Are you serious? When are you going to get consent?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Thorpe, I ask you to restrain yourself. Your own teller needs to concentrate.

Senator Thorpe: You should be ashamed—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Thorpe, there are plenty of opportunities to debate at other times.

DOCUMENTS

Climate Change

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (16:40): I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 72, relating to an order for the production of documents, before asking that it be taken as a formal motion. The amendment changes the return date from 21 November to 28 November.

Leave granted.

Senator HANSON: I move the motion as amended:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, by no later than midday on Monday, 28 November 2022, all documents of 23 May 2022 or later that relate to the definition of 'net zero' emissions and that are:

- (a) briefing materials for the Minister for Climate Change and Energy;

(b) file notes or other internal documents of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water; or

(c) correspondence or records of other communication between the Minister for Climate Change and Energy and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, or between that department and other departments.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion, as amended, moved by Senator Hanson be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:45]

(The Deputy President—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes29
Noes30
Majority.....1

AYES

Antic, A.	Askew, W.	Brockman, W. E.
Cadell, R.	Canavan, M. J.	Cash, M. C.
Chandler, C.	Colbeck, R. M.	Davey, P. M.
Duniam, J. R.	Fawcett, D. J.	Hanson, P. L.
Henderson, S. M.	Lambie, J.	Liddle, K. J.
McDonald, S. E.	McGrath, J.	McKenzie, B.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.	O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)	Paterson, J. W.
Pocock, D. W.	Rennick, G.	Reynolds, L. K.
Roberts, M. I.	Scarr, P. M.	Smith, D. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.	Van, D. A.	

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.	Ayres, T.	Bilyk, C. L.
Chisholm, A.	Cicccone, R.	Cox, D.
Dodson, P.	Farrell, D. E.	Faruqi, M.
Gallagher, K. R.	Green, N. L.	Grogan, K.
Hanson-Young, S. C.	McKim, N. J.	Payman, F.
Pocock, B.	Polley, H.	Pratt, L. C.
Rice, J. E.	Sheldon, A. V.	Shoebridge, D.
Smith, M. F.	Steele-John, J. A.	Thorpe, L. A.
Urquhart, A. E. (Teller)	Walsh, J. C.	Waters, L. J.
Watt, M. P.	Whish-Wilson, P. S.	White, L.

Question negatived.

Fuel Excise

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Western Australia—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:48): I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 73, standing in the name of Senator Dean Smith, relating to an order for the production of documents. The amendment changes the return date from 2 November to 1 December.

Leave granted.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: At the request of Senator Dean Smith, I move the motion as amended:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Treasurer, by no later than 3 pm on Thursday, 1 December 2022:

(a) any briefing notes, file notes and emails provided by the Treasury to the Treasurer and/or to his office since 30 May 2022 in relation to the reintroduction of the full fuel excise from 29 September 2022 and monitoring activities undertaken by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC);

(b) any briefing notes, file notes and emails between the Treasury and the ACCC since 30 May 2022 in relation to the reintroduction of the full fuel excise from 29 September 2022 and monitoring activities undertaken by the ACCC; and

(c) any briefing notes, file notes and emails between the Treasurer and the ACCC since 30 May 2022 in relation to the reintroduction of the full fuel excise from 29 September 2022 and monitoring activities undertaken by the ACCC.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question before the chamber is item 73 of Senator Dean Smith, as moved by Senator O'Sullivan.

The Senate divided. [16:53]

(The Deputy President—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes41
Noes18
Majority.....23

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Brockman, W. E.
Cash, M. C.
Cox, D.
Faruqi, M.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Liddle, K. J.
McKenzie, B.
O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
Pocock, D. W.
Rice, J. E.
Shoebridge, D.
Thorpe, L. A.
Waters, L. J.

Antic, A.
Cadell, R.
Chandler, C.
Davey, P. M.
Fawcett, D. J.
Henderson, S. M.
McDonald, S. E.
McKim, N. J.
Paterson, J. W.
Rennick, G.
Roberts, M. I.
Smith, D. A.
Tyrrell, T. M.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Askew, W.
Canavan, M. J.
Colbeck, R. M.
Duniam, J. R.
Hanson, P. L.
Lambie, J.
McGrath, J.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Pocock, B.
Reynolds, L. K.
Scarr, P. M.
Steele-John, J. A.
Van, D. A.

NOES

Ayres, T.
Cicccone, R.
Gallagher, K. R.
Payman, F.
Sheldon, A. V.
Walsh, J. C.

Bilyk, C. L.
Dodson, P.
Green, N. L.
Polley, H.
Smith, M. F.
Watt, M. P.

Chisholm, A.
Farrell, D. E.
Grogan, K.
Pratt, L. C.
Urquhart, A. E. (Teller)
White, L.

Question agreed to.

Jobs and Skills Summit

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Western Australia—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:56): On behalf of Senator Cash, I seek leave to move general business notices of motion Nos 74 and 75 together.

Leave granted.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: At the request of Senator Cash, I move:

GENERAL BUSINESS NOTICE OF MOTION NO. 74

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Treasurer, by no later than midday on 25 November 2022:

(a) briefing notes, file notes and any written communication between the Treasurer and/or his office and any attendee of the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit in relation to the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit;

(b) briefing materials, file notes and any written communication produced by the Department of the Treasury that were provided to the Treasurer and/or his office in relation to the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit;

(c) any briefing materials, file notes and any written communication produced by the Department of the Treasury that were provided to the Treasurer and/or his office in relation to the agreed proposals or that came from the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit; and

(d) any correspondence, between the Treasurer and/or his office and any official from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining, Maritime and Energy Union, the United Workers Union, the Australian Workers Union, and Unions NSW between 18 August and 19 September 2022.

GENERAL BUSINESS NOTICE OF MOTION NO. 75

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, by no later than midday on 25 November 2022:

(a) briefing notes, file notes and any written communication between the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (the Minister) and/or his office and any attendee of the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit in relation to the multi-employer bargaining proposals;

(b) briefing materials, file notes and any written communication produced by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the Department) that were provided to the Minister and/or his office in relation to the consultation on the Government's bargaining proposal;

(c) briefing materials, file notes and any written communication received by the Department that were in relation to the consultation on the Government's bargaining proposal;

(d) any briefing materials, file notes and any written communication produced by the Department that were provided to the Minister and/or his office in relation to the agreed proposals of that came from the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit; and

(e) any correspondence, between the Minister and/or his office and any official from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining, Maritime and Energy Union, the United Workers Union, the Australian Workers Union, and Unions NSW between 18 August and 19 September 2022.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that motions Nos 74 and 75, in the name of Senator Cash, as moved by Senator O'Sullivan, be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:58]

(The Deputy President—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes28
Noes29
Majority.....1

AYES

Antic, A.
Cadell, R.
Chandler, C.
Duniam, J. R.
Lambie, J.
McGrath, J.
O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
Rennick, G.
Scarr, P. M.
Van, D. A.

Askew, W.
Canavan, M. J.
Colbeck, R. M.
Fawcett, D. J.
Liddle, K. J.
McKenzie, B.
Paterson, J. W.
Reynolds, L. K.
Smith, D. A.

Brockman, W. E.
Cash, M. C.
Davey, P. M.
Henderson, S. M.
McDonald, S. E.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.
Pocock, D. W.
Roberts, M. I.
Tyrrell, T. M.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Cicccone, R.
Farrell, D. E.
Green, N. L.
McKim, N. J.
Polley, H.
Sheldon, A. V.
Sterle, G.
Walsh, J. C.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Ayres, T.
Cox, D.
Faruqi, M.
Grogan, K.
Payman, F.
Pratt, L. C.
Smith, M. F.
Thorpe, L. A.
Waters, L. J.
White, L.

Chisholm, A.
Dodson, P.
Gallagher, K. R.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Pocock, B.
Rice, J. E.
Steele-John, J. A.
Urquhart, A. E. (Teller)
Watt, M. P.

Question negatived.

Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Western Australia—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (17:00): At the request of Senator Cash, I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, by no later than midday on 25 November 2022:

(a) briefing notes, file notes and emails between the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (the Minister) and/or his office and any stakeholder in relation to Government's Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill, announced by the Minister on 10 October 2022;

(b) briefing notes, file notes and emails between the Minister and/or his office and the Prime Minister, and/or his office in relation to the Government's Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill;

(c) briefing materials produced by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations that were provided to the Minister and/or the Minister's office in relation to the Government's Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill, announced by the Minister on 10 October 2022, for the use of consultation;

(d) all briefing notes, file notes, emails and stakeholder submissions views that were collated in relation to Departmental consultation on the Government's Secure Jobs Better, Pay Bill and

(e) briefing materials produced by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations that were provided to the Minister and/or the Minister's office in relation to the Government's Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question before the chair is that general business item No. 76, in the name of Senator Cash, as moved by Senator O'Sullivan, be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [17:05]

(The Deputy President—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes27
Noes29
Majority.....2

AYES

Antic, A.	Askew, W.	Brockman, W. E.
Cadell, R.	Canavan, M. J.	Cash, M. C.
Chandler, C.	Colbeck, R. M.	Davey, P. M.
Duniam, J. R.	Fawcett, D. J.	Henderson, S. M.
Lambie, J.	Liddle, K. J.	McDonald, S. E.
McGrath, J.	Nampijinpa Price, J. S.	O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)
Paterson, J. W.	Pocock, D. W.	Rennick, G.
Reynolds, L. K.	Roberts, M. I.	Scarr, P. M.
Smith, D. A.	Tyrrell, T. M.	Van, D. A.

NOES

Allman-Payne, P. J.	Ayres, T.	Chisholm, A.
Ciccione, R.	Cox, D.	Dodson, P.
Farrell, D. E.	Faruqi, M.	Gallagher, K. R.
Green, N. L.	Grogan, K.	Hanson-Young, S. C.
McCarthy, M.	McKim, N. J.	Payman, F.
Pocock, B.	Pratt, L. C.	Rice, J. E.
Sheldon, A. V.	Shoebridge, D.	Smith, M. F.
Steele-John, J. A.	Thorpe, L. A.	Urquhart, A. E. (Teller)
Walsh, J. C.	Waters, L. J.	Watt, M. P.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.	White, L.	

Question negatived.

Questions on Notice

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Western Australia—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (17:07): At the request of Senator Cash, I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 77 relating to outstanding questions on notice.

Leave granted.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I move the motion as amended:

That—

(a) the Senate notes that, as at 3 pm on 18 November 2022, there were 103 overdue questions on notice; and

(b) there be laid on the table by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, by no later than 5 pm on Monday, 28 November 2022, answers to all 103 overdue questions on notice.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question before the chamber is that item 77, an order for the production of documents through a motion of Senator Cash, as moved by Senator O'Sullivan, be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [17:09]

(The Deputy President—Senator McLachlan)

Ayes39
Noes17
Majority.....22

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.	Antic, A.	Askew, W.
Brockman, W. E.	Cadell, R.	Canavan, M. J.
Cash, M. C.	Chandler, C.	Colbeck, R. M.
Cox, D.	Davey, P. M.	Duniam, J. R.
Faruqi, M.	Fawcett, D. J.	Hanson-Young, S. C.
Henderson, S. M.	Lambie, J.	Liddle, K. J.
McDonald, S. E.	McGrath, J.	McKim, N. J.
Nampijinpa Price, J. S.	O'Sullivan, M. A. (Teller)	Paterson, J. W.
Pocock, B.	Pocock, D. W.	Rennick, G.
Reynolds, L. K.	Rice, J. E.	Roberts, M. I.
Scarr, P. M.	Shoebridge, D.	Smith, D. A.
Steele-John, J. A.	Thorpe, L. A.	Tyrrell, T. M.
Van, D. A.	Waters, L. J.	Whish-Wilson, P. S.

NOES

Ayres, T.	Chisholm, A.	Ciccone, R.
Dodson, P.	Farrell, D. E.	Gallagher, K. R.
Green, N. L.	Grogan, K.	McCarthy, M.
Payman, F.	Pratt, L. C.	Sheldon, A. V.
Smith, M. F.	Urquhart, A. E. (Teller)	Walsh, J. C.
Watt, M. P.	White, L.	

Question agreed to.

MATTERS OF URGENCY

Climate Change

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (17:12): I inform the Senate that the President has received the following letter, dated 21 November 2022, from Senator McKim:

Pursuant to standing order 75, I give notice that today the Australian Greens propose to move "That, in the opinion of the Senate, the following is a matter of urgency:

That Vanuatu's Climate Minister, Ralph Regenvanu, would only back Australia's bid to host the 2026 COP if Australia doesn't commit to any new coal or gas handouts, yet Labor's first budget has \$1.9 billion to open up a new LNG terminal and petrochemical hub in Darwin Harbour"

Is the proposal supported?

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

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I understand that informal arrangements have been made to allocate specific times to each of the speakers in today's debate. With the concurrence of the Senate, I ask the clerks to set the clock accordingly.

Senator COX (Western Australia) (17:13): At the request of Senator McKim, I move:

That, in the opinion of the Senate, the following is a matter of urgency:

That Vanuatu's Climate Minister, Ralph Regenvanu, would only back Australia's bid to host the 2026 COP if Australia doesn't commit to any new coal or gas handouts, yet Labor's first budget has \$1.9 billion to open up a new LNG terminal and petrochemical hub in Darwin Harbour.

Here we have a government who wants to host a climate conference on the one hand but is actively giving billions of dollars to projects that will wreck our climate on the other. In fact, you can't have it both ways. This government cannot attend COP27, claiming they're back—like the saviours that they think they are—whilst campaigning for donations from their fossil fuel mates and giving public money back to them. During my time at COP27, just two weeks ago, I heard about the impacts of climate change that we're already having, particularly on our Pacific island neighbours, who also want to co-host COP31 with the Australian government. I heard about the costs that local communities are facing now and about the impacts on culture and the traditional way of life. First Nations people are being displaced, leaving their ancestral homes because of climate change.

Climate change is real and climate change is here. The climate science spells it out clearly: we must say no to new fossil fuels and no to public money being given to these fossil fuel projects for expansion or the opening of new ones. The Greens will continue to push the government further and faster to be more ambitious in their climate commitments. Vanuatu's climate minister is asking the Australian government to do the same before they will agree to co-host COP31 alongside them. It seems like a reasonable ask, would you not say, but we know that the government struggles when made to choose between its strong climate action commitment and lining the pockets of corporate donors in the fossil fuel industry.

The \$9.1 billion in the budget for gas and petrochemical plants in the Middle Arm harbour was alongside the \$42.7 billion in fossil fuel subsidies. Middle Arm, just like many other projects the government is throwing money at, is a dirty fossil fuel project that does not deserve public money. Middle Arm is estimated to increase the Northern Territory's emissions by 75 per cent and increase industrial air pollution by 500 per cent.

Middle Arm will sit just three kilometres away from Palmerston, where locals will have to breathe in the air toxins produced by this precinct. The project will destroy our climate and environment but also impact on the health of those living in this area. The Beetaloo and Barossa gas projects will also be used to power this gas and petrochemical hub at Middle Arm—public money for Middle Arm feeding into the public money for Beetaloo and Barossa, and these projects all depend on each other.

Last week we saw the resources minister jetting off to Japan and assuring foreign investors that their investment in Australia's fossil fuel industry is good and is a welcome investment. So thanks to her for doing that on our behalf. While the Australian government loves to give away money to billionaires, much of this investment in the fossil fuel projects comes from overseas investors such as Japan and South Korea. If only the government could commit to phasing out fossil fuels and putting the equivalent of that \$40 billion into renewable energy and the infrastructure that we need to build a clean, green energy grid.

The government has a very important decision to make, and we think it's an easy decision—indeed, a decision that should have been made the second they won the election. The Greens want to stand in solidarity with Vanuatu and all of our Pacific nations. For years, they have been sounding alarms and begging the Australian government to take climate action seriously and take the action that is required. The social licence for fossil fuels is disappearing—and disappearing fast.

This government can no longer justify their subsidies to their giant corporation mates whilst wanting our Pacific neighbours to support our bid to host a climate conference. In COP27 I heard not just from our Pacific neighbours but also from those of the Torres Strait Islands—those that I've spoken about in this chamber and the alarming rates at which our low-lying islands are disappearing. We need to take that seriously. Our domestic policy that Minister Wong talked about today is just as important as supporting our neighbours in the Pacific.

Senator GROGAN (South Australia) (17:18): We will be voting against this motion, but I want to make it clear why we will be doing that. The Minister for Climate Change and Energy has just returned from a very successful COP27 in Egypt, at which Australia was warmly welcomed back into the fold, into the international community, as a climate change leader after nine very long years of neglect. We are delighted to join with our Pacific family in bidding to co-host COP31 in 2026. We want the Pacific to have a voice, and there is no better way than hosting this conference with them, in our region, for the Pacific to put their case before the world.

We look forward to working closely and cooperatively with the Pacific, to secure and deliver a COP that will look to a collective vision in this important environment. Minister Bowen met with the Vanuatu climate minister at COP. That minister has described having an Australian government with a strong agenda as a breath of fresh air. The level of support that we have received, for this bid, from around the world has been really encouraging, including very strong support from the Pacific region.

We also acknowledge that nations have differing positions, which are, rightly, debated at these international summits. The question that we have in front of us refers to the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct. The government is supporting the development of the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct, together with regional logistics hubs along key transport links. This investment will enable the precinct to be globally competitive and sustainable, with a focus on green hydrogen and critical minerals processing.

This investment is not a subsidy for fossil fuel. Rather, the funding will go towards infrastructure that will support users to export clean energy critical to meet our commitment to net zero. That means not only generating green hydrogen but also manufacturing and exporting lithium batteries, which are critical to the global energy transition and decarbonisation. Demand is growing overseas for these clean energy sources, and this investment will help to position the Northern Territory and northern Australia to diversify their economies and take advantage of new opportunities. It will provide significant economic benefits and sustainable jobs.

Middle Arm is already recognised as a potential site for renewable energy, with companies like Sun Cable looking to establish renewable energy battery facilities at Middle Arm. Instead of funding any particular companies, what we're seeking to do here is invest in common-use enabling infrastructure, like the marine works, which will give all potential users in the market an opportunity to grow and thrive—including those who are able to process and export green hydrogen and energy transition components.

There is some way to go until construction commences, and, as our friends would be well aware, the project is undergoing significant environmental assessments both under the Northern Territory Environment Protection Act and under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. These assessments will look clearly at the impact of the proposed construction.

The Australian government will work with the Northern Territory government, with the industry, with the local community and with the relevant First Nations communities to develop a sustainable growth plan for Middle Arm, with a view to further announcements next year on the implementation of this equity investment. The Australian government believes investing in projects such as the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct is an important way of setting up our economy and the Northern Territory for a sustainable future. We are committed to playing a constructive role as a climate change leader, and we also support economic and job opportunities where it makes sense to do so. We believe that this project has potential for both economic development and job opportunities in the Northern Territory. It will also help us into a sustainable future.

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland) (17:22): This motion is a reflection of the complete failure of the Greens to get anything right on energy and also the complete embarrassment that was COP27 for the Greens political platform. Quite clearly, over the last couple of weeks, there has been no agreement among the countries of the world to get rid of or phase down—whatever you want to call it—fossil fuels. The headline in the *Guardian* online paper was 'Draft Cop27 agreement fails to call for "phase-down" of all fossil fuels'.

With this motion, the Greens are now trying to sneak into this chamber a decision that wasn't even taken at the climate conference. Why should Australia do something that other countries are not committed to do? Other countries are moving away from phasing down fossil fuels; the language in the agreement from this year's COP is more open to fossil fuel development than it was in the agreement from last year at Glasgow. That is because the rest of the world has woken up to the fact that we need coal, gas and oil to have a functioning modern economy and to feed ourselves.

One thing that must be stressed in this debate is that, in a few months time, by the end of this year, Australia will no longer produce urea based fertilisers. Urea fertilisers are the most commonly used fertilisers in Australia. Synthetic nitrogen fertilisers, of which urea is one, are the most commonly used fertilisers in the world. In fact, nitrogen based fertilisers feed around half the world's population right now.

Synthetic nitrogen based fertilisers come from natural gas. If we don't have natural gas, if we don't produce natural gas, we won't be able to feed half of the world's population. That is how the world works. They are the real facts. The rest of the world has found that out over the past year when Russian gas was denied to European manufacturers. They have had huge issues with producing fertilisers and that has sent fertiliser prices through the roof right across the world and has sent food prices up. That has fed into inflation, as we've seen right around the world, causing untold suffering, especially in poorer countries.

Here in Australia it is a travesty that we no longer will produce urea fertilisers. We used to be reliant on China, but they banned the export of them a few years ago. We will be reliant on the Middle East to grow our food rather than taking care of it ourselves. But we have plenty of gas resources in this country. We are just denying ourselves the use of them. We're not supporting them. This new government has scrapped funding for the development and exploration of new gas in the Beetaloo and the Cooper basins. We need to get back to supporting our country and

our people. The rest of the world has worked out that you actually do need fossil fuels, not just to make things but to do the very simple things in life, like feed oneself.

The other thing this motion demonstrates is how wrong the Greens have been on energy over the past few years. I'm old enough to remember a few years ago Greens senators in this place saying that there's no market for coal, there's no future for it and no-one is going to make any money out of it anymore. That was their prediction. The prediction was there would be no business case to invest in fossil fuels. They have been wrong on that—fantastically wrong—and now they're trying to use the laws to ban people from investing in these projects, to stop them, even though there is a very strong economic case for Australia to invest in coal, oil and gas. You just have to look at our trade data.

People may not realise that over the last 12 months king coal has re-emerged. Coal has been re-coronated. It is the nation's biggest export once again. The biggest export from Australia over the past 12 months has been coal. It overtook iron ore in the last couple of months. For the last 12 months we exported \$130 billion worth of coal. It alone is about a quarter of our merchandise exports, so one in every four dollars of exports from our nation come from coal. Iron ore is about \$120 billion, so it's very important. Gas too is sitting just shy of \$80 billion now. Together coal, gas and oil account for 40 per cent of our nation's merchandise exports—a massive amount of wealth for our country and indicative of how much demand there is for Australia's high-quality fossil fuels.

In that environment we should be increasing our production of those commodities. When the price of something goes up and demand goes up, we should respond to that and increase our fossil fuel production. We should help the free world especially overcome aggression from Russia and provide its own food and energy needs. This Greens motion would make us weaker and more dependent on dictatorial regimes that mean to do us harm.

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (17:28): As mentioned earlier, COP27 came to a close overnight with really little achieved in terms of reducing emissions. Australia played a more positive role than we have previously, which some would argue would not be hard. On the Climate Change Performance Index we still rank ninth last, out of 65 countries. This is a long way from the climate leadership spoken of by the government. Continuing to subsidise the fossil fuel industry will only make things worse. Giving money to the profitable industry responsible for global warming, given what we know about the state of the climate, makes no sense. Funding of the Middle Arm project is particularly bad.

The government has committed \$1.9 billion to fund, as we heard, common-use infrastructure, which we are assured will be sustainable. Senator Grogan said that this is not a fossil fuel subsidy, but in estimates we were told that it is up to the market to decide. The NT government and private companies are openly talking about using it for fossil fuels, such as gas. If this proposal looks like a petrochemical plant, has the government ducking and weaving on whether it is a petrochemical plant and has the support of the gas industry then it seems to be a petrochemical plant.

At estimates the week before last I asked the department about what cost-benefit analysis had been done for this project. They weren't able to answer, so we still don't know how we can justify this \$1.9 billion spend. I also asked if they were aware that the site chosen for Middle Arm, according to modelling done by the CSIRO and IPCC, will be underwater by 2100. They weren't aware of that either. So, while it's great to hear about the environmental impact assessments that will be undertaken, we're missing the whole point about climate change.

I think Senator Canavan highlighted that in his speech, when he talked about the need to continue to invest because it's profitable. With climate change, whether or not it's profitable is beside the point. Is it morally right to continue doing what we're doing given what we know about climate change? Not just given what we know, given what we're seeing—the flooding across the country, the droughts in the Horn of Africa.

We've heard people in parliament argue against loss and damage for people who live in countries who've contributed next to nothing to this issue, who are pleading with us to show some leadership. Finally, we have a government that's saying the right things, that's saying we will be leaders on climate. We're not seeing that yet, but I'll give them the benefit of the doubt and hope that we continue to see them heading in the right direction, but \$17.9 billion for a fossil fuel project is not heading in that direction, in the direction that Australians want, that millions of Australians voted for.

Senator WATERS (Queensland—Leader of the Australian Greens in the Senate) (17:32): Vanuatu is calling out Australia on our nonsense. It's clearly said that Australia shouldn't host or co-host the next climate conference if we are giving public money to open up new coal, oil and gas projects. I completely agree with the Vanuatu climate minister on that.

I thought this government had made a commitment that there wouldn't be any new public money for fossil fuel subsidies, but, unfortunately, when the budget was handed down we saw some tweaks, sure, but we saw about \$40 billion of the last government's fossil fuel subsidies retained by this government, who is so poor it can't put dental

or mental health care into Medicare. It can't raise the rate of JobSeeker. It's too poor to do that, but it's not too poor to keep \$40 billion of the last government's subsidies for the coal and gas industry. And then it has the audacity to add \$1.9 billion for a new gas export terminal—without the consent of First Nations owners, I'm desperately sad to see. That's \$1.9 billion for a new LNG export terminal and petrochemical hub.

We just heard from Labor: 'Oh, it might do other things as well. Don't look too hard.' Well, I'm afraid it is directly a gas export terminal that will prop up gas extraction from the Beetaloo basin, for which the \$50 million public grant fund proposed by the last government is also being retained by this government. This is a gas export terminal that will create a market for the Beetaloo gas basin, which also lacks First Nations' consent and which would be an absolute carbon bomb. So much for no fossil fuel subsidies and so much for being too poor to fund decent things in this country. The government isn't too poor to give yet more handouts to the gas companies that conveniently make large donations to both political parties.

The other thing that made me laugh/cry was the Labor Party saying this was a sustainable development precinct and not to worry because it's going to be assessed by the EPBC laws, our federal environment laws. Well, I am an environmental lawyer and I can tell you that there are no climate impacts considered under the EPBC Act because we do not yet have a climate trigger. So I'm afraid it gives me no comfort whatsoever that a gas export terminal will need tick-off from our current EPBC laws, which were written by former prime minister John Howard, because the climate impacts won't be considered.

Honestly—you could not make this stuff up! We're at \$42.7 billion of public money over the forward estimates, over four years, going to prop up the fossil fuel sector—\$42.7 billion over four years. That is an absolute outrage, from a government that said there wouldn't be any new public money for new coal, oil and gas, and from that same government which is crying poor when it comes to actually helping people with the cost of living and to doing things like increasing the pathetically low rate of JobSeeker, which these people kept below the poverty line.

It doesn't add up—except when you look at the donations from the coal, oil and gas industry. And of course, they only have to disclose those once a year, on 1 February. So it's just a very cosy little stitch-up.

It's no wonder that Vanuatu's climate minister is calling Australia out and urging us to not have new fossil fuel subsidies if Australia wants to host the next climate conference. The Greens are firmly in agreement with that position.

Those fossil fuel subsidies should have been dumped from the budget. There certainly should not have been \$1.7 billion added for a new gas export terminal. The Labor government need to start remembering that at one time they made a commitment not to have new fossil fuel subsidies, and they ought to stick to that commitment.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (17:35): Great news: Vanuatu still exists! Experts told us it would now be underwater due to global warming and rising sea levels, just like Al Gore forecast that Mount Kilimanjaro would have no snow by 2016. How many islands has Vanuatu lost due to rising sea levels? None. Mount Kilimanjaro is still topped with icy white powder. Maybe that's why it's now called climate change instead of global warming.

I thank the Australian Greens for this breaking news that Vanuatu's climate minister would only back Australia's bid to host the 2026 Conference of the Parties, the COP, if Australia does not commitment to any new coal or gas projects. With that headline, the solution is clear: Australia must immediately fund and build as many coal and gas projects as humanly possible, so there's no chance these parasites will be hosted here at the expensive UN World Economic Forum talkfest for climate elites, the 2026 COP.

What's the COP? The UN's Conference of the Parties involves millionaires, billionaires and politicians bouncing around the world in fuel-guzzling private jets to luxurious locations, gorging themselves on prime beef while preaching to us, the lowly peasants, to reduce our carbon dioxide footprint, stop flying, stop driving and stop eating red meat. If the 2026 COP were to be hosted in Australia, taxpayers would be forking out for the UN's globalist elite talkfest. We'd be paying for them to tell us to destroy our energy grid and commit economic suicide to appease the sun gods! If the COP, the Conference of the Parties, does not want to come to Australia, that is their loss. We'll keep our abundant protein-rich red meat, our delicious range of seafood, our cheap and reliable coal-fired power, our huge gas reserves and our efficient petrol and diesel cars. Let the UN's World Economic Forum Conference of the Parties eat their bugs in the dark while waiting for their electric vehicles to charge.

We have one flag. We are one community. We are one nation.

Senator ALLMAN-PAYNE (Queensland) (17:38): The 2022 federal election saw a groundswell of support for candidates that support reducing Australia's emissions. Not only is the public support there for reducing emissions; it's also the necessary thing to do if we want to avoid further catastrophic climate change. So Australia, hosting a Conference of the Parties, or COP, meeting, to work together globally to prevent a mass extinction, should be a good thing. But hosting an international climate change conference is a not-so-cheap exercise in public relations, if you're committed to opening up more coal and gas mines, like this government is.

You can't have climate action while opening up more coal and gas. They are literally incompatible.

Vanuatu is absolutely correct to put conditions on its support for Australia's bid to host the COP. The government likes to talk about regaining our place on the international stage and how our partnerships with the Pacific are about respecting the Pacific family. Well, using island nations to greenwash Labor's fossil fuel agenda is a pretty atrocious way of showing respect to the Pacific. Pacific nations know this, and they aren't going to let it happen. They have proven themselves more than adept at lobbying richer and more powerful nations on climate policy, and they will continue to make decisions in the best interests of their people and their region.

If Labor were serious about climate action, they would put a stop to all new coal and gas mines, stop using public money to subsidise the fossil fuel sector and commit to phasing out fossil fuel use and exports. We need to transition to a clean-energy future. Giving \$1.9 billion to a new petrochemical and LNG facility undermines our interests in the Pacific, it undermines Australia's credibility and, quite frankly, it undermines our chances of keeping global temperatures to a survivable level.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett): The question is that the motion standing in the name of Senator McKim be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [17:45]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Fawcett)

Ayes13
Noes28
Majority.....15

AYES

Allman-Payne, P. J.
Hanson-Young, S. C.
Pocock, D. W.
Steele-John, J. A.
Whish-Wilson, P. S.

Cox, D.
McKim, N. J. (Teller)
Rice, J. E.
Thorpe, L. A.

Faruqi, M.
Pocock, B.
Shoebridge, D.
Waters, L. J.

NOES

Antic, A.
Brockman, W. E.
Canavan, M. J.
Fawcett, D. J.
Lines, S.
McLachlan, A. L.
Pratt, L. C.
Sheldon, A. V.
Sterle, G.
White, L.

Ayres, T.
Brown, C. L.
Chisholm, A.
Green, N. L.
McCarthy, M.
Payman, F.
Roberts, M. I.
Smith, D. A.
Urquhart, A. E.

Bilyk, C. L.
Cadell, R. (Teller)
Colbeck, R. M.
Grogan, K.
McGrath, J.
Polley, H.
Scarr, P. M.
Smith, M. F.
Walsh, J. C.

Question negatived.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Cost of Living

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett) (17:48): The President has received the following letter from Senator Dean Smith:

Pursuant to standing order 75, I propose that the following matter of public importance be submitted to the Senate for discussion:

The Albanese Government's broken promise to deliver cost of living relief in the Budget, including by bringing down energy prices by \$275.

Is the proposal supported?

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

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I understand that informal arrangements have been made to allocate specific times to each of the speaker in today's debate. With the concurrence of the Senate, I shall ask the clerks to set the clock accordingly.

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia) (17:49): 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ...' People will recall the famous novel by Charles Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities*. But if Charles Dickens were alive today, he would be compelled to write about a tale of two Labor parties. The first Labor Party is the Labor Party that acts in a certain way when it's desperate to get elected to government. The other tale of the Labor Party is how it chooses to act when it is elected to government. Earlier today we talked about the great deceit that Labor has inflicted upon Western Australian voters. Prior to the election, the Labor Party said that large-scale, wide-ranging, backward-looking industrial relations reforms were not part of its plan. And today, six months after their election, as we begin the last parliamentary fortnight, the big ticket item that this Senate chamber will debate will be Labor's big plans for industrial relations reform.

But nothing tells the story better about what Labor says and what Labor does on its way into government compared to what Labor says and does when it's in government than the issue of electricity prices. On 97 occasions—just think about that; it's three fewer than 100—the Labor Party thought it would seek to camouflage its poor record on electricity prices in an effort to come to government. Mr Jim Chalmers, then shadow Treasurer, said in Perth on 30 April this year:

We've got policies about getting power bills down, we've got policies for cheaper, more accessible health care, which is a big part of the story. We've got policies to make child care cheaper, we've got policies to get real wages moving again.

'We've got policies to get electricity prices down,' Mr Chalmers said.

At the Powering Australia press conference on 3 December 2021, the Prime Minister himself, Mr Albanese, then the opposition leader, said of Labor's policy that it 'would see electricity prices fall from the current level by \$275 for households' by 2025. In his National Press Club address on 18 May this year, the then opposition leader and now Labor Prime Minister, Mr Albanese, said:

Making Australia a renewable energy superpower is the fastest way to cut pollution and the most effective way to act on climate change.

And then he said:

But it's also the best way to cut power bills for families and businesses—saving families \$275 a year.

They are just a few examples of the 97 occasions when Labor, in opposition, said it would commit to bringing power prices down for Australian families by \$275. That's what they said in opposition.

And what has happened in government? You can run but you can't hide from the budget process. In the government's own budget documents, at page 57 of Budget Paper No. 1, it says:

Treasury has assumed retail electricity prices will increase by an average of 20 per cent nationally in late 2022, contributing to higher forecast CPI in 2022-23. Given forward wholesale contract prices for electricity remain elevated, retail electricity prices are expected to rise by a further 30 per cent in 2023-24.

What Labor says in opposition, when trying to get to government, is very, very different to what it does in government.

Who are the people that pay the price for that? It's ordinary Australian families and small and medium-sized businesses. Just this morning, Western Australians would have woken up to a news story about how Western Australian charities are now having to do more to support Western Australian families meet the rising cost-of-living challenges. (*Time expired*)

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (17:54): Again, there's the question of the cost of living. Let's look at what the impact is for so many people right at the moment. At the inquiry into the most recent industrial relations bill, we heard from Peter Richards, a 42-year-old Simplot worker from Devonport, who is a casual forklift driver. To his credit, he served in East Timor with the Army back in 1999 to 2000. Peter said:

The cost of living has gone through the roof. Everyday necessities—it's the difference between buying frozen vegetables or having fresh vegetables ... I currently walk most places because the cost of fuel has gone through the roof, and I get a lift to and from work with my fellow workmates.

Paul Jeffares also talked about the cost of living and the pressures of being a working person in Australia at the moment under the previous government's legislation:

I work at CUB, Carlton & United Breweries, here in Melbourne, as a shift electrician. I've been there 30 years.

He was told by a company by the name of Catalyst, who operate as the recruitment arm of Programmed, that with his wages and conditions he had one choice: firstly, to be sacked, or, secondly, to agree to a 65 per cent wage decrease if he wanted to work. He said:

When your wages and conditions are reduced by 65 per cent, your whole life changes; your world crumbles; you just fall apart—just like that.

He said, about the pressures on him and his workers, that after almost a year of fighting to get their wages and conditions back on keel they eventually got there, with no help from the legislation. He went on to say that this can absolutely still happen to thousands of workers right Australia.

Heather Macardy, a primary school teacher, talked about the problems she has had over 18 months of negotiations in the existing multi-employer stream, not having the capacity to bring that dispute to a head, and the effects on her and her colleagues. She said:

We need the negotiation process to hurry up. It's too slow—it's far too slow.

... ..

We have no power ... This legislation is a way to change things and make things better for employees.

Then we go to the academics and the reports that have talked about multi-employer bargaining. It really is a question about whether we want a race to the bottom, which has happened for the last 10 years, or whether we want a race to the top, based on quality economic output. That's what happens when you start making the system work for working people—for fellow Australians in this country. A 2019 OECD report said that to improve employment and wage distribution multi-employer bargaining is critical; it leads to higher employment, lower unemployment, a better integration of vulnerable groups and less wage inequality. Addressing gender inequality, a 2020 OECD report found that multi-employer arrangements are 'necessary to negotiate targeted raises in female dominated and low-paid sectors'.

Of course, in countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Japan multi-employer bargaining is an essential part of their macroeconomic policy. It gives the capacity for skills, training and investment. It's where people come together and work out how they can get results. And they come together across industries. What a great idea! They can turn around and say, 'We as a group can actually invest in skills, training and capacity across our industry.' They also get smaller employers and medium-sized employers, who may not have the resources to do it on their own, coming together. At a recent Senate inquiry, we heard numerous examples from small and medium-sized employers about how it would work for them.

Then, of course, you've got the vanguard of people like Alan Joyce. In his material world he says: 'Twenty-one external companies and 17 owned subsidiaries are all okay. That's okay; wages go down.' That's not multi-employer bargaining, when you set up dodgy companies.

Then you have the pearler—really, the home goal—when Senator Birmingham says:

... those are the things that our government managed to achieve, with strong economic growth in our last year in office, with unemployment down to 50-year lows, creating the conditions for economic growth to help to drive productive wages growth.

Well, that is a lie. (*Time expired*)

Senator RICE (Victoria) (17:59): I rise to speak on this matter of public importance on the government's broken promise to bring cost-of-living relief in the budget. Energy bills are rising, rents are rising, the cost of food is rising—we are in a cost-of-living crisis. It seems everything is rising except for income support payments. These are still way below the poverty line, with JobSeeker at just \$48 a day. It is people on income support who are most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, who need cost-of-living relief and who have been failed by this government in the budget. How does the government expect people to pay the bills, pay the rent and feed themselves on \$48 a day? The reality is: people just can't, and they aren't.

Last week I had the privilege of visiting St Mary's House of Welcome in Collingwood in Melbourne—a community hub where anyone is welcome to come for lunch, for a shower or to charge their phone. What I saw is that the face of homelessness is changing. St Mary's is seeing more people than ever before, including young people and families. Many come to grab a meal to take home to their families because they simply cannot afford fresh fruit and vegetables anymore. The work that St Mary's does is incredible, but they rely on donations and they run on the smell of an oily rag, and with the cost of living rising they are feeling the pressure from increased demand.

We should not be relying on organisations like St Mary's to do the heavy lifting and to be supporting our community. Inadequate income support payments force people to live in poverty. But poverty is a political choice, and it's a choice that this government made in the budget. We can blame the cost-of-living crisis all we want, but the government has the power and it has made a choice. What its choice needs to be is to acknowledge that as the cost of living continues to rise, income support payments need to rise too. We need a guaranteed liveable income of at least \$88 a day for all income support payments. We need to end mutual obligations—which do nothing to help people find work—and we need to remove unfair restrictions on who can access payments to ensure that everybody has got enough to cover their basic needs. Only with a guaranteed adequate income will we really tackle

the cost-of-living crisis for those who are feeling it the most, and see income equality so that places like St Mary's aren't expected to keep on picking up the pieces.

Senator BROCKMAN (Western Australia) (18:02): I too rise to speak on this matter of public importance from Senator Dean Smith on the cost-of-living crisis facing so many Australians. This is a government that doesn't have a plan, and that's very clear. In fact, we saw it revealed here in question time today, and I'll go back to that later. We've seen a government with no plan. Incoming, this government knew that gas prices were on the rise. We had seen that long before the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. We had seen rising gas prices and we knew that in the end they would have a flow-on impact on businesses and households. What's this government's immediate response to that crisis in gas prices? I will just point out that it is an eastern states gas crisis, as the Western Australian situation is very different. What's the government's response? What does it put on the table as policy responses to the rising cost of gas impacting on the rising cost of living? There are price controls—a policy that has failed every time it has been tried for over 2,000 years. There's increased regulation—a policy that, again, has a very dubious chance of actually succeeding in pushing downward prices on gas. What's the other one they floated? A taxation increase—is that really going to help cost-of-living pressures on Australian families and Australian businesses? It almost beggars belief.

This is a government that came into office without a plan, and we've seen that today. In answering a question on inflation and wages today, the finance minister said: 'No-one is pretending that wages should be growing at the pace of inflation.' Think about that for a second. 'No-one is pretending that wages should be growing at the pace of inflation'—she said that just today. Yet what did the Prime Minister say just a few short months ago about wages and inflation? He said: 'It's not bad luck; it's bad policy that wages aren't keeping up with inflation.' Don't you see the quite contrary positions in those two statements? The Prime Minister said, 'It's not bad luck; it's bad policy that wages aren't keeping up with inflation.' The finance minister said, 'No-one is pretending that wages should be growing at the pace of inflation.'

This is a government that has no clue about how to handle the pressures of a modern economy. This is a government that has no clue how to satisfy the demands of the union movement on the one hand and still maintain downward pressure on prices and maintain the strong and growing economy that they inherited from the Liberal government. It is a government that promises much. They promised a \$275 decrease in power prices to every Australian family. In their first budget, they delivered an increased outlook for energy prices going into the foreseeable future. We have seen massive rises in the cost of fuel, which impact on every Australian household. We've seen massive rises in the cost of rental accommodation. We've seen huge flow-on impacts to things like grocery prices. Every family knows that the headline rate of inflation is not reflective of the real cost-of-living pressures that are facing every Australian family. Part of the reason why these cost-of-living pressures will keep going is that this is a government that is contradictory internally. It doesn't know how to handle this situation and it doesn't even understand how wages and inflation work.

Senator GREEN (Queensland) (18:07): I am very pleased to stand here today in the Senate and contribute to this matter of public importance debate on the cost of living. That's because, as we head into the final sitting week of this year, the Albanese Labor government isn't slowing down on delivering its election commitments. Over the next fortnight, we will be implementing our \$7.5 billion five-point cost-of-living plan. We will be delivering cheaper child care, cheaper medicines, more generous paid parental leave and more affordable housing and we will get wages moving again. In just six short months, the Albanese Labor government has taken more action on the cost of living than the previous government did in almost a decade.

Just in the chamber today we were talking about cheaper child care. This is just one of those steps that we are taking. These changes will have material impacts for around 96 per cent of families who use early childhood education. Labor's plan for cheaper child care will make it more affordable for around 1.26 million Australian families.

But it's not just cheaper child care that we are delivering. Our cost-of-living plan won't just reduce those costs; it will also put Australians back on track for real pay rises. That is because our Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill goes right to the heart of the cost-of-living challenges Australians are facing right now. Australia's current workplace laws are not working to deliver meaningful wage increases. No-one has forgotten that under the previous government, under those opposite, it was a deliberate design feature to keep wages low. The hypocrisy for those opposite to come in here and talk about cost of living while at the same time having a design feature to keep wages low is not lost on everyday Australians.

The hypocrisy continues when it comes to the discussion around electricity prices in this place because the former government had 22 energy policies. They had 22 over nine years, and those incoherent, inconsistent, uncertain policies led to three changes in the Liberal leadership, possibly two in the National Party, and to direct results of disunity on energy policy. They couldn't get their act together for 10 years, and now they want to come in here and

lecture us. This is their record on electricity prices: complete disunity on net zero and vetoing renewable energy projects, which would have created jobs, although renewable energy is the most affordable energy source in the market. They promised to build a coal fired power station in North Queensland, but that was just a press release. They never actually did that. They hid key information about electricity prices from the Australian public, information about the rises in electricity.

This is not only a problem of the former government; it's followed them through to opposition because we know that the opposition still has climate deniers in their ranks, politicians that come into this place with their graphs downloaded from some pokey part of the internet. Now their answer, after having no solutions for a decade, seems to be to offer nuclear power as a solution. Only a couple of weeks ago in estimates the CSIRO said that nuclear wasn't a competitive option and that it would take until the next decade to get it up and running. This is the solution from those opposite, the most expensive form of power that will take us into the next decade to establish.

We know that renewable energy is the cheapest form of power. That is why we are delivering our Powering Australia plan. We know that this country needs certainty when it comes to energy policies, which is why we are delivering our plan for Australians. What you will see from those opposite is hypocrisy when it comes to energy prices and the cost of living. I appreciate I'm about to be followed in this place by the Venn diagram of conspiracy theorists about climate change and throwing in anti-vax as well, but I just want to make this clear: when it comes to the facts on energy policy—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Chandler): Senator Scarr, on a point of order?

Senator Scarr: My point of order is personal reflection. There were two personal reflections there on my good colleagues. It could be either Senator Rennick or Senator Roberts in relation to assertions of conspiracy theorists and anti-vaxxers, and I think those comments should be withdrawn.

Senator GREEN: You can't call it personal if you don't know who it is, can you?

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Green, perhaps you can clarify that you aren't intending on making a reflection in your contribution. I will draw you to point of order from Senator Scarr and ask that you take note of the point that he made.

Senator GREEN: I'm happy to paint the entire bench over there with the same brush, when it comes to—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Scarr, another point of order?

Senator Scarr: I think the advice from previous rulings is that a personal reflection which is done in group form, on a collective basis, can perhaps be more egregious than if it's just directed at a particular senator. I can certainly remember the clerk providing advice with respect to that sort of collective reference.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Green, you have 36 seconds of your contribution left, and I just ask that you exercise a degree of caution in how widely or narrowly you choose to make reflections on senators opposite. I do note that you were choosing your words quite carefully, I thought, but just be very cautious of not too broadly using the brush that you were utilising at that point.

Senator GREEN: I do think it is important that the Senate understands that I am talking directly about the former government, the Liberal and National parties, and their failure over a decade to develop any energy policy. We know the reason that occurred was their disunity and their beliefs in their own party about climate change and about delivering cheaper energy policy. We will not stand here, as many points of order as you want to call, and we won't be lectured by those opposite about bringing down energy prices because they never did it in over a decade. *(Time expired)*

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (18:14): The Albanese government's behaviour goes well beyond a broken election promise to give cost-of-living relief; the government is actively making inflation worse. The inflation rate is eight per cent and will remain at eight per cent into the future on the back of increases to energy prices. Electricity, gas, diesel and petrol are all inputs of every corner of our economy. Forcing energy price increases to appease the sky god of warming will force up input costs right across our economy and lead to more inflation. Weather dependent solar and wind power will never provide base-load power. Doubling down on more solar and wind power before the added cost of changing out every wind turbine and solar panel with new ones before we even get to 2050 will lead to more inflation. Taxpayers pay for these things twice: once in taxpayer subsidies for wind and solar and then through higher inflation. Not only do we have a lack of wage rises; we have a lack of wages. Businesses are closing all over Australia as inflation wreaks havoc in the productive economy and energy costs drive manufacturing overseas.

This government has no answers. We have just seen a childcare bill that gives handouts to millionaires but fails to create a single job. Failing to use government policy to create jobs while allowing 220,000 new migrants into

Australia every year will create a pool of unemployed, resulting in reduced market power for labour. That can only mean lower wages, even before losing eight per cent a year off pay packets through inflation.

One Nation believe the way to break the inflation cycle is a comprehensive root-and-branch review of the taxation system, to return bracket creep to wage earners, while forcing big businesses, especially foreign multinationals, to pay their fair share.

The Queensland Labor government's health department still mandates COVID injections for health professionals. Injection mandates must be abolished now. Let anyone work who wants to. We are one community, we are one nation and Labor is a threat to breadwinner jobs.

Senator RENNICK (Queensland) (18:16): I'm very pleased to rise on this motion today about the Albanese government's inability to control the price of energy. It's not really surprising that that has happened. The earlier speech we heard from them was basically made up more of invective and personal insults than any detail. We saw that type of behaviour as well in estimates, where I got to question Senator McAllister about how many transmission lines we were going to need in order to meet the 43 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide by 2030. Of course, she had no idea. The numbers given were somewhere between 5,000 kilometres and 28,000 kilometres. There was an article a year or two ago in the *Australian Financial Review* that said that building 900 kilometres of transmission lines would cost \$2.4 billion. That was back in 2020. So, if you wanted to build 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines, that would cost a cool little \$75 billion in 2020 prices. I would suspect that would probably be closer to \$100 billion now, just to build the transmission lines. So, if you think energy prices have gone up a lot already, get set for them to go even higher. That's what will happen under the Albanese government, who have absolutely no idea on the price of basically turning the energy grid into being backed by 82 per cent of renewable energy.

I am glad Senator Green referred to the CSIRO because I have spoken to the CSIRO many times and they have actually said that there are 40 different models to get to net zero. Can you believe that? Forty different models! These people want you to believe that the science is settled, but there are apparently 40 different models to work out how to get to net zero. Let me tell you something: if you've got to rely on a model to get to net zero, that is not science; that's indoctrination, intimidation and shoddy mathematical modelling. The only time the science is settled is when you have an algorithm demonstrating cause and effect and quantifying that cause and effect. Einstein wasn't famous because he was a scientist; he was famous because of the algorithm he invented— E equals MC squared. It's called mathematics. That's what matters.

Let's go back to the economy, however. Another question I put to the CSIRO—actually I didn't ask this; Larry Marshall, the head of the CSIRO, volunteered this—is that the cost of recycling a battery is three times more than the cost of building it. Of course, the thing that the unicorn farmers don't want to talk about is that it's not just the generation that you've got to build; it's the cost of building it, it's the generation, it's the transmission, it's the storage and it's all the extra security services. So that's more batteries on top of storage. You need more batteries for frequency control. And then you want to recycle it!

I'll tell you a simple solution if you want to recycle it. It's called photosynthesis. You were taught about it in grade 8 science. It's very, very simple. We know that carbon dioxide is recycled through the atmosphere every four years. Those are simple numbers. The weight of the atmosphere is 5.15 times 10 to the power of 15. Carbon dioxide makes up 0.04 per cent of that atmosphere, which means the weight of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is two by 10 to the power of 12. Carbon dioxide has the specific density of 1.53. So the weight of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is three times 10 to the power of 12. We know, as per the IPCC report of 2007, that 800 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide is consumed via photosynthesis every year naturally in the environment. That's eight by 10 to the power of 11. So you take three by 10 to the power of 12 divided by eight by 10 to the power of 11, and it's four. That means that carbon dioxide—

Senator Shoebridge interjecting—

Senator RENNICK: No, that's photosynthesis, champ! You're taught about it in grade 8 science. Let me tell you: we can cut the cost by basically going back and building more coal-fired power stations near my home town in Kogan Creek. There are 400 million tonnes—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Chandler): Order, Senator Rennick! Senator Scarr is on his feet. Senator Scarr?

Senator Scarr: There is just a continuous barrage of interjections from Senator Shoebridge. I'm having trouble hearing my friend Senator Rennick even though I'm this far away from Senator Shoebridge.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I was likewise struggling to hear above all of the cries across the chamber. But I would also remind all senators to direct their comment through the chair. That might enable us to be somewhat more orderly. Senator Shoebridge, are you wishing to debate the point of order?

Senator Shoebridge: I'm sorry. It was his attack on Einstein that really set me off. I apologise if that troubled anyone here.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you for that clarification, Senator Shoebridge. Senator Rennick, you can continue your contribution.

Senator RENNICK: The cheapest and best way to lower power prices will only be under a coalition government. We will do that by adding some more turbines in Kogan Creek in my home town of Chinchilla, which has 400 million tonnes of free coal owned by the state government. You've only got to mine it, put it straight into the coalmine and go straight into the connector and you'll get free energy.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The time for the debate on the MPI has expired.

DOCUMENTS

Australian Building and Construction Commissioner

Senator SCARR (Queensland—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (18:23): I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

This is the annual report from the Australian Building and Construction Commission for 2021-22 and also the quarterly report for the period 1 April to 30 June 2022. I don't think that any objective stakeholder or citizen of this country who took the time to read the Australian Building and Construction Commission's annual report of 2021-22 would identify this as an agency which should be abolished. To the contrary, any reasonably minded person who perused this annual report would come to the view that the ABCC is undertaking extremely important work which is in the best interests of Australia and the best interests of all Australians, including those, in particular, involved in the construction industry.

You don't have to go too far into the annual report to make that assessment. Indeed, in the introductory section of the annual report, there's a performance snapshot with respect to the year-end review for 2021-22. What does that tell us about the performance of the ABCC? Let me tell you: 4,355 inquiries received; 203 presentations delivered; 99 per cent of calls answered within 60 seconds; 1,638 site visits conducted. Listen to these figures: \$5,278,478—over \$5 million—paid to subcontractors following ABCC intervention; 1,577 enterprise agreements assessed in an average assessment time of 2.4 weeks; 555 workplace relations management plans assessed; 225 code audits finalised; \$2,569,852 worth of wages and entitlements recovered for over 4,000 employees; 161 wage audits finalised. Does this sound like an agency which should be abolished, or does this sound like an agency which is doing its job and should be supported?

Addressing noncompliance, there were 171 investigations finalised and 164 new investigations commenced. Obviously, there's still a problem, isn't there? The pipeline of investigations which need to be continued continues. There were 22 proceedings finalised but 23 new proceedings commenced. Again, there's a pipeline of issues which the ABCC needs to address. In terms of penalties: \$3,087,438 of penalties was imposed.

What is the success rate of the ABCC? We've heard from some of those opposite that the ABCC is pursuing matters which are trivial, inconsequential et cetera. What actually happens? What happened during the last financial year, ending 30 June 2022, when the ABCC had its proceedings finalised? A 100 per cent success rate! Not 95, not 90, not 85—100 per cent success. That builds on the success of the ABCC since 2 December 2016, where: \$13.5 million was paid to subcontractors; 110 proceedings were finalised with a 92 per cent success rate; \$728,000 in compensation paid to victims of unlawful conduct; over \$17 million of penalties imposed as a direct result of actions taken by the ABCC. Does that sound like an agency that should be abolished or does it sound like an agency which is doing its job and should be supported?

It is tragic, then, to go to the message from the Commissioner of the ABCC. In the first paragraph he describes how the ABCC is in transition. He says, 'We are in a state of transition to abolition.' The government's industrial relations bill will come to this place shortly, and I seek leave to continue my remarks later in relation to this annual report.

Consideration

The following documents were considered:

Documents tabled earlier today (see entry no. 35 in today's *Journals*) were considered as follows:

Motion to take note of documents nos 1 to 10 and 12 to 99 moved by Senator Cadell. Consideration to resume on Thursday.

Motion to take note of document no. 11 moved by Senator Scarr. Consideration to resume on Thursday.

Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grant

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:28): I table documents relating to the order for the production of documents concerning the Wine Tourism and Cellar Door grant program.

COMMITTEES

Cost of Living Select Committee

Work and Care Select Committee

Membership

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Chandler) (18:29): The President has received a letter nominating senators to be members of various committees.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:29): by leave—I move:

That Senators Hanson and Roberts be appointed as participating members of the Select Committee on the Cost of Living and the Select Committee on Work and Care.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:30): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:30): I table revised explanatory memoranda relating to the bills and move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND AMENDMENT (DISASTER READY FUND) BILL 2022

Today, I introduce the Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022.

We know that due to climate change, Australia is facing longer and more intense natural disaster seasons.

We have already seen the devastating consequences of not being prepared when unprecedented natural disasters hit, like Black Summer and the recent floods in South East Queensland and New South Wales.

The Morrison Government failed to prepare for these events. They ignored warnings in the lead up to Black Summer, and left their \$4.8 billion Emergency Response Fund untouched for years.

Over three years, Scott Morrison's Emergency Response Fund didn't complete a single mitigation project or release a cent in recovery funding, while earning his Government over \$800 million in interest.

In this year's Election, Labor committed to changing that, by creating the Disaster Ready Fund from the Morrison Government's failed Emergency Response Fund.

We committed to improve Australia's disaster readiness by investing up to \$200 million per year on disaster resilience and mitigation projects.

The Disaster Ready Fund Bill makes good on this commitment. The Bill will transform the former Government's failed Emergency Response Fund into a dedicated ongoing source of funding for natural disaster resilience and risk reduction initiatives.

The Bill will allow the new Disaster Ready Fund to provide up to \$200 million per year for natural disaster resilience and risk reduction initiatives. To ensure this level of funding remains appropriate, this limit will be reviewed at least every five

years. If it is determined that the limit should be changed, the responsible Ministers will have the flexibility to do this through a disallowable legislative instrument. Prior to making a legislative instrument, the Future Fund Board of Guardians will be consulted to confirm that any proposed adjustment will not impact the Board's ability to continue to comply with its obligations under the Disaster Ready Fund Act and the Disaster Ready Fund investment mandate. The responsible Ministers will consult the Minister for Emergency Management as part of this process.

Funding for natural disaster recovery efforts will continue, most notably under the Australian Government-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018. These arrangements provide for disaster recovery funding to be delivered through state and territory agencies to disaster affected communities. This, along with the recent appointment of Senator Tony Sheldon to the new role of Special Envoy for Disaster Recovery, demonstrates the Government's commitment to strengthening disaster recovery and emergency management.

Dedicating the Disaster Ready Fund to natural disaster resilience and risk reduction will provide a clearer distinction between the different funding sources for recovery and resilience and enhance the focus on building resilience to future natural disasters.

In saying that, the Government will honour the 2022-23 Emergency Response Fund commitments announced by the former Government, including the recovery elements. This will ensure that important resilience programs, such as the \$50 million Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program which is designed to reduce the impacts of natural disasters and coastal hazards such as storm surges and coastal inundation, can achieve their objectives. The Bill will also allow the Government to provide the \$150 million announced for 2022-23 to fund recovery and post-disaster resilience measures in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

To ensure that these commitments can be met while also promoting the long term sustainability of the Disaster Ready Fund, the Government will make new commitments to fund natural disaster resilience and risk reduction initiatives from the Fund from 1 July 2023.

On 1 September 2022, the new National Emergency Management Agency was established, merging the functions of Emergency Management Australia and the National Recovery and Resilience Agency. The Agency is administratively responsible for all disaster related functions including expenditure from the Disaster Ready Fund. To facilitate this change, the Bill will transfer responsibility for Disaster Ready Fund expenditure to the new Agency.

Combining the functions of the Emergency Management Australia and the National Recovery and Resilience Agency ensures that all natural disaster programs and funding, including under the Disaster Ready Fund can be administered effectively and efficiently to strengthen Australia's ability to prepare for, manage and recover from an increasing number and severity of natural disasters.

The Bill will also streamline arrangements for transfers from the Disaster Ready Fund Special Account and make administrative improvements to the operation of the Fund, consistent with other Australian Government investment funds.

In summary, this Bill makes important amendments to ensure that Australia is appropriately funded for natural disaster resilience and risk reduction initiatives. Investing up to \$200 million per year on resilience projects was recommended by the Productivity Commission in its report into natural disaster and is supported by insurers, local governments and disaster relief bodies. The Bill provides the flexibility to change this limit, if appropriate, while promoting the long term sustainability of the Disaster Ready Fund. The amendments made by the Disaster Ready Fund Bill will improve the Australia's disaster readiness into the future.

An Albanese Government will be better prepared to respond to, recover from and prepare for natural disasters. The establishment of the Disaster Ready Fund is a crucial step in this.

SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (WORKFORCE INCENTIVE) BILL 2022

As has been widely reported in public forums, and is understood by this Government, businesses across Australia are experiencing skills and labour shortages that are constraining productivity and economic growth. In response to the challenges many global economies are facing, the Albanese Labor Government is implementing a range of policies designed to address the labour market issues the country is facing to boost productivity and address underemployment. In early-September, at the Jobs and Skills Summit, our Government announced 36 immediate actions to build a bigger, better-trained and more productive workforce—to help deliver secure jobs with growing wages, boost incomes and living standards and create more opportunities for more Australians. If we are to truly unlock the full potential for our country and address our labour shortages, we need to take seriously that there are many who continue to be excluded from the labour force but want to join.

The Jobs and Skills Summit presented an enormous opportunity to examine potential solutions, and in the lead up to the Summit, the Albanese Government was continually consulting across portfolios on the ways and means that we could unlock workforce participation for those who wanted to work, or work more, but were finding barriers or penalties to their doing so. During this consultation, stakeholders and peak bodies representing older Australians advised that many age pensioners (and other pensioners over Age Pension age) are motivated to contribute to the workforce and are an underutilised group who may be willing to assist in addressing current shortages.

At present, only around 3 per cent of age pensioners earn income from employment. By providing incentives and increasing opportunities to work more without penalty, even a marginal increase in the number of older Australians in work will benefit individuals and businesses.

The measures in this Bill are purposefully designed to further strengthen the existing incentives for pensioners over Age Pension age to take up work, or increase the number of hours they work, if they wish to do so.

Through the social security income test, with its income free area and proportional withdrawal rate, combined with the Work Bonus, pensioners are better off financially if they earn additional income, rather than relying solely on income support.

Pensioners are able to earn an amount of income before their pension begins to be reduced—the income free area. For each dollar of income over the income free area, the single pension is reduced by 50 cents. For couples, each individual pension is reduced by 25 cents a fortnight for each dollar of income the couple has over the income free area.

In addition, the Work Bonus allows pensioners over Age Pension age to earn an extra \$300 per fortnight from work before the income test is applied. The combination of the income free area and Work Bonus means a single age pensioner, with no other income, could earn up to \$490 per fortnight from work before their payment begins to reduce.

Pensioners are able to build up any unused amount of the \$300 fortnightly concession in a Work Bonus income bank. This amount can be used to exempt future earnings from the pension income test. This means a pensioner could choose to do intermittent or seasonal work, and still benefit from the Work Bonus. At present, the maximum Work Bonus income bank balance a person can accrue is capped at \$7,800.

This Bill delivers on one of the key outcomes from the Jobs and Skills Summit. From commencement until 31 December 2023, age pensioners, Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment recipients over Age Pension age, as well as certain veterans' entitlement recipients over qualifying age, will have \$4,000 credited to their Work Bonus income bank. The maximum Work Bonus income bank will increase accordingly, taking the maximum balance from \$7,800 to \$11,800 until 31 December 2023.

Eligible pensioners who are currently working and have already benefited from the full value of the Work Bonus concession will have their income bank topped up by \$4,000, taking it from zero to \$4,000.

Eligible pensioners who do not currently work and already have the current maximum income bank balance of \$7,800, will also have their income bank topped up by \$4,000. Until 31 December 2023, they will be able to have a maximum income bank balance of \$11,800.

Because the \$4,000 increase will be added to each eligible pensioner's Work Bonus income bank up front, every pensioner will be able to have an extra \$4,000 of employment income disregarded from the income test from the start of this measure.

The Bill will also give age pensioners and those receiving equivalent Department of Veterans' Affairs payments, increased flexibility to move more easily between the pension and periods of work.

Under this measure, age pensioners with employment income, whose total income exceeds their income limit, will be able to easily resume their Age Pension payments if they become payable again within 2 years, without having to do a full re-application.

This legislation, once passed will enable a streamlined, simple process to accommodate pension recipients' flexibility in their approaches and choices to work.

At the moment, after 12 weeks at a nil rate of payment, those who are working can only resume their Age Pension payments if they complete a full re-application. This Bill will allow Services Australia (Centrelink) to suspend, instead of cancel a person's Age Pension, for up to 2 years if their payment is reduced to nil and they have some employment income.

Suspending instead of cancelling the person from payment ensures that the person can benefit from an abridged re-application process if at any time during the two-year period their income is at a level where they are no longer precluded from payment.

To enable a person to be paid their correct pension entitlement, the shorter, simpler process will confirm their current circumstances, including their income and assets information. This means Age Pension payments can be resumed quickly and efficiently.

In addition, we know pensioners value their concession cards and even if they are able to work, older Australians often have additional medical needs. To support their ongoing care and cost of living, we are also extending the time a person can keep their Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) while their payments are suspended. The PCC provides access to a range of Commonwealth health concessions, including cheaper prescriptions under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Currently, age pensioners who earn above the income limit keep their PCC for 12 weeks. Disability support pensioners who work more than 30 hours or have income (including some from employment) above the limit retain their card for 52 weeks. This Bill will increase and align the amount of time age pensioners and disability support pensioners are able to retain their concession card to 2 years.

When a recipient of Age Pension, Disability Support Pension or certain veterans' entitlements is employed and has sufficient income that a pension is no longer payable, and their partner is also a pensioner, they will both keep their PCC for 2 years. Both will also be able to easily resume their pension payments within the two-year period if their income reduces to the point they become payable again.

We know that participating in work improves one's quality of life, with financial and non-financial benefits. For pensioners, this could mean a higher standard of living, stronger social connections, staying mentally active and keeping physically fit. Businesses also stand to benefit from the skills and experience of older Australians, particularly in the context of current labour shortages.

We value the contribution that all senior Australians have made, and continue to make, to our economic and social wellbeing, and we encourage those pensioners who still wish to contribute to the workforce, to do so.

Debate adjourned.

Senator CAROL BROWN: I move:

That resumption of the debate be made an order of the day for a later hour.

Question agreed to.

Ordered that the bills be listed on the *Notice Paper* as separate orders of the day.

Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022
Privacy Legislation Amendment (Enforcement and Other Measures) Bill 2022

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:32): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:32): I table a revised explanatory memorandum relating to the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022 and move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

FAIR WORK LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SECURE JOBS, BETTER PAY) BILL 2022

For nearly 10 years, wages were kept low as a deliberate design feature of the previous government's management of the economy.

Insecure work was encouraged, with no regard to the households crying out for security.

Institutions were established, and appointments made, with the intention of increasing conflict rather than bringing people together.

The introduction of this bill is about making a choice.

A choice to get wages moving and end the era of deliberate wage stagnation.

A choice to act to close the gender pay gap and take long-overdue steps to put gender equality at the heart of our workplace laws.

A choice to improve job security.

A choice to wind up institutions which were established with a political agenda to promote conflict.

At a time when the pressures of global inflation are hitting every household, our workplace laws are simply not up to date.

Cost of living is about the gap between income and prices. No-one can seriously claim to care about the cost of living if they support continued wage stagnation. Today, inflation is running at 7.3 per cent and wages are at 3.1 per cent. Every day the impact of a decade of wage stagnation is felt by households trying to make ends meet.

The urgency of getting wages moving is most acute in feminised industries. The gender pay gap still sits at an unacceptable 14.1 per cent.

For a decade we were told low unemployment would create the hydraulic pressure which would push up wages. We now have sustained low unemployment. Yet wage growth remains unacceptably low. The hydraulic pressure is there, but there are leaks in the pipes. This bill starts to plug those leaks, so wages can start moving again.

To promote job security, to close the gender pay gap, to get wages moving—we need to change the law.

In the design of these reforms, we have deliberately focused on the needs of lower-paid and feminised workforces.

Loopholes which have hindered job security and wage growth have appeared in the Fair Work Act over the past decade.

Years ago, job security was simply defined across the economy as the difference between being a casual or a permanent employee. Job insecurity now has many faces. We see it in the gig economy, labour hire, new forms of insecurity for part-time employees, and rolling fixed-term contracts which effectively amount to a permanent probation period for employees. We see it where casual loading has not been a sufficient incentive to promote secure jobs.

All legitimate forms of employment have their place. All will continue to exist. But where there is abuse, we must curtail it. Where loopholes have arisen in legislation, we must close them.

Despite a record low unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent, inflation is fast outpacing wages growth and workers are falling behind.

Businesses are struggling to attract workers, and to retain those they already have.

Australia's current workplace relations framework is not working to deliver a fair go for workers, or productivity gains for employers.

The Albanese Labor Government wants to see a strong economy that delivers for all Australians. We want to see more workers in good jobs: jobs with security, fair pay and proper protections. We want workers to have a pathway to a better life and businesses to thrive.

For this, we need fair, effective and up-to-date laws.

Australians have asked for change. They have asked for less conflict and fairer pay. They have asked for a better future for themselves, and for their families.

It will take time for this bill to result in improvements in workplaces and pay increases in the pockets of Australians, so we cannot waste a moment in passing it.

The Government has consulted closely with businesses and unions in the design of these reforms.

The measures in the bill will now be outlined in detail.

Gender equality

Australian women are among the most educated in the OECD; and are participating in the workforce in significant numbers. Yet over the period from 1983 to date, successive governments have only been able to close the gender pay gap by 5.1 percentage points.

Some of the most undervalued workers in our country are workers in female-dominated industries. Many are the very workers who put their health and safety on the line to guide us through the shutdown period of the pandemic. Workers in health care, aged care, disability support, early childhood education and care, the community sector, and other care and service sectors.

Work in these industries is undervalued because of unfair and discriminatory assumptions about the value of the work and the skill required to do the job.

This undervaluation is one of the biggest causes of the gender pay gap and our reforms take a number of key steps to address it.

Objects

Gender equality is at the very heart of our government's agenda; and this bill will place gender equality at the very heart of our Fair Work system—where it belongs.

Under our reforms, gender equality will be included as an overarching object of the Fair Work Act, in the modern awards objective and in the minimum wages objective.

The term gender equality aligns with the terminology used in the International Labour Organization's Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and reflects the Government's policy intention to achieve equal outcomes, as well as equal treatment. The Government would like to thank the Member for Goldstein, the Member for Melbourne, Professor Sara Charlesworth, Associate Professor Meg Smith for their strong advocacy on this matter.

These amendments will embed gender equality as a central goal of our workplace laws; and set a clear expectation that the Fair Work Commission must take into account the need to achieve gender equality when performing all its functions—when setting the minimum wage; when considering changes to awards; and in all other decisions it takes.

Equal remuneration and expert panels

It shouldn't be impossible for working women in undervalued industries to win a pay equity claim before the Commission; but currently it is.

Our laws have placed insurmountable hurdles in the path of workers seeking equal pay over many years. Our early childhood educators, for example, were unable to win a pay rise in 2021 because they were unable to find an appropriate male comparator group. Because there is no male comparator. It's an impossible task.

The work of our early childhood educators is essential to the successful development of our children and our nation. It should be valued on its own merits, free of discriminatory assumptions based on the gender of the people who perform the work.

Over the years there have been many important milestones in the long fight to win equal pay for women: the national minimum wage and equal pay cases of 1969 and 1972; the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1984; the establishment of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency in 1986, and improvements in the Fair Work Act in 2009.

The reforms in this bill are intended to reverse decades of unfair outcomes for women workers, by removing the need to find a male comparator and making clear that sex discrimination is not necessary to establish that work has been undervalued.

To support these changes to our laws, the Government announced \$20 million in the budget to establish a Pay Equity Expert Panel and a Care and Community Sector Expert Panel, with a dedicated research unit, in the Fair Work Commission. These changes will commence three months after the Bill is passed to allow additional time for the Fair Work Commission to be ready to implement these reforms.

These changes are further complemented by our reforms providing greater access to bargaining for lower-paid and feminised sectors through the supported bargaining stream, which will help workers to negotiate better pay and conditions for themselves.

The historic reforms in this bill are the result of decades of courageous and tireless campaigning by women workers and their unions, gender equity advocates and academics who have simply refused to accept that certain types of work should be valued less by our society, simply because it is work done by women.

From the public servant Louisa Dunkley campaigning for and winning equal pay in 1895; to the factory worker Zelda D'Aprano chaining herself to the doors of Melbourne's Commonwealth building in October of 1969; to the historic victory of the Australian Services Union winning equal pay for community sector workers in 2012.

The Government acknowledges the work of our Labor colleagues who have championed this reform over many years: the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher; her predecessor the Member for Sydney the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, who made a number of the election commitments that are in this bill, and many other members of caucus—past and present.

The Government also acknowledges the leading work of the states, including Queensland, in developing pay equity principles on which provisions in our bill are closely modelled.

These changes will have a great impact on peoples' lives. Childhood educators, some of whom have spent more than 40 years in the industry, are often incredibly passionate about the job they do, but they struggle constantly with staffing shortages due to inadequate pay and conditions in the sector. These people have been waiting for a lifetime for their essential work and the work of their colleagues to be properly valued. They should not have to wait any longer.

Pay secrecy

Workers who want to have a discussion about pay equity at work should not be prohibited by their employment contracts from doing so.

This bill will prohibit pay secrecy clauses, bringing transparency to workplaces.

Critically, this bill protects workers by saying if you want to tell someone how much you are paid, that's up to you.

Prohibiting sexual harassment

Stamping out workplace sexual harassment is central to achieving safe, productive and gender equitable workplaces.

Under the previous government's laws, there was no express prohibition on sexual harassment under the Fair Work Act; and Stop Sexual Harassment Orders were only available to some workers.

We will fix these issues.

Our changes mean that whether you're a nurse in Tamworth, a plumber in Perth, or an office worker in Canberra, you can ask the Fair Work Commission to deal quickly and effectively with your complaint of sexual harassment in the Fair Work Commission—whether the harassment occurred in the past or is ongoing, or both. The new provisions also allow the Fair Work Ombudsman to investigate and assist with compliance.

These changes send a clear message that workplace sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

These reforms fully implement recommendation 28 of the *Respect@Work* Report, complementing the Attorney-General's proposed reforms to the Sex Discrimination Act. The bill clarifies that the Fair Work Commission's new sexual harassment jurisdiction will operate concurrently with existing state and territory jurisdictions.

This bill means that all legislative changes recommended by *Respect@Work* are now before the parliament.

This bill also strengthens the Fair Work Act's anti-discrimination protections, bringing it into line with other Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws.

Flexible working arrangements

Too many Australians are struggling to manage their work and care responsibilities. This is damaging families, communities, and our national economy.

Women still carry the main responsibility for caring work; and are more likely to request flexible work arrangements. In order to access the flexibility they need to manage work and care, they are often forced to drop out of the workforce, or to take lower-paid or less secure employment. This plays a major role in widening the gender pay gap. We want families to have better access to flexible work, so they can better share and manage their caring responsibilities.

Under our current laws, an employee can ask for flexible work, but if their employer says no, they've got nowhere to go.

The problem is starkly illustrated by the recent report by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, commissioned by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, called *Who cares?*, which outlines the damaging collision between work, family and caring arrangements for Australia's retail, fast food and warehousing workers.

The essential contribution of these workers meant we could all access food and other necessities during lockdown periods of the pandemic.

Yet the harrowing stories in this report show these workers are stressed out, exhausted and barely able to manage their family responsibilities. Alarming, the report shows that the children of workers in this industry are struggling to access early childhood education and care; essential for their development and future success.

These types of stories are unacceptable.

The findings of *Who cares?* are supported by the Senate Select Committee on Work and Care, chaired by Senator Barbara Pocock, which finds that 'current workplace laws and cultures are not designed to recognise or support working carers, with the

needs of people balancing work and care being easily ignored or overlooked'. The interim report recommends access to flexible work as a key area for reform.

Flexible working arrangements not only help parents and carers but also provide job security and an economic lifeline to employees with disability, older Australians, and workers experiencing family and domestic violence.

We will make two key changes to the law to support flexible work.

We will bring employers and employees together in workplaces in the first instance to have a genuine discussion about flexible work.

And if agreement can't be reached at the workplace level, we will give the Fair Work Commission the power to resolve the dispute.

Job security

Fixed term contracts

More than half of all employees engaged on fixed term contracts are women; and more than 40 per cent of fixed term employees have been with their employer for two or more years.

This bill will limit the use of fixed term contracts for the same role beyond two years or two consecutive contracts, whichever is shorter, including renewals. If these rules are breached, the term of the contract that provides for its expiry on a set date will be of no effect, but otherwise the contract will be valid. The provisions allow employers to use fixed term contracts for legitimate purposes, while providing appropriate protections to employees.

The Bill also includes strong and effective anti-avoidance provisions.

We have delayed the commencement of these provisions for up to 12 months to continue consultation to ensure the provisions are fair, workable and effective.

Stronger protections for workers

The bill gives effect to recommendations of the 2019 Migrant Workers' Taskforce.

The bill being introduced today would not have been possible without the advocacy of migrant workers and their unions.

It will now be unlawful to advertise a job for less than the applicable minimum rate.

Secondly, the bill will provide greater ability to recover unpaid entitlements, by increasing the cap on small claims under the Fair Work Act from \$20,000 to \$100,000. The current low threshold forces many workers to pursue pay claims through a full court process which can be expensive, time consuming and complex.

In addition, the Bill will require the Fair Work Ombudsman and Fair Work Commission to have regard to the need for guidelines, other materials and any community outreach to be available in multiple languages. This will help ensure workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can access the resources and assistance they need. I acknowledge the Member for Fowler for her ongoing advocacy.

Firefighters

The bill will also fix a loophole the previous government failed to address by including ACT volunteer firefighters in the presumptive liability provisions. We will also add malignant mesothelioma to the list of presumptive cancers for firefighters, and lower the qualifying period for oesophageal cancer from 25 to 15 years. The bill confirms and clarifies access to these provisions for volunteer firefighters.

This is unfinished business and we will continue to consult to ensure our laws provide firefighters and all first responders with better access to the compensation they deserve for work related injuries and illnesses.

The Government acknowledges the advocacy of Mr Brett McNamara, an ACT government firefighter, who has been lobbying for changes to the law. We also acknowledge the representations that have been made to the Government from our parliamentary colleagues who represent the ACT, as well the United Firefighters Union and the ACT Volunteer Brigades Association.

Reducing barriers to bargaining

Australia's bargaining system is not working effectively and hasn't worked effectively for a long time. Bargaining delivers simpler and more tailored workplace arrangements, productivity improvements for businesses, and higher weekly earnings for workers compared with those on awards.

Only around 15 per cent of employees are covered by an agreement that is in date.

The bill enacts commitments made at the Jobs and Skills Summit in September.

Reforms will remove unnecessary limitations from the existing framework. Multi-employer bargaining is already contemplated by the act through three streams—single interest, multi-employer and low paid. The problem is it isn't working.

We're not creating new streams of bargaining; we are varying the existing streams to make them work and to get wages moving.

The prohibition already in the act on pattern bargaining will remain.

The bill clarifies that the general building and construction industry is not covered by the multi-employer bargaining streams.

Bargaining at the enterprise level delivers strong productivity benefits and is intended to remain the primary and preferred type of agreement making. This is why the bill contains safeguards to ensure that those that already bargain at the enterprise level can continue to do so. For employees and employers that have not been able to access the benefits of enterprise level bargaining, these reforms will provide flexible options for reaching agreements at the multi-employer level. This is intended to deliver more equitable and inclusive wage outcomes which benefit more Australians.

A stronger role for the Fair Work Commission

The bill will allow the Fair Work Commission to resolve intractable disputes through arbitration, where there is no reasonable prospect of agreement being reached.

These changes are intended to provide a strong incentive for good-faith negotiations, reduce the time for enterprise agreements to be finalised and allow for quicker resolution of intractable disputes.

Agreement terminations

The bill will limit the circumstances in which an agreement can be terminated by the Fair Work Commission if the application has been made by only one party, rather than by consent.

To address this challenge, when determining unilateral applications for termination of agreement, the bill requires the Fair Work Commission to consider whether bargaining is underway and whether the termination would adversely affect employees' bargaining position.

The Commission will have the capacity to terminate an agreement where its continued operation would pose a significant threat to the viability of the employer's business, and termination would likely reduce the potential of job losses, and the employer guarantees to pay employees the relevant termination entitlements.

The Fair Work Commission must also be satisfied that it is appropriate in all the circumstances to terminate the agreement.

Termination of zombie agreements

The bill will return balance and fairness to the system by sunseting enterprise agreements that are out of step with the wages and conditions provided in modern awards. It's inconceivable that in 2022 there are agreements that still exist which lock in terms and conditions back to the WorkChoices days.

Sunseting 'zombie agreements' will mean businesses need to pay the minimum entitlements provided for in awards, to benefit workers and level the playing field.

Simplifying the better off overall test

We'll make the better off overall test simple, flexible and fair.

There's consensus that approval requirements for enterprise agreements are onerous, complex and unnecessarily prescriptive.

We'll make key changes to fix this.

First, the concept of 'prospective award covered employees' is removed for enterprise agreements that are not greenfields agreements. For the majority of proposed enterprise agreements, the test will be applied in relation to actual workers, and patterns and types of work that are reasonably foreseeable.

The bill will restore the original intent of the test as a global, rather than line-by-line, comparison against the modern award.

And, thirdly, if there is a common view that the employer and union have that the agreement passes the test, the Commission will give primary consideration to that view.

Finally, as an important safeguard, the bill includes a process to allow employees or their representatives to reassess the test in relation to circumstances that the Commission did not have regard to at the time.

Commencement of these changes will be delayed to align with the multi-employer bargaining changes and close technical loopholes to further safeguard workers.

This makes sure that no worker will be worse off.

Simplifying approval requirements

Building on these reforms, we'll also remove complexity by streamlining Commission approval of an agreement, while retaining strong protections to ensure employees are not disadvantaged.

Initiating bargaining

In addition, to encourage employers and employees to remain within the single enterprise bargaining stream, a bargaining representative will be able to commence bargaining if no more than five years have passed since the nominal expiry date of a single enterprise agreement, and a proposed new agreement will cover the same or a similar group of employees as the earlier agreement.

Supported bargaining stream

The bill will rename and remove barriers to access the existing low-paid bargaining stream, with the intention of closing the gender pay gap and improving wages and conditions in sectors such as community services, cleaning, and early childhood education and care, which have not been able to successfully bargain at the enterprise level.

Unnecessary hurdles to entry in the current low-paid stream will be replaced by a broad discretion for the Fair Work Commission to consider the prevailing rates of pay in the industry, including whether workers in the industry or sector are low paid.

The Commission must also be satisfied that employers who would be covered by a supported bargaining authorisation have clearly identifiable common interests, for example, whether or not they are substantially funded, directly or indirectly, by the Commonwealth, a state or a territory.

Single-interest bargaining stream

Under the existing single-interest employer authorisation stream, employers who are not franchisees need to obtain the permission of the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. It's unnecessary red tape.

Under our changes, employers in the single-interest stream must have clearly identifiable common interests and the Fair Work Commission must be satisfied that it is in the public interest.

There has been a significant focus on the impacts that these changes may have on businesses in the past weeks. To be clear, the bill requires that the Fair Work Commission apply both a common interest and public interest test when considering including employers in the single-interest stream, and small business cannot be included unless they consent. The provisions also ensure that businesses with a history of effective bargaining can continue to do so.

The bill provides that voting in the single interest bargaining stream in relation to majority support determinations, protected action ballots and agreement approval occurs on an employer-by-employer basis.

We want to see businesses competing on quality, on innovation, on product and service offerings—not on who can pay the lowest wage. If we are going to get wages moving, we need to stop the race to the bottom.

Cooperative bargaining stream

The cooperative bargaining stream reframes and retains the existing multi-employer stream in the Fair Work Act; and is open to all businesses.

It's entirely voluntary. Note there's no industrial action in that stream. Conciliation and arbitration are by consent.

Bargaining assistance from the Commission can be accessed on the request of the parties.

Fair work institutions

The government is committed to fairness and integrity, and this extends to the agencies that regulate workplace relations matters.

The Australian Building and Construction Commission and the Registered Organisations Commission are ineffective and discredited institutions, more concerned about prosecuting workers and their representatives than tackling rampant wage theft or addressing workplace safety, or educating and promoting good workplace relations.

This bill will abolish the ABCC and the Registered Organisations Commission. The Fair Work Ombudsman will be the workplace relations regulator for all industries and the general manager of the Fair Work Commission will be the regulator on registered organisations.

National Construction Industry Forum

The Bill establishes a statutory National Construction Industry Forum. In line with the Jobs and Skills Summit outcomes, the Forum will provide advice to Government on industry culture, gender equity and other matters in the building and construction industry.

Conclusion

These reforms reflect our vision for a fairer, safer and more inclusive Australia.

This bill is just the start of the government's reform of workplace relations, with a second tranche next year.

This bill is for those workers who have been waiting far too long for their work to be properly valued. This bill is for all the employers who want to treat their employees fairly without fear of being undercut by unscrupulous competitors.

This bill delivers on the government's commitment to ensure a fairer workplace relations system that provides Australians with job security, gender equity and sustainable wage growth.

This bill will not fix every problem in our workplace relations system. But it is a strong start. And it will provide a strong foundation on which we can continue to build the fairer and more equitable system Australians need, want and deserve.

There will be requests to move more slowly, to wait extra months, to pretend that there's no urgency.

As this bill proceeds through the parliament, the Government asks parliamentarians to remember how long people have already waited.

Waited a decade while wages were kept deliberately low.

Waited generations while the gender pay gap refused to close.

Waited while children became adults and caring responsibilities collided with rosters.

Waited in insecure work for the secure job which still hasn't arrived.

These Australians have waited long enough. And while waiting they have turned up every day and done their job. It's now time we did ours and legislated for secure jobs and better pay.

I commend the bill to the Chamber.

PRIVACY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2022

This Bill sends a clear message that the Albanese Government takes privacy, security and data protection seriously.

As the Optus, Medibank and MyDeal cyberattacks have recently highlighted, data breaches have the potential to cause serious financial and emotional harm to Australians, and this is unacceptable.

Governments, businesses and other organisations have an obligation to protect Australians' personal data, not to treat it as a commercial asset. The law must reflect this.

This Bill will provide Australians with confidence that their data will be protected in four ways.

First, the Bill will significantly increase penalties under the Privacy Act for serious or repeated privacy breaches to incentivise businesses to take strong privacy and cyber security measures to protect the personal data they hold.

Second, the Australian Information Commissioner will be provided with a suite of improved and new powers to resolve privacy breaches efficiently and effectively.

Third, the Notifiable Data Breaches scheme will be strengthened to ensure the Information Commissioner has comprehensive knowledge of the information compromised in a breach to assess the particular risk of harm to individuals.

Fourth, the Information Commissioner and the Australian Communications and Media Authority will have greater information sharing powers to ensure regulators are able to work together and take prompt action to minimise harm to Australians.

These amendments are targeted and measured. They respond to the most pressing issues arising from the Optus data breach and other recent cyber incidents.

I am introducing this Bill at the earliest opportunity. The Government has moved swiftly at every stage of the response to the Optus data breach—giving Australians confidence that their compromised identity documents can be replaced, coordinating action between regulators, and taking steps to enable Optus to share information with financial institutions to detect and prevent fraud. I also acknowledge the work of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, Australian Federal Police and other federal regulators and agencies that have supported the response to this breach.

The novel privacy challenges posed by the rise of digital platforms and the unprecedented volume and variety of data that these platforms collect from users underscores the importance of reforming our privacy laws.

The Attorney-General's Department's review of the Privacy Act will recommend further reform proposals to ensure Australia's privacy framework protects the personal information of Australians, supports an innovative economy and responds to new challenges in the digital age.

Increased penalties

The Bill will increase penalties for a serious or repeated breach of privacy from \$2.22 million, to not more than the greater of \$50 million, three times the value of any benefit obtained through the misuse of the information, or, if the value of the benefit obtained cannot be determined, 30 per cent of a company's domestic turnover in the relevant period.

Setting these penalties at a higher level will accord with Australian community expectations about the importance of protecting their personal data.

Further, penalties for privacy breaches cannot be seen as simply the cost of doing business. Entities must be incentivised to have strong cyber and data security safeguards in place to protect Australians.

These new penalties mirror those proposed in the Treasury Laws Amendment (More Competition, Better Prices) Bill 2022, which implements the Government's Better Competition election commitment. This will ensure alignment of penalties across Australian privacy law and consumer law.

Strengthened Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme

The Bill will strengthen the existing Notifiable Data Breaches scheme by empowering the Information Commissioner to assess an entity's compliance with the scheme's requirements. Assessments are an important educative tool, and this power will assist entities in ensuring they are meeting their requirements.

The Information Commissioner will also have new information-gathering powers in regards to the scheme's reporting and notification requirements. This is necessary to provide the Information Commissioner with a comprehensive understanding of the information compromised in a breach in order to assess the particular risks to individuals, and take actions such as issue a direction for the entity to notify individuals who have been affected by a data breach.

Enhanced enforcement powers

The Bill will improve the powers available to the Information Commissioner to resolve privacy breaches by empowering the Commissioner to publish notices about specific breaches of privacy or otherwise ensure those directly affected are informed. The Bill enables the Commissioner to compel entities to undertake external reviews to improve their practices to reduce the likelihood of them committing a breach again.

The Bill will also provide the Commissioner new information-gathering powers to conduct assessments, and new infringement notice powers that can be used if an entity fails to provide information when required, without the need to engage in protracted litigation.

To ensure Australia's privacy laws remain fit for purpose in a globalised world, and ensure the Privacy Act can be enforced against global technology companies who may process Australians' information on servers offshore, the Bill will amend the Act's extraterritoriality provisions. This will mean that even if foreign organisations do not collect or hold Australians'

information directly from a source in Australia, they must still meet the obligations under the Privacy Act so long as they "carry on a business" in Australia.

Greater information sharing arrangements

To ensure Australians are informed about privacy issues, the Bill will provide the Commissioner an express power to publish a final determination following a privacy investigation, and information about a final assessment report. The Commissioner will also be able to publish information about other matters, such as an update about an ongoing privacy investigation, if it is in the public interest.

The Commissioner will also be able to share information with enforcement bodies, alternative complaint bodies and privacy regulators for the purpose of the Commissioner or the receiving body exercising their functions and powers. The Australian Communications and Media Authority will also be provided better powers to share information within Government for enforcement purposes.

This will drive better cooperation between regulators in order to deliver better outcomes for Australians.

Conclusion

The Bill is an important and pressing reform that will make sure penalties for privacy breaches adequately reflect community expectations, and will ensure Australia's privacy regulator has the enforcement tools necessary to effectively deter the misuse of Australians' personal information.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Pratt): In accordance with standing order 115(3), further consideration of these bills is now adjourned to 22 November 2022.

Ordered that the bills be listed on the *Notice Paper* as separate orders of the day.

Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022

Atomic Energy Amendment (Mine Rehabilitation and Closure) Bill 2022

Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2022

Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme Amendment Bill 2022

Education Legislation Amendment (2022 Measures No. 1) Bill 2022

High Speed Rail Authority Bill 2022

Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget Measures) Bill 2022

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:33): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:34): I table a revised explanatory memorandum relating to the Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022 and an addendum to the explanatory memorandum relating to the High Speed Rail Authority Bill 2022, and I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RESPECT AT WORK) BILL
2022

The Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022 marks a significant step in fulfilling the Government's election commitment to implement the recommendations of the Respect@Work Report.

The Respect@Work Report was a watershed moment in recognising the impact of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces and setting out a clear path to reform. The National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces found that 33% of people who had been in the workforce in the preceding 5 years had experienced workplace sexual harassment. The National Inquiry found that almost two in five women said they had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years. Gender inequality is a key driver of sexual harassment in the workplace, which is borne out by the disproportionate impact this behaviour has on women.

The Government acknowledges the work of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, and the work of the Commission more generally in producing the Respect@Work Report and also the work that Commissioner Jenkins and the Commission have done since the report was published to implement the report's recommendations, including through the Respect@Work Council.

This Bill would not have happened without the individuals and organisations who contributed their stories, advocacy and expertise to inform the findings and recommendations in the Respect@Work Report.

The Respect@Work Report made 55 recommendations to federal, state and territory governments, independent government agencies, the private sector and the community more broadly, all driven by the same impetus: to put an end to sexual harassment and make Australian workplaces safe for all.

The Government is moving decisively to implement the outstanding legislative recommendations of the Respect@Work Report, as these changes will have an immediate impact in setting cultural norms around preventative efforts and are essential to eliminating workplace sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation.

Hostile Work Environment (Schedule 1)

Schedule 1 to the Bill introduces an express prohibition in the Sex Discrimination Act to protect people from hostile workplace environments on the ground of sex. This protection will not require that conduct is directed at a specific person, but instead prohibits conduct that results in an offensive, intimidating and humiliating environment for people of one sex.

As noted in the Respect@Work Report, sexually charged or hostile workplace environments can increase the risk of a person experiencing other forms of unlawful discrimination, including sexual harassment. This new provision will provide clarity to employers, employees and other people in the workplace of their obligations to create safe and respectful workplace environments. This will implement recommendation 16(c) of the Respect@Work Report.

Positive Duty (Schedule 2)

Schedule 2 to the Bill creates a positive duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate unlawful discrimination, including sexual harassment, as far as possible. This will implement recommendation 17 of the Respect@Work Report.

The Australian Human Rights Commission will also be equipped with appropriate compliance powers to enforce the positive duty. The Commission will prepare and publish guidelines for compliance with the positive duty and will educate businesses and employers to better understand and comply with their obligations. This will implement recommendation 18 of the Respect@Work Report.

This cornerstone of the Respect@Work Report recommendations is a key step to focusing actions on the prevention of sexual harassment and discrimination, looking beyond remedies to misconduct. The focus on prevention of workplace sexual harassment and discrimination also shifts responsibility from those who experience that discrimination and harassment to those who are best placed to prevent it: employers.

The positive duty will complement the existing work health and safety framework, which also requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the physical and psychological health and safety of workers.

The Bill will enable the Commission to monitor and assess compliance, working with businesses along the way to support their compliance. The Commission's functions will include:

- conducting inquiries into a person's compliance and making recommendations to achieve compliance;
- giving a compliance notice specifying the action that must be taken to address non-compliance;
- applying to the courts for an order to direct compliance with a notice; and
- the ability to enter into enforceable undertakings.

Inquiries into Systemic Unlawful Discrimination (Schedule 3)

Schedule 3 to the Bill will provide the Australian Human Rights Commission with a function to inquire into systemic unlawful discrimination. This will implement recommendation 19 of the Respect@Work Report.

The Respect@Work Report found that there are significant cultural and systemic factors that drive sexual harassment in the workplace and that addressing these drivers can be challenging.

This function will enable the Commission to inquire into any matter that may relate to systemic unlawful discrimination or suspected systemic unlawful discrimination. Systemic unlawful discrimination is unlawful discrimination that affects a group of people and is continuous, repetitive or forms a pattern. The Commission can undertake an inquiry where requested by the Minister, or when the Commission considers it would be desirable. At the conclusion of an inquiry, the Commission may publish a report and provide it to the Minister, which may include recommendations.

Representative Actions (Schedule 4)

Schedule 4 to the Bill will enable representative actions to proceed from conciliation at the Commission to make an application to the courts, and will implement recommendation 23 of the Respect@Work Report.

Currently a representative body is able to make a representative complaint to the Commission on behalf of one or more persons, however, where a complaint is not resolved, the representative body is not able to initiate court proceedings.

This Bill will enable a representative body to progress a complaint on behalf of one or more affected persons from conciliation at the Commission to application to the court. This will improve support for people who experience harassment and

discrimination to navigate the legal system and resolve their complaints. It will also better enable issues of systemic discrimination, affecting a broad range of people, to be addressed.

Costs Protections (Schedule 5)

Schedule 5 to the Bill will insert a costs protection provision into the Australian Human Rights Commission Act to provide greater certainty in relation to the cost of pursuing legal action. This will implement recommendation 25 of the Respect@Work Report.

The Respect@Work Report heard that concerns about adverse costs orders deter applicants from seeking to resolve complaints through the courts. Costs reforms will give both applicants and respondents greater certainty in terms of the costs they may face, while not impacting their access to legal representation.

The cost reform in this Bill is the model supported by the Australian Human Rights Commission in their 2021 Free and Equal Position Paper and these reforms will apply to all applications under Commonwealth anti-discrimination law. The approach balances the need for certainty and the clear impact costs can have on applicants taking action in the courts, against the unintended consequences of cost reform, such as impacting access to legal representation.

Public Sector Reporting to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (Schedule 6)

Schedule 6 to the Bill will amend the Workplace Gender Equality Act to require the Commonwealth public sector to report against 6 gender equality indicators to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. The Respect@Work Report found that improved data collection is important to ensure that there is a robust understanding of gender inequality in Australian workplaces. This will implement recommendation 43 of the Respect@Work Report for the Commonwealth public sector.

Victimisation (Schedule 7)

Schedule 7 to the Bill will clarify that victimisation can be the basis for a civil action of unlawful discrimination under Commonwealth anti-discrimination law, being the Age Discrimination Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Racial Discrimination Act.

The Respect at Work Act 2021 included an amendment to clarify that victimisation can be the basis of a civil—and not just a criminal—action of unlawful discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Act. It had always been the intention that the provisions in relation to victimisation in the Sex Discrimination Act—and the equivalent provisions in other Commonwealth anti-discrimination Acts—could form the basis of either a civil or criminal cause of action, but the clarifying amendment in the Respect at Work Act 2021 was made necessary by a number of court decisions which gave rise to uncertainty around whether the relevant provisions achieved their intent.

The amendments in Schedule 7 would address the same potential issue in other Commonwealth anti-discrimination Acts by ensuring that the victimisation provisions in those Acts reflect what has always been the intention—which is that acts of victimisation can form the basis of both civil and criminal causes of action.

Objects clause and termination timeframe alignment (Schedule 8)

Schedule 8 to the Bill will amend the objects clause of the Sex Discrimination Act to state that an object of the Act is to achieve substantive equality between men and women. This will implement recommendation 16(a) of the Respect@Work Report.

The Bill will also insert a new objects clause to support the operation of the new hostile work environment protection. The addition to the objects clause will state that an object of the Act is to eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination involving workplace environments that are hostile on the ground of sex.

This Schedule will also change the timeframe for when a complaint under anti-discrimination law may be terminated by the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission from 6 months to 24 months.

The Respect at Work Act 2021 amended the timeframe for complaints made under the Sex Discrimination Act, but not for any other anti-discrimination law. This has led to procedural challenges and complexity for people who are entitled to make a claim under more than one Commonwealth anti-discrimination Act.

The President retains a discretion to consider complaints beyond the statutory timeframe, but this change will give greater certainty to complainants that intersectional aspects of an anti-discrimination complaint can be considered without procedural obstacles.

Conclusion

Sexual harassment is a serious and pervasive issue that affects all industries and all professions and demands a fundamental re-think in how our laws are shaped to prevent and respond more effectively. The Respect@Work Report represents a paradigm shift in how public policy and the legislative framework support people who experience sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. This Bill takes those steps as set out in the Respect@Work Report, makes that paradigm shift, and signals to all workers that they deserve to be safe at work.

Sexual harassment is by no means inevitable. It is preventable. And this Government will continue to work to ensure it is addressed.

I am both pleased and proud that the Government is taking this next crucial step in fully implementing the Respect@Work Report.

The Attorney-General's Department consulted with a number of key stakeholders in relation to the measures contained in this Bill, including members of the Respect@Work Council. I would like to thank the unions, business groups and other individuals and organisations that provided constructive feedback to the Attorney-General's Department as part of that process.

I expect the Bill will be referred to a Senate Committee for an inquiry. Given the range of views about how best to implement the recommendations of the Respect@Work Report, I have no doubt that the Committee will receive a number of thoughtful and constructive suggestions for refinements and improvements to the Bill. The Government looks forward to engaging, through the Attorney-General's Department, with that important parliamentary process.

ATOMIC ENERGY AMENDMENT (MINE REHABILITATION AND CLOSURE) BILL 2022

It is a longstanding legislative requirement that the Ranger mine must be restored to a condition similar to surrounding Kakadu National Park. For such an environmentally, culturally and historically important region, only the highest standard of rehabilitation will do.

Today, I introduce the Atomic Energy Amendment (Mine Rehabilitation and Closure) Bill. This Bill is the first step towards ensuring the unique Environmental Requirements prescribed at Ranger remain legal obligations until Ranger's rehabilitation is complete.

When Ranger was established 40 years ago, it was envisaged rehabilitation would take five years and be completed by January 2026 when current regulatory arrangements lapse. However, based on the best environmental science of today, it is apparent Ranger's rehabilitation will take longer.

Accordingly, the Government is acting to extend Ranger's regulatory framework until the job is complete. The Bill enacts a number of measures for securing Ranger's full rehabilitation and eventual closure.

Firstly, the Bill allows the mine's operator, Energy Resources of Australia (ERA), to transition to a new Authority that permits its rehabilitation to be continued at Ranger beyond January 2026. This in no way reflects ERA's performance at Ranger. ERA has long been progressively rehabilitating Ranger, and it is well-advanced with the task—for instance, one of the mined-out pits is now fully backfilled, with Mirarr Traditional Owners participating in the first revegetation planting.

The reason for allowing a new Authority is simply because more time is needed to complete rehabilitation. ERA acknowledges this. Mirarr Traditional Owners acknowledge this. Environment groups acknowledge this. But the current *Atomic Energy Act* simply does not allow the Government to extend ERA's authority.

The Bill will also enable progressive closing out of the site. This means that discrete parcels of land at Ranger—some of which are relatively undisturbed—can transition back to underlying Aboriginal land tenure when ERA is deemed to have rehabilitated those areas. The Northern Land Council have asked that Ranger be progressively closed out so that Ranger's Mirarr Traditional Owners can get on Country as soon as it is safe to do so.

Recognising that the Ranger mine was established under controversial circumstances, it is equally important Parliament is clear about what this Bill **does not** do.

- The Bill **does not** permit the re-commencement of mining at Ranger. It is entirely focussed on rehabilitation and closure.
- The Bill **does not** allow the standard or quality of rehabilitation that ERA must achieve at Ranger to be increased or decreased. The longstanding Environmental Requirements will remain in place.
- The Bill **does not** reduce the longstanding liability that the Australian Government has accepted for Ranger's rehabilitation.
- The Bill **does not** reduce or diminish the role of the Northern Land Council or the Supervising Scientist, both of which will continue to play critical roles in Ranger's rehabilitation, monitoring and closure.
- The Bill **does not** pose regulatory implications for the broader uranium industry. The Bill concerns only the Ranger site, since it is the only mine subject to an authority under the Atomic Energy Act.

Many people today who were not around in the 1970s will not remember the history of the Ranger Uranium Mine. To say that Ranger was opposed by the Mirarr Traditional Owners is an understatement. Ranger became a flashpoint in the struggle of land rights, attracting national media attention and protests.

And many people today may not appreciate that Ranger's history is also intrinsically linked to the Kakadu National Park which, like Ranger, was established without the agreement of Traditional Owners.

Fast forward almost half a century later to March this year; In Opposition we supported the long-awaited return of the remaining half of Kakadu National Park back to 13 clan groups. This was a milestone in the unfinished business of Aboriginal culture and history in Australia.

Now, in Government, we are putting forward amendments through this Bill that take that next step toward the eventual return of Ranger to its Aboriginal Traditional Owners. This too will form part of the story of this country's unfinished business.

In concluding, I wish to thank ERA, the Northern Land Council and the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation representing the Mirarr people for their close engagement on this Bill. Ranger's rehabilitation is a priority for all parties and we all look forward to seeing Ranger being a world-class example of mine rehabilitation.

I commend this Bill to the Chamber.

AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION AMENDMENT (SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS) BILL 2022

Transnational serious and organised crime is destructive, pervasive and complex. In 2020-21 serious and organised crime was estimated to cost Australia up to \$60.1 billion. As Australia's national criminal intelligence agency, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (the ACIC) is central to our national response to transnational serious and organised crime. The ACIC uses its collection and assessment capabilities to generate intelligence to drive disruptions, seizures and arrests by law enforcement, intelligence and international partners.

The Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2022 amends the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002* to provide greater certainty with respect to the ACIC Board's powers to authorise special operations and special investigations.

The Bill does not expand or otherwise alter the powers available to the ACIC when undertaking ACIC special operations or special investigations.

Under the Act, the ACIC may only use its coercive powers where the ACIC Board makes a determination for a special operation or special investigation. The Board may only exercise the power to authorise special operations or special investigations when it considers that it is in the public interest to do so.

However, the existing provisions in the Act include key definitions which cross-refer to other definitions that are central to the process for making determinations. This layering of definitions adds unnecessary complexity to the process in making determinations.

The proposed amendments address this issue by repealing the current definition of *federally relevant criminal activity* in subsection 4(1) and replacing it with a new definition of *federally relevant crime*. The current definition of *relevant crime* in subsection 4(1) is also amended. These changes reduce the multi-layered definitions that currently exist which add unnecessary complexity.

The Bill also makes minor consequential amendments to the *Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement Act 2010* and the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979*.

The measures in this Bill provide that the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission can continue to exercise its powers with greater legal clarity when conducting activities to combat transnational and serious organised crime in Australia.

DEFENCE HOME OWNERSHIP ASSISTANCE SCHEME AMENDMENT BILL 2022

I am pleased to present the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme Amendment Bill 2022.

The Bill fulfils the Albanese Labor Government's election commitment to boost home ownership for Defence members and veterans by expanding the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme eligibility criteria.

The Scheme was established in 2008 by the Rudd Labor Government, and continues to be an important retention offering by the Australian Defence Force. The Scheme also has an important secondary benefit of improving home ownership levels for Defence Force members, veterans and their families.

The Bill advances these objectives and is cognisant of the fact that housing affordability is one of the biggest issues facing Australia.

Further to this, the Bill responds to the struggles experienced by the veteran community and the role that housing can play in their greater wellbeing. The Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing found that safe, secure and affordable housing is fundamental to veteran wellbeing. While maintaining the retention focus, the Bill makes four broad policy amendments to the Scheme which look to further home ownership levels amongst serving Defence members and veterans.

Firstly, the Bill expands access to the Scheme by providing Defence members with access to the benefits earlier in their careers. This amendment reduces by half, the period of effective service that a Defence member must complete before accessing the Scheme. What this means for members of the Permanent Defence Force is that their qualifying service period will be two years; for members of Defence Reserves, four years; and for a foreign service member, two years.

To accommodate the halving of the qualifying service period, the Bill similarly amends the requisite period of effective service to access each subsidy tier. There are three subsidy tiers, which are 40, 60 and 80 per cent of the average house price. Based on the years of effective service, the tiers determine the subsidy amount received by participants of the Scheme.

The Bill provides members of the Permanent Forces and the Reserves, as well as members who have separated from the Defence Force because of a compensable condition, with access to each subsidy tier between two and four years earlier than currently provided by the Act. The amendment will provide members of the Permanent Forces access to tier one where they have less than four years of effective service; tier two where they have between four and eight years of effective service, and tier three where they have between eight and 12 years of effective service.

Secondly, the Bill allows veterans to apply for their final subsidy certificate any time after they have separated from the Defence Force. Currently, veterans must apply to access the Scheme within five years of separating from the Defence Force. Removing this limitation will ensure veterans can access the Scheme at a time that suits them without feeling pressured to do so within a five-year period.

The Albanese Labor Government acknowledges that the nature of military life is unique and families can be deeply affected by military service. This can include the frequency of postings throughout Australia which has an impact on home ownership. Accordingly, this amendment has been extended to surviving partners who have similarly been impacted by the nature of service within the Australian Defence Force.

Thirdly, the Bill creates a power to continue paying a subsidy amount where a genuine error, mistake or accident caused all outstanding amounts due under the subsidised loan to be paid. This amendment is in response to observations by Defence that the current legislation provides little reprieve where a loan is paid down due to a genuine error, mistake or accident, and as a result the subsidised borrower stops receiving their monthly subsidy.

It is intended that this power will address scenarios including, but not limited to, where a subsidised borrower mistakenly transfers money into their loan account which results in it being paid off, or where a third party mistakenly transfers money to a subsidised borrower's loan account when it was not for the purpose of paying the loan down.

Finally, the Bill provides a power to make and recover relevant payments, including overpayments, which may occur in the administration of the Scheme. This technical amendment assists the Scheme's administrators in efficiently processing subsidy payments. For transparency and good governance, the Bill also requires the Secretary to report any such payment every financial year.

The Bill assists in positioning the Australian Defence Force as an employer of choice, assisting serving members and veterans to own a home, and ensuring the Scheme can be administered as efficiently and beneficially as possible.

The Bill is scheduled to commence on 1 January 2023. From this date, new applicants will be able to apply for a subsidy certificate under the proposed amendments. The Bill will also allow applicants who are veterans to re-apply where they were previously refused a subsidy certificate because they had not completed their qualifying service period or made their application outside of the five-year post-separation limit.

For existing members of the Scheme, their monthly payments may increase as they move up the subsidy tiers, and additional subsidy credits applied to their subsidised loan.

In recognition of the Scheme's original intent, I emphasise that the Bill reinforces and furthers the Government's commitment to retention in the Australian Defence Force, home ownership for members and veterans, as well as veteran wellbeing.

I commend the Bill.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (2022 MEASURES NO. 1) BILL 2022

I'm pleased to introduce the Education Legislation Amendment (2022 Measures No. 1) Bill 2022.

This Bill amends the *Higher Education Support Act* 2003 to improve equality of access to higher education and support this Government's commitment to building a highly skilled workforce.

The Bill delivers on an election commitment to remove the ten per cent HECS-HELP discount for students who pay upfront their student contribution amounts for Commonwealth supported places.

This was a measure we took to the election on the principle that all students should pay the same amount for the same course, regardless of their ability to pay up-front.

The measure will take effect on 1 January 2023 and is projected to save \$144 million over the forward estimates.

Those savings will help fund the 20,000 new university places recently announced by this Government.

Those places are allocated to support students who are under-represented in our universities.

Students from poorer backgrounds.

Students from the bush.

Indigenous Australian students.

Students who are the first in their family to cross the threshold of one of our universities.

The Bill will also extend the FEE-HELP loan fee exemption for a further twelve months.

This exemption originally commenced on 1 April 2020 as a COVID-19 financial relief measure, and will now continue through to 31 December 2022.

The measure will help around 30,000 full-fee paying undergraduate students accessing FEE-HELP to study in 2022. It will also support the higher education providers at which these students are enrolled.

The Bill also extends FEE-HELP to eligible students who participate in the Government's microcredential pilot.

The microcredential pilot encourages universities to develop and deliver industry targeted, flexible short courses as part of building a highly skilled workforce.

The Bill makes other amendments to the *Higher Education Support Act* to clarify and improve its operation.

It clarifies arrangements around enabling courses.

Enabling courses help prepare students for higher education study like a bachelor's degree.

The measures in the Bill clarify that these courses won't count toward a student's lifetime limit of Commonwealth support.

The Bill also improves consistency by aligning the HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP citizenship and residency requirements for New Zealand citizens with the existing requirements for those students accessing a Commonwealth supported place.

The measure will require that these students be resident in Australia for the duration of their unit of study to be eligible for HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP.

The Bill strengthens administration and accountability by requiring that students seeking Commonwealth funding provide their Unique Student Identifier to their institution and the Commonwealth.

It also makes other minor technical amendments to the *Higher Education Support Act* and the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act* to improve their operation.

The measures in this Bill support the Government's commitment to equal access to higher education and building the skills of Australia's workforce.

I commend this Bill to the Chamber.

HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY BILL 2022

I rise to introduce this Bill to establish a High Speed Rail Authority as an independent body to advise on, plan and develop the high speed rail system in Australia. There has been little action to progress high speed rail in Australia until now.

This Government is committed to establishing this authority to oversee the construction and operation of a high speed rail network along Australia's eastern seaboard. The High Speed Rail Authority will reinvigorate work on this very important nation-building project, and Australians will no longer miss out.

The benefits identified in the former Labor government's comprehensive two-stage rail study were significant, not just in substantially reducing travel times; but also unlocking regional economies, providing significant employment opportunities, and supplying a remarkable economic boost in the medium and long term. The study found that, for every dollar of costs, there would be a return of \$2.30 in benefits to society.

The evidence has shown that without high speed rail, Australia is missing out on significant opportunities, which is why the Authority will be established. The Authority will provide expert independent advice and work with the Victorian, New South Wales (NSW), Australian Capital Territory, and Queensland governments, local government and the private sector to drive this change.

A high speed rail network will revolutionise interstate travel in Australia, significantly reducing travel time to move between capital cities compared to other modes of travel. Imagine a high speed train connecting capital cities from Melbourne, to Canberra, to Sydney, to Brisbane, all across our regional centres, through our semi-urban populations, straight to our international hubs with trips taking as little as three hours.

We will no longer be behind the rest of the developed world when it comes to land infrastructure and technology. Japan introduced its first bullet train in 1964, France in 1981, and China introduced in 2003. These countries have since grown their high speed networks, increased their top train speeds, and now celebrate annual patronage in the hundreds of millions on their high speed rail networks. Let's get on board and give the Australian public a modern, efficient, and high speed rail network.

A well-patronised high speed rail service will assist us to meet our net-zero commitment by providing lower ongoing energy and greenhouse emissions than interstate travel by air, and has an added benefit of reducing road traffic. Settlement patterns across Australia's east coast will be transformed, alleviating pressure on outer suburban areas and growth corridors in major cities.

The construction of high speed rail will secure significant jobs for the economy, impacting all Australians. Through Labor's National Rail Manufacturing Plan, the Australian Government will ensure that more trains are built in Australia by local manufacturing workers and that every dollar of federal funding spent on rail projects will go towards creating local jobs and providing a sustainable industry.

This Bill will ensure that high speed rail is progressed in Australia, with the immediate priority of updated analysis and commencing work on an initial connection between Sydney and Newcastle. Once established we will begin work on planning and overseeing the construction of a reliable, safe, efficient and cost-effective high speed rail network.

As a statutory agency, the Authority will provide independent and impartial advice on the policy and standards, develop business cases and secure corridors. Specific measures will be taken to prevent and reduce the environmental impact on surrounding land and the Authority will coordinate and consult with state and territory governments, industry, businesses and communities to enhance Australia's long term-trail investment.

Faster rail will continue under the Authority. Whilst the National Faster Rail Agency will be ceased, its functions will be absorbed into the Authority and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to retain the existing capability and expertise and ensure that both faster rail and high speed rail are delivered.

High speed rail and faster rail will help all Australians to secure jobs, build a better future for our regions, and reinvigorate manufacturing in Australia.

We know there is a strong interest internationally and from the private sector with experience in high speed rail. The Authority will work with consortiums collaboratively and with transparency to investigate alternative funding and financing opportunities including value uplift. The Authority will also commence work to secure corridors now and not waste any opportunities.

We have already committed \$500 million to commence early works and secure corridors for the rail connection between Sydney, the Central Coast and Newcastle. The Government will continue negotiations with the NSW Government on the allocation and other investment options will be identified between the Australian Government and NSW further down the line.

As a Government, it is expected that we serve the Australian community and improve the lives of the Australian people. Establishing the High Speed Rail Authority and investing in high speed rail will improve the lives of all Australians and transform our beautiful country. The time is now and we need to stop procrastinating and start taking action. This is a long term project with significant benefits and it is not just about a political cycle but rather a focus on Australia's future. A high speed rail network along the east coast of Australia will truly be a transformational project that has the ability to touch the lives of all Australians. It is a project that has the support of the regions and cities, and of businesses and industries. Now is the time to

complete transformational infrastructure projects that not only sets Australia up for the future but also provide jobs and opportunities immediately.

High speed rail will be an economic game changer for the country and will improve growth, access and sustainability. It will provide countless social benefits long into the future and create broad economic benefits for our regional centres.

The Bill I am introducing to you will allow all of these things to finally happen in this Parliament. We must not delay the Australian public any longer. Let us give our fellow Australians the bipartisan support to pass this Bill into legislation. The time is now to invest in our country's future.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2022

President

The Australian community has a clear expectation that defence personnel, veterans and their families are well looked after. This is an important task and responsibility of government—a solemn commitment.

I am pleased to be introducing this legislation today, as it demonstrates the Albanese Labor Government's commitment to addressing the adequacy of support to Totally and Permanently Incapacitated veterans—oft referred to as *TPI veterans* and their families, providing them greater financial support to ultimately deliver a better future for veterans and families.

Before the 2019 election, the then Prime Minister raised expectations he would increase the TPI Payment by committing to a review of the pension, even telling the TPI Federation they had a "compelling case", however after the election, funnily enough, no increase was recommended by that review.

Typical of the *all announcement no delivery* games of the previous Government, Labor Senators decided they couldn't rely on anyone else to get the job done—they rolled up their sleeves and initiated their own inquiry.

This Bill responds to that recommendation of that Labor initiated inquiry—the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into the *Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Payment (Special Rate of Disability Pension)* for Government to consider an increase to the TPI payment.

The Committee's report on the Inquiry was tabled in Parliament on 1 July 2021, recommending an increase to the TPI payment. The Committee did not provide advice on the quantum or amount of the increase, but suggested it should be "modest".

However, the Government of the day ignored the bipartisan recommendation, which was another slap in the face for our Veteran community.

This Bill implements the Albanese Labor Government's 2022 pre-election commitment to provide an increase to the TPI payment from 1 January 2023.

It is disappointing that it's taken a new Government to implement this necessary change, rather than action that could have been taken more than a year ago... but here we are.

This initiative implements the Senate Inquiry's recommendation, providing an increase of \$1,000 to the annual rate (or \$38.46 per fortnight) of TPI payment to ensure veterans and their families are better supported financially, helping keep up with cost of living pressures.

The increase to the TPI payment means it will be comparable with the national Minimum Wage and greater than the after tax national Minimum Wage a wage earner would receive.

This initiative recognises the importance of supporting veterans who have been severely impacted by their experiences in the Australian Defence Force.

The Bill will achieve this by amending the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* to increase the rate of pension payable to TPI veterans.

This Government is committed to implementing practical support measures to better support defence personnel, veterans and their families.

We want our service personnel, veterans, and veteran families to know that Australia is proud of them and that our country will always be there for them.

That they get the support they not only need, but deserve.

I commend the Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Ordered that the bills be listed on the *Notice Paper* as separate orders of the day.

Customs Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Customs Tariff Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Customs Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Customs Tariff Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

Treasury Laws Amendment (Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:35): I move: That these bills may proceed without formalities, may be taken together and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:36): I move: That these bills be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

CUSTOMS AMENDMENT (INDIA-AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION) BILL 2022

The Customs Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022 amends the *Customs Act 1901* (the Customs Act) to implement the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement.

India is a key strategic and economic partner for Australia and the Australian Government is committed to accelerating our economic ties with India. The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement will be an important driver for deepening our relationship.

Recent years have seen remarkable growth in the trading relationship between India and Australia, fuelled by the many complementarities between our two economies. The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement will secure Australia's foothold in the world's fastest growing major economy and enable Australian businesses to unlock or expand their operations in a market of nearly one and a half billion consumers, with a GDP of \$4.3 trillion.

The Agreement represents significant new trade diversification opportunities for Australian business. From the day IA-ECTA enters into force, 85 per cent of Australian goods exports by value to India will enter without tariffs and an additional 5 per cent will have tariffs eliminated over periods not exceeding 10 years. This is commercially significant for up to \$14.8 billion worth of Australian merchandise trade destined for the Indian market each year. The Agreement will also provide certainty and support Australian services suppliers and professionals doing business in India, currently our third largest services export market.

The amendments contained in this bill will insert into the Customs Act new rules of origin for 'Indian originating goods' and provisions for document retention and verification for 'Australian originating goods'. The amendments will outline when imported goods may be considered to have originating status and be eligible for preferential tariff treatment. Complementary amendments to the *Customs Tariff Act 1995* will provide for the preferential rates of customs duty applicable to goods that are originating under the Agreement. These will be made by the Customs Tariff Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022.

These bills were referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) on 1 August 2022 and debate on the bills will be dependent on the advice provided in its report. It is anticipated that JSCOT will report in mid-November.

I commend this bill to the Chamber.

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (INDIA-AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION) BILL 2022

The Customs Tariff Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022 will amend the *Customs Tariff Act 1995* to implement the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (IA-ECTA).

The amendments contained in this Bill will insert a new Schedule of preferential rates of customs duty for goods that are Indian originating. Schedule 10A will be comprised of tariff subheadings for goods that have a rate of customs duty other than 'Free' at entry into force of the IA-ECTA. The goods classified to these subheadings will include tobacco, alcohol and fuel products, which will have an excise-equivalent rate of customs duty, and certain goods containing iron, steel and aluminium, which will be phased to 'Free' over approximately five years.

The Bill will also amend concessional items in Schedule 4 of the *Customs Tariff Act 1995* to extend concessional treatment to goods that are Indian originating.

The amendments contained in this Bill complement the amendments contained in the Customs Amendment (India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022.

I commend this bill to the Chamber.

CUSTOMS AMENDMENT (AUSTRALIA-UNITED KINGDOM FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION)
BILL 2022

The Customs Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022 amends the *Customs Act 1901* (the Customs Act) to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the Agreement).

The Agreement will bring both commercial and strategic benefits. The United Kingdom is the world's fifth largest economy and our fifth largest two-way trading partner, with A\$31.8 billion in goods and services trade in 2020. The Agreement will deliver preferential market access for Australia's key exports, providing important diversification opportunities and removing barriers that were impeding trade while the United Kingdom was a member of the European Union. It will also improve certainty for exporters and importers, service suppliers and investors across the whole economy.

The Agreement will facilitate a strong and resilient economic recovery from COVID-19, while reducing the vulnerability of Australia's trade and investment to future crises. It will enhance Australia's economic engagement with the United Kingdom through strengthened trade rules that will help build upon our already healthy trading relationship.

The amendments contained in this bill would insert into the Customs Act the rules of origin and document retention requirements called for by the Agreement. Those amendments outline when imported goods may be considered to have originating status and be eligible for preferential tariff treatment. Complementary amendments to the *Customs Tariff Act 1995* are required to provide for these preferential rates of customs duty.

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties is currently considering the Agreement and is scheduled to report in mid-November. This bill is being introduced now to give the Parliament more time to consider the amendments required to implement this Agreement.

I commend this bill to the Chamber.

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (AUSTRALIA-UNITED KINGDOM FREE TRADE AGREEMENT
IMPLEMENTATION) BILL 2022

The Customs Tariff Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022 will amend the *Customs Tariff Act 1995* (the Customs Tariff Act) to implement the preferential rates of customs duty for goods determined to be United Kingdom originating. These amendments will ensure that Australia fulfils its obligations as a signatory to the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement and is prepared for the Agreement to enter into force.

This bill will insert a new Schedule of duty rates into the Customs Tariff Act. Schedule 15 will contain the preferential rates of customs duty for imported goods that satisfy the rules of origin set out in the Agreement. Australia has committed to reducing the duty rate on most originating goods to 'Free' over the years following the entry into force of the Agreement. Excise equivalent goods, which are certain fuel, alcohol, tobacco and petroleum products, that are originating under the agreement will continue to have excise equivalent customs duties applied, so they receive the same treatment as domestically produced equivalents.

The bills will also provide for the suspension of preferential tariffs for United Kingdom originating goods classified to certain subheadings of Chapters 72 and 73 of Schedule 3 of the Customs Tariff Act, which deal with iron and steel goods. When activated, the customs duty rate applied to these goods would be the 5 per cent general rate of customs duty which currently applies. The suspension will be activated when the United Kingdom global safeguard applies to Australian steel products. The United Kingdom global steel safeguard is currently in place and has been extended to 30 June 2024. The suspension, therefore, will apply from entry into force of the Agreement.

The suspension of preference will end from the date that the United Kingdom Safeguard ends or no longer applies to Australian steel. From this date the preferential duty rate applied to certain goods from the United Kingdom will be reduced in accordance with the rate that applies under Schedule 15.

Finally, this bill also amends certain tariff concessions to maintain their scope and ensure that commitments made under the Agreement are honoured.

The amendments in this bill complement the amendments in the Customs Amendment (Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement Implementation) Bill 2022, which will amend the *Customs Act 1901*.

I commend this bill to the Chamber.

TREASURY LAWS AMENDMENT (AUSTRALIA-INDIA ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND TRADE
AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION) BILL 2022

The bill will amend the *international tax agreements act 1953* to implement the agreement reached between Australia and India on 2 April 2022, as part of the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement.

Specifically, the Bill will adjust the taxation on certain payments or credits made to Indian residents providing technical services remotely to Australian customers. It aligns Australia's tax treatment of Indian residents providing technical services remotely, with residents from other countries.

As Australia's seventh largest trade partner, India shares a close economic relationship with Australia. This measure will further strengthen this relationship.

In accordance with the trade agreement's side letters on taxation, this measure will commence on the later of the day of Royal Assent and the day the trade agreement enters into force. It will apply to assessments for income years starting on or after the commencement of this amendment. It does not commence at all if the trade agreement never enters into force.

Full details of the measure are contained in the Explanatory Memorandum.

Debate adjourned.

Senator CAROL BROWN: I move:

That resumption of the debate be made an order of the day for a later hour.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Electoral Matters Joint Committee

Membership

Message received from the House of Representatives notifying the Senate of the appointment of Ms Chaney to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

BILLS

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Lifting the Income Limit for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card) Bill 2022

Supply Bill (No. 3) 2022-2023

Supply Bill (No. 4) 2022-2023

Supply (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2022-2023

Aged Care Amendment (Implementing Care Reform) Bill 2022

Australian Human Rights Commission Legislation Amendment (Selection and Appointment) Bill 2022

Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (AFP Powers and Other Matters) Bill 2022

Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2022

Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022

Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022

National Health Amendment (General Co-payment) Bill 2022

Treasury Laws Amendment (More Competition, Better Prices) Bill 2022

Assent

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the Senate that he had assented to the bills.

Crimes Amendment (Penalty Unit) Bill 2022

Report from Committee

Senator CICCONE (Victoria—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (18:37): Pursuant to order and at the request of the chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, Senator Green, I present a report of the committee on the consideration of the Crimes Amendment (Penalty Unit) Bill 2022.

Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022

In Committee

Consideration resumed.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Pratt) (18:38): We are dealing with the amendments moved by Senator Roberts. The question is that part 2 of schedule 4 stand as printed.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (18:39): I would like to provide some advice to the chamber just so that they are aware. Tonight is the first Monday under the new routine of business, where there will be no divisions from 6.30 until adjournment. I want to take this opportunity to remind senators that in lieu of calling a division they are able to record their voting position in *Hansard* by way of a request to the chair. This approach would facilitate the smooth running of the chamber during this time and ensure that we are able to continue consideration of the legislative program as well.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (18:39): The debate was interrupted because we ran out of time, so I'd like to continue with some questions to the minister with regard to this bill. The last question I asked the minister was: what benefits are given to which people with regard to being able to pay cash? The minister responded by saying that Aboriginals in certain remote areas could actually pay cash. Then I asked: what about white Australians? The minister's response to me was that I'd gone on my racist rant again. What I'd like to ask the minister, if it is racism, is to please tell me: how do you define every other Australian who is not Aboriginal? Don't you believe that your policy in this bill, which clearly defines that Aboriginal people can pay by cash in remote areas where other Australians can't, is racist when it's clearly based on race and not on an individual needs basis? So who is the racist here, Minister? Please answer my question.

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (18:41): That's not what I actually said, Senator Hanson. But what we've said is that it is feasible that some people will still be able to pay cash in certain circumstances. That would obviously be determined through the department. I gave some examples of what that would be, whether it be in a remote Indigenous community, whether it be in some remote geographic areas or whether it be someone who's a domestic violence victim. Those are some examples that I gave. Obviously, how that would be determined would go through a departmental process.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (18:41): In the bill you define people of Aboriginality, Aboriginals who can actually access these childcare services. I know the definition of an Aboriginal came up earlier, which is self-determination accepted by the elders, or the fact that you were born Aboriginal. Are you happy with these definitions?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (18:42): I've already provided an answer to this question, Senator Hanson. The definition of an eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in the bill is based on the definition in the Australian Education Regulation that has been in place since 2014.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (18:42): I have grave concerns about this because, if you look at the census of people claiming Aboriginality, that they are Aboriginals, in the last census it was around about 850,000 people. In the one prior to that it was about 670,000 people. There has been an increase over five years of 23 per cent to 24 per cent of people claiming to be of Aboriginal decent, whereas the rest of the population increased by eight per cent, and that included migrants into the country. Could it be possible that a lot of people are jumping on the bandwagon claiming to be Aboriginals when they are not and claiming benefits from the taxpayer that they are clearly not entitled to? Your silence shows me you can't even answer that question because you don't know how to answer it.

Senator Chisholm: It didn't deserve an answer.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Pratt): I need to call you before you jump up, Minister. Senator Hanson.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (18:43): If we have a discrepancy in this nation and a division because people are coming from other countries, islanders who are claiming Aboriginality and claiming benefits in this nation purely because of the fact that they can under this definition that we have—what defines an Aboriginal is self-identification—do you believe that the definition is good enough for them to get taxpayer funded services that the hardworking people of Australia have to pay for?

Senator CHISHOLM (Queensland—Assistant Minister for Education, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (18:44): I have no idea what point you're trying to make, Senator Hanson. But I think the aspersions you're trying to cast are outrageous. They don't belong in this chamber at all. If you've got a serious contribution to make, I'm happy to stay here and answer questions, but I'm not going to put up with nonsense.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (18:44): I also want to say that Senator Hanson is spreading pretty baseless conspiracy theories, and it is absolutely vile. I move:

That the question be now put.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Pratt): The question is that the question be put. Senator Hanson, I will draw your attention to the question before the chair. Senator Faruqi has moved that the question be put. Those of that opinion say 'aye'. Those against say 'no'. I think the ayes have it.

Senator Hanson: The noes have it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR: Senator Hanson, do you want your dissent recorded, or do you want to defer the division?

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (18:45): I want to defer the vote till tomorrow. What Senator Faruqi has said can't be put to the chamber for a vote, because there's no voting.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR: There is voting on the voices, but, because you've asked for a division, I can't put the question. Senator Faruqi?

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (18:46): Chair, I'm just wondering, based on what the minister said earlier, whether we can still record our voting positions without having a division tonight.

The TEMPORARY CHAIR: Well, you did put the question that the motion be put, Senator Faruqi. That was carried on the voices, but I cannot implement that because it needs a vote in the chamber. I'm advised by the clerks that we have to report progress.

Progress reported.

(Quorum formed)

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (18:50): I rise to make a contribution on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022 and indicate the coalition's position in relation to this bill, which is that we will be supporting the bill. But we're also intending to move an amendment to increase the fortnightly work bonus from \$300 to \$600 a fortnight from 1 January 2024, which is, of course, when the government's temporary work bonus concession balance measure comes to an end.

In making those points, I'll state at the outset that the coalition will always pursue well-designed policy changes to ease the pressures faced in the labour market, be they worker shortages or inflationary pressures, and the pension that so many in our community rely on shouldn't financially punish older Australians who want to continue to work. In June of this year, 78,000 of the 2.6 million age-pension recipients in this country had earnings from employment in the last fortnight; for the DSP, 52,400 recipients had earnings, from a total of 765,000 recipients. For both payments, the majority, 65,500 of the aged pensioners and 37,000 of DSP recipients, had earnings of over \$250 in the fortnight. Five thousand five hundred age pensioners and 2,300 DSP recipients were on zero rate payment—that is, they'd had their payment suspended.

In its most recent Business Conditions and Sentiments release, the ABS reported that almost a third of employing businesses were having difficulty finding suitable staff. I think everyone who goes out into their community and talks with small business, with primary producers or with any employer would be well familiar with that fact. Regional areas, as well, are suffering from staff shortages as a result of depressed labour mobility between regions and of course also reduced migration, which is in place for obvious reasons. The challenges in finding employees post-COVID was highlighted by the National Farmers Federation in its submission to the Senate inquiry into this legislation. Before borders closed in February 2020, there were 337,800 people working in agriculture, forestry and fishing. In February 2022, that figure had fallen to 301,800. So that's over 30,000, or nearly 40,000 people fewer in that period of time. A recent survey by the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry showed 75 per cent of its members reported struggling to find suitable staff to hire.

Pensioners who choose to engage in some paid employment during their retirement typically have higher incomes and so of course can support a higher standard of living than those who don't. They also gain significant non-financial benefits, including stronger social connections, something I think we all need to consider as important, staying mentally active and keeping physically fit. In its submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into Senator Smith's very good Social Services Legislation Amendment (Enhancing Pensioner and Veteran Workforce Participation) Bill 2022, Anglicare noted: 'As well as much needed income, work can give people purpose, reduce social isolation, and foster connection to community.' Pensioners who choose to work during their retirement make a valuable contribution to Australia's economy and to its community. Around 80,000 age pensioners are supplementing their pension income with paid employment.

The coalition had a proven track record of developing sound, sensible and practical policy to address the challenges faced by pensioners. The government has once again endorsed coalition policy by adopting schedules 1 and 2 from a government bill of the last parliament. Those schedules of that bill were introduced by the former coalition government in February to incentivise recipients of the age pension, the disability support pension and certain veterans' entitlements to undertake or increase paid employment. Of course, the coalition's bill didn't progress because of the prorogation of parliament and the election.

Under the current policy settings, pensioners with employment income have their age pension cancelled if their total income exceeds the pension income test limit for more than 12 weeks. They also lose access to their pensioner concession card after 12 weeks. It's quite clear to anyone who examines these settings that they can act as a deterrent for pensioners and those receiving the equivalent Department of Veterans' Affairs payments. Understandably, many pensioners want to work but do not want to lose their pension status and have their pensioner concession card cancelled for earning too much. They also do not want to complete a full application to have their pension or pensioner concession card reinstated.

Both schedules 1 and 2 of this bill, initiatives of the former coalition government, increase flexibility for those people over the pension age who want to work by allowing pensioners to move easily between the pension and periods of work. Pensioners with employment income whose total income exceeds the income limit will have their age pension suspended for a period of up to two years, rather than cancelled after 12 weeks. If at any time during the two-year period their income is at a level that they can return to the age pension, they will benefit from an abridged reapplication process. Acknowledging the importance of the pensioner concession card to pensioners, this bill extends the time a person can keep their pensioner concession card while their payments are suspended. The bill will increase and align the amount of time age pensioners and disability support pensioners are able to retain their concession card to two years.

Relating to the work bonus, schedule 3, both the coalition and stakeholder groups have advocated for an increase to the work bonus. State and territory chambers of commerce as well as the Council on the Ageing, the National Seniors Association, the National Farmers Federation, the Benevolent Society and the Housing Industry Association, amongst others, have voiced their support in providing pensioners with support to re-enter the workforce.

On 26 June this year, just weeks after the election, the coalition announced that a Dutton government would support older Australians who choose to work more by doubling the amount of work bonus from \$300 to \$600 a fortnight that could be earned without reducing pension payments. This coalition policy makes it further worthwhile for older Australians to pick up an extra shift or work extra hours and help businesses across Australia with labour shortages. Back then, the coalition called on the Albanese government to implement the policy immediately, to help relieve pressure on a very tight labour market. Of course, sadly, as we know, there was no response.

In August, the coalition introduced legislation to double the amount pensioners can earn before their pension payments are impacted and also remove barriers for working pensioners deterred by the risk of losing their pension or pensioner concession card or the requirement to complete a full application every time they become eligible for the pension. Again, there was no response forthcoming from the government when this legislation was introduced. It took the Jobs and Skills Summit for the government to belatedly wander into this policy space.

While we welcome the government's long overdue announcement of an increase in the work bonus income, we said this temporary measure was too little, too late. The government has continued to drag its feet on incentivising pensioners to take up some employment without penalty. Pensioners could have had their work bonus already increased, but the coalition's amendment to increase work bonus payments to \$600 a fortnight, which had been passed in the Senate, were voted down by the government in the House only a matter of weeks ago.

The government's temporary alternative, to provide a \$4,000 increase to their work bonus concession balance, was originally due to terminate on 30 June 2023. The government finally listened to the coalition—and to stakeholders, importantly—and extended this increase to the end of 2023. However, with this extension of time, more can still be done. Increasing the amount pensioners can earn every fortnight will make a meaningful difference to household finances, and this increase should continue beyond 30 December 2023.

That's why the coalition is calling on the government to increase this work bonus from \$300 to \$600 per fortnight from 1 January 2024, to further incentivise eligible pensioners to undertake additional hours of paid employment. This increase would commence on 1 January 2024 when the government's temporary measure ends and would be ongoing, subject to an annual review to ensure that these measures remain appropriate.

With regard to the amendment I have already referred to, currently under subsection 1073A(a) of the Social Security Act, pensioners can earn income concessions of up to \$300 over an instalment period of 14 days. The coalition's amendment will enable eligible pensioners and relevant veteran entitlement recipients to earn up to \$600

work bonus a fortnight and still receive the maximum pension payment. Pensioners will continue to accrue an unused concession balance up to a maximum of \$7,800, which can exempt future earnings from the pension income test.

The amendments will encourage and support eligible pensioners wishing to re-enter the workforce or increase their work hours, enabling them to contribute to relieving the skill and labour shortages Australia is so badly suffering. The added income received by working pensioners and veterans means they are better able to support themselves and their dependants, considering the economic climate of increasing inflation and the growing costs of living.

In June, recognising the challenges businesses face in hiring and retaining staff, the coalition announced that a Dutton government would support older Australians by, as I have already stated, doubling the amount of income pensioners and veteran service pensioners can earn without reducing pension payments. The amendments follow through on the policy that was announced and will take, as I have already said, effect from 1 January 2024. It includes an annual review mechanism. It requires a ministerial review to be tabled in parliament on the operation of the amendments.

It's important to make the point that the pension should not financially punish older Australians who want to continue to work. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in its prebudget submission made last December, noted:

There is an army of older workers with the skills Australia needs who would still like to work, but don't participate in the workforce as it reduces their pension.

In its submission to the Senate inquiry into this bill, ACCI also noted:

Considering the deeply rooted labour market conditions, faltering productivity rates, and downgrades to domestic and international economic growth forecasts, these amendments will end long before the challenges facing businesses and the economy are solved.

I think it's important to take note of those points from an organisation that is well connected with the business community and employers and the pressures they are facing. If they're saying that these measures already in place are going to come to an end too soon, it is a good reason to look to the coalition's amendments.

The amendments are sensible policy that will provide long-term certainty for both businesses and pensioners. They build on other measures of the bill originally and proudly introduced by the coalition before the last election. Again, the amendments will incentivise pensioners to remain engaged in the workplace or to get those few extra shifts or extra hours without any penalty being applied, will provide businesses with an additional source of experienced staff and will provide all the other benefits that flow from being able to remain connected to society and to remain physically fit. All of those are positives. I will commend those amendments when we get to them.

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania—Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate) (19:02): I'm also pleased to make a contribution in relation to the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022. As has been highlighted, the coalition government introduced a similar bill—with, in fact, a very similar name—in February this year aimed at incentivising older pensioners and veterans to undertake or increase their paid employment activities. I'm pleased to note that the government's bill adopts some of the measures proposed in our earlier bill. As a member of the Community Affairs Legislation Committee, I have taken particular notice and interest in this piece of legislation. It does encourage eligible recipients of the age pension, the disability support pension, the carer payment and some veteran entitlements to engage in paid work.

Before the election the coalition announced that a Dutton government would support older Australians who choose to work more, by doubling the amount of income eligible pensioners and veteran service pensioners can earn without reducing their pension payment. Essentially, pensioners would be able to increase the amount of money they earned fortnightly from \$300 to \$600 while still receiving their pension entitlement.

Under the coalition's earlier legislation, if a pensioner's income from employment exceeded the income limit, their age pension would be suspended for up to two years rather than be cancelled after 12 weeks. If during that two-year period the pensioner's income dropped to a level where they could return to the age pension, they could reapply for that entitlement via, as Senator Duniam mentioned, an abridged process by updating their income-and-asset information with Services Australia. Our bill also allowed for working age pensioners, disability support pensioners and some veteran entitlements recipients and their pension partners to retain their pension concession card for up to two years after their payment ceased.

My colleague Senator Dean Smith introduced a private senator's bill in August to bring the coalition's policy to fruition and help around 80,000 pensioners. In September, Senator Smith also moved a successful amendment to the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Lifting the Income Limit for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card) Bill, which incorporated many of these initiatives. However, the government later used its numbers to

exclude that amendment. The bill also included extended qualification for pensioner concession cards and suspension of benefits and entitlements instead of cancellation, as per the bill introduced by the former government on 10 February.

In addition to having a similar name, much of the content within this bill is the same as the legislation introduced by the coalition earlier this year. The first two schedules in this government bill replicate the measures in the coalition's bill and in part of Senator Smith's bill. These measures could have been enacted months ago, so I don't think we need to keep pensioners waiting any longer for these changes to come into effect.

As it stands now, the bill we are debating today enables eligible pensioners and veterans to benefit from a maximum \$7,800 increase to their work bonus concession balance, which can exempt future earnings from the pension income test. While the coalition welcomes a measure that allows pensioners to earn more, the measure is only temporary. Pensioners should receive support beyond the end of 2023. To this end, it would be great to see the work bonus increase from \$300 to \$600 per fortnight to be reviewed every 12 months rather than simply ending in December 2023.

Businesses in my home state of Tasmania and across Australia are right now facing industry-wide workforce and skills shortages which are impacting productivity and economic growth. We're also still recovering from the impact of COVID-19 on our economy and dealing with high inflationary pressure. Last year, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry called on the government to encourage more pensioners back into the workforce by letting them earn without losing their benefits. The organisation backed this up again in June this year, asking the Labor government to consider this important issue at the much-publicised Jobs and Skills Summit in September. Indeed, 36 immediate actions were identified at that event for a bigger, better-trained and more productive workforce. How many have been implemented to date?

Following the summit, the ACCI made a submission to the inquiry of the Community Affairs Legislation Committee, highlighting that businesses are already working at full capacity and looking to secure more labour. The ACCI submission said:

There is now almost one job available for every person seeking work, with 470,900 job vacancies and 487,700 unemployed in August.

It went on to say:

Targeted and ongoing public effort has the capacity to increase workforce participation. With productivity growth over the past decade at 1.1 per cent per year, its slowest pace in 60 years, and the RSA downgrading GDP forecasts to 3¼ per cent over 2022, 1¾ per cent over 2023 and 1¾ per cent over 2024, there is a need to ensure maximum participation.

Yet we are still debating this topic today.

Labour shortages are one of the top issues facing Australian businesses right now. Quite simply, if businesses don't have access to enough workers, they can't run. Let's help our businesses stay open.

All sides of politics recognise this sticking point right now, and we have a good solution. I commend the government for endorsing coalition policy by adopting schedules 1 and 2 from our earlier bill. However, the solution this bill provides will be very short term, not nearly long enough for the pensioners to supplement the income they are watching diminish as they pay more for essentials in today's climate, and not long enough for Australian businesses to reap the benefit of this experienced and willing workforce. We're not suggesting that the work bonus increase becomes a permanent fixture within the legislation, but that's why an annual review would be excellent. That small change would make the world of difference.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (19:08): I rise to speak on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022. This bill makes small but meaningful improvements that will benefit age pensioners and some veteran recipients. It'll mean that people's payments will be suspended for two years, but not cancelled, if people's incomes mean they can't receive the payment. It'll enable people to keep their pensioner concession cards for up to two years after their payment ceases. That's a welcome measure, and we support it. Finally, and most importantly, it makes changes to the work bonus to increase the amount that age pensioners are able to earn if they are working before their pension gets cut.

To begin with, I want to thank the minister's office for their close and constructive engagement on this piece of legislation. The minister moved an amendment in the House of Representatives as a result of negotiations with the Greens and advocacy with organisations such as National Seniors to extend the time that this scheme will operate to December next year. That is a concrete improvement in the bill.

I also want to thank the opposition for their advocacy on this issue. They put forward a clear, concrete proposal that would help people on income support, and we welcomed that. I want to say to the opposition and to the government that we'd like to see some other proposals for people on JobSeeker to allow them to earn more as well.

They're on lower incomes than people on pensions, and their effective tax rate, which operates as a disincentive to work, is much, much higher.

Finally, I'd like to thank National Seniors Australia for their close engagement and advocacy on this issue. We recognise that they would like to see further changes to the age pension, and we look forward to continuing to work with them on how the system can be improved.

As we discuss the measures in this bill before us, I want to also contrast that with what else needs to occur—that is, a change to the appallingly low rate of JobSeeker. There is a desperate need for a guaranteed liveable income. The benefits that are flowing through to age pensioners in this bill could also flow through to other people on income support. These same measures included in this bill that increase the income support benefits that age pensioners are able to receive could be extended to other people on income support.

Mere days ago, we saw the collapse of Deliveroo, which is leaving around 15,000 workers without their usual source of income with no more than a few minutes notice. Sadly, we know that many people working as delivery drivers will not be able to access income support because of the restrictions in place. We know that even those who are eligible will likely face hours of paperwork and potentially weeks of waiting. Then, when they do receive the payment, it will be a vastly inadequate one, vastly below the poverty line.

Imagine that you're a jobseeker looking for permanent, reliable work that delivers you a decent income. You get a bit of work here and there—casual, unreliable, unpredictable work. You're certainly not going to go off JobSeeker in order to take this work because, although you might get enough work this week, who knows what will happen next week or next month?

Imagine you're this jobseeker and you've got health issues that enable you to work more some weeks but not the rest. Of course, under our punitive system, you're not eligible for the disability support pension even though you've got these health issues—not that the DSP gives you all that much more than JobSeeker.

Imagine that this week you are able to work. Imagine that you are actually just like the age pensioner, somebody who is able to fill the labour shortage gaps that we are facing in this country. Your health is good this week, and there are some extra hours of cleaning available at a local business. You'd really like to take up this opportunity to pay a few bills, to get the washing machine fixed or to pay off some of the loan that a friend generously lent to you six months ago so that you could repair your car. But it's not worth it.

This bill is giving age pensioners an \$11,800 work bonus. They are going to be able to earn that amount before their payments start to be reduced—again, we welcome that; we're supporting this bill—but, unlike those pensioners, the jobseeker we're talking about has a work credit of only \$1,000 before they start to have their payments reduced. That means that as soon as they start getting a bit of extra work their payments get slashed. In fact, they are facing an equivalent marginal tax rate of over 60 per cent in many instances. If we look at the modelling of that, for some jobseekers, depending on their circumstances, it's the equivalent marginal tax rate of between 60 and 80 per cent. So not only are our jobseekers who are capable of working some more hours and of working to top up their JobSeeker payment having to scrimp by on JobSeeker and get by on charity or loans to survive but they just can't get ahead. And they're certainly not being incentivised to take up extra work if it's available.

That's the first reason why I wanted to bring the issue of jobseekers into this debate. It's because they, like aged pensioners, are available to take up extra work opportunities as they're available. They should also have available this increase in the amount they can earn before their payments are slashed. The other reason why we're actually debating this issue today and debating increased income limits for age pensioners is because we know that living on the age pension can be a real struggle, particularly if you're an age pensioner who is renting a house privately. Pensioners, when you ask them if they want to be able to earn extra money, say that they sure do, because surviving on the pension is a struggle. They say they need to be able to earn extra in order to survive.

But, of course, as well as this focus on pensioners, we also need to be focusing on the people on income support who are surviving on much, much less. Those are the people on JobSeeker, on youth allowance and on parenting allowance. Jobseekers are expected to exist on \$48 a day when the Henderson poverty line is \$88 a day. We heard in the debate on this bill and in the committee hearings on this bill from the Australian Council of Trade Unions. They have publicly called for an increase in the JobSeeker rate. We've heard that from the Business Council of Australia, who acknowledged earlier in the pandemic that the rate needed to be raised. And we've heard it from social services and community organisations around the country. These two things go hand in hand: we need to increase the rate as well as allow people to earn more. Most importantly, we've heard this time and time again directly from the people who have been forced to rely on inadequate payments. So I have been sharing stories in this place from people whose lives have been impacted by the failure to act on JobSeeker and other payments. I want to thank them for their courage in sharing their stories; it has been a privilege to try to bring their voices into this place.

I also want to mention specifically that the rate of JobSeeker is an issue that we've heard about from some senior members of this government. When legislation passed through parliament with a miniscule increase to JobSeeker after the COVID supplement ended, multiple Labor ministers said that they thought the increase wasn't enough and that they would act. Well, now they're in government but we are yet to see any action. The now Deputy Prime Minister said in a speech:

The government is in control of the budget and the purse strings, and, in order to change the budget, ultimately we need to change the government. This is a matter to which Labor is committed. In government, it is something we would certainly seek to act upon.

The legislation before us today is a great step forward for age pensioners but we are yet to see any action on a change in policy that would increase the rate of JobSeeker or which would allow them to earn more. All we have got so far from the government is a commitment that was made in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, that they would commit to review the rate of JobSeeker before budgets.

So let me give them a hand with that review. The rate of JobSeeker is inadequate. I asked about this very issue in estimates and it turns out that a 'review' actually doesn't mean whether the rates are adequate. It turns out that the review isn't a review. Senator Ayres answered my questions in estimates, and it wasn't 'a review' as a noun, it was 'to review' as a verb. All that meant was that there was an informal discussion between the head of the department and the minister. That review wasn't examining whether the rate was adequate, or whether people were able to live on the payment or whether the rate is so low that it's putting people at risk of domestic violence, food scarcity or homelessness. No, the review is whether the government think they can afford to increase the rate.

At the same time, the government tells us that the stage 3 tax cuts are the Holy Grail of pre-election commitments. They cannot be reviewed, considered or contemplated in any way, shape or form despite costing the budget bottom line \$250 billion over the next decade. But, no, we must not touch them. In fact it seems Labor ministers aren't even allowed to look at the stage 3 tax cuts out of the corner of their eye, probably because if they did the right-wing media would assemble like a school of piranhas desperate to draw blood on the premise of a broken promise.

I hope the Labor Party is going to find the courage of its convictions and, in addition to moving on age pensioners, will act on increasing the rate of JobSeeker. We hope that will happen because it will make a crucial difference to the people who are forced to live below the poverty line and are not able to earn anything extra without having it absolutely slashed by the income limits. In the meantime, we will keep calling for a rise in the rate of JobSeeker as often as we can. I will keep raising it in any debate on any bit of legislation where it is relevant because we need it. People are living in desperate poverty. We will keep calling for a guaranteed liveable income for anyone who needs it. Poverty is a political choice. It is a choice that the Liberal Party made for over a decade, except for that brief window when the COVID supplements lifted payments above the poverty line. And it's a choice that sadly the Labor government made in their first budget, leaving hundreds of thousands of people relying on payments that are below the poverty line.

With regard to this legislation, in line with this I foreshadow that we will have some substantive amendments during the Committee of the Whole debate. These amendments reflect the work we were putting in to developing a policy platform before the election. I want to particularly thank the drafters for their incredible work on this. The Social Security Act is a large and complex piece of legislation, and I thank them, particularly given the time frames and the small team that's available. We are putting these forward as substantive amendments because we want to make the point that poverty is a political choice and that politicians in this place, in the way they vote, are making choices that impact the lives of people across the country. The amendment items in the sheet that's been circulated in the chamber set out clear changes that we call on all parties in this place to support, and most important among them is raising the rate of income support to \$88 a day. We know that the rate of JobSeeker and other payments is too low, and we know that it needs to be increased. Here today is an opportunity to do that.

We also have an amendment to abolish mutual obligations. We've seen reporting about how these systems have failed to help the most vulnerable and instead have left people interacting with a baffling and at times cruel system. We can end it. We have amendments to provide earlier access to the age pension to help people who, in previous years, would have been able to access the age pension at 65 but now are no longer able to do so. Simply put, we think this could make a huge difference to thousands of older Australians who are eking out a living, surviving until they reach age pension age. This is particularly true for First Nations people who we know face a lower life expectancy.

We have an amendment to lower the age for JobSeeker from 22 to 18, and that, in combination with removing mutual obligations, would make a huge difference to thousands of students around the country. Too many people are forced to study full-time on payments that are inadequate. This would change that for them. Finally, we have an amendment to extend the work bonus to other income support groups. If people can enable those on the age pension

to earn more before losing their income support, why can't we do it for people on JobSeeker or the DSP? That is a simple question that I want to put to everyone in this place.

Senator DAVID POCOCK (Australian Capital Territory) (19:23): I rise to speak in support of the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022. According to the Department of Social Services only three per cent of pensioners receive income from employment. According to recent reports employers are struggling to fill about 480,000 jobs. Pensioners represent an eminently qualified pool of worker that we could better utilise. Traditionally, pensioners have been rightly cautious about taking up work for fear of how it will impact their pensions. Understandably, not everyone wants to go to the hassle of liaising with Services Australia and risking their pension just to work for a few hours here and there or to work for a couple of weeks over the holidays.

Removing the barriers standing in the way of getting pensioners to take up more hours or get back into the workforce is good public policy. I share the government's optimism that these changes to the work bonus will get seniors back into the workforce at a time when we desperately need them. The changes would give senior Australians more flexibility by putting \$4,000 into their work bonus income banks upfront. This means that senior Australians are better able to consider seasonal work, whether that's accounting at tax time or retail around the holidays. I also support this change being implemented as a trial and note that the government has extended the trial to the end of 2023. Clearly, there are a lot of priorities for our social services budget, and I believe we need to be looking closely at the effectiveness of each of our programs so that we can refine them over time and also make room for new ideas. As we move on through the parliamentary term, I will keep asking the question of whether this program is working and whether it needs to be refined.

I want to speak briefly about the amendments that will be moved by the Greens on this bill. I will always support raising the rate of JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and other payments to those most in need. I have spoken about this many times in this place because it's not right to leave people behind. We know that inequality has huge implications for the fabric of our society and for the cohesion that many have taken for granted. Dealing with rising inequality and having an effective safety net is something that we should all support. This is about priorities. We've heard, over and over, how tight the budget is, yet we've seen no talk of winding back fossil fuel subsidies—reportedly near \$12 billion a year—and then we see additional ones like \$1.9 billion for the Middle Arm project. This is clearly about priorities, and we're not treating the discussion about JobSeeker with the urgency it deserves. I commend Senator Rice for the way that she continues to raise this issue.

Here in the ACT, just beyond these walls, we have too many people living in, frankly, terrible conditions. There are over 38,000 Canberrans living below the poverty line, and that includes some 9,000 children. Reports suggest that one in six children in Australia are now growing up in poverty. That should concern everyone in this place, and we should be working to ensure that that doesn't happen—because we can change that. A recent study by Care's financial counselling found that Canberra households living in private rentals face a shortfall of \$100 a week. The cost of rent for a two-bedroom unit in Canberra has increased by 7.4 per cent in the past year. If you're living on a payment, you cannot afford to rent privately. With 160,000 people on the social housing waitlist nationwide, social housing is not an option for most people. In asking people to support themselves on \$48 a day, we are asking people to live in their cars. We're better than this. If the Senate is willing, we can raise the rate today and grant kids, students, and pensioners a better quality of life.

On the other amendments proposed by the Greens, I've not had the opportunity to look at them in detail and provide scrutiny. We were provided with them only this morning, and I note that they are not small amendments. I haven't seen any of the costings or analysis behind them and I haven't had the time to consult with experts, let alone people in the ACT. Many of these amendments are policies that I would likely support, but if my support is needed then I need to better understand the benefits, the impacts and the potential consequences before I cast my vote. While I will support the increase in JobSeeker, I will be abstaining from the other amendments put forward by the Greens. However, in doing so I want to say that I welcome more discussion on this. We have turned a blind eye to this for too long. There are so many Australians doing it tough. There are Australians with jobs doing it tough. And much of the talk in the parliament has been around dealing with the cost-of-living crisis faced across the country, so let's not forget people who are unemployed and relying on JobSeeker to put food on the table for themselves and their family.

This is important. This is important for those people, those families, those children who are having to grow up in poverty, and this is important for all of the communities that we come from, all of the towns and cities. This is about deciding what kind of country we want to be—whether we want to be a country that looks after the people who need support to get back on their feet or a country that is willing to say, as one of the wealthiest countries in the history of the world, we simply can't afford to give them a helping hand. I certainly believe that we can. I'd suggest looking at the budget and the \$12 billion going to fossil fuels in the form of subsidies. This is about choice, and I'd

urge my colleagues here in the Senate on all sides of politics to really consider this. Consider the impact that it is going to have on the future of our great country—having one in six children grow up in poverty. We have the means to deal with it. We can be a compassionate country. We can deal with this. We can be part of starting to deal with the growing inequality that should be a concern to all of us here.

I commend this bill to the Senate. It will certainly help a number of pensioners and will help ease some pressures in businesses across the country. Hopefully this is the first step in looking at social security in Australia and coming up with a fairer system.

Senator HANSON (Queensland—Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation) (19:32): The Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022 will enable eligible social security pensioners over age pension age and certain veteran entitlement recipients over qualifying age to earn up to another \$4,000 before the income tax test is applied and their payments affected. This will occur through a \$4,000 increase in the work bonus unused concession balance for each eligible recipient and a \$4,000 increase to the maximum unused concession balance until 30 June 2023.

For years now One Nation has been fighting for an increase to the age pension and more opportunities for pensioners to earn additional income. Actually, it was just prior to the last election that the issue of pensioners being able to earn extra money took pride of place in one of my cartoons, *Please Explain*, and it was well received by the public. They loved it. The government is to be acknowledged and commended for adopting our policy. Thank you. It's years too late, but you've adopted it. It wasn't on your agenda prior to the election. Maybe you watched my cartoon, and it gave you a little hint about where you should go to look after our pensioners in Australia.

With the need to increase Australian workforce participation becoming more urgent, allowing pensioners to earn more without penalty made all kinds of sense long before now. A person's utility in the economy does not end at retirement age. The knowledge, experience, industry and work ethic of many Australians at this age are substantial economic assets we can ill-afford to leave untapped. This can be applied to many industries and economic sectors that are screaming for skilled workers.

It is simply better for this nation that Australian jobs are done by Australians instead of outsourcing them to a flood of overseas workers who we cannot accommodate sustainably. We are going to bring over 200,000 people into the country. The additional income earned by age pensioners will largely be spent in our economy and in our communities, especially regional communities. In many cases today it is income that our oldest population really needs given there is very little else the government is doing about their rising costs of living and soaring interest rates. Older Australians will enjoy not only additional income without penalty but also potential health benefits from remaining active in the workforce longer, like members of parliament. They're active in the workforce. This will potentially have the flow-on effect of reducing public health and aged-care costs in the long term.

One Nation completely supports this legislation and looks forward to its passage, apart from the fact that the government are stipulating it's only until 30 June 2023. So I'll tell the age pensioners out there, 'You have seven months at this stage, but then it depends on the passage and assent of this bill how much time you really do have to go and make your \$76.92 a week, regardless of the inflation rate of eight per cent, what you are paying extra in rent, what you are paying extra in food and what you are paying extra for your medication.' Oh, no, that's right—the government took another policy of mine to actually reduce the PBS. I suggested it be to \$19.50, which we could afford, but the government made it \$32. They did reduce it, I have to say that, but again it's another One Nation policy they've taken.

The fact is that pensioners have given of themselves for this country. They are living in poverty. A lot of them can't even eat properly and buy the food that they need, and the government think that they've done a wonderful thing for them to allow them to earn \$76.92 a week until June next year. I would like to know what skin it would be off the government's nose if we allowed this to continue. Why are they not making this unlimited? We shouldn't be putting a time limit on it. Why June next year? Why is there a time limit?

We have a shortage of workers in this country. We have known that grey nomads actually work. They travel around the country and do the picking of fruit that we can't get workers for. These people will want to get out to work, but a lot of them won't because of the part-pension provisions that they will lose. Even more important to them is that they will lose their health benefits. That is more important to them than a few dollars. You will gain more out of it because a lot of them won't be sitting in their homes going through depression, not knowing what do with themselves, feeling useless to society, let alone to themselves, and this would give them such an improvement in their health issues that we should be taking it up.

I'll tell you what—these age pensioners are damn good workers. I know because I employed them. How many people in this chamber have run their own business and employed staff? How many? Most of them haven't even owned their own businesses. They have never employed staff. They have gone through the unions. They have

actually gone through the political universities and all the rest of it. They ended up here in office and became politicians. They wouldn't know what it's like to be in the real world. They have no idea what it is like to struggle, and yet they are putting these stipulations on pensioners. I don't know why they even bothered in the first place if they were only going to do it for about six or seven months. Why bother? What was the big game plan? Was it to get a pat on the back from people out there that they really are looking after pensioners? I don't see it. It is a great step, but I think that you need to actually get rid of it finishing up in June 2023.

The other thing is that the government must now turn its attention to incentivising the more than 900,000 Australians currently receiving unemployment benefits. The worker and skills shortage demands that we do more to address long-term unemployment and get people who are capable of working into jobs that are going begging. The incentives have already been taken care of. Governments provide generous subsidies for relocating for work, and businesses are offering things like sign-on bonuses and free accommodation.

What is needed is an additional push, and that is: to reduce what unemployment benefits can be claimed over a set period. One Nation's policy is that unemployment benefits should only be available for two years in every five, and not in one straight go. A person might get a job for six months and then can't work anymore after that for another two or three months, and then work for another 10 months and then have a break. There's only two years of benefits.

We might then start to address the unemployment benefit that's paid out to over 900,000 people in this country—people who are now the fourth generation who are on welfare; people who have made themselves unemployable by their appearance, by their dress, but not only by that. We are failing them, as a nation, because a lot of these people can't get jobs because they can't even read or write properly. And we just keep propping them up by giving them a welfare payment.

There was one fellow who got a job and he came home and was proud to tell his parents. His father abused him for getting a job, because he'd actually shamed his father by getting that job. So what he did was: he threw his job in. Is this what we really want?

People have to start being responsible for themselves and their own actions and stand on their own two feet. As Senator Pocock said, people in this country need a helping hand. Yes, they do. That's what it's about—it's about a helping hand. It is not a way of life.

And to both sides of this chamber, whether on the Labor or the coalition side: you have not addressed the real concerns out in our society, because you don't want to upset these people because you're going to lose the vote. Well, until you address this, we're not going to look after these people who are on welfare payments—people who take it for granted and think it's their God-given right to receive this unlimited amount of money. But it's not only welfare payments. On top of that, their health is all paid for. Then there's every other benefit, like rental assistance and everything else that these people get.

But it's at a cost, which the taxpayers have to keep working to pay for. One taxpayer in Australia on \$80,000 supports one welfare recipient. If we've got increasing costs and we're hitting \$1 trillion in debt, something has to give. You can't have an increasing NDIS. You cannot have increasing childcare expenses—now with \$4½ billion on top of it—of \$10 billion a year. We can't keep affording this at all.

And yet you are so miserly in your evaluation, to allow pensioners to earn an extra \$4,000 on top of it—and only till June next year, mind you. They're not going to be a drain on our society. Actually, a lot of these pensioners would be able to help their families who have their own businesses and can't get workers. They would gladly go and help them and work for them. It would give them some incentive in their lives. And I think that's what's needed.

I think this was poorly thought out. I think you're being tokenistic. And I don't think that you're being fair dinkum with this at all.

So, in addition to making unemployed people more accountable for taxpayer funded income and providing a strong push into the workforce, it would effectively reduce the cost to taxpayers by 60 per cent over five years. And once again, I'll tell you what our bill is for welfare: \$228.8 billion—not 'million', 'billion'—a year. That's what we're paying. How do you intend to address that?

Once again, it would put Australians into Australian jobs instead of outsourcing them to overseas workers—or is that your whole plan? Is that what you want to do: to keep people in Australia on welfare so it gives you the right to open up the floodgates and bring workers in from overseas? Instead of bringing in unsustainable numbers of immigrants to address our skills shortage, we must prioritise those Australians who are capable of working but currently are not.

We have a rental and housing crisis and a public health system under enormous demand. Bringing in an additional 200,000-plus people per year can only make these problems worse, not better. It is also completely inconsistent

with this Labor government's obsession with reducing emissions to net zero—a phrase they cannot even explain in layman's terms.

In summary, this bill is a good first step to increasing Australian workforce participation—but only a first step. We've got to do all we can to get more Australians into jobs and work and paying their way, instead of propping them up when they're not taking responsibility for their own actions, and putting a roof over their own head. As I've always said: if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day; if you teach him how to fish you feed him for a lifetime.

We are a prosperous nation. This nation has been built on the hard work of taxpayers. But, I'm telling you now, the taxpayers have had a gutful. They can't afford it anymore. The escalating costs due to government policies have put us in this position. Your emissions trading scheme and what you're doing here, zero net emissions, will put more strain on everyday Australians. So take the pressure off the neck of the age pensioners out there. Give them unlimited access to earn what they want to earn. They will pay their taxes on it after a certain amount. And do not put a time limit on it of June next year.

Look after our independent retirees, who we don't talk about. These people have contributed to this country. They have gone without. They have saved and made their investments, and now they can't get any assistance or help apart from maybe a bit of health care. Look after those people who have contributed to this country. But you don't. You're too busy worrying about the migrants and looking after them, making sure they're housed and have jobs and have everything done for them.

What about the Australian people? These Australians have worked and fought for this nation. They have gone without and built the country that we have today. I'm proud to be part of this country and to call this land my own. Thanks to those Australians who have given me what I enjoy today.

Senator ALLMAN-PAYNE (Queensland) (19:47): I rise to speak on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022. The changes made by this bill are welcome, and I want to echo the comments made by my colleague Senator Rice. It makes sense that older Australians who want to work more should not be penalised for doing so. I acknowledge that many of my colleagues have already spoken to the benefits of this bill succinctly, so, while I wish to speak to this bill, I want to highlight further amendments that we should be considering.

If we are extending the number of hours pension holders can work, then why are we not extending the number of hours that those receiving JobSeeker or the disability support pension can work before being penalised? If we are increasing the number of hours that pensioners can work, it makes no sense to exclude other members of society. This exclusion is particularly stark when we know that JobSeeker and the disability support pension both fail to support Australians stay above the poverty line. The \$48 a day that jobseekers receive is not enough. They are income support payments that still fall below the poverty line and must be increased to \$88 a day. We must raise the rate. This increase in the rate of income support is one of the most important changes that we can make to alleviate poverty in this country, because, let's be clear, poverty is a political choice.

There are people in my community throughout Central Queensland who are at breaking point because of the inadequate levels of government support payments. For these people, yes, it's the rate of pay that is too low, but it's also the paperwork, the extreme administrative burden, the waiting periods and the punitive punishments for slight breaches of mutual obligations. As Senator Rice foreshadowed, there will be substantive amendments put to this bill, and each one is an opportunity for us, collectively as a parliament, to make people's lives better. It's that simple.

During the initial waves of COVID the government doubled the rate of JobSeeker. This lifted people out of poverty and, quite literally, saved lives. It also showed that it is possible to meaningfully reduce poverty in this country. This government could make choices to scrap policies such as the stage 3 tax cuts. These tax cuts are going to cost us \$244 billion. These tax cuts only further benefit the rich in this country, rather than taking this money and making sure that this government's income payments are above the poverty line.

Lifting people out of poverty is only a matter of political will. We need to make and pass these additional amendments to ensure that social services in this country are more equitable and just, and prioritise improving people's lives.

Senator AYRES (New South Wales—Assistant Minister for Trade and Assistant Minister for Manufacturing) (19:50): I should just indicate something after listening to some of the contributions. Firstly, Senator Hanson, if you're listening, I should indicate that I listened to your contribution and that the date that has been incorporated into the legislation is in fact 31 December, not the end of June. I thought it would just be useful to point that out at this stage.

This Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Bill 2022 delivers one of the government's commitments to address Australia's labour market challenges through practical and targeted solutions consistent with our announcements at the Jobs and Skills Summit in early September. It strengthens existing

incentives for people over the age pension age to take up work or to increase the number of hours that they work, if they wish to do so. The bill also provides that age pensioners and those receiving equivalent Department of Veterans' Affairs payments will no longer have their pensions cancelled after 12 weeks if their income, where it includes some income from employment, exceeds their income limit. Instead, they will be suspended from payment for up to two years. An abridged reapplication process will be made available to them should their income no longer preclude them from payment. Pensioners suspended from payment will keep their pensioner concession card for two years instead of it being cancelled after 12 weeks so that they retain access to a range of benefits, including cheaper prescription medicines.

The benefits of this measure also extend to partners of age pensioners, disability support pensioners and equivalent veteran payments recipients, as long as the partner is also receiving a pension. These measures will strengthen the incentives for older Australians to work and, like a series of the speakers in this debate, I hope the Senate supports the legislation quickly.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (19:53): by leave—I move Greens amendment (5) and requests for amendments (3) and (6), on sheet 1698, together:

(5) Page 38 (after line 27), at the end of the Bill, add:

Schedule 6—Mutual obligations and participation requirements

Part 1—Removing employment pathway plans

Social Security Act 1991

1 Subsections 14A(1) and (2)

Omit "and Division 3A of Part 3 of the Administration Act".

2 Subsection 14A(7)

Repeal the subsection.

3 Subsection 23(1) (paragraphs (aa) and (a) of the definition of *compliance penalty period*)

Repeal the paragraphs.

4 Subsection 23(1) (definition of *Employment Department*)

Omit "Division 3AA of Part 3 of the Administration Act", substitute "the *Fair Entitlements Guarantee Act 2012*".

5 Subsection 23(1) (definition of *Employment Minister*)

Omit "Division 3AA of Part 3 of the Administration Act", substitute "the *Fair Entitlements Guarantee Act 2012*".

6 Subsection 23(1) (definitions of *employment pathway plan*, *satisfies the employment pathway plan requirements* and *unsuitable*)

Repeal the definitions.

7 Paragraphs 500(1)(c) and (ca)

Repeal the paragraphs.

8 Subsections 500(2), (2A) and (2B)

Repeal the subsections.

9 Subparagraph 540(1)(a)(ii)

Omit "or", substitute "and".

10 Subparagraph 540(1)(a)(iii)

Repeal the subparagraph.

11 Subsection 540(2)

Repeal the subsection (including the notes), substitute:

(2) A person satisfies this subsection if the person:

- (a) has attained the minimum age for youth allowance (see section 543A); and
- (b) is not yet 18 years old; and
- (c) satisfies the criteria prescribed by the Minister.

(2A) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, prescribe criteria for the purposes of paragraph (2)(c).

Note: A person receiving youth allowance, and who receives employment services from a remote engagement program provider, may also qualify for a remote engagement program payment: see Part 2.13.

12 Subsection 540AB(1)

Omit "and ending in accordance with subsection (3)".

13 Paragraph 540AB(1)(e)

Repeal the paragraph.

14 Subsection 540AB(3)

Repeal the subsection.

15 Paragraph 593(1)(b)

Repeal the paragraph.

16 Subsection 593(1AC)

Repeal the subsection.

17 Paragraph 593(1D)(e)

Omit "; and", substitute ".".

18 Paragraph 593(1D)(f)

Repeal the paragraph.

19 Subsection 593(1F)

Repeal the subsection.

20 Paragraphs 729(2)(bc) and (bd)

Repeal the paragraphs.

21 Subparagraphs 729(2)(d)(i) to (iic)

Repeal the subparagraphs.

22 Paragraph 729(2)(da)

Repeal the paragraph.

23 Subparagraphs 729(2)(dc)(iii) to (vii)

Repeal the subparagraphs.

24 Paragraph 729(2)(g)

Repeal the paragraph.

25 Subsections 729(2A) and (2B)

Repeal the subsections.

26 At the end of Part 3 of Schedule 1A

Add:

151 Persons not required to comply with employment pathway plan requirements

(1) For the purposes of applying this Act and the Administration Act on and after the commencement day in relation to a person, the person is taken to:

(a) satisfy the employment pathway plan requirements; and

(b) satisfy the Employment Secretary that the person is willing to actively seek and to accept and undertake paid work in Australia, except particular paid work that is unsuitable to be done by the person.

(2) For the purposes of this section, *commencement day* means the day Schedule 6 of the *Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Act 2022* commenced.

152 Persons under 18 receiving youth allowance

If a person:

(a) was qualified for youth allowance in accordance with subparagraph 540(1)(a)(iii) immediately before the commencement of Schedule 6 to the *Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Workforce Incentive) Act 2022*; and

(b) has attained the minimum age for youth allowance (see section 543A); and

(c) is not yet 18 years old;

then the person is taken to have satisfied the criteria prescribed by the Minister for the purposes of paragraph 540(2)(c) until youth allowance ceases to be payable to the person.

Social Security (Administration) Act 1991

27 Divisions 2A, 2B and 2C of Part 3

Repeal the Divisions.

28 Divisions 3AA and 3A of Part 3

Repeal the Divisions.

29 Transitional rules

(1) The Minister may, by legislative instrument, make rules prescribing matters of a transitional nature (including prescribing any saving or application provisions) relating to the amendments or repeals made by this Part.

(2) To avoid doubt, the rules may not do the following:

- (a) create an offence or civil penalty;
- (b) provide powers of:
 - (i) arrest or detention; or
 - (ii) entry, search or seizure;
- (c) impose a tax;
- (d) set an amount to be appropriated from the Consolidated Revenue Fund under an appropriation in this Act;
- (e) directly amend the text of this Act.

Part 2—Removing the program of support

Social Security Act 1991

30 Paragraph 94(2)(aa)

Repeal the paragraph.

31 Subsections 94(3A), (3C), (3D) and (3E)

Repeal the subsections.

32 After paragraph 94(5)(a)

Insert:

- (ab) a person participates in voluntarily; and

33 Sections 94A to 94F

Repeal the sections.

That the House of Representatives be requested to make the following amendments:

(3) Page 38 (after line 27), at the end of the Bill, add:

Schedule 4—Earlier access to the age pension

Social Security Act 1991

1 Subsection 23(5A) (table item 4, column 3)

Omit "66 years and 6 months", substitute "65 years".

2 Subsection 23(5A) (table item 5, column 3)

Omit "67 years", substitute "65 years".

3 Subsection 23(5D) (table item 4, column 3)

Omit "66 years and 6 months", substitute "65 years".

4 Subsection 23(5D) (table item 5, column 3)

Omit "67 years", substitute "65 years".

Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986

5 Subsection 5QB(2) (table item 4, column 3)

Omit "66 years and 6 months", substitute "65 years".

6 Subsection 5QB(2) (table item 5, column 3)

Omit "67 years", substitute "65 years".

7 Subsection 5QB(5) (table item 4, column 3)

Omit "66 years and 6 months", substitute "65 years".

8 Subsection 5QB(5) (table item 5, column 3)

Omit "67 years", substitute "65 years".

9 Application of amendments

The amendments made by this Schedule apply in relation to a person on and after the commencement of this item.

(6) Page 38 (after line 27), at the end of the Bill, add:

Schedule 7—Jobseeker eligibility

Social Security Act 1991

1 Subparagraph 593(1)(g)(i)

Omit "22 years of age", substitute "18 years of age".

2 Application of amendments

The amendments made by this Schedule apply to a person who makes an application for a jobseeker payment on or after the commencement of this Schedule.

Statement pursuant to the order of the Senate of 26 June 2000

Amendment (3)

Amendment (3) is framed as a request because it amends the bill to lower the pension age from 67 years old to 65 years old under the *Social Security Act 1991*. The amendment also lowers the pension age from 67 years old to 65 years old in relation to persons other than veterans under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*. As the effect of this amendment will be to increase the number of individuals that are eligible to receive an age pension, it will result in an increase in expenditure under the standing appropriation in section 242 of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* and section 199 of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

Amendment (6)

Amendment (6) is framed as a request because it amends the bill to lower the eligibility age for the jobseeker payment from 22 years old to 18 years old. As the effect of this amendment will be to increase the number of individuals that are eligible to receive a jobseeker payment, it will result in an increase in expenditure under the standing appropriation in section 242 of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*.

Statement by the Clerk of the Senate pursuant to the order of the Senate of 26 June 2000

Amendments (2), (3), (4) and (6)

If the effect of the respective amendments is to increase expenditure under the standing appropriations in section 242 of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*, section 199 of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* and section 105 of the *Farm Household Support Act 2014* then it is in accordance with the precedents of the Senate that the amendments be moved as requests.

I will speak about amendments (3), (5) and (6) and my other two amendments so that we don't take up too much time. But I flag that if we do get to vote on (3), (5) and (6) that we won't require a division on them.

As I foreshadowed in my speech, we have a suite of substantial amendments for this bill. They pick up on the fact that while this bill makes very welcome changes to enable age pensioners to earn more it does not do the same for other income support recipients who are on lower rates of payment. Aged pensioners struggle to survive, particularly if they're in private rental on the pension rate. Imagine then, if they're struggling, that people on income support, who are on considerably less, are also struggling. Our amendments seek to address both of those issues.

Amendment (2) is critical and core to this bill. It says: 'Okay, great, increase the work bonus for age pensioners. We want to see that work bonus extended to other income support recipients, including JobSeeker and DSP recipients.'

We know that all working age social security payments are below the Henderson poverty line. The Greens's choice is that we should be legislating to be increasing them all to above \$88 a day. The very least that we need to be doing is to be allowing all income support recipients to have the same benefits that are being proposed for age pensioners in this bill, to enable them to earn more. As I said in my second reading contribution, at the moment the amount that somebody on JobSeeker is able to earn before their JobSeeker payments get slashed is \$1,000 in the equivalent of the work bonus and work credit, whereas this bill is allowing age pensioners to be earning \$11,800, and yet it's a double whammy because people on JobSeeker only get that \$48 a day compared with \$73 a day for the age pension. That's the rationale behind item 2 of our amendments.

Item 3 is to provide earlier access to the age pension. We have increasingly got people who have worked hard all their lives and who up until when it was changed were able to access the age pension at the age of 65. They are now having to wait until the age 67, and we know that people approaching retirement age often have limited capacity to continue working, particularly if they've been working in heavy labour jobs and are desperate because they're no longer able to work. They're stuck on JobSeeker and are not able to access the age pension, despite the fact that the likelihood of them getting work and being able to work is very, very low. We feel that reducing the age for the age pension back down to 65 would really benefit these people.

Item 4 of the amendments I've moved is to be raising the rate of income support above the poverty line for everybody, and that's in line with our Greens policy of moving towards a guaranteed livable income so that everybody on income support is able to access the money that they need in order to be able to live and not to be

living in poverty. We can afford it, just as we seemingly can afford \$250 billion of the stage 3 tax cuts. Instead of giving that money to the very wealthy in our society—income tax cuts that every one of us in this place will benefit from to the tune of \$11,000 a year—instead of going ahead with the stage 3 tax cuts, we could actually spend the money to lift people out of poverty. We know that, by increasing the amount of income support, it actually enables people to get themselves back on their feet and enables them to seek work. It puts them in a position to seek work because if you are homeless, if you are starving, if you suffer from malnutrition, if you can't afford the medical care you need, you are not in a good place to be able to get work.

Item 5 is to abolish mutual obligations. Again, we know that these are punitive conditional measure, and they don't help people who are trying to survive on a payment rate that's way below the poverty line. We know that mutual obligations are costing us a huge amount of money and achieving nothing, so let's abolish mutual obligations. We saw during the COVID pandemic, when mutual obligations were abolished, that more of the people on income support and the people on JobSeeker were seeking work. They were in a position seek work, not because they had to go and apply for their 20 jobs a week and to be jumping through the hoops of their employment agencies but because getting rid of those punitive obligations actually freed them up to be doing meaningful work. Also, they had double their normal income, which put them in a position to be looking for work. The final amendment I moved is to lower the age of qualification for JobSeeker from 22 to 18 years old, which is in line with advocacy from the National Union of Students and the Foundation for Young Australians, which called on the government to address the gaps faced by people aged 18 to 22 years who are trying to access income support. Given the time, I will leave my contribution there at this stage.

Question negatived.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (19:59): by leave—Madam Temporary Chair, in lieu of calling a division, I ask that Australian Greens senators be recorded as having supported the amendments.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Reynolds): It being 8 pm, I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Tasmania: Public Holidays Workplace Relations: Amazon

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (20:00): I rise to add my voice and support to SDA Tasmania's campaign to make New Year's Day in Tasmania a public holiday. Currently, under Tasmanian legislation New Year's Day is not a public holiday; therefore when it falls on a weekend, as it will next year, employees are not able to receive penalties for working on 1 January. This is, frankly, unfair, as our mainland brothers and sisters do recognise New Year's Day as a public holiday. The cost of living is rising, groceries are going up, petrol is going up, and Tasmanian workers, not only in retail but in other sectors, will be \$150 or more out of pocket when they work on New Year's Day.

I recently met with Tameka from a local Woolworths store in my home town of Launceston. She's a mother and works full time. Because she works Monday to Sunday, she will be affected by the short-sighted decision of the Tasmanian government not to recognise 1 January as a public holiday in Tasmania. Tameka is not the only Tasmanian affected; thousands of other working people will be disadvantaged as well. Not just are they people working in fast food, hospitality, retail and supermarkets; nurses and firefighters are also affected.

Tasmania doesn't deserve to be the poor cousin of our mainland counterparts when we're working on certain days in the calendar year. It really doesn't make any sense at all, because there is no consistency across the rest of the year. I ask the Liberal state government: if Christmas is a public holiday, why then is New Year's Day any different?

I urge the Tasmanian Liberal government to start listening to the Tasmanian workforce and to bring about equality. I urge the Tasmanian Liberal government to start listening to the SDA and their secretary, Joel Tynan, because Tasmanian workers deserve to be paid a fair day's pay on a public holiday that is recognised by mainland states. Some Tasmanians do get paid for that public holiday, but not all Tasmanians, and we deserve to be treated equally.

I also note the SDA's Make Amazon Pay campaign. This week the SDA, the TWU and unions across not only Australia but the world are calling for an end to poor working conditions and low wages for Amazon workers. As Black Friday sales begin this week, not just in America but also here in Australia and in many other countries, Amazon workers face undeniable pressure and stress to fulfil orders around the world, placing great strain on individuals and their families. The race to the bottom on wages and secure jobs is not just something the Morrison government and those opposite allowed to happen for almost 10 years; it is a global problem, a problem that needs

to be addressed. Amazon is the gold medallist for these poor practices. Thousands of Amazon Flex drivers aren't even getting paid the minimum wage. They have no rights and are pressured to drive dangerously overloaded cars and vehicles to avoid being sacked on a whim, without reason or recourse. This week is a reminder that Amazon workers, who kept filling and delivering orders throughout the pandemic, deserve respect and have a right to safe workplaces right around the world, as does every working person. Working rights are human rights, so I implore you to join this campaign. Whilst profits soar at Amazon, doubling in the first half of 2021 compared to 2020, workers are left with little or no pay rise and are working unimaginable hours without breaks. Amazon really is amongst the world's worst offenders for exploiting their work practices and their employees.

I stand with the SDA in fighting for equality, for New Year's Day to be paid as a public holiday, and I stand with the TWU and the SDA in speaking up for and walking in solidarity with the Amazon workforce. These conditions aren't Australian. We don't want this downward trend in workers' rights and pay in this country, and the only way that that's going to change is if people become members of and stand with their union and campaign against this atrocity of taking away workers' rights and taking advantage of those people who don't necessarily have a voice of their own. I urge you to support these campaigns.

COVID-19: Vaccination

Senator RENNICK (Queensland) (20:05): I rise tonight to give a bit of a synopsis of last week's estimates, where I got to speak to a number of health professionals but mainly Professor Murphy. I had more time with Professor Murphy this time than I did with Professor Skerritt, who was off in Ireland on some conference instead of being here at estimates, which I was a little bit disappointed in.

I have to say that one of the most startling aspects of my questioning was the fact that Professor Murphy admitted that he hadn't read the TGA nonclinical report about the Pfizer vaccine. I would have thought that when you were the actual Chief Health Officer and you were about to administer a vaccine to what turned out to be over 20 million people—nearly all of your countrymen—you would have taken the time to actually read the nonclinical report, which outlines all of the research that was done and all of the animal testing and everything like that that was done on the vaccine. I certainly know, from my former career, that you would never sign off on a set of financial statements if you hadn't actually scrutinised them in intricate detail.

It's interesting and relevant because Professor Murphy told me that on Thursday, but on the Tuesday night before I'd asked the National Blood Bank Authority whether or not the spike protein stayed in the blood for longer than three days, at which time you can donate blood. Professor Murphy insisted that there is absolutely no evidence that the spike protein was in the blood. He's correct to a certain extent, but had he actually read the TGA nonclinical report he would have known that there was no distribution and degradation data on the S-antigen encoding mRNA protein. That, in itself, I find shocking—the fact that you wouldn't actually test the spike protein in the vaccine before you administer it to humans. The spike protein is the active ingredient. The idea of the vaccine was to deliver a lipid inside your body that goes into your cells, and then the cell's ribosome would produce the actual spike protein.

What they actually did was test luciferase, a benign enzyme, in actual animals; they didn't even test the spike protein in animals. For anyone to make any absolute comments or speak in a position of authority about what the spike protein is capable of doing in the blood would be completely wrong. I will be looking at ways of holding both Professor Murphy and Professor Skerritt accountable for those statements, because it's completely wrong for him to be saying things if he hasn't actually done the time.

I want to touch on a couple of other things in this TGA nonclinical report that I think are really important. In the summary it says:

- Almost similar microscopic lung inflammation was observed in both challenged control and immunised animals after the peak of infection (Days 7/8).

That seems to suggest that there was actually no difference whatsoever in the inflammation of unvaccinated rats or animals after day seven or eight compared to the vaccinated rats or animals. So there was no evidence that it reduced inflammation in the lungs at all. For some reason that got completely overlooked as well.

I'm going to run out of time, so I want to jump on a couple of other things that got overlooked. In a former set of estimates, Professor Skerritt said that the lipid in the protein is the same lipid that's in your sausage or steak that you might eat for breakfast. It turns out that he contradicted himself in last week's set of estimates, where he said that there are four different set of lipids in the vaccine. That's not what he said in the prior set of estimates, so that's another example of our so-called health experts flip-flopping as to what they said six months ago compared with what they're saying now. Clearly, the question has to be asked if Professor Skerritt actually read the TGA non-clinical report. I get the impression that he hadn't.

Then of course the last thing that we need to touch on tonight is the fact that the FDA said as far back February 2021:

At this time, data are not available to determine how long the vaccine will provide protection, nor is there evidence that the vaccine prevents transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from person to person.

Despite that statement from the FDA, for the next two years we had health professionals running around until the last month claiming that the vaccines stopped transmission. Professor Kelly couldn't actually name any studies that showed an increase in IGA, immunoglobulin A, in the mucosal system, for the simple reason that there weren't any studies.

Youth Voice In Parliament Week

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (20:10): Tonight it is my privilege and pleasure to read out a few speeches from talented and diverse young people in New South Wales, submitted through the Raise Our Voice in Parliament campaign. Ava Koshab, a 13-year-old, shared concerns about climate. Ava writes:

I earnestly believe that climate change is one of the most severe challenges facing Australia today. Though climate change will affect all Australians, it has been evident over the decades that First Nations communities that are disproportionately impacted by the disaster. First Nations peoples have had their sacred sites and resources destroyed in order to allow big corporations to dig up fossil fuels. First Nations communities have had no autonomy over these decisions and have never allowed for these tragedies to occur.

I don't believe that it is too late for the government to act, but I do believe that if there is a time to act decisively, it's now. I would like to see parliament-wide agreement in relation to a commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2030, through not only words of sympathy and recognition, but through action.

I implore the Minister for Environment, Tanya Plibersek, to not approve any more fossil fuel projects. I ask that the money that previous governments have spent to destroy this country, now be used to build this country by providing a fair transition into renewable energy, and for job creation for all fossil fuel workers.

Nithurshi Selvarasa, an 11-year-old refugee, has this to say:

My name is Nithurshi, a proud Tamil refugee. I am 11 years old, my electorate is Greenway. The term "Refugee" is used to refer to a person who fled from their country, risking everything and crossing borders to escape persecution.

As a refugee myself, I know that a refugee is more than a word, instead a person with resilience. My own mother fled from Tamil Eelam, her homeland, with a child many in her hands on a tiny boat to Australia with many dire conditions and was still hopeful. However, it's hard for refugees to stay hopeful because of the harsh system in Australia. Refugees don't have many opportunities in comparison to citizens.

For instance, last year, I did the Opportunity Class test and my result was high enough to go to an Opportunity Class school. I wasn't able to go because I'm a refugee. Refugees escape to countries for protection and to turn over a new life. However, refugees face more problems such as being deported months later when arriving in Australia.

The Australian parliament must take action. All refugees deserve freedom as they are human and faced hardships. We deserve permanent visas and no more detention centres. Thank you.

Maximus Pondal, a 16-year-old from Blacktown wrote this:

I've always considered myself Australian. For thirteen years I had never known a place unlike the sparse but vibrant country I was born in. My mother tongue is English, and Tim-Tams are my favourite snack, followed closely by Lamingtons. There is no place like home. But something had always felt a bit off—that sometimes in infrequent but certainly odd occasions I wouldn't get the same treatment compared with the rest of the flock.

It was made obvious throughout the years that I had looked apart—that I was somehow different, distinct or even—at times—foreign. In supermarkets, on the bus, or even on the streets at times, voices of discontent were applied without apparent reason. It would be better to always give the benefit of the doubt—but most of the time it was what you had expected it to be. In the diverse and multicultural country of ours, a relic of the past still lingers on with many of our citizens today.

This shouldn't be happening. Discrimination of all forms, although relatively unnoticed at times, shamefully is treated like business as usual.

Parliament should endeavour in acknowledging the diversity of this country—especially with its traditional custodians and new settlers who to live better than before. It should make steps to eradicate the relics of the past and live up to its anthem that we truly do have boundless plains to share.

I am in awe of these young people. They say it like it is. Our decisions in this place would be so much better and wiser if we started hearing them and acting on what they're asking us to do.

Youth Voice In Parliament Week

Senator PRATT (Western Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (20:15): Raise Our Voice is an organisation dedicated to amplifying diverse young female, trans, non-binary voices to actively lead conversations in our politics, both domestic and foreign. We've been given speeches from young people all over Australia, and I'll be reading some from WA today.

This one is particularly moving: 'My name is Alyssa. I'm from the Moore electorate in WA, and, like many other young Australians, I suffer from mental illness. In my 17 years, I've been in some of the toughest of situations,

finding myself fighting to want to survive, hundreds of times hearing the saying, "If you feel unsafe, go to emergency." But what can emergency truly do? Sitting in the hospital waiting room for six hours, pleading for them to save me from myself. Even with the overwhelming amounts of privilege and top health insurance money can buy, not that it should even matter, we were turned away. With a lack of beds, staff and supplies, their hands were tied. Had my parents been unable to take time off work to be with me for the week before I was admitted, I wouldn't have made it there. The scariest part is that this was a notably short amount of time. Alternatively, people are waitlisted for months, begging for anyone who could help them survive their crisis. The Parliament of Australia has supposedly highlighted mental health and suicide prevention as one of its highest priorities. But, if it truly is that important to them, there has to be more they can do. By encouraging the studies of psychology and psychiatry, implementing non-negotiable mental health support systems in schools and introducing youth funding towards those who miss work when in crisis, the government have the potential to change the game for youth mental health in Australia. Suicide is the leading cause of death in Australia for those aged 15 to 24. Make it known.'

Thank you, Alyssa. I'll now read Sascha's words: 'My name is Sascha Finlay-Collins, and I'm a 16-year-old who lives in Tangney. I'm asking our new parliament to foster a real national pride in what it means to be Australia. Changing the attitude of a country begins with its leaders, so I believe parliament needs to take more steps to show the world who we are as Australians. We're home to the world's oldest living culture, and our incredible Indigenous heritage is something that parliament could better showcase, using more Indigenous art and cultural practices on the world stage. Australia's also the country it is because of our unique biodiversity. However, we are losing this biodiversity, from our native butterflies and bees to the whales that swim the seas surrounding our nation. We need to work together to preserve our native flora and fauna. Appreciating our heritage and protecting our environment are some small first steps our politicians can take to uphold our Australian values of mateship, a fair go and respect. When our politicians reflect these values, they inspire their people. I'm asking parliament to preserve the identity of Australia, to create a better future for all.'

Finally: 'Hi there. My name is Darcy, and I am 16 years old. I live in WA, in the electorate of Moore. Today I'm speaking to you about a topic close to my heart and probably close to many of yours as well: cancer. This year I lost my good friend Megan Reid. Meg was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2019 at the aged 16. Over the years, she had countless rounds of chemo and radiation, even beating cancer three times. But, despite these efforts, she sadly passed away on 14 July. I'm not asking for sympathy, no. I'm asking for funding. Did you know that only four per cent of federal cancer funding goes towards childhood cancer research? That's right. Considering, worldwide, more than 400,000 children and adolescents are diagnosed with cancer every year, this just doesn't make much sense. Childhood cancer is brutal and poses more challenges than adult cancers. Cancers in children often have no known cause and are different in how they spread and grow, making it hard to tell how they will respond to treatment. We lose countless children every year. Who knows? Maybe we've already lost our future Prime Minister or our next Nobel Prize winner. After losing Megan this year, I've come to realise that, without her here to push for federal funding from parliament, someone must take her place. What a perfect way to honour her memory.'

Youth Voice In Parliament Week

Senator ALLMAN-PAYNE (Queensland) (20:20): The Raise Our Voice in parliament campaign is a brilliant initiative that aims to elevate the voices of young people across Australia, giving them a direct voice into the parliament. I'm delighted to have been asked to read out the speeches of several intelligent, passionate and articulate young people from Queensland.

I start with Sadia Shareef, who is 15 years old. Sadia writes:

Racism is a fast-spreading pandemic. 1 in 5 people living in Australia have been subjected to racial discrimination. Personally, I find it difficult to leave the house without thinking I could become a victim of racism. I am aware that I'm not the only one who has these feelings.

We talk about Australia being a multicultural and accepting society, yet there are such high rates of racism across the country. How can we talk about this when there are people being bullied and belittled, for belonging to a certain ethnic group or simply having a different skin colour?

Being different is what makes us unique and allows our talents to shine. It is the year 2022. It is time for change, I wish that the government can educate children at school about the detrimental effects of racism. Racism is a choice, but never an option! The government should help spread more awareness about Racism in Australia, to allow members of the public to better understand the effects of racism in Australia.

We cannot leave this immense issue hanging. Racism is a reality in Australia, and if we continue to ignore it, the consequences will worsen. How many more people must suffer before we can take action?

The second speech is from Will Vanman, who is 16 years old, and he writes about climate change:

Australia's new parliament must urgently address the impending climate catastrophe. I have been lucky enough to avoid the major impacts of flooding that impacted my electorate earlier this year, however, I know so many that do not share the same

luck. It is a completely surreal feeling to walk around your neighbourhood to find houses completely underwater, boats on streets, and people rescuing their pets by canoes. With the current forecast for similar conditions next year, we need to act.

We cannot continue as a country to ignore the impending crisis, brush off the increasing frequency and severity of drought, bushfires, and floods, and continue business as usual. The hard truth from the IPCC is that with our current climate trajectory and goals, we only have a 50% chance of staying below 2.0C.—a risk that my generation of Australians and all future generations do not want to gamble. Before we even reach 2.0C, climate tipping points are threatening to accelerate this process even more. We are coming towards the edge of a crumbling cliff side, knowing it could give away at any moment, yet we are still walking, running, sprinting towards it.

The government needs to step up and take lead as the global leader in the necessary climate revolution. This does not include sneaking in extra profit by continuing to open polluting coal mines, gas explorations and dirty factories. Science tells us that we need a systemic rethink, restructuring and reorienting throughout Australia, including no more coal or gas plants. Real action, not just empty promises.

I talk to many of my fellow students who are pessimistic about our future. Currently, the government is letting us down. Our nation will be on the frontlines of this ecological emergency, and we must respond accordingly. A less than 50% chance of survival is not good enough.

Senate adjourned at 20:25