



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hansard

TUESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2025

CORRECTIONS

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

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

**FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

Governor-General

Her Excellency the Hon. Samantha Joy Mostyn AC

House of Representatives Office Holders

Speaker—Hon. Dugald Milton Dick MP

Deputy Speaker—Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP

Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—Hon. Karen Lesley Andrews MP,
Mrs Bridget Kathleen Archer MP, Hon. Scott Andrew Buchholz MP,
Ms Lisa Marie Chesters MP, Dr Michael Randolph Freeland MP,
Mr Steven Georganas MP, Ms Zoe Anne McKenzie MP, Ms Alicia Emma Payne MP,
Ms Marion Rose Scrymgour MP, Ms Rebekha Carina Che Sharkie MP,
Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP,
Mr Andrew Damien Wilkie MP and Mr Terry James Young MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP

Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Mark Christopher Butler MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Michael Sukkar MP

Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Kevin John Hogan MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Australian Labor Party

Leader—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Richard Donald Marles MP

Chief Government Whip—Ms Joanne Ryan MP

Government Whips—Mr David Philip Benedict Smith MP and Ms Anne Maree Stanley MP

Liberal Party of Australia

Leader—Hon. Peter Craig Dutton MP

Deputy Leader—Hon. Sussan Ley MP

Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP

Opposition Whips—Hon. Melissa Lee Price MP and Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP

The Nationals

Leader—Hon. David Kelly Littleproud MP

Deputy Leader—Senator Perin McGregor Davey

Chief Nationals Whip—Hon. Mark Maclean Coulton MP

Nationals Whip—Mr Samuel James Birrell MP

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Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Aly, Hon. Dr Anne	Cowan, WA	ALP
Ananda-Rajah, Dr Michelle	Higgins, Vic.	ALP
Andrews, Hon. Karen Lesley	McPherson, Qld	LP
Archer, Mrs Bridget Kathleen	Bass, Tas.	LP
Bandt, Mr Adam Paul	Melbourne, Vic.	AG
Bates, Mr Stephen James	Brisbane, Qld	AG
Bell, Ms Angie Marion	Moncrieff, Qld	LNP
Belyea, Ms Jodie Anne	Dunkley, Vic.	ALP
Birrell, Mr Samuel James	Nicholls, Vic.	NATS
Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles Guy	McMahon, NSW	ALP
Boyce, Mr Colin Einar	Flynn, Qld	LNP
Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan	Monash, Vic.	IND
Buchholz, Hon. Scott Andrew	Wright, Qld	LP
Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Burnell, Mr Matthew Paul	Spence, SA	ALP
Burney, Hon. Linda Jean	Barton, NSW	ALP
Burns, Mr Joshua Solomon	Macnamara, Vic.	ALP
Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP
Byrnes, Ms Alison Joy	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Caldwell, Mr Cameron Mackenzie	Fadden, Qld	LNP
Chalmers, Hon. Dr James Edward	Rankin, Qld	ALP
Chandler-Mather, Mr Max	Griffith, Qld	AG
Chaney, Ms Katherine Ella	Curtin, WA	IND
Charlton, Dr Andrew Henry George	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Chester, Hon. Darren Jeffrey	Gippsland, Vic.	NATS
Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie	Bendigo, Vic.	ALP
Clare, Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Coker, Ms Elizabeth Ann	Corangamite, Vic.	ALP
Coleman, Hon. David Bernard	Banks, NSW	LP
Collins, Hon. Julie Maree	Franklin, Tas.	ALP
Conaghan, Mr Patrick John	Cowper, NSW	NATS

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Conroy, Hon. Patrick Martin	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Coulton, Hon. Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	NATS
Daniel, Ms Zoe	Goldstein, Vic.	IND
Dick, Hon. Dugald Milton	Oxley, Qld	ALP
Doyle, Ms Mary Judith Jacinta	Aston, Vic.	ALP
Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, KC	Isaacs, Vic.	ALP
Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, Qld	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Entsch, Hon. Warren George	Leichhardt, Qld	LP
Fernando, Ms Cassandra Juanita	Holt, Vic.	ALP
Fletcher, Hon. Paul William	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Freelander, Dr Michael Randolph	Macarthur, NSW	ALP
Garland, Dr Carina Mary Lindsay	Chisholm, Vic.	ALP
Gee, Hon. Andrew Robert	Calare, NSW	IND
Georganas, Mr Steven	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Giles, Hon. Andrew James	Scullin, Vic.	ALP
Gillespie, Hon. Dr David Arthur	Lyne, NSW	NATS
Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald	Moore, WA	LP
Gorman, Hon. Patrick Possum	Perth, WA	ALP
Gosling, Mr Luke John Anthony	Solomon, NT	ALP
Haines, Dr Helen Mary	Indi, Vic.	IND
Hamilton, Mr Garth Russell	Groom, Qld	LNP
Hastie, Hon. Andrew William	Canning, WA	LP
Hawke, Hon. Alexander George	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Hill, Mr Julian Christopher	Bruce, Vic.	ALP
Hogan, Hon. Kevin John	Page, NSW	NATS
Howarth, Hon. Luke Ronald	Petrie, Qld	LP
Husic, Hon. Edham Nurredin	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Jones, Hon. Stephen Patrick	Whitlam, NSW	ALP
Joyce, Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard	New England, NSW	NATS
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, Qld	KAP
Kearney, Hon. Gerardine Mary	Cooper, Vic.	ALP
Kennedy, Mr Simon Peter	Cook, NSW	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Keogh, Hon. Matthew James	Burt, WA	ALP
Khalil, Mr Peter	Wills, Vic.	ALP
King, Hon. Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, Vic.	ALP
King, Hon. Madeleine Mary Harvie	Brand, WA	ALP
Landry, Hon. Michelle Leanne	Capricornia, Qld	NATS
Lawrence, Ms Tania Natalie	Hasluck, WA	ALP
Laxale, Mr Jerome Alexandre Alain	Bennelong, NSW	ALP
Le, Ms Dai Trang	Fowler, NSW	IND
Leeser, Mr Julian Martin	Berowra, NSW	LP
Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith	Fenner, ACT	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Lim, Mr Bon Cheng	Tangney, WA	ALP
Littleproud, Hon. David Kelly	Maranoa, Qld	LNP
Marino, Hon. Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Marles, Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, Vic.	ALP
Mascarenhas, Ms Zaneta Felice Antoinetta	Swan, WA	ALP
McBain, Hon. Kristy Louise	Eden-Monaro, NSW	ALP
McBride, Hon. Emma Margaret	Dobell, NSW	ALP
McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis	Riverina, NSW	NATS
McIntosh, Mrs Melissa Iris	Lindsay, NSW	LP
McKenzie, Ms Zoe Anne	Flinders, Vic.	LP
Miller-Frost, Ms Louise Jane	Boothby, SA	ALP
Mitchell, Mr Brian Keith	Lyons, Tas.	ALP
Mitchell, Mr Robert George	McEwen, Vic.	ALP
Mulino, Dr Daniel	Fraser, Vic.	ALP
Neumann, Hon. Shayne Kenneth	Blair, Qld	ALP
O'Brien, Mr Edward Lynam	Fairfax, Qld	LNP
O'Brien, Mr Llewellyn Stephen	Wide Bay, Qld	LNP
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John	Gorton, Vic.	ALP
O'Neil, Hon. Clare Ellen	Hotham, Vic.	ALP
Pasin, Mr Antony	Barker, SA	LP
Payne, Ms Alicia Emma	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Pearce, Mr Gavin Bruce	Braddon, Tas.	LP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas	Moreton, Qld	ALP
Phillips, Mrs Fiona Evon	Gilmore, NSW	ALP
Pike, Mr Henry Jon	Bowman, Qld	LP
<i>Vacancy</i>	Hinkler, Qld	—
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Price, Hon. Melissa Lee	Durack, WA	LP
Rae, Mr Samuel Thomas	Hawke, Vic.	ALP
Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Reid, Dr Gordon James	Robertson, NSW	ALP
Repacholi, Mr Daniel Peter	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Roberts, Ms Tracey Gardner	Pearce, WA	ALP
Rowland, Hon. Michelle Anne	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Ryan, Dr Monique Marie	Kooyong, Vic.	IND
Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine	Lalor, Vic.	ALP
Scamps, Dr Sophie Anna	Mackellar, NSW	IND
Scrymgour, Ms Marion Rose	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Sharkie, Ms Rebekha Carina Che	Mayo, SA	CA
<i>Vacancy</i>	Maribyrnong, Vic.	—
Sitou, Ms Sally	Reid, NSW	ALP
Smith, Mr David Philip Benedict	Bean, ACT	ALP
Spender, Ms Allegra May	Wentworth, NSW	IND
Stanley, Ms Anne Maree	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Steggall, Ms Zali	Warringah, NSW	IND
Stevens, Mr James William	Sturt, SA	LP
Sukkar, Hon. Michael Sven	Deakin, Vic.	LP
Swanson, Ms Meryl Jane	Paterson, NSW	ALP
Taylor, Hon. Angus James	Hume, NSW	LP
Tehan, Hon. Daniel Thomas	Wannon, Vic.	LP
Templeman, Ms Susan Raye	Macquarie, NSW	ALP
Thistlethwaite, Hon. Matthew James	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Thompson, Mr Phillip Bruce	Herbert, Qld	LNP
Thwaites, Ms Kate Lynne	Jagajaga, Vic.	ALP

Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Tink, Ms Kylea Jane	North Sydney, NSW	IND
Vamvakinou, Ms Maria	Calwell, Vic.	ALP
van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes	Forde, Qld	LP
Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier	Bonner, Qld	LP
Violi, Mr Aaron Anthony	Casey, Vic.	LP
Wallace, Mr Andrew Bruce	Fisher, Qld	LNP
Ware, Ms Jennifer Lesley	Hughes, NSW	LP
Watson-Brown, Ms Elizabeth	Ryan, Qld	AG
Watts, Hon. Timothy Graham	Gellibrand, Vic.	ALP
Webster, Dr Anne Elizabeth	Mallee, Vic.	NATS
Wells, Hon. Anika Shay	Lilley, Qld	ALP
Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien	Clark, Tas.	IND
Willcox, Mr Andrew John	Dawson, Qld	LNP
Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Wilson, Mr Richard James	O'Connor, WA	LP
Wolahan, Mr Keith	Menzies, Vic.	LP
Wood, Hon. Jason Peter	La Trobe, Vic.	LP
Young, Mr Terry James	Longman, Qld	LNP
Zappia, Mr Antonio	Makin, SA	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CA—Centre Alliance;
 IND—Independent; KAP—Katter's Australia Party; LNP—Liberal National Party;
 LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
 Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
 Acting Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—J Hinchcliffe
 Parliamentary Budget Officer—S Reinhardt

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	Senator the Hon Malarndirri MaCarthy
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 the Public Service</i>	<i>The Hon Patrick Gorman MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for a Future Made in Australia</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Tim Ayres</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Women</i>	<i>The Hon Kate Thwaites MP</i>
Minister for Defence (Deputy Prime Minister)	The Hon Richard Marles MP
Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery	The Hon Pat Conroy MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Defence Personnel	The Hon Matt Keogh MP
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 Home Affairs	The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs	The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Cyber Security	The Hon Tony Burke MP
(Leader of the House)	
Minister for Emergency Management	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
<i>Assistant Minister for Immigration</i>	<i>The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon Julian Hill MP</i>
Minister for Health and Aged Care	The Hon Mark Butler MP
(Deputy Leader of the House)	
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 Indigenous Health</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 Ageing</i>	<i>The Hon Kate Thwaites MP</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>The Hon Josh Wilson MP</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
Minister for Cities	Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
<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 Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Government Services	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Housing	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Homelessness	The Hon Clare O'Neil MP
Minister Assisting the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	The Hon Dr Anne Aly 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>
<i>Assistant Minister for Social Security</i>	<i>The Hon Kate Thwaites MP</i>
Attorney-General	The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
<i>Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General</i>	<i>The Hon Patrick Gorman MP</i>
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 Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	The Hon Julie Collins MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</i>	<i>Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm</i>
Minister for Resources	The Hon Madeleine King MP
Minister for Industry and Science	The Hon Ed Husic MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for Skills and Training	The Hon Andrew Giles MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Employment</i>	<i>The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>

Each box represents a portfolio. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there can be two departments in one portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** *Assistant Ministers* in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the *Ministers of State Act 1952*.

SHADOW MINISTRY

Title	Minister
Leader of the Opposition	The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Shadow Minister for Women	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Cabinet Secretary	Senator James Paterson
Shadow Minister for the Public Service	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians	Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price
Shadow Minister for Government Efficiency <i>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition</i> (Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)	<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
Shadow Minister for Energy Affordability and Reliability <i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</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 (Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam
Shadow Attorney-General (Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations	Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business	The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Shadow Minister for Education Shadow Minister for Regional Education Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education Shadow Minister for Youth <i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education</i>	Senator the Hon Sarah Henderson The Hon Darren Chester MP Angie Bell MP <i>Senator Matt O'Sullivan</i>
Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care	Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
Shadow Minister for Sport (Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) Shadow Minister for Indigenous Health Services <i>Shadow Minister for Regional Health</i> <i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>	Senator Kerryne Liddle <i>Dr Anne Webster MP</i> <i>Senator Hollie Hughes</i>
Shadow Treasurer Shadow Assistant Treasurer Shadow Minister for Financial Services <i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury</i>	The Hon Angus Taylor MP The Hon Luke Howarth MP <i>Senator Dean Smith</i>
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs	The Hon David Coleman MP
Shadow Minister for Trade and Tourism (Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House) Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific <i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Trade</i> <i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs</i>	The Hon Kevin Hogan MP The Hon Michael McCormack MP <i>Rick Wilson MP</i> <i>Senator Claire Chandler</i>

Title	Minister
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	
(Manager of Opposition Business in the House)	
Shadow Minister for Government Services and the Digital Economy	Senator Claire Chandler
Shadow Minister for Science and the Arts	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Home Ownership</i>	<i>Senator Andrew Bragg</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Social Services</i>	<i>Pat Conaghan MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</i>	<i>Senator Hollie Hughes</i>
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development	Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
(Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)	
Shadow Minister for Communications	Melissa McIntosh MP
Shadow Minister for Western Sydney	
Shadow Minister for Northern Australia	Senator Susan McDonald
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories	The Hon Darren Chester MP
Shadow Minister for Roads and Road Safety	Tony Pasin MP
Shadow Minister for Defence	The Hon Andrew Hastie MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Industry	
Shadow Minister for Defence Personnel	
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Phillip Thompson OAM MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Industry</i>	
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Personnel</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>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Government Waste Reduction</i>	<i>James Stevens MP</i>
Shadow Minister for Home Affairs	Senator James Paterson
Shadow Minister for Cyber Security	
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 Child Protection and the Prevention of Family Violence	Senator Kerryne Liddle
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>Pat Conaghan MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Multicultural Engagement</i>	<i>Senator Paul Scarr</i>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Shadow cabinet ministers are shown in bold type.**

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2025

COMMITTEES

Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings Joint Committee.....	1
Parliamentary Library Joint Committee.....	1
Membership	1

BILLS

Defence Service Homes Amendment (Insurance) Bill 2025.....	1
Returned from Senate.....	1
Customs Amendment (Expedited Seizure and Disposal of Engineered Stone) Bill 2024.....	1
Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.....	1
Reference to Federation Chamber	1
Future Made in Australia (Production Tax Credits and Other Measures) Bill 2024.....	1
Consideration of Senate Message.....	1

BUSINESS

Rearrangement.....	1
--------------------	---

BILLS

Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.....	3
Second Reading.....	3
Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025.....	6
Second Reading.....	6
Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025	8
Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025	8
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025.....	8
Second Reading.....	8

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Pennant Hills Post Shop.....	13
DMFS Darwin's Welcome to the Top End.....	13
Moore Electorate: Federal Election.....	13
Roger, Professor Simon	13
Medical Workforce	14
Holt Electorate: Find a Penny Foundation.....	14
Donations to Political Parties.....	14
Drummoyne Water Polo Club.....	14
Australian Greens.....	15
Cost of Living.....	15
Spence Electorate: Australia Day Honours.....	15
Safer Internet Day	15
Workplace Relations	16
Flinders Electorate: Somerville Recreation Reserve.....	16
Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association: National Finals.....	16
Power, Ms Sasha	16
Federal Election.....	17
South Australia: Roads	17
Housing.....	17
Labor Government.....	18
Interest Rates	18

CONDOLENCES

Andrews, Hon. Kevin James, AM	18
Reference to Federation Chamber.....	21

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Taxation	21
Critical Minerals Industry.....	22
Medical Workforce	22
Future Made in Australia.....	23
Taxation	24
Resources Industry.....	24
Manufacturing Industry	24

Medicare	25
Cost of Living.....	26
Medicare: Bulk-Billing	27
Housing.....	27
Superannuation.....	28
Schools.....	28
Cost of Living.....	29
Veterans	30
STATEMENTS	
Personal Explanation.....	30
PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION	
Valedictory	31
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	
Cost of Living.....	36
BUSINESS	
Rearrangement	46
BILLS	
Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025	47
Second Reading.....	47
Third Reading.....	48
Future Made in Australia (Production Tax Credits and Other Measures) Bill 2024	48
Consideration of Senate Message.....	48
BUSINESS	
Rearrangement	48
Days and Hours of Meeting.....	48
COMMITTEES	
Employment, Education and Training Committee.....	49
Report.....	49
Reference to Federation Chamber.....	50
Corporations and Financial Services Joint Committee	50
Report.....	50
BILLS	
Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025	50
Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025	50
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025	50
Second Reading.....	50
Third Reading.....	66
Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025	66
Second Reading.....	66
Third Reading.....	66
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025	66
Second Reading.....	66
Third Reading.....	66
ADJOURNMENT	
Aircraft Noise	67
Griffith Electorate: Schools	67
Reid Electorate: Community Events.....	68
Federal Election.....	68
Austral, Ms Marbine	69
Barker Electorate: Community Projects	70
Lalor Electorate: Infrastructure.....	71
Albanese Government: Health Care.....	71
BUSINESS	
Orders of the Day	71
BILLS	
AusCheck Amendment (Global Entry Program) Bill 2025.....	72
Second Reading.....	72
Third Reading.....	72
Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025	73
Second Reading.....	73

NOTICES	
Presentation	78
FEDERATION CHAMBER	
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS	
Brookie Fest.....	79
Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras	79
AUKUS	79
Brand Electorate: Roads	79
Keppel Bay Sailing Club	80
Education.....	80
Veterans: Graves	81
Future Made in Australia (Production Tax Credits and Other Measures) Bill 2024.....	81
Endometriosis.....	82
Swan Electorate.....	82
Tumbatrek.....	83
Eden-Monaro Electorate: Community Events.....	83
Black Summer Bushfires	83
BILLS	
Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025	84
Second Reading.....	84
GRIEVANCE DEBATE	
Education	97
Housing.....	98
Parramatta Electorate: Pongal.....	98
Sunshine Coast: Infrastructure.....	100
Health Care.....	101
Schools.....	101
Albanese Government	102
Newcastle Electorate.....	104
BILLS	
Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025	105
Second Reading.....	105

Tuesday, 11 February 2025

The **SPEAKER (Hon. Milton Dick)** took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES

Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings Joint Committee

Parliamentary Library Joint Committee

Membership

The **SPEAKER (12:01)**: I have received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Brockman has been discharged from the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings and the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, and Senator Blyth has been appointed as a member of the committees.

BILLS

Defence Service Homes Amendment (Insurance) Bill 2025

Returned from Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment.

Customs Amendment (Expedited Seizure and Disposal of Engineered Stone) Bill 2024

Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Reference to Federation Chamber

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Chief Government Whip) (12:01): I declare that, unless otherwise ordered, the following bills stand referred to the Federation Chamber for further consideration: (1) Customs Amendment (Expedited Seizure and Disposal of Engineered Stone) Bill 2024 and (2) Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 at the adjournment of the debate on the motion for the second reading of the bill.

Future Made in Australia (Production Tax Credits and Other Measures) Bill 2024

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered at a later hour this day.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (12:02): I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, having earlier been referred to the Federation Chamber by way of a programming declaration, being returned to the House immediately, and all debate occurring in this Chamber.

I don't know what sort of protection racket the Labor Party is running here, but, based on the actions to date on the issues reflected in this bill, we have had a deliberate attempt on the part of the responsible minister to avoid scrutiny, and there is no chance that this bill is to be considered uncontroversial. In order for a bill to go from the House to the Federation Chamber as a substitute for debate, it would typically involve both the opposition and the government agreeing to it being passed over to the Federation Chamber. That usually happens when it's not controversial. But the bill that we want to have debated in this House introduces a form of retrospectivity in its application—that is, the Minister for Climate Change and Energy has put forward a piece of legislation which will change the rules of the game. He's done so in the form of the legislation, which should be debated in this chamber, but we now know from the government that they want to shove it under the carpet and send it up to the Federation Chamber so it is not fairly debated. Since when has legislation which has retrospective application been non-controversial? Since when? When has that ever happened? I'm looking squarely at the Labor members who are in this chamber today. I welcome them to name the precedent, of all those bills that had retrospective application, that was so uncontroversial it was sent to the Federation Chamber. But that's what they're trying to do.

Now, the best thing that you can say about the attempt of the Labor Party to move this bill to the Federation Chamber is that it is consistent with the minister's approach to date—to hide from scrutiny when it comes to the issues that are in that bill. The issues in that bill relate to how the government manages offshore wind zones. This is only the latest example in a completely bungled mess which is the result of the incompetence of the Minister for

Climate Change and Energy. I think most people who've been following the issues of offshore wind know that Labor has already made a mess of this right across the country.

Regional Australia has already been hit and hurt through a community engagement process on offshore wind which has been completely flawed, with reckless indifference shown to those communities. The government has never come forward with an explanation of the economic merits of offshore wind. But what has been most hurtful is how quickly they have disregarded concerns from regional Australia—the very people who will be most impacted from some of their offshore wind zones. I'm talking about the offshore wind zones off the coast of WA; Victoria; and New South Wales—in the Illawarra and the Hunter. These local communities have raised very fair and reasonable concerns around the economic impact, the social impact and the environmental impact of these zones. On each of these occasions, in each of those zones which I've mentioned, communities have been steamrolled by a minister who has adopted a process of avoiding scrutiny and refusing to have serious questions answered.

This has been the story of offshore wind under the Labor government from the time they came to office. They do not want scrutiny. Community after community with which I have met have come out with examples of very simple questions asked of government for which they do not get an answer. Why is it that the Albanese Labor government is so hell-bent on disrespecting regional communities when it comes to offshore wind?

Now, the bill before the House, which Labor wants to duckshove over to the Senate and ignore scrutiny on again, goes to offshore wind. For those who don't know what this is all about, I will explain. After the act was introduced under the former coalition government, it was the now Labor Minister for Climate Change and Energy who created the regulations which govern how feasibility licences are granted to developers who wish to build offshore wind projects in zones that are declared. The now Labor minister created regulations for how that is managed. This is consistent with everything Labor does in this portfolio—with haste and ideological rigour; to just steamroll ahead—because it set its arbitrary target of 82 per cent renewables in the grid by 2030. The minister went ahead with those regulations and introduced them, not having done his homework. Those regulations have since been proven to be flawed. As the minister was applying those regulations, he was rejecting proposals in these offshore wind zones. Once a proposal was rejected it was out of the game—until the minister was taken to court, and the court found that, in fact, the minister had the power to still grant feasibility licences to those proponents he had rejected.

So now the minister's in big strife. He raced ahead, he introduced those regulations and he was busted; he was caught out. So what did he do? He decided to change the regulations. When did he do that? Did he do that with scrutiny? Did he engage with industry? Did he engage with the coalition? No, he didn't. He did it sneakily instead. On 12 December last year, after parliament had risen, he changed the regulations to make sure that that power no longer existed. The thing is that that change in regulation, because it would have an adverse impact on others, could not be applied retrospectively. So he made a mess in the first place with the regulations, and then he tried to mop up that mess with a change in regulations—and, in mopping it up, he failed because he could not apply it retrospectively. What he really wants to do is change all the rules for the proponents who came before.

So what has he done? Last week he walked into this chamber and introduced the bill that should be debated here today. I'm talking here about the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, by the way, who will never lose a moment in front of that microphone. I've never seen a faster speech than the one he made last week—in and out. No scrutiny did he want—none at all. And now, today, when we have a line-up of speakers on this very legislation—he's not even here! He's in his room. Seriously! There's no scrutiny. They want to pass this off to the Federation Chamber. It is a disgrace! We need to have the debate here in this chamber. We need scrutiny on this legislation. Anything that has retrospective application at least deserves the scrutiny of the parliament. Even the regulations from last year are still yet to be scrutinised by the Senate committee. Thus, I put this motion to the House.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:13): I second the motion. Never before has the Minister for Climate Change and Energy been accused of hiding his light under a bushel—and that would be a bit of an understatement. This is a minister who, surprisingly, does not want to debate and speak on his bill that my good friend the member for Fairfax has just outlined. We think it is unacceptable that the Federation Chamber is increasingly being used by this government as a clearing house for bills that are politically difficult for them and, importantly, bills where there is significant opposition to what is being proposed. Here we're talking about a bill that makes retrospective changes. For most members in this House, there are few things that require more care, more debate, more argument and more attention than a retrospective change. Here we have, again, the government insisting on a controversial, important, significant bill that is before this House being sent off to the Federation Chamber.

We move this motion today partly in response to a similar decision that the government took last week, in kicking the Criminal Code Amendment (Hate Crimes) Bill 2025 off to the Federation Chamber against the request of the

opposition. Again, today, it's against the request of the opposition. By any definition, whether it's last week's hate crimes bill or the electricity infrastructure legislation, these cannot be described as uncontroversial bills that can be kicked off to the secondary Federation Chamber. As the *Practice* notes, it's supposed to operate by agreement between the government and the opposition. That's how it has always operated, by the way.

For those members of the Australian public watching today who might be wondering what the arcane debate of a bill being kicked off to the Federation Chamber, the secondary chamber, means, this is a huge departure that has been habitual from this government. In the last parliament, 18 bills were referred off to the Federation Chamber, because our view was, quite rightly, that bills, by definition, should be debated in the main chamber—preferably with an opportunity for members to speak on behalf of their electorates, on behalf of the people who send them to this parliament, and to make their case. Eighteen bills were referred to the Federation Chamber. We're now getting towards nearly 180 bills in this parliament having been sent off to the Federation Chamber, which, again, supports our contention that the Federation Chamber is being used as a clearing house for bills that the government is too embarrassed to debate or which are trouble, otherwise, politically.

So I absolutely second this motion from the member for Fairfax. I suppose there's no surprise that the government want to kick this off to the Federation Chamber with as little scrutiny as possible, because they refuse to tell Australians how much offshore wind will cost or how much more Australians will have to pay in their power bills. They're changing the rules after the fact, which we know just creates uncertainty for anybody affected. They've largely ignored the relevant stakeholders in the industry, which the member for Fairfax outlined.

We know that communities around this country are utterly fearful of the decision-making of this minister and utterly fearful of the decision-making that he has displayed over the last 2½ years. So it's totally understandable that those communities are very nervous when the not-so-camera-shy minister does not want to front up to this chamber to justify or argue for the retrospective changes that are now being kicked off to the Federation Chamber. It would be a shocking precedent if the government continued down this path of sending controversial bills to the Federation Chamber. And that's why I second the motion.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to. There being more than one voice calling for a division, in accordance with standing order 133 the division is deferred until after the discussion of the matter of public importance. The debate on this item is therefore adjourned until that time.

BILLS

Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (12:18): Australia is currently amidst an energy crisis, the likes of which it has not seen before. Indeed, not only is it on the front page of nearly every newspaper and in every talkback radio, but this energy crisis is being felt in every home across this country and in every business. The economy is getting weaker by the day. And here we are, in the final sitting week of this term of government, and the government brings in only one measure for consideration by the parliament about this energy crisis—only one measure. That measure does nothing to reduce the price of energy for households. That measure does nothing to make energy more affordable for Australian businesses. That measure does nothing to avoid the blackouts which the operator is warning about. The measure on energy that the government has chosen to introduce to the Australian parliament in the final sitting of this government is to mop up the mess of the Minister for Climate Change and Energy. That's why we're here. Think about that for a moment.

We only have to look at the last two weeks to know the damage which is being done, self-inflicted by government, across the economy because of poor energy policy. Australians were promised a \$275 reduction in household power bills, but households are paying up to \$1,000 more than what they were promised. On average, we have seen around 600 families every single week, since Labor came to office, signing up to hardship arrangements with their energy retailer because these families cannot pay the bills. We have seen 27,000 businesses go insolvent—27,000!—largely because they cannot handle the costs, and one of the biggest costs, we know, has been the increased cost of energy. We are seeing Australia now hollowing out its industrial capability as our manufacturers are either closing their doors or saying they need to because the cost of energy keeps going up and up.

Australia is losing its energy security. Australia is becoming more and more reliant on foreign powers to keep the lights on.

The warnings about blackouts are growing worse by the day. Everyday Australians now have heightened anxiety about not just the price of electricity but the potential for blackouts.

There's been much talk over the last 24 hours about tariffs potentially being slapped on Australian industry from the United States. These same companies need to be competitive. They need energy costs to come down. It's a handbrake on their activity in a world where they must get costs down to remain competitive.

These are the serious issues of the energy crisis Australia is facing, and there is not one serious commentator who isn't estimating it getting worse. I cannot find one commentator, other than the minister, the Prime Minister and some on the Labor benches—no commentator, no serious energy expert or analyst—who is saying that Labor's all-eggs-in-one-basket, renewables-only approach is going to bring prices down.

All of those problems that I've outlined are only going to get worse, because prices will continue to skyrocket on a renewables-only, entirely-weather-dependent system. Labor, as it goes forward in trying to have 82 per cent renewables on the grid by 2030 and nearly 100 per cent thereafter, is effectively closing down an electricity system which has been working, before it has a replacement ready to go. It's only going to get worse.

This context is key to this debate today, because, of all of those issues faced by Australians and the Australian economy, this government has chosen to introduce legislation, the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which addresses none of these things—none of them; not one iota. They've chosen to use the final sitting of the parliament to introduce an amendment to the act which manages offshore wind projects, and that amendment does one thing: it mops up the mess made by the Minister for Climate Change and Energy.

Prior to my words here, we had another debate in this chamber about this very bill, because the Labor Party doesn't want scrutiny on it. Again, this is the only bill in this portfolio area, in this sitting of parliament, and where is the minister? Where is the Minister for Climate Change and Energy? He's not here. He came into this parliament last week and introduced this bill at record speed. He was at that dispatch box on—off. He couldn't have been quicker. Why? He doesn't want scrutiny of this. And, when you look at what this bill does, you can see why. The substance of this bill is to legislate the retrospective application of the regulations that the minister put into place last December. But let's go back a bit because we need to understand offshore wind and how the licensing process has been regulated to understand why this bill needs scrutiny and why, in the absence of scrutiny, it absolutely needs to be opposed.

Firstly, the Albanese government has made it very clear that it wants offshore wind in abundance in this country. At no point has it revealed the economic impact on the Australian people or Australian businesses. At no point has the government come forward with any transparency about the economics of offshore wind. Nevertheless, it has forced, by its own rules, offshore wind, in abundance, into the operator's plan for Australia's future electricity system. 'To hell with the costs,' they think. 'We just want to do it.' Why? Well, they set the arbitrary target of 82 per cent renewables by 2030 and nearly 100 per cent thereafter. They just want it done. So they made the big call: 'We're going to have lots of offshore wind.'

They then identified six zones for potential declaration—one off the coast in WA, two in Victoria, one in Bass Strait and two in New South Wales. The way this government have run the community consultation process on each of those zones has been a disgrace, because they've demonstrated reckless indifference towards those local communities who will be most impacted. Some of these communities didn't even know that a zone was going to be declared until it was.

When you go to places like the Hunter and the Illawarra you hear stories about residents who will have an offshore wind zone, if Labor continues this debacle, right off their own coast. They didn't even know there was a consultation period. Those few who did know there was going to be consultation about these offshore wind zones didn't have their questions answered. We're talking about very intelligent people who know their own area. They had the potential of an offshore wind zone just off their coast. These communities brought forward very serious and reasonable questions on the economic impact, the social impact and the environmental impact on their areas. These questions were left unanswered by the government. In many cases, these communities were begging the minister to turn up and have a conversation with them, to understand the impact on their area. The minister refused.

The minister then called for a community review of this process. He got the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner to run this review. It was very clear that well over 90 per cent of regional communities were dissatisfied with the process. That review was tabled well over 12 months ago. Still, to this day, the minister has taken no action on it. He does not want scrutiny. All of those zones, by the way? The minister has now gone ahead and declared them as offshore wind zones, despite at no point providing transparency or answers to those most impacted.

What follows once a zone is declared is that you have developers who wish to build a specific offshore wind project come forward. Developers come forward, look at a zone—a big geographical area in the ocean—and put forward applications so they can build offshore wind projects in those zones. Like everything the minister has done—with great haste driven by an ideological belief—the regulations that govern how those feasibility

applications are treated were done too quickly and without scrutiny and had enormous holes in them. What the minister has ended up doing as these applications come forward, as some applications have been rejected by the minister, is fail to consider the possibility of still granting a licence for an area the applicant may not have bid for.

I'll give a very simple example here. Two applicants come into a zone. One wants a development of one area and another one has an application for another area, but there is some overlap and one has more merit than the other according to assessment. The minister has just rejected that application with lower merit, with no consideration of still granting a licence for another place within that zone. The original regulations should have accounted for that possibility, but they didn't. Why? Because this minister, again, with great haste, just put in the regulations, but he ended up being found out. He was taken to court. The court found that, in that example, the minister actually did have the power to still grant the second applicant a feasibility license, but the minister never did that. The minister's decision was basically that, once you're rejected, you're out of the race. The courts said he wasn't able to do that. In fact, he should have considered using a power that was there to still grant a licence.

Instead of dealing with this front-on, coming clean and saying, 'Okay, we've got an issue here. I could have done this better. This is how we now need to work together,' instead of engaging with this chamber and instead of engaging with industry, the minister decided, without telling the outside world, much less people in this parliament, to change the regulations so that that problem would just go away. When did he do this? Just before Christmas, after parliament rose last year—again avoiding any scrutiny. On 12 December the minister changed the regulations to mop up the mess he had created on how feasibility licences are granted. But then he found out those changes he made to the regulations—again, with haste, without scrutiny and without doing his homework—wouldn't do the job. The problem he really wants to fix is all those people who had put in applications who either had been rejected or he had planned to reject previously. In other words, he wants the change he made to the regulations last December to apply retrospectively, not just in the future but in the past.

To make a retrospective change is a big deal in any area, but it's particularly a big deal when you are dealing with a private sector which has already submitted applications on certain rules of the game by that same government. But that's this minister's plan. I don't deny there may indeed be merit to considering such things, but, in the context of the ongoing lack of scrutiny and the reckless indifference to regional communities and the private sector from this minister, that risk cannot be taken. Today we're talking about a bill, even though a Senate committee is still yet to investigate those exact same changes to the regulations made by the minister in December. In other words, those changes are yet to undergo scrutiny, and so, in the absence of that scrutiny, the minister has come into this chamber and wants to legislate the exact same thing plus retrospectivity.

And what makes this even worse is that this morning the Albanese government has tried to gag debate in this chamber because it does not want scrutiny or transparency, instead it wants to shove this debate off to the secondary chamber, the Federation Chamber. It does so against the *Practice*, where usually the government and opposition agree that bills which are not controversial get sent to that secondary chamber. Well, this is controversial, and the coalition disagreed with the government's judgement but still that's what they want to do. Why? Consistent with everything done by this minister on offshore wind, this change will be done without scrutiny, because it just mops up yet another failure.

I have to say one of the issues here goes beyond offshore wind. This, again, is a consistent approach we have seen from this minister and from this government right throughout this term where the minister has intervened in the marketplace and, in so doing, has made things worse. Just as the minister has shown reckless indifference to regional communities with respect to offshore wind, so too has he shown disregard for every Australian when it comes to planning premature closure of baseload power stations. It is as a direct consequence of the minister's declaration of an 82 per cent renewables grid by 2030 and the nearly 100 per cent thereafter that the market operator has been forced to plan premature closure of coal plants. Every now and then, when it looks like we're going to have a blackout, people fret because we're running out of energy, and yet the form of 24/7 always-on baseload power that keeps the lights on is being pushed out of the marketplace prematurely due to this minister's instruction.

Over the next 10 years we will have over 12 gigawatts of energy generation coming from coal plants closed ahead of when these coal plant owners have them scheduled to close. So Labor's bringing forward the closure of our baseload power stations, despite the fact this is leading to an increase in prices and heightened risk of blackouts. It is a direct consequence of a constraint placed on the market operator for its system plan by this minister and this Albanese government—a direct intervention for which they do not want scrutiny.

They're saying that they now appreciate that gas might be important. Again, this government has intervened in the gas marketplace, sought not to be under scrutiny and made things worse. This government is suffocating the supply of gas in Australia. We have abundant gas under our feet in Australia. This government is suffocating its supply to the Australian marketplace. It's often gas which sets the price of electricity, and once you limit supply, supply and demand, prices go up. That's what has been happening.

The Albanese government uses taxpayer money to fund legal activists to fight gas projects in the courts. That's how much they're trying to suffocate gas. The approvals process is an absolute debacle. They have not advanced one critical gas infrastructure project. They stripped any money out for CCS. This is a government which is adamantly opposed to Australia using its own gas, and of course that has impacts on our trading partners.

When you have the Japanese, of all people, publicly calling out the sovereign risk of Australia due to the market interventions of the minister for climate change in the Albanese government, you know there's a problem. And there is a problem, because they are jeopardising not just our energy security but the energy security of our key allies and trading partners. So they're killing off coal prematurely; they're suffocating gas. Why? Because they want to put all eggs in one basket of wind and solar.

The problem is investment has stalled on wind and solar under the Albanese government. This is what happens when you intervene so much in the marketplace and heighten sovereign risk. It impacts every sector. And if they're so hell-bent on closing down one system to replace it entirely with renewables, why then make this intervention on offshore wind and send all the wrong signals to the private sector? It doesn't make sense unless you are just mopping up at mistake, which is precisely what this is.

The Albanese government only wants all eggs in one basket—renewables only. Not only is it trying to suffocate gas and close coal prematurely, not only is it stalling the rollout of renewables, but it is also denying Australia the opportunity to look at alternate technologies used the world over, including zero emissions nuclear energy. To think that Australia is the only nation amongst the G20 which is either not using nuclear energy or not moving towards it—it's ridiculous. So every other advanced economy in the world is using nuclear energy today or moving towards it, yet the Albanese government wants nuclear energy to remain illegal in Australia.

The coalition have been very clear with our approach, and it is one of a balanced energy mix. We believe that only a balanced energy mix will deliver cheap, clean and consistent 24/7 electricity. That means renewables, gas and, as coal retires from the system, zero-emission nuclear energy. We have accepted a scenario of increased demand for electricity by up to around 60 per cent between now and 2050 as the more realistic plan put forward by the market operator. But Labor refuse to agree that a balanced energy mix will work even though their approach leaves Australia isolated. There is not one country in the world seeking to do what Labor is attempting. Even though prices go up, lights go out and emissions, by the way, don't even come down, this government wants to double down.

That is why it all comes back to the importance of scrutiny. The bill before the House, the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, needs scrutiny. That is why as an opposition we make clear: (1) this bill should not be sent to Federation Chamber for debate; it should be debated here in this chamber; (2) this bill should be referred to a Senate committee, the committee for environment and communications legislation, for review so proper scrutiny of the bill can take place; and (3) given the lack of scrutiny and the long, sorry saga which has led to this point, the coalition will oppose this bill in the House.

I close with these last comments. Australia right now is amidst an energy crisis. We have a government which is hell-bent on putting all eggs in one basket with a renewables-only approach. This is making Australians poorer. Businesses are closing. Our economy will be weaker. We are eroding our energy security. It is only getting worse. It is time that Australia had a pragmatic energy approach and put engineering and economics at the centre. We need a balanced energy mix. That balanced energy mix includes renewables and gas. We shouldn't be closing our coal plants prematurely, but, once they do retire from the grid, they should be replaced with another form of 24/7, always on, base-load power in the form of zero-emission nuclear energy. To the extent that this government continues, it needs to have scrutiny. It needs to answer questions. At the very least when it comes to this week, in this parliament, scrutiny should be applied to the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. To do otherwise would be a disgrace, but that is the Albanese government.

Debate adjourned.

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:49): The coalition will be supporting the passage of the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025. The bill will simply amend the Social Security Act to maintain current arrangements for youth disability support pension payment rates. As many members in this House may know, there are different rates of DSP for recipients under 21, depending on their individual circumstances, including their family situation. This includes a rate for a single dependant living at home

and a higher independent rate. This bill makes technical changes to provide for the intended different rates of payment for DSP youth recipients based on those circumstances, including their particular family situation.

The bill corrects a drafting error from many years ago that unintentionally affected a small cohort of DSP recipients under 21. And the bill ensures that youth recipients continue to receive rates based on their circumstances and family situation, maintaining higher payments for those who are independent or living away from home, which is the intended aspect of the rules. We understand from the government and have been assured that without this correction some recipients in full-time study or apprenticeships would receive lower payments. That is obviously an unacceptable situation, as it discourages education, which obviously contradicts common sense and of course contradicts our disability strategy at a national level.

We understand that the bill also validates past rate decisions and preserves the intended DSP payment structure, which is an understanding of not only this government but previous governments as well. On that basis, we will be supporting this very sensible and non-controversial bill.

Mr BATES (Brisbane) (12:52): I rise to speak to the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025. This bill is seeking to close a loophole identified in the social security legislation by the AAT in 2024. The consequences of this error are that for years the department and the government of the day have been misapplying the social security act, where participants were technically eligible for the higher independent disability support pension rate but were paid the lower rate. Although a drafting error, it calls into question the principles that underpin social security. The disability support pension is already a borderline poverty payment. The government should not be seeking endless ways to reduce it further.

The Greens also have concerns about the scope of backpay that this bill is seeking to avoid. Participants are constantly forced to defend themselves against the state. We saw this at its peak with robodebt, but it endures through schemes like mutual obligations and Work for the Dole. It seems strange, then, for the government to seek to remedy an error that no-one cared to identify for nearly two decades. Time and time again we see participants punished for minor infractions while the government and departments throw up their hands and yell, 'Oops!'

Not knowing your own legislation is not a simple mistake; it's an unbelievable oversight. Denying the higher independent rate on the mistake and understanding of an amendment from 2005 has genuine implications for participants. For these reasons the Greens will be opposing this bill.

We need to seriously consider whether using the machinery of the state to make social security harder to access, more means-tested and more restricted is a genuinely productive use of time. I urge the government to take seriously all the other issues that plague the DSP. The starting point for any genuine reform should be the low rate of the DSP. As a borderline poverty payment, it forces many disabled people into a vicious cycle of poverty, fear and pain. Income support payments below the poverty line mean hunger, they mean illness and they mean homelessness. None of these realities are conducive to finding meaningful, sustainable work. Poverty can have dire impacts on your physical and mental health and your ability to find work and maintain relationships, regardless of whether you are 20 or 60.

The tightening of eligibility for the disability support pension has also forced many people who are living with disability to rely on the lower rate under JobSeeker, which further entrenches poverty and disadvantage. Since 2007 the number of jobseekers with partial capacity to work has risen from 10 per cent to 43 per cent. Nearly half of all people on the poverty payment, JobSeeker, are incapacitated from work in some way. This has coincided with the tightening and restricting of the DSP.

We see the punitive administration of the DSP in other ways with the partner income test. I would like to foreshadow that the Greens will be moving amendments in the Senate calling for an end to the overtly restrictive partner income test under the DSP. The partner income test traps disabled people in abusive relationships. This is by forcing people into dynamics of financial dependency, where they lose access to their own income. Beyond this, the partner income test also genuinely prevents members of the community from getting married out of fear of losing the DSP. Disabled participants should not be punished for pursuing relationships. It's regressive and genuinely undermines marriage equality. This is another instance of the state being used to punish rather than support.

The government can't keep burying their heads in the sand and continuing to ignore the millions of renters, single parents, students, women and people with disabilities all doing it tough. Today there are more than three million Australians living in poverty, including one in six children. Many of those people are either unable to access income support or are relying on payments that are among the lowest in the OECD.

Despite being one of the wealthiest countries on earth, successive Labor and coalition governments have made policy choices that deliberately keep people in poverty, including refusing to raise JobSeeker, youth allowance and the disability support pension. The evidence is clear: one of the single most effective ways to genuinely tackle the

cost-of-living crisis is to raise the rates of income support payments. I urge the government to get their priorities in order. Tax breaks for property investors, giving hundreds of billions of dollars to billionaires and corporations, doesn't help the average Australian get through the cost-of-living crisis, and it does nothing for the millions struggling to survive on Centrelink payments.

Poverty is impacting so many Australians, and it is only getting worse. With skyrocketing rents, interest rate rises and inflation, so many people are struggling to get by. From not being able to afford nutritious food, education and housing or the resources to get a job—these are all having a significant impact on people's mental health and wellbeing as well. Poverty is a political choice, and the Greens are fighting for a strong social safety net and a liveable wage that would raise all Centrelink payments above the Henderson poverty line.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston—Minister for Social Services) (12:57): I am very pleased to speak to and sum up on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025, which will amend the Social Security Act 1991 to maintain current arrangements for the youth disability support payment rates. This includes different rates for recipients aged under 21, depending on their circumstances, including family situation. This reflects the long-established policy position that higher rates of payment should be targeted to those with greater need, such as those that are living independently or away from home.

These technical amendments are necessary as a recent merits review decision highlighted an unintended consequence of the Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Amendment (Welfare to Work and Other Measures) Act 2005. Those changes introduced the partial-capacity-to-work rule to the independence criteria, which was intended to apply to youth allowance recipients only. It's now understood that a drafting error in the 2005 amendments means that certain DSP recipients under 21 are impacted. This in turn affected the rates of support those recipients were entitled to receive. Without this bill, it would mean that arrangements would be at odds with the objective of Australia's Disability Strategy, providing a perverse incentive for young people to drop out of study, and apprenticeships. This bill is important to maintain the current arrangements for youth DSP payment rates and will validate past rate decisions, consistent with the longstanding policy intent of these arrangements. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): The question is that this bill be now read a second time. A division is required. In accordance with standing order 133, the division is deferred until after the discussion of the matter of public importance.

Debate adjourned.

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025

Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025

Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (12:59): I rise to speak on the additional appropriation bills for 2024-2025: Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-25 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025. These bills provide the necessary appropriations to ensure the continued delivery of essential government services and to fund decisions made since the 2024-25 budget was announced in May last year. In total, these bills appropriate approximately \$12 billion for the remainder of the financial year, the majority of which, some \$7 billion, is directed towards the ordinary annual services of government.

The opposition supports this legislation to ensure the smooth operation of government and the uninterrupted provision of services that the Australian people rely on. However, while we support these bills as a matter of necessity, we must also use this opportunity to highlight the grave economic mismanagement that has led us to this point and put Australians under so much cost-of-living pressure. These bills, like the budget bills before them, were introduced in the context of a budget and MYEFO update that yet again expose the Albanese Labor government's utter failure to tackle its cost-of-living crisis. The Albanese government cannot manage the economy. That is why we have seen inflation far too high for far too long. They cannot manage the budget. That is why we have seen \$347 billion in additional spending that has fuelled inflation and kept rents, mortgages and the cost-of-living high for the people who we represent.

The evidence of the Albanese Labor government's failures has been mounting since they were elected back in May 2022. What do they have to show for their additional \$347 billion in expenditure? What do they really have to

show apart from higher prices, higher interest rates, higher rents, more small businesses collapsing—some 27,000—and lower living standards. In fact, they are saying that living standards have dropped so far under this government that it wouldn't be until the year 2030 that living standards would recover to where they were under the former coalition government.

Under the Albanese government's economic mismanagement, we are witnessing the longest sustained period of inflation since the 1980s. Interest rates have been hiked 12 times under this government alone compared to once in nine years under the former coalition government. Energy bills have risen by an average of \$1,000 per household, in stark contrast to what was promised by the Prime Minister and the Treasurer prior to the last election when they said energy bills would fall by \$275. They've actually risen by \$1,000 per household. For businesses, the story is worse. Often, there have been 100 per cent increases. Living standards have collapsed. As I said before, businesses have gone insolvent. We are in a sustained household recession with negligible productive growth. Productivity has fallen through the floor. So for all the people that I represent, the people in Petrie, when they buy a product or get something done, what they're buying is a lot less than what it was just three years ago. That is because productivity has also collapsed.

What is the government's response to all of this? When we come into question time each day and when we hear the ministers in the media, what is their response? It's denial and indifference. The Prime Minister says to Australians, like he did in 2022: 'Trust me. You'll be better off under Labor.' Their coalition partners in the Senate, the Greens party, are also responsible for this. After 2½ years, or almost three years, now, Australians know better. Let's look at the real impact of Labor's failures on everyday Australians. The employee living cost index, an index measuring the true cost of living for hardworking Australian families, has surged by 19.4 per cent since the government took office. That is a huge jump, far outstripping any sort of wage growth or anything the government has done to try and help this situation. It's surged almost 20 per cent. That's almost 50 per cent higher than the consumer price index over the same period.

We have seen a 66 per cent increase in the number of people seeking assistance with their energy bills—just to keep the lights on at home, just to keep the wi-fi going at home. You want to relax after a big day's work and watch a bit of Netflix. We have seen people seeking assistance with energy bills, and that's not what was promised prior to the last election, when they said: 'Renewables are cheap. We're going to be a renewable energy superpower.' Have you heard that expression before from the Prime Minister and the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, that we're going to be a renewable energy superpower? What's it done? It's made household bills go up by \$1,000 by ensuring that all new energy is just coming from Chinese-made solar farms and wind farms. That is not working; it's not the solution. And they won't even put a cost on the additional transmission lines, the some 27,000 new lines that have been dug up through national parks and over sand dunes without, really, I think, much of an environmental impact study, because: 'It's renewables. We've just got to do it.' Bang—pop it in. The coalition has other solutions, which the Leader of the Opposition and our shadow minister for climate change and energy, Ted O'Brien, have spelt out in relation to gas, renewables and emissions-free, modern nuclear power that can be dropped in at seven locations where we currently have those transmission lines. So we can go emissions free under our policy without destroying sand dunes and national parks and running 27,000 kilometres of new poles and wires through rural and agricultural land.

At the end of the day, when you focus on Australians and what's best for them, not what's ideological about the policy, Australians are better off. When you govern just for union donors or when you govern for a small amount of people, then what happens is the policies go wrong and most Australians cop it through higher cost of living.

It's the same with the Greens; they're no different. When they say, 'Let's tax billionaires,' it all sounds good—tax millionaires, tax billionaires and everything else. But what Australians don't understand is that the students that are at university and the people that are perhaps on some sort of welfare assistance—when you tax those businesses, which are often the vehicle through which people have made their wealth through entrepreneurial activities, all of those costs of higher taxes. You see the Greens running around with 'Tax billionaires' shirts. Those higher taxes are passed on to the consumers that we represent in Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. That is the absolute reality. So it's easy for a protest party of government, like the Greens, which is not a government party, to come in and say, 'Free this, free that, free dental, free HECS, free TAFE'—whatever it might be, someone is paying for it all, and they're paying for it through higher taxes, which is how the Australian government gets its money. They don't have a money tree out the back; the Treasurer doesn't have a money tree out the back of his parliamentary office that he just plucks the billions of dollars from to bring down the budget every May, right? It comes from taxes levied on the Australian people, and what we see, every day in this place, are more and more bills coming through to find new ways to tax people.

Yesterday, we had the member for Kooyong—and don't believe me, go to the *Hansard* and look at what she said. She wants to tax every person in Australia that currently claims a tax deduction on a ute. She wants to tax them.

That's what she said. She basically said: 'There are three million utes in Australia and only two million businesses, to round it up. Therefore, one million people must be rorting the system because they're not apprentices.' I said to the member for Kooyong, who's a teal—she says she's Independent but votes with the Greens 80 per cent of the time—that there are more people than just qualified tradespeople that use utes. What she, and others in this place, fail to understand is that farmers, for example, are not tradespeople. But guess what? They deliver food to Bendigo, to Kooyong and to Petrie, and right around the country. They use utes, and they can claim a legitimate tax deduction, as to fringe benefits tax, or on some sort of LandCruiser ute that's probably over the luxury car tax threshold—and rightly so; so they should.

This is what happens when you get elites that earn a lot of money coming in here and saying, 'Oh, we just need to tax people more.' But who cops it? The farmers cop it.

Let's say you were to take the advice of the member for Kooyong, who has written to the Treasurer saying that that tax exemption for utes should be removed. Let's say he takes that advice and the cost of utes goes up. What does that do to the price of apples, lamb or tomatoes, or pest control, or any other service where small-business people use a ute but they're not actually tradespeople? Take concreters, for example. People might want to put a driveway in for their house or a path from their back door to the clothesline. Concreters are not tradies; they haven't done a four-year apprenticeship. But they use utes as legitimate tools for their business. We need people to wake up a bit and explain how higher taxes are passed on to the people that we actually represent.

Families are struggling to keep the lights on; there's no doubt about it. Mortgage holders are facing an additional \$50,000 in repayments just to keep a roof over their heads. Small businesses are closing their doors at an alarming rate. This is the reality of Labor's cost-of-living crisis, and yet, despite all of the pain and suffering, the Prime Minister hasn't offered any comfort or solutions and has no plan to ease the burden on Australians. The cost-of-living crisis we face today is not a coincidence; it is a direct result of the government's economic incompetence. Australians are crying out for relief and are saying Labor has failed them. Instead of addressing these real and pressing issues, this government continues to ignore the struggles of hardworking families and small businesses.

While we support these additional appropriation bills to ensure the continued functioning of government, we will not stand idly by while Labor's economic failures wreak havoc on Australian households. If you think it's bad now, just three months before the federal election is due, imagine what it would be like with a Labor-Greens-teal government in the next parliament, where you'd have members like the member for Kooyong and the member for Melbourne putting bills into this place with the Prime Minister. I can tell you now, it would be bad for Australia.

Dr Webster: Disastrous.

Mr HOWARTH: It would be disastrous for Australia, as the member for Mallee says. I've got to shoot off that warning because the Prime Minister and his government must take responsibility for the economic damage that they have caused in the last three years. The coalition is not in government; they are. If you can't trust the leader of the country when he makes promises about lowering electricity prices, not changing stage 3 tax cuts or not putting additional taxes on superannuation that are not indexed, so that people in their early 20s are going to be impacted by the decisions of the Albanese government when they're at retirement age, then how can you trust anyone? It's no wonder that Australians get a little bit cynical about politics when people—and particularly the leader of the country—say one thing before an election and then something after. Above all, they must present a real plan: one that delivers genuine relief and restores the economic stability that Australians deserve. Until that happens, the coalition will continue to stand with the Australian people, holding this government to account and fighting for a better, more prosperous future for all Australians.

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (13:15): This set of appropriation bills— Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025— seeks appropriations for a combined \$12.1 billion. We on this side of the House care greatly about how taxpayers' money is spent, and an incoming Dutton and Littleproud government will have the nation's first minister for government efficiency, in the form of Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, alongside the future assistant minister for waste reduction, James Stephens. I cannot wait to see them run the ruler over every agency and find efficiencies and, of course, inefficiencies.

We know that under the Albanese government the cost of living has increased substantially and real wages are not keeping up. The coalition is committed to fighting tooth and nail for everyday Australians to find savings everywhere we can. On that front, I focus today on energy policy, because this is a government that, before they were elected, promised 97 times that they would reduce power bills permanently by \$275 per annum. That promise was officially broken on 1 January this year. They hate to talk about it. It was a big promise. It was a bold promise and it is broken. Why is this promise broken? It is because this government couldn't deliver an outcome even if it was gift-wrapped on their doorstep. Yes, that's part of it. Is it broken because this is an incompetent government

unready for office and showing no sign of improvement? Yes to that, too. The promise to reduce energy bills is also broken because Labor are joined at the hip with the Australian Greens political party.

Labor didn't run in the Prahran by-election for some bizarre reason, but in the seats that Labor do hold they fret about losing them to the Greens. So Labor rob regions such as mine in Mallee to buy votes in the inner cities, throwing country people under the figurative bus to save themselves from the Greens.

Labor thinks that a rapid race to a political carbon emissions reduction target is the smart thing to do. It is not. The Albanese Labor government is turning Australia into an international pariah. No nation of the geographic scale of Australia with a tiny emissions profile like Australia's is doing what this blind government is doing with 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines across agricultural electorates like mine with VNI West. Almost every other developed nation is turning to zero emissions nuclear energy for the long term.

The coalition has a responsible plan for energy policy. When I look at the almost \$179 million in the bill for the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and the \$263 million-plus from the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and the \$33 million for agricultural, fisheries and forestry, I wonder, for that collective taxpayer spending of in excess of \$575 million, how nobody has piped up and said: What about nuclear? What about learning from the rest of the world? What about our farmers and fishers and the impact that that reckless energy policy is having on them? Either those agencies are incompetent, or this is a government so blind to its political and ideological energy target that it simply won't listen to sound advice. Worse than the direct taxpayer impact of the government spending in this bill, spending on agencies that are either incompetent or ignored by the government anyway, there are hidden costs to every taxpayer as a consequence of collective energy policy failures at state and federal levels.

In my home state of Victoria, we have a state Labor government as well as the federal Labor government zeroing in on my electorate of Mallee as Labor's dumping ground for bad policy, namely railroading small regional communities and farmers with unwanted wind turbines, solar panels and transmission lines to boot. Don't buy the spin from foreign wind cowboy companies. Over 90 per cent of over 1,800 people who own, work or have close connections with farms oppose renewable projects on farmland according to a recent survey by farming advocacy group Farms for Food. Victorian Labor had six renewable energy zones in their initial plans. Now almost all the singular REZ is landing in Mallee.

While Australians struggle with the cost of living and 27,000 small businesses have gone to the wall under Labor, with energy costs a major factor in failing business viability, Labor pretends that it's \$275 permanent energy reduction promise never happened. The arsonists stand there with a bucket of water, pretending they're helping. They toss into the energy crisis bonfire a one-off series of four quarterly payments to somehow nurse their wounded polling through an election. Mark my words: once the election passes, power bills will surge back up again. This government cares far, far more about its own political survival in inner-city electorates than it does about struggling Australians and battling small businesses.

Labor is dividing the Mallee with duplicated infrastructure that we will not need if we put zero-emission nuclear energy at existing coal-fired power plant sites. Labor forgets that, during the early decades of this century, energy bill payers already paid a fortune to gold-plate our transmission network. Government set reliability standards that were high in order to meet peak-demand events which might occur only a few times a year—namely, those couple of hot weeks we endured recently, when everyone is home in the evening and air conditioners are churning. Into this mix, they've thrown intermittent wind turbines, which cannot guarantee peak generation when it's hot. It's incompetency at a nearly criminal level.

The same bureaucrats and boffins in whom we are asked to invest in this bill today back in the early 2000s projected that electricity demand would keep rising. What they didn't foresee is that energy efficiency would improve and the take-up of rooftop solar panels. The gold-plating of the grid, based on false prophecies, saw us all paying early this century for new substations and transformer upgrades, more transmission and distribution lines, investment in network reliability and redundancy, and capacity for peak demand that's rarely used.

In Australia's energy policy today, we also see another clear illustration of the need to revisit where we a federation stand as when it comes to responsibility. Energy policy is nobody's direct responsibility, just like health policy, as I find all the time as shadow assistant minister for regional health. The national energy arrangements, like the Australia Energy Regulator and the Australian Energy Market Operator, are set up under national, not federal, arrangements. Australia's energy policy is an accountability vacuum, and we all pay as a result.

The former coalition government intervened in this accountability vacuum by creating what is now known as the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner. The first commissioner was Andrew Dyer. Andrew retired relatively recently from the role, and let me put on record my appreciation for his work. I connected with Andrew and, in turn, connected him with Mallee farmers and landholders who are being railroaded by Labor governments

and harassed by the foreign energy cowboys Labor has enticed into regional Australia, stirring up bad blood in regional communities and families. Andrew called out those cowboys and sought greater regulation of their behaviour. This has not happened.

The unreliability of Labor's energy plan is writ large when you look at the recent collapse of a wind turbine in Berrybank, south of my electorate. These foreign energy cowboys are proposing turbines as tall as 280 metres, which is just 17 metres short of the Eureka Tower in Melbourne. Each turbine, at 280 metres tall, would clock in at number seven in the list of tallest structures in the nation, behind the Sydney and Q1 towers, Australia 108 in Melbourne and three naval communication towers.

But wait. It gets worse. A German company is planning to build a turbine 364 metres tall to the tip of its blades. If we had those in Australia, that would be the equal second-highest building in the nation. It's out of sight and out of mind from those inner-city electorates where Labor is competing against the Greens and teal candidates. Labor proposes pincushioning electorates like Mallee with massive turbines. After the Berrybank turbine collapse and other recent safety incidents, you have to ask whether turbines are safe or good for the environment—let alone the potentially devastating impact on agricultural primary industry.

Labor is happy to transform Mallee into an industrial wasteland. The Victorian government has removed from their 2022 report an item that says without offshore wind generation, Labor will need up to 70 per cent of Victoria's agricultural land for their renewable energy objectives. Don't worry: I kept a copy of the document, though they've removed it.

With offshore wind in Victoria on the rocks, you could see the wind turbine map of electorates like Mallee rapidly turning into a pincushion. Australians are feeling the pain of this reckless energy transition in their energy bills and will continue to do so. As the coalition revealed late last year, Labor's renewables-only plan will cost almost \$600 billion, with the coalition's responsible energy transition being 44 per cent cheaper, at \$263 billion. Moody's, late last week, confirmed Labor's energy plan could cost up to \$230 billion over the next 10 years alone and drive household electricity prices up another 25 per cent in that time.

This is yet another independent warning that Chris Bowen's renewables-only approach will continue to hurt Australians, forcing families and businesses to the wall. Chris Bowen promised wholesale prices of \$51 per megawatt hour in 2025, but the reality is that Australians' quarterly prices have been in excess of \$100 per megawatt hour over the past year.

Energy policy failures are why regional Australians are urging their city cousins to desert the Labor-Greens-teal axis, whom, I must add, are backed by the energy barons of Climate 200, the very enablers of this destruction in not only our regional landscapes and lifestyles but our environments. I can only hope the expenditure in this bill might go towards departments and staff who will call out this nonsense on behalf of regional Australians—salt-of-the-earth, hardworking farmers like Glenden Watts, Ben Duxon, Tess Healy, Barry Batters, Gerald Feeney, Andrew Weidemann, Ross Johns and too many more to mention from my electorate who didn't choose this fight. It chose them, and they are fighting. I am fighting alongside them, and I'm grateful to Peta Credlin from Sky News for giving them a platform. I look forward to hosting Peta and shadow minister Ted O'Brien in Mallee before the election to show all Australians the human face and cost of reckless energy policy and the alternatives at our fingertips.

Ms WARE (Hughes) (13:28): I rise to speak on these bills, the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-25, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025. These bills do, of course, provide the necessary appropriations to ensure the continued delivery of essential government services and to fund decisions made since the 2024-25 budget was announced in May last year. In total, these bills appropriate \$12 billion for the remainder of the financial year, the majority of which, some \$7 billion, is directed towards the ordinary annual services of government. The coalition supports this legislation to ensure the smooth operation of government and the uninterrupted provision of services upon which Australians rely.

However, while we support these bills as a matter of necessity, we must also use this opportunity to highlight the grave economic mismanagement that has led us to this point and put Australians under so much cost-of-living pressure. These bills, like the budget bills before them, were introduced in the context of a budget and MYEFO update that yet again exposed the Albanese Labor government's utter failure to tackle our current cost-of-living crisis. We need to get Australians back on track—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate will be resumed at a later hour and the member will be granted leave to continue their remarks when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Pennant Hills Post Shop

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (13:30): Last week we learnt that Australia Post has been asked to vacate its Pennant Hills premises by April 2025 with no clear plan for the relocation of its services. This closure isn't just an inconvenience; it will have real consequences for the 7,760 residents and the many local businesses, schools, higher education providers and service providers who depend on it daily.

After Hornsby, Pennant Hills is the most significant post office in our shire, providing essential services such as bill payments, parcels and PO boxes. With no banks left in Pennant Hills, the local Australia Post office has been a vital lifeline, allowing residents to conduct their banking and postal services in person. Losing the post office would create unnecessary hardship not just for seniors but for so many in our community.

I know what it takes to maintain postal services for Berowra's communities. When the Brooklyn post office closed in 2023, I fought hard alongside the community to ensure that postal services remained in Brooklyn, and today a new post office is up and running there as a result of our efforts. That's why I've launched a petition calling on Australia Post to maintain its presence in Pennant Hills with hundreds already signing it over the weekend. I've also written directly to Australia Post CEO, Paul Graham, and the Minister for Communications requesting meetings to discuss possible solutions, including finding an alternative location for the post office in Pennant Hills shops.

I'll keep fighting to retain these essential services for our Pennant Hills community.

DMFS Darwin's Welcome to the Top End

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (13:31): It was fantastic on the weekend to meet some of the newest Australian Defence Force families that have been posted into the Territory at the Defence Members Families Support's, DMFS, Welcome to the Top End event. Our ADF personnel, veterans, ex-service organisations and many other community and sporting organisations came together in the Darwin Convention Centre to show what we have to offer in the Top End for our new families. It was great to speak with many of the serving members and their partners, wives, husbands, daughters and sons to hear how the move to the Top End was going. It was great to see whether the spouses had found work and whether the kids had settled into schools okay and to make sure that they understood how valuable they are to us as a community and how welcome they are in the Top End.

As we know, partners and families are the backbone of our ADF personnel. Our ADF members can't do the difficult job that they do for us as a nation without the support of their families, and that's why our government, the Albanese government, has released the Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy from this year until 2030, known as the family strategy. It's identifying better ways to support our Defence personnel and veterans, and that's why this event in Darwin on the weekend was so important. Well done to all involved.

Moore Electorate: Federal Election

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore—Second Deputy Speaker) (13:33): As this may be the last sitting week before the upcoming federal election, I wish to thank the electors of Moore for the great honour and privilege of representing our community for the past four parliamentary terms, stretching over nearly 12 years. After 30 years with the Liberal Party, political circumstances almost identical to the 1996 election in Moore caused me to move to the crossbench at the start of this year, and I will contest the next election as an Independent.

Whilst I have an established track record of advocating for representing and delivering infrastructure and services for our community, there is still a lot more work to be done in realising my development vision for our community. My ongoing vision for the electorate is to develop our suburbs into a thriving city with modern amenities and a great place for families to live and prosper and to continue to evolve Joondalup, as a regional city centre, into a thriving centre of commerce, health care, innovation, advanced technology and higher education and into a hub of skilled employment.

This will only be possible with the continued support of the constituents of Moore, and I conclude by respectfully asking for your No. 1 vote on election day.

Roger, Professor Simon

Dr REID (Robertson) (13:34): Professor Simon Roger is retiring this year from clinical medicine after working on the Central Coast for over 32 years. Starting in 1992, Professor Roger was the first nephrologist appointed by the Central Coast local health district. Along with practising nephrology in both the public and private setting, Professor Roger was instrumental in leadership as head of the division of medicine for 10 years, and as medical staff council chairman and head of department for renal medicine for 30 years.

During his career he served the community and looked after an enormous number of kidney disease, dialysis and transplant patients on the Central Coast. Professor Roger authored over 100 publications in peer-reviewed journals

and delivered over 105 lectures sharing his expertise in erythropoietin, iron and pharmacological treatments for hyperkalaemia.

At the onset of his career, the hospital's renal services cared for around 20 patients, with this service expanding to over 500 patients under his leadership. Professor Roger was instrumental in setting up the kidney supportive care service on the Central Coast as an alternative treatment for end-stage kidney disease. The renal team expanded to include an advanced trainee, three consultant nephrologists, a renal social worker, dietetics and a dedicated renal pharmacist. Professor Roger's dedication to developing renal services has been felt by his colleagues and the constituents of the Central Coast. Well done, Professor Roger.

Medical Workforce

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (13:36): On 1 February I co-hosted the inaugural SA future GP forum with the General Practice Registrars Australia. That brought together registrars, pre-vocational doctors and general practice students from across 21 universities across Australia. The aim was to hear how we can help these students and registrars ensure they go through a pathway to being a general practitioner. That's because fewer than 10 per cent, or around 10 per cent, of medical students actually decide to become GPs now. That's down from 50 per cent in previous decades. Why? There's a few reasons

One of the reasons is the inequitable pay difference between being a registrar in a hospital and going into a GP practice. What we know is that we need to fund medical practices around Australia to take on students, to take on registrars. There's around a \$31,000 difference in pay and that is meaning fewer students are going through this pathway. We also need to lift the Commonwealth supported places to study medicine. That has effectively flatlined in the last decade. With an ageing population and a growing population, what we're seeing is a shortfall of 10,000 GPs across Australia. That's what the AMA is saying. That's the cliff that we're facing. It was great to hold this forum, and I look forward to fixing this issue with the parliament.

Holt Electorate: Find a Penny Foundation

Ms FERNANDO (Holt) (13:37): Christmas is a time of joy and giving but it is also a time when many in our community are doing it tough. It's a season that reminds us of the power of giving and of the importance of looking after one another. For the past two years I have hosted Curries and Carols, a charity fundraiser that brings together three things I cherish—Christmas, a curry and the spirit of charity. This year I was proud to support Find a Penny Foundation, an organisation doing incredible work providing free meals to those in need. Thanks to the generosity of our community, we raised \$2,000 to help them continue their vital work. I want to express my gratitude to Bibi and her amazing team at Find a Penny for their efforts throughout the year in providing support to our community. Your compassion and dedication make a real difference in people's lives. To everyone who contributed on the night, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your kindness is what makes our community in the south-east suburbs so special.

Donations to Political Parties

Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (13:39): Half a million dollars—that's how much Gina Rinehart funnelled into the Liberal Party in a single year. Meanwhile, Labor's biggest donor is billionaire Anthony Pratt. Billionaires are buying political influence at the expense of our planet, our livelihoods and our communities, and we all know how it ends. At his inauguration, Trump lined up his billionaire mates and donors—Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk—and, hours later, began winding back social and environmental protections, and attacking human rights, democracy and climate action. Back in Australia, billionaires are bankrolling the Liberals' campaign. We should be terrified about what that means for our future. Labor and the Liberals back an economic system that allows Gina Rinehart to bank \$40 billion while more people than ever before live in tents and cars.

People deserve a government that will fight for them. You deserve a government that will put your needs above the needs of the one per cent and that fights for putting dental into Medicare, for you to see a GP for free, to wipe student debt, for cheaper groceries and for a cap and freeze on rent increases. That's what the Greens will put firmly on the table when there's a minority government. But nothing changes if nothing changes. A vote for the major parties is more of the same. This election, we can keep Dutton out and break up the two-party system—but if you want change you're going to have to vote for it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): I remind you about the use of correct titles for future debates, Member for Melbourne.

Drummoyne Water Polo Club

Ms SITOU (Reid) (13:40): Congratulations to the Drummoyne Water Polo Club on being awarded a Play Our Way grant for their female participation and empowerment program. The club was awarded the grant for their plan

to increase the involvement of girls and women in the sport from the ground up. As well as introducing policies to welcome and sustain young and adult female athletes, they are working to increase the number of female coaches, referees and officials. In 2024 they elected their first female president—a huge congratulations to president Sally Gates. She's already made an indelible mark on the club. They've seen a 20 per cent rise in women members, and that will continue to rise with the support of this grant.

Drummoyne Water Polo Club is one of Australia's largest water polo clubs. It has more than 30 teams, including junior girl and boys right through to senior teams. The success of the Drummoyne Water Polo Club rests on its members and volunteers—people who have been involved with the club for many years. Congratulations to the entire team. Thank you for fostering a love of this great sport in our local community. I look forward to attending your annual club day later this month.

Australian Greens

Cost of Living

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (13:41): The member for Melbourne, the Greens leader, just belled the cat: if the Greens are able to form a governance-sharing arrangement after the next election, woe beside Australia and Australians, particularly regional Australians, because it's the Greens who have policies that want to change the social fabric of this nation. Horseracing will be gone. Australia Day will be gone. All the traditions that this nation is based on will be gone if the Greens get a share of the governance arrangements.

Things are crook in Tallarook, and they're crook because of those opposite. The cost-of-living crisis is out of control. For the first 12 to 18 months we didn't hear about the cost-of-living pressures on ordinary households or small businesses. All we had was a divisive referendum that did nothing to help this nation and did nothing to help Indigenous Australians close the gap.

I've just had a meeting with Wes Lambert, the Australian Restaurant & Cafe Association CEO. There are business insolvencies that really are hurting the catering association. We in the coalition have a better plan. We are going to get this country back on track; rest assured we will. We won't be in a governance arrangement with the Greens. We would never do that; rest assured we wouldn't do that. The cost of living is out of control under Labor.

Spence Electorate: Australia Day Honours

Mr BURNELL (Spence) (13:43): Australia is a nation built on unity. Our story as a people is written by individuals from all walks of life, united by the special bond we know as the Australian way, coming together for the common good. I want to take my time in this place now to congratulate those everyday Aussies in my community who received Australia Day honours and whose efforts make our country the great nation it is.

Mr John Hough is one of those everyday Aussies. He was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the General Division for his service to veterans. Mr Hough, thank you for your service and for the work that you do in bringing together and supporting our veterans to make their lives better.

There were also several local Australian of the Year award winners across the northern suburbs. From the town of Gawler, to Darren Dwyer, James Krieg, the First Steps Playgroup and Relay for Life: congratulations on your significant achievements and thank you for the work that you do.

The City of Salisbury's Madeeha Usman, Dal Za Tuang Naulak, Dennis Greenhill, Mary Purbrick, the Northern Districts Athletics Club, the Salisbury Business Association and the Asbestos Victims Association: thank you for your service to our community and congratulations.

Finally, the City of Playford. To John Eoncheff, Kaitlin Ownsworth, the Lions Club of Elizabeth Playford, the Salvation Army Playford Corps and the Playford Bowling Club: congratulations and thank you for your hard work—*(Time expired)*

Safer Internet Day

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (13:45): Today is Safer Internet Day. It's a reminder to everyone how important it is to keep an eye on kids when they're online to help keep them safe. That's why the coalition established the eSafety Commissioner, to advocate and work towards protecting our kids online. Unfortunately, cyberbullying is rife throughout Australia and there are so many children suffering now. Almost half of kids—that's half!—aged between eight and 17 have been treated in a hurtful or nasty way, bullied online, and this is unacceptable.

The opposition leader announced the coalition's position on protecting Australian kids online in June last year. He led the debate on social media bans for under 16s because he knows it's vitally important to keep kids away from harmful activities online. It took the Albanese Labor government until November last year to introduce a bill to ban under 16s from being on social media. Because it took so long, we'll probably have to wait until this December for the promised implementation of the ban. Labor has a track record of delaying the rollout of important projects.

Australians would be right to question whether implementation will go ahead by December or if this will be another Albanese Labor government broken promise.

Workplace Relations

Ms MASCARENHAS (Swan) (13:46): Tomorrow marks an important anniversary. It will be one year since Labor's closing-the-loophole reforms became law. This was fundamentally about safety, security and fairness for workers, making workplaces safer, making sure that jobs could be more secure and ensuring fair and better conditions for Australian workers. They gave casuals a fairer path to a steady job. These changes have made a big difference because for a decade the coalition kept wages low on purpose. This was their strategy to hold workers down.

The opposition have confirmed they will repeal our closing-the-loopholes law—that's right, back to undermining workers in favour of big business. The right to disconnect? Gone. Fairer conditions? Scrapped. Secure jobs for the future? None. Instead, they'll push tax-free lunches for big bosses because looking after the top end of town is what they know and all they care about. They don't care about a fairer Australia. They don't want a fairer Australia. They want an Australia that only benefits the few at the top end. We will always stand up for workers. Labor will always stand up for a fair go. For one year, closing the loopholes has been doing exactly that.

Flinders Electorate: Somerville Recreation Reserve

Ms McKENZIE (Flinders) (13:47): I have the enormous fortune to represent an electorate that likes to run around, brandish a bat, hit or kick a ball or throw one through a hoop. It keeps us happy and healthy, and our flourishing sporting clubs are the backbone of our beautiful community.

On Saturday I went out to watch the cricket match between Somerville and Mount Eliza at the Somerville Recreation Reserve. It was a celebration of premierships past and graced by cricket royalty, including ODI player Shaun Graf, who was born and bred in Somerville. Roast beef rolls were made by Steve, and Bec and Ella were running the bar. Premiership players got the gold in the form of a stubby holder, at least that was until I announced a future Dutton government will provide \$5 million towards the redevelopment of this much loved but very dilapidated reserve and pavilion.

Over the years Peter Alp, president of the cricket club between 2011 and 2021, has advocated for a rebuild of the reserve. He has held talks with all and sundry and drawn the presidents, secretaries and treasurers of all the cricket, footy and netball clubs to meetings with me, meetings with state candidates, meetings with anyone who will listen. I haven't yet seen Peter in tears, but he has come close a couple of times, sitting with me on the sagging benches of the pavilion, asking: 'What have we got to do to get someone to listen? Forty-nine clubs and we're still growing. What more do we have to do?' The institution can claim to have been standing for more than 130 years, and let's hope that the commitment I made on Saturday, if realised, will mean many more victories to come in the future.

Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association: National Finals

Mr REPACHOLI (Hunter) (13:49): The Hunter is always punching above its weight, and we have done it again with a couple of local young blokes absolutely dominating at the recent Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association titles. Judd Thomas is now a dual Australian champion after taking out the titles in the under-11s Mini Bulls and under-11s Steer Rider. Singleton's own Logan George is also now an Australian national champion in the under 14s Mini Bull, taking out the win.

For those who don't know, the Mini Bulls competition is a rodeo event which involves young riders being mounted on a miniature bull and trying to hold on while the bull tries its hardest to buck them off. The steer riding event is similar to the mini bull event, and it's considered an introductory form of bull riding for young riders. Instead of bucking bulls, the young riders ride steers that buck. Whether it's riding a mini bull or a steer, getting bucked off by any angry animal isn't something an everyday person can do, and it takes serious courage.

I know what it takes to become a national champion and I know how hard both of these young gentlemen, Judd and Logan, have worked. The time they put in and the results they got on the day are absolutely fantastic. Congratulations to both you boys. Keep up the great work. I really look forward to seeing—and hopefully one day you guys showing me—how a steer's eyes and legs buckle when I sit on it, but we'll see what we can do. Keep up the great work in the rodeos in the future. Cheers.

Power, Ms Sasha

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (13:50): One of Wide Bay's successful young women with a bright and promising future is 17-year-old Sasha Power from Kilkivan. Sasha has been competing in khanacross motorsport events since she was 12. In 2023, Sasha achieved first, second and third place over three classes at the national khanacross titles. In 2024, Sasha dominated an all-female field at the Gold Coast by placing first against very experienced drivers.

Sasha has been working as an electrical apprentice for the last 12 months and is starting her second year. She's been putting wages aside to save for her first 'proper' rally car. The motorsport community has noticed Sasha's success, and she already has a sponsor for the Queensland Rally Championship in 2025, with Cameron and Tahnee Henry from Virtual Security Guard on the Sunshine Coast.

Sasha will be one of the youngest rally drivers competing at the Queensland Rally Championship and the youngest female driver in the championship. Having tasted success in the swimming world and competing at two national swimming championships, Sasha is determined to do the same in the motorsport world. I wish Sasha all the best, and I'm sure she joins with me when I say: long live the combustion engine!

Federal Election

Mr LAXALE (Bennelong) (13:52): It's an election year, and soon voters' minds will start to focus on the choice they face. Let's do a little compare and contrast. The Liberals opposed our tax cuts for every Australian. They voted against energy rebates for homes and small businesses. They opposed cheaper medicines and cheaper child care. They blocked and voted against action on housing and they opposed free TAFE and cuts to student debt. That's just in the last three years. What's next? Their slogan is 'Back on track'. Back to what? Back to secret ministries, rising inflation and deficit after deficit after deficit. Back to frozen Medicare rebates, cuts to hospitals and a GP tax. Back to no action on housing and a denial of climate change.

That's not what Bennelong voted for. We deserve better than going back. We deserve a government that listens and acts. It is Labor that has delivered cost-of-living relief, back-to-back surpluses and more than halved inflation. It is Labor that is investing in urgent care clinics and delivering cheaper medicines. It's Labor that's investing \$32 billion to boost housing supply and it is Labor that is backing students with free TAFE and will also wipe 20 per cent off all student debt.

There will be a choice at this election, and in Bennelong that choice has to be Labor.

South Australia: Roads

Mr PASIN (Barker) (13:53): In 2021, the former coalition government committed to funding the first step of the Greater Adelaide Freight Bypass. Under the former state Liberal and coalition government South Australia was put on a trajectory to improve productivity and safety by building the Truro freight route, while a number of strategic planning and business cases got underway towards developing a high-productivity freight network. Since 2022, those opposite have cut, cancelled or delayed almost \$30 billion in infrastructure funding, including funding for the critical Truro freight route, just months before shovels were set to hit the ground.

For my community in Barker, the Truro freight route is incredibly important. It's important for safety along the Sturt Highway corridor and instrumental in working towards the duplication of the Sturt Highway, which carries vehicles between New South Wales and Adelaide or further west to Perth. This work at Truro is also vital for plans to get heavy vehicles off the South Eastern Freeway and out of the suburbs of Adelaide.

If we want to grow this nation's economy, improve productivity and safety on our freight routes, and address the road safety crisis that is unfolding under Labor, we need those opposite to stop playing politics with roads. Those opposite have wasted a full term in government with no plans for South Australia's wider freight network. All I've seen from those opposite over 2½ years is putting votes in front of road safety and road investment decisions.

Housing

Ms LAWRENCE (Hasluck) (13:55): Housing is at the centre of the Albanese government's achievements, with the Housing Australia Future Fund, Help to Buy and crisis accommodation addressing real needs. The coalition created a supply problem over their ten years by failing to act. They didn't even have a housing minister. They didn't care. Now, with an election coming, the only suggestion that the Liberals have is for young people, with an average balance in their super of about \$25,000, to raid their super for housing.

There are many problems with Liberal policy, and one is that they don't know how to frame policy for people who don't have \$12 million portfolios. I'm not alone in this assessment. Economists think the coalition policy is ludicrous. Of 49 economists recently polled by the Economic Society of Australia, 48 voted it down. Economist Saul Eslake describes it as a thoroughly bad idea.

The Super Members Council tells us that in New Zealand the policy has simply not worked. It has caused a severe spike in housing, seen a fall in homeownership by young people, and seen more New Zealanders fall into greater debt. The Super Members Council CEO, Misha Schubert, warns Australians to heed the example in NZ and to not let this happen here in Australia. Australians are already getting nervous about the coalition's secret cuts. Now young people have to worry about the coalition cutting into their retirement nest egg too.

Labor Government

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (13:56): Labor must be judged not by its promises but by its performance. Three years ago, each Labor member in this chamber was out in his or her electorate spruiking promises to change the world. But fast-forward, here we are, the final whistle almost blown on this term of government, and the scoreboard tells a very different story than the promises they made. Every single Labor MP in this chamber promised their constituents a \$275 reduction in household power bills, but households are now paying up to \$1,000 more than Labor promised. Labor promised a more reliable electricity grid, yet constituents are now anxious about blackouts. Labor promised emissions would go down, yet emissions have gone up. Labor promised that investment would come in; instead sovereign risk has gone up. The scoreboard is an utter disgrace. What we don't want to hear in this next election campaign is Labor MPs blaming their weak Prime Minister or blaming the zealot ideologue of the minister. Each and every one of you told an untruth to your residents about \$275 cuts. Own up to it.

Interest Rates

Dr CHARLTON (Parramatta) (13:58): Here's a question: does the Leader of the Opposition want interest rates to come down next week when the RBA meets, or does he want them to stay where they are? Well, unfortunately, today we got an answer to that question, friends. Today the Leader of the Opposition admitted that he does not want to see interest rates cut. Here's what he said about the decision next week: 'You don't want to cut rates and then find they've been cut too early and have to increase rates later on.' He went on to say that cutting rates too early would obviously be a real concern to economists and families as well. I don't think he's spoken to too many families. Most families know that, with inflation coming down thanks to the Albanese government, it gives more room for the RBA to deliver welcome interest rate cuts. Interest rate cuts are now forecast by every major bank, and in fact have been implemented by the NAB, cutting its fixed-rate mortgages last week.

Everybody in Australia is looking forward to the dividend of good economic management—except, it turns out, the Leader of the Opposition, who said today that he wants interest rates to stay higher.

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

CONDOLENCES

Andrews, Hon. Kevin James, AM

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:00): I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 14 December 2024, of the Honourable Kevin James Andrews AM, a former Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Menzies from 1991 to 2022, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

It is a measure of the man that we honour today that, throughout the wealth of tributes paid to his life by his colleagues, his opponents, his loved ones and his friends, the same three pillars stand tall in all of them: his deep faith, his belief in public service and his devotion to his family. I want to welcome all the members of the Andrews family joining us today: Margie Andrews, who is here on the floor, accompanied by her dear friend Bernadette Hayes; Emily, Juan, Pat, Martin and Marcella in the gallery. For 31 years, this House was Kevin's second home, but everyone who served here with him, everyone who worked with him—indeed, virtually anyone who met him—came away knowing how much all of you meant to him.

I spoke with Margie after Kevin's passing. I rang her to ensure that the family were aware of the government offering a state funeral, as was entirely appropriate. And I must say, the love in this fantastic relationship that they had shone through during that discussion. None of us in public life can serve our country and serve our local community without the sacrifices that our families make. The man that you loved understood everything you gave up to support him, and he was grateful for it every day.

Kevin Andrews was someone who did always stand up for his principles and was always courteous and respectful in the manner he advanced them. That did him credit. Some of his principles I disagreed with, but you were able to have a discussion in a courteous way and a respectful way—I must say, Mr Speaker, in a way that you would like to see, I think, all members of the House conduct themselves. It was who he was, and it gave him enormous credit.

As a cabinet minister, his portfolios took him to the political frontlines: immigration, social services, defence and, most notably, the battle over Work Choices during his time as employment and workplace relations minister. These were very high-stakes, high-profile roles, and that speaks for the great trust that former prime minister Howard and former prime minister Abbott, who I spoke with on Kevin's passing, placed in him as a person of integrity and someone who was committed to getting his objectives achieved through this democratic institution which is so important.

This reflects a conviction that Kevin brought to public life, and it also reveals something of the man beyond the arena, because, even when he was the standard-bearer for policies which Labor members fiercely disagreed with

and firmly opposed, Kevin Andrews was regarded by his opponents with true respect and affection. That's not because the arguments that he put forward were an exercise in mere show; it's because he had an instinctive respect for everyone who had answered the call of public service.

He had a rich world of interests and enthusiasms beyond politics, from his famous phantom calls of the Melbourne Cup to all those kilometres he logged on the annual Pollie Pedal, raising funds for worthy causes. As former prime minister Tony Abbott put it in his moving eulogy he gave at that state funeral in December:

There was nothing narrow or politically obsessive about Kevin.

It was his breadth of interests, together with his depth of faith that sustained him right through to the final moments of his life. Just two weeks before his passing, he published a history of his local Catholic church, and, in the final hours of his life, he was still emailing his publisher about the manuscript of his memoirs. To the last, this was indeed a man determined to fill every page. His life was indeed a very full story.

Our condolences to all who loved him. Our condolences to the Liberal Party of Australia, an organisation that he loved and served with loyalty and with distinction.

May Kevin Andrews rest in eternal peace.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): on indulgence—I thank the Prime Minister for his very dignified, very warm and generous words. I'm honoured to be here to celebrate the life of Kevin James Andrews AM. It's an extension of what has been a long period of mourning for Margie, the family and all of those who were very close to Kevin.

Six years before he was elected to the parliament, Kevin Andrews visited Washington, DC. The young man stumbled across an old political memorabilia shop. On a narrow, dusty shelf he chanced upon a copy of John F Kennedy's inaugural address, signed by the 35th President of the United States of America. That framed speech would hang on the wall of Kevin's office for his more than 30-year career as the member for Menzies. Kevin lived by Kennedy's immortalised words:

... ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.

But there was another less quoted line of that speech which Kevin adored and embodied. President Kennedy said:

... civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof.

No-one could ever deny Kevin Andrews's civility or his sincerity. Testimony to that fact was the outpouring of love and respect for Kevin from across the political aisle after his untimely death.

Born in Sale in Victoria, Kevin was proud to come from the great middle sector of Australia. His parents weren't wealthy, but they were hardworking, running a trucking business and a small farm in Gippsland. They inspired in him the diligence and dedication needed for success. As a racing commentator and sports reporter from his early teens, Kevin developed a love of speaking and writing that would equip him so well for his political life to come. But, before that, he would spend a decade in the Victorian legal profession as a barrister and, before that, as the associate to the late great Sir James Gobbo in the Supreme Court of Victoria. In the civil courts, Kevin witnessed the increasing economic plight of Australians. He wanted to make a difference to clients he helped, and his belief in liberalism as the true source of social justice thrust him into politics.

Succeeding Neil Brown at a by-election in 1991, Kevin would go on to win the seat of Menzies a record 10 times. As a backbencher, Kevin quickly revealed himself to be a parliamentarian of profound skill and a man of principle driven by his Catholic faith. He campaigned to repeal the then euthanasia law in the Northern Territory, and, indeed, the Andrews bill remains one of the few successful private members' bills. Dignified, decent, determined and duty driven, Kevin was a dependable minister including in cabinet. He delivered for Prime Ministers John Howard and Tony Abbott, regardless of the portfolio he was dealt.

In charge of aged care, Kevin increase the number of beds, eased administrative burdens for nursing staff and implemented a pricing review. Taking the reins of workplace relations, Kevin led the establishment of a permanent construction industry watchdog, restoring the rule of law to a lawless sector. At the helm of Immigration, Kevin introduced the Citizenship Act and strengthened the character provisions under the Migration Act. He recognised the importance of a shared national identity. Overseeing Social Services, Kevin reformed welfare payments and helped many Australians move from being on pensions back into the workforce, where they were able to. In command of Defence, Kevin oversaw the establishment of a single force structure, increased rotational exercises with key partners, authorised the replacement of our naval fleet and committed troops to fight the evil ISIS death cult in Iraq and Syria.

Not to be forgotten is the pivotal role Kevin played in opposition, where he committed himself to the necessary discipline of policy review and development. In so doing, he helped forge the coalition's path out of the wilderness.

Returning to the backbench, Kevin continued to make commendable contributions to the nation, most notably in bringing in the Magnitsky sanctions and improving the NDIS.

For a man who saw politics as a vocation, it was fitting that Kevin finished his service as Father of the House. Possessing a profound intellect, Kevin Andrews was a prolific writer. Penning many books as well as many columns for *The Spectator* and *Quadrant*, Kevin exhibited that rare talent to traverse many styles and many subjects. His monograph of Joseph Lyons is a touching insight into our 'most reluctant Prime Minister', as Kevin described him.

An avid cyclist, Kevin's passion pours forth from the pages of his book on Italian cycling. No doubt the members for Hume and Canning will recall Margie and Kevin's fondness for karaoke night at the Pollie Pedal. As they say, what happens on the Pollie Pedal stays on the Pollie Pedal—and Margie will be happy to hear that!

A proud conservative, Kevin's collection of speeches, *One People, One Destiny*, includes an address from 2014 where he said: 'Conservatives believe custom and convention are preferred to endless and often needless change in the name of progress. Change should be judged according to the unintended consequences as well as the intended.'

Kevin's most scholarly piece is his 2012 book, *Maybe 'I Do'*. It was a staunch defence of marriage and family as society's foundational building blocks. What Kevin understood academically he lived personally, for undoubtedly Kevin's greatest achievements were twofold: his marriage to his dear wife, Margie, a partnership where their attributes and abiding affection amplified them both; and their five cherished children, Emily, James, Stuart, Catherine and Benjamin.

Kevin Andrews believed that a successful society is a compact across generations. Devoted to God, to his family, to his country and to his party, Kevin Andrews never neglected his role in that compact. To echo Tony Abbott's words at Kevin's state funeral, we are indeed much the poorer for his passing but we are so much richer for his living.

Margie, to you—and it's lovely to see you in the company of Bernadette Hayes, your dear friend, today; thank you, Bernadette, for being there. It's fair to say Margie is an emotional person and has felt the loss terribly. She has been by Kevin's side through every major element of their lives together, public and private. Margie, the pain that you have felt has been felt by your family and by those who have long admired you and the relationship you've had with Kevin. You are a remarkable person and somebody of great achievement in your own right, but together you were a formidable partnership and together you created an amazing legacy for your family and for this country. We pay our deep respects to you and your family.

May God bless Kevin Andrews, and may he rest in peace.

Mr WOLAHAN (Menzies) (14:13): on indulgence—'Being the member for Menzies means something.' Margie Andrews said that to me one week before Kevin died. We were at the Veneto Club, in Bulleen. They were celebrating their 51st anniversary. Kevin was with Margie. He was frail but fully present. Margie asked me to be with him as he worked the room one last time. As we moved from table to table, people shared stories. He smiled and he listened. They were happy to see him, and he was happy to be there—as he must have done so many times as their MP.

There was a moment, Margie, where it was just us—and I'm grateful I got to tell him this. Kevin, I think of you often, especially in this place—at an adjournment speech; at my desk alone late at night; in the party room, nervous to stand; or as I walk along corridors. Everything I do for the first time, he did many times. I want you to know I admire you more than you know.

Being the member for Menzies doesn't just mean something because it is named after a giant; it means something because its longest-serving member was a giant, a gentle one. You have heard of Kevin's conviction and courage, but two other markers stand out. The first was his funeral at Saint Patrick's Cathedral two days before Christmas. At the front were his greatest legacy—you, his family. At the conclusion of the mass, we turned and we followed you down the aisle. As I walked to down the packed cathedral, to the left and right, I saw people from the community of Menzies—party members, teachers, shopkeepers, volunteers, neighbours and friends. They had turned up en masse to honour the person who had served them for so long. They were grieving but they were grateful. The mark of the man was the community that he served.

The second mark I want to take you to is back to the Veneto club. The band was playing vintage Italian music. They were playing love songs. Margie, you and Kevin went to the dance floor. You held each other and danced like it was your first date. You didn't see it, Margie, but his face was beaming, his eyes were closed, he was content, and he was gently holding you. The mark of the man was the love of you, his wife.

Vale Kevin Andrews. You were a parliamentarian and a patriot but, most of all, you loved and you were loved. May he rest in peace.

The SPEAKER: As a mark of respect to the memory of the Hon. Kevin James Andrews, I ask all present to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for the Arts, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Leader of the House) (14:17): I declare that the resumption of debate on the Prime Minister's motion of condolence in connection with the death of the Hon. Kevin James Andrews is referred to the Federation Chamber.

Debate adjourned.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Taxation

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister rule out any changes to negative gearing and capital gains treatment on property during his time as Prime Minister?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER (14:17): Order! Members on my right don't need to give commentary when a question is being asked. I don't know how many times I have to tell people that. Order!

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:17): I mean, really, they have had a long time to work out questions in this place. You know what our housing policy is. Our housing policy is \$32 billion of a Homes for Australia Plan. That's our plan. That's our plan, not changes to negative gearing or other things. We actually are a political party that is saying what we are doing. I know that's unfamiliar to those opposite, because after three years in the job—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will pause. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr Dutton: On a point of relevance, the Prime Minister was asked a very tight question; it was one sentence. We ask for a straight answer. Will he rule out changes to negative gearing and capital gains treatment of property during his period as Prime Minister? Can he just say yes or no? Can he be honest with the Australian people?

The SPEAKER: Resume your seat. The Leader of the Opposition is entitled to raise his point of order; he's done so. The Prime Minister did directly answer the question. He mentioned negative gearing directly and said it wouldn't be changed, so that's a direct answer. I know what you are after, and he did give you—

Mr Dutton: Yes or no?

The SPEAKER: He did that, so he's done what you want. So you're going to be quiet now, for the remainder of this question. The Prime Minister will return to the question.

A government member interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: Yes, that's right—the same person who said civility is not a sign of weakness. But, anyway, we'll deal with that. After three years in the job, this bloke has had three ideas: (1) \$10 billion to fund long lunches for business, (2) \$600 billion to pay for nuclear reactors, and (3) cuts to everything else to pay for them. They are the only three ideas that he has had. And then he comes along here and says, 'Tell us what you won't do.' He doesn't come along here and ask about what we are doing on housing, about the build-to-rent scheme. I note that Chris Minns was in my electorate yesterday—500 new homes in Camperdown, just down the road from where I grew up, Pymont Bridge Road and Parramatta Road. Affordable housing for essential workers, no doubt taking advantage of the build-to-rent scheme that was passed by the Senate last December.

It's just like how he doesn't ask about the Housing Australia Future Fund. That's so important—building social and affordable homes for people, providing additional housing for women and children escaping domestic violence, providing additional housing for Indigenous communities. It's just like how he doesn't ask us about Help to Buy or about all those tens of thousands of Australians who've been helped into homeownership as a result of what we have put in place. The Help to Buy scheme is something that was opposed as hostile by those opposite. They know what they're against; they don't know what they're for. That is why they will be rejected. That is why they are floundering not as an alternative government but as this thought bubble that has to find \$600 billion to pay for its nuclear reactors.

Critical Minerals Industry

Ms MASCARENHAS (Swan) (14:22): My question is to the Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia. How will the Albanese Labor government's policies on critical minerals help build a better future for Australia, and what would make Australian workers and the resource sector worse off?

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand—Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia) (14:22): I thank the wonderful member for Swan for her fine question. Australia has all the critical minerals the world needs for electric cars, solar panels and storage batteries, and all the rare earths the world needs for defence technologies like submarines and aircraft. Labor is building a better future for Australia through our production tax credits for critical minerals, which I'm really pleased to say passed through the other place last night. The Albanese Labor government's production tax credits for critical minerals will bring a 10 per cent tax incentive, for more processing facilities here in Australia, and that means more Aussie jobs to build them, more Aussie jobs to operate them and more Aussie jobs to transport the minerals and refined products that are produced.

We have had much support for this policy. The CEO of the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, Mr Warren Pearce, has said:

This is the first time any Australian Government has put their money where their mouth is for the critical minerals industry.

He said the incentive:

... is a powerful strategic lever that provides the foundation for the Future Made in Australia ambitions of the country. It's also the largest ever commitment from an Australian Government to critical minerals.

This will stimulate billions in new investment in critical minerals processing, which will be far more valuable than the incentives on offer.

And, of course, that is exactly the point—to put our shoulder to the wheel, alongside industry, to build a new critical minerals resources industry in this country. This is a government that gets things done; it gets things done for the Australian people and gets things done for the resources sector.

But I am also asked what would make Australian workers and the resources sector worse off. Well, I don't have to look too far, because there they all sit opposite me. Last night, the coalition betrayed the resources sector. The coalition were dragged kicking and screaming to a vote last night and then voted against production tax credits. The coalition voted against the single biggest investment by any government in the resources sector.

No wonder it was really difficult to get the Liberals to vote in the other place. The poor old WA Liberal senators had to march into the Senate to vote against a policy that Western Australians support, that the Western Australian Liberal leader supports, that the Western Australian Nationals leader and Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia supports, but the east coast opposition leader and east coast shadow Treasurer refuse to get behind. What another abysmal day for the WA Liberals in this place, where they have clearly demonstrated they have absolutely no influence on the federal coalition party room. They have no influence or ability to have the shadow Treasurer or the Leader of the Opposition step back from their really hasty, rash decision that was made on budget night last year. The coalition has voted against— (*Time expired*)

Medical Workforce

Ms WARE (Hughes) (14:25): My question is to the Minister for Health and Aged Care. Under the Albanese Labor government, 27,000 small businesses have collapsed since the last election. Minister, how many GP clinics have closed since the election of the Albanese Labor government?

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh—Minister for Health and Aged Care and Deputy Leader of the House) (14:26): I'll take that question on notice and see if I can get an answer to the member in precise detail, but I will say that I've said since before the last election and since that the state of general practice when we came to government was its most parlous in 41 years. Bulk-billing was in freefall, and, as I've said once or twice at this dispatch box before, they were suffering through the impact of a six-year freeze on the Medicare rebate. Those opposite, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, when he was health minister, decided to freeze the income of general practices, while their costs continued to rise. Unsurprisingly, they come under very real pressure.

Over the last 24 hours, I've signed off on the third increase in the Medicare rebate since we came to government. Of the three increases, we've delivered the biggest, the second biggest and the third biggest increases in the Medicare rebate in more than 30 years, since Paul Keating was the Prime Minister.

Mr Pike interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bowman is warned.

Mr BUTLER: The deputy leader of the Liberal Party, when she was health minister, did not deliver a single increase to the Medicare rebate. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was health minister, froze the Medicare rebate. So, yes, general practice has been under a little bit of pressure.

The SPEAKER: The minister will pause. The manager is going to take his point of order now.

Mr Sukkar: The point of order is on relevance. The question was very tight. The minister has stated that he doesn't know the answer and that he will endeavour to get an answer. That doesn't now mean he can stray into areas that aren't relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister does have three minutes to answer the question. I agree with the manager, and he has indicated that he will take the details on notice, but he will need to remain relevant to the question. He was asked about small businesses and the specifics around how many GP clinics have closed, so he will need to talk about GP clinics, not necessarily the opposition policies, otherwise I will have to sit him down.

Mr BUTLER: All of that is why, when we came to government, I made it very clear that of all the myriad pressures on our healthcare system—and with an ageing population, more chronic disease and the impacts of a once-in-a-century pandemic, there are many pressures on our healthcare system—the one we have focused on more than any other is rebuilding general practice. I will come back to the member with that precise number, but let's be very clear—I'm sure the member knows this in her heart of hearts—no government has valued general practice more than this government. No government has invested more in general practice than this government. As for the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, the worst and the second-worst health ministers in the history of Medicare, we're more than happy to keep debating this issue.

Mr Hogan interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Page is now warned.

Future Made in Australia

Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Industry and Science. How is the Albanese Labor government's Future Made in Australia plan creating secure, well-paid jobs for Australian workers? Is the minister aware of any approaches that would leave Australian manufacturing worse off?

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Minister for Industry and Science) (14:30): You should get ready for it! Thanks to the member for Gilmore for not only the question but backing manufacturing, particularly in our regions.

We have been focused on rebuilding manufacturing capability for a host of reasons. One, Australians want their country to be a nation that makes things. Two, strong economies have to have strong manufacturing capability. Manufacturing makes secure, well-paying jobs—very important to the nation. The other critical issue is that rebuilding manufacturing capability is important in our national, economic and strategic interest. We need to be able to stand on our own two feet and not be dependent on broken and concentrated supply chains, only relying on a handful of nations for the things that are really important to our country. That's why we stood up the National Reconstruction Fund. That's why, recently, we stood up the \$2 billion investment plan to work with aluminium smelters to give a sustainable long-term future to regional blue-collar communities to make aluminium.

Importantly, the other big step happened last night when the Senate passed our production tax credits—particularly important for critical minerals processing, as the Minister for Resources has outlined. I give credit to the Minister for Resources and the Treasurer for their support on these important initiatives that are really critical for the long-term good of the country. But we need to make sure that local supply chains are there to make sure we've got the things we need as we make the transition to net zero.

I'm asked about alternative plans. Where are they? They've spent, the coalition, three years—and no plans and no policies, no costed policies in particular. Frankly, the reason they have no plans is they have no care. They don't care to put forward what they think is important in the national interest. Their plan comes in one word: 'No.' When we asked them if they would support the National Reconstruction Fund: 'No.' When we asked them to support the \$2 billion to transition aluminium to a sustainable footing: 'No.' When we asked them for support on production tax credits: 'No.' In fact, their blind opposition has blinded them to how bad they look. The Australian Greens backed our plans on critical minerals and backed our plans for the National Reconstruction Fund, while those opposite voted 'no' against them. The Greens back the resources sector and manufacturing, but the Libs and Nats don't support the resources sector and manufacturing. It shows you they have nothing to offer the Australian public except negativity, no plans and no care. *(Time expired)*

Taxation

Ms CHANEY (Curtin) (14:33): This is a question for the Treasurer. Governments on both sides rely on bracket creep caused by inflation to increase tax over time and surreptitiously fund their additional spending. Do you agree that indexing tax brackets, like 17 other OECD countries have done, would stop us sleepwalking into greater reliance on income taxes and provide greater transparency for taxpayers about new spending?

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin—Treasurer) (14:33): Thank you to the honourable member for Curtin for her question. Obviously I'm aware there are a range of suggestions around about the next steps in income tax reform, while our focus has been delivering a tax cut for every Australian taxpayer. I do know that about half the OECD is taking the course that you're suggesting; that means about half the OECD isn't. Countries make their own decisions about these sorts of things. For us, one of the defining purposes of this Prime Minister and his government is to help people earn more and keep more of what they earn. The most important and fundamental part of that is about getting real wages growing again for consecutive quarters but also the tax cuts are playing a meaningful role as well.

There are, more or less, to oversimplify, three different ways that you can return bracket creep. There is the way that the member for Curtin is proposing. There is the way that those opposite were proposing, which is just to return bracket creep to people who are already on the highest incomes. Or there is the Labor way, the way that we have chosen to return bracket creep. As the Treasury analysis that we released a little over a year ago now when we made the changes to the tax cuts makes clear, the way that we chose has positive benefits for workforce participation and other benefits as well. So I do acknowledge that governments have choices to make when it comes to how we return bracket creep. We are frankly proud of the way that we've gone about returning bracket creep, because instead of giving a tax cut to some taxpayers, as those opposite were proposing, we are giving a tax cut to every Australian taxpayer. They are rolling out right now. They are helping Australians with these cost-of-living pressures which are enduring.

The final point I would make is this, and again I make this point respectfully. I listen to the member for Curtin and her colleagues on all of these sorts of issues in a genuine and respectful way. But the difference between the ideas which are offered up from the crossbench and the ideas that we are able to pick up and run with in government is we have to make it all add up. We have to make sure that our tax reform priorities are balanced with our priorities when it comes to public investment. We have to make sure that all of those things are calibrated. But, having said that, I say again that I thank the member for Curtin for her question and for her interest, along with other crossbench colleagues, in genuine tax reform. I note that genuine tax reform is being rolled out right now in the economy.

Resources Industry

Manufacturing Industry

Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (14:36): How is the Albanese Labor government supporting Australia's resources and manufacturing industries, Prime Minister? Are there any alternative approaches that would leave people worse off?

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (14:36): I thank the member for Paterson for her question. Indeed, when I was in Tomago with the member for Paterson, the member for Hunter and my ministerial colleagues, it was a great day, securing jobs there which are so important for the Hunter region. Indeed, our government's plan for a future made in Australia is about Australian workers making more things here.

I met with the CEO of Rio Tinto just yesterday as well. The global CEO was here, welcoming the work that we have done to secure the future of the aluminium industry here in Australia. We want to make sure that we don't just export our resources and buy back the finished products; we want to make things here. We want to add value here, turning the resources the world needs into products the world wants.

Last night, our production tax credits passed the Senate, opposed by those opposite but supported by the crossbenchers in the Senate, very importantly. They backed jobs and they backed Western Australia, but they also backed our industries in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

Our aluminium industry is a great Australian industry. According to the peak body, aluminium is Australia's highest-earning manufacturing export. The industry directly employs more than 20,000 people and it indirectly supports another 55,000. Australia produced 1.5 million tonnes of aluminium in 2022. Those opposite voted against the legislation for production tax credits last night, but they also have a record of opposing the aluminium industry and wanting it sent offshore. The shadow Treasurer, when he was a consultant, delivered a presentation on competition in the mineral sector. It was a full presentation, including a killer slide that read, 'In aluminium we are missing our chance to replace—'

The SPEAKER: Order! The Prime Minister will pause.

Mr Dutton interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition is going to pause.

Mr Taylor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The shadow Treasurer will just give it a rest so I can hear from the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Sukkar: Speaker, my point of order goes to relevance. I can see the question invited a 'compare and contrast'. We're not even talking about comments from the shadow Treasurer when he was a member of parliament or a minister in the former government. God knows from when the Prime Minister is referencing or how long ago. It cannot be relevant even to an expansive view of that question.

The SPEAKER: I'm not sure what document the Prime Minister is reading from, but if he is reading from a document from a presentation he is going to have to make his answer very relevant to what he was asked about—to make sure that it is directly relevant. He has the call.

Mr ALBANESE: Indeed, I'll certainly do that. I was asked about the industry. This explains the ideological position of those opposite who want manufacturing sent offshore, and they've done that for a long period of time. Here's the quote: 'In aluminium, we are missing our chance to replace uncompetitive processing with bauxite exports.' And, by 'killer slide', I mean 'job killer'. That's what they want. In his case, he said this: 'In aluminium, there are few prospects for growth. We cannot compete in processing. Australian aluminium smelting is uncompetitive on both capital and operating costs.'

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: And I note that he says that's right. They've never supported jobs here and they've never supported— *(Time expired)*

The SPEAKER: Is the Prime Minister seeking to table a document?

Mr Albanese: Yes. I table the report that shows their support for sending the aluminium industry offshore.

Medicare

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Health and Aged Care. GP bulk-billing rates in my electorate of Longman were at 93 per cent in 2019 before COVID. Under the Albanese Labor government, they've fallen to as low as 79 per cent. Australian families are already facing a cost-of-living crisis, a housing crisis and an energy bill crisis. Why are my constituents now having to endure a bulk-billing crisis under this minister?

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh—Minister for Health and Aged Care and Deputy Leader of the House) (14:42): Why is there a bulk-billing crisis in Australia? Hmm! Who said, 'There are too many free Medicare services in this country'? Who tried to abolish bulk-billing altogether? And who, when he couldn't get that GP tax through, froze the Medicare rebate for six long years?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order. The members on my right. The minister for the environment—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: When the House comes to order—there's far too much noise—I want to hear from the member for Page on a point of order.

Mr Hogan: Again from this minister, the point of order is hubris.

The SPEAKER: Resume your seat—and you may keep walking out of the chamber.

The member for Page then left the chamber.

The SPEAKER: Members obviously want question time to be robust, but that sort of behaviour is not befitting. To simply raise a point of order to do that is completely disrespectful to every member and to every Australian that is watching question time. The minister has the call.

Mr BUTLER: As I said yesterday, I think in response to the member for Longman, when we came to government, the college of doctors said that bulk-billing was in freefall and that general practice was at a tipping point. It was very clear why that was—because the Medicare rebate had been frozen for six years. As I said, I think in response to the former member, six years of freezing a GP's income while their costs continue to increase is going to have a pretty obvious result. Bulk-billing was under enormous pressure. We've done a whole range of things about that. But I did want to talk about something the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday and has been interjecting across the table again, as is his want, to the member for Sydney. He has tried to draw some sort of equivalence between a measure in the 2013 budget to realign Medicare indexation with the financial year, a measure which in the budget papers that he referred to selectively yesterday—

The SPEAKER: No, the minister is going to pause. The member asked a question about bulk-billing crisis, and the minister is giving contest about why he doesn't believe that is the case. It is impossible for you to raise a point of order on relevance when you have asked such a broad question, so I'm not hearing the point of order. If it is on relevance, you will follow the member for Page, so I am just giving a fair warning. The member for Longman, on a point of order?

Mr Young: It is, only because I did not ask about 2013.

The SPEAKER: No. Resume your seat.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right. We are going to have order today, and we are going to do question time in a dignified manner. I appreciate the member was asking the question, but when I explained to him the question about why you now have bulk-billing rates that are in crisis, of course the minister is going to give his view on why he doesn't think that or believes that is the case. I gave you a fair go. You are going to leave the chamber under 94(a).

The member for Longman then left the chamber.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business, on point of order?

Mr Sukkar: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Firstly, the member is entitled to raise a point of order. He's entitled to be heard. To exercise 94(a) in the instance where a questioner was asking a question about his electorate, this was not a question full of invective. It was a question that referred to bulk-billing rates in his electorate. He's entitled to take a point of order on relevance, seeking answers for his electorate, so, Mr Speaker, we have an issue with him not being heard. Secondly, to be removed from the House for exercising his right is a huge concern.

The SPEAKER: I will deal with this. I was anticipating this, so I have followed previous Speaker Smith's example, who did exactly the same thing on 29 July 2019 when he refused a point of order for exactly the same manner; on 19 August 2019, when the then minister for populations, cities and urban infrastructure was being questioned. Indeed, the manager of opposition business at the time was treated the same way, so the consistency is there. If people wanted to take points of order, they were given that. Yourself, the Leader of the Opposition, the deputy leader and the Leader of The Nationals do get certain allowances for their seniority. But to simply disrupt question time, when I made it clear to the House that the minister was being directly relevant because he asked such a broad question is entirely what has happened before and will continue in that manner. The Minister for Health and Aged Care in continuation. I will ask him to be directly relevant.

Mr BUTLER: Thank you, Speaker. Explaining the answer to the last part of the member's question about why we have a bulk-billing crisis yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition tried to draw that equivalence between one measure in the '13 budget that sought to realign indexation to the beginning of the financial year to his in the 2014 budget that sought to introduce a GP tax on every single Australian patient. When he couldn't get that through in the midyear budget update later that year, it very clearly says in the MYEFO papers that—because he couldn't get that through—instead, the indexation of MBS rebates would be frozen for four long years. Now, I have said it was six years; perhaps the Leader of the Opposition only did four of those years. Former prime minister Scott Morrison extended that for two years in 2016 and 2017, and you wonder why there's pressure on bulk-billing. Unlike that, what this government did was triple the bulk-billing incentive, stop the freefall, see an increase in bulk-billing in the last 12 months in every single state and territory, and last year delivered six million free visits to the doctor.

Cost of Living

Mr LAXALE (Bennelong) (14:49): My question is to the Treasurer. How is the Albanese Labor government's responsible economic management helping to ease cost-of-living pressures? Are there any alternative approaches that would leave people worse off?

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin—Treasurer) (14:49): I thank the member for Bennelong for his question and for his work on the House economics committee as well. He knows that the defining feature of this Labor government is responsible economic management, and he knows that we have maintained a focus on fighting inflation and helping with the cost of living. That's what the tax cuts are all about as well as the energy bill relief, cheaper early childhood education and medicines, rent assistance, free TAFE, and better wages. All of that has been opposed by those opposite and delivered while we turned two big Liberal deficits into two substantial Labor surpluses.

Because of our efforts, inflation is down, wages are up, and unemployment is low. We know that people are still under pressure. We know that there is still more work, but together as Australians we have made substantial and now sustained progress in the fight against inflation. It's why Westpac yesterday and ANZ today substantially lowered their forecasts for both headline and underlying inflation in this quarter and the next quarter as well.

The biggest risk to household budgets in 2025 is sitting over there with his back to us. Australians would be thousands of dollars worse off if he had his way, and they will be worse off still if he wins the election. There's an election due in the next three months, and that means it's been almost three years now that they have had to come up with costed, coherent and credible economic policies, and they haven't been able to do it. All they have are secret costs and secret cuts. There are no costings on long lunches, no costings on their nuclear fantasy to push up electricity prices, no costings on their raid on super which will push up house prices and no costings for the golden ticket visa that he promised at a fund raiser.

They can't even get their stories straight. The Leader of the Opposition says that, of course, they'll cut 36,000 jobs. The Leader of the Nationals said yesterday that they'll cut 'hardly any'. The Leader of the Opposition says that golf days are not part of their long lunch policy. The shadow Treasurer says that they're in. This is worse than some kind of harmless shambles. It's a cuts and costings con job, and it will make Australians worse off because they can't find \$10 billion a year for long lunches or the \$350 billion they said they'd cut or the \$600 billion they'd need for nuclear reactors without coming after Medicare again or housing or pensions or veterans or natural disaster relief. That's why this election is a simple choice: a coalition of cuts and conflict, making people worse off, and taking Australia backwards or this Labor government and this Prime Minister making progress on inflation, helping with the cost of living, strengthening Medicare and building Australia's future.

Medicare: Bulk-Billing

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (14:52): My question is to the Minister for Health and Aged Care. Minister, GP bulk-billing rates in my electorate of Sturt were at 79 per cent in 2019 before COVID. Under the Albanese Labor government, they've fallen as low as 69 per cent. Australian families are already facing a cost-of-living crisis, a housing crisis and energy bill crisis. Why are my constituents now having to endure a bulk-billing crisis?

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh—Minister for Health and Aged Care and Deputy Leader of the House) (14:53): I thank the member for his question. I have very much enjoyed visiting his electorate more frequently in recent times with the terrific Labor candidate there, Claire Clutterham, who, I can tell you, gets health. She gets health. I'm not sure from that question that the current member for the eastern suburbs in Adelaide understands health. But I'm very pleased to get another opportunity to explain to those opposite why we have seen a slide in bulk-billing. I say again: perhaps after question time, go and have a talk to your leader about what happened to Medicare over the last 10 to 15 years. The truth is that those opposite have never supported bulk-billing.

The father of the modern Liberal Party, John Howard, called bulk-billing an absolute rort. He fought it tooth and nail, election after election. When they finally had to raise the white flag on the total abolition of Medicare, John Howard got his protege the Leader of the Opposition to try instead to kill it with a death of a thousand cuts by making sure that every single patient in Australia would have to pay a fee every time they went to the doctor. When we blocked him doing that, he did second best instead. He imposed a freeze on Medicare rebates, which unsurprisingly caused bulk-billing to start to slide. We're trying to turn that around. We tripled the bulk-billing incentive, which is exactly what the College of General Practitioners asked us to do. And, when we did it, when the Treasurer did it in the 2023 budget, the college said that would be a game changer, and it has stopped the slide in every single state and territory. If the member for Sturt had any interest in South Australia, he'd know that the second-biggest increase in bulk-billing since we tripled the bulk-billing incentive has been in his state of South Australia. So I say this: we're not going to take lectures on bulk-billing from a party that has spent 41 years trying to dismantle the universal health mission of Medicare, a system that we created, that we delivered, that we have fought hard every one of those 41 years to defend and—now that we've inherited the mess that the Leader of the Opposition created—that we're fighting hard to strengthen now.

Housing

Ms BYRNES (Cunningham) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Housing. How is the Albanese Labor government helping people dealing with housing stress, what have been the challenges in delivering that help and are there any other approaches that would leave people worse off?

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham—Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness) (14:56): I want to thank the member for Cunningham for her question. She's a huge housing advocate, and, of course, we announced a couple of weeks ago that our government is directly funding new affordable homes right in her community in the Illawarra through the Housing Australia Future Fund.

We've had some good economic news recently, but there's no question that many Australians are facing real pressures right now, and housing is a big part of that picture. Whether it's families living in insecure rentals or whether it's that generation of young people who feel that homeownership is slipping out of their reach, we've got a housing crisis in our country which has been cooking for a generation. We know that the long-term fix here is to build, build, build. That's why, after the wasted decade, the Commonwealth is back, leading on housing and

investing \$32 billion. We're building 55,000 social and affordable homes around the country with our big housing build. That's part of the 1.2 million homes we're working to build with the states. We're training more tradies, we're creating more infrastructure and we're directly investing in homes ourselves, just like the Australian government used to.

In round 1 of the Housing Australia Future Fund, we'll deliver 13,700 new homes for Australians. Just in that round, that's more social and affordable housing than those opposite delivered in their entire nine years in office. And I want you to remember, Speaker, that, for most of that period they were in office, they were so checked out of this problem that they didn't even have a Commonwealth housing minister. Unfortunately, that attitude has continued through the wrecking and blocking that we've seen from the opposition on housing over the last three years. The opposition leader blocked the Housing Australia Future Fund, personally delaying the construction of tens of thousands of social and affordable homes that our country desperately needed. The opposition leader blocked 40,000 aged-care workers and nurses from getting into homeownership, and he'll abolish that program too if he's elected. The opposition opposed build to rent, which will create 80,000 new rental homes. They even opposed our national housing target

Imagine looking at the situation we face today and thinking that the answer is to cut billions out of our housing approach and lower the nation's ambitions? What frustrates me so much about this is that, when the Liberals want to find money for the things that they value, they do it. They'll move heaven and earth for taxpayer funded caviar and steak tartare for the boss, but God help you if you're looking for more Commonwealth investment in housing. On that side of the chamber, they're hungry for subsidised long lunches; on this side, we're hungry for more housing. That's why our government is investing billions in social and affordable homes Australia needs. We want more affordable housing; they want more affordable corporate lunches. It's all about priorities, isn't it?

Superannuation

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (14:59): My question is to the Treasurer. Prior to the last election, the Prime Minister ruled out any changes to superannuation. Why is the Treasurer persisting, for the first time in our history, on taxing unrealised capital gains on superannuation assets?

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin—Treasurer) (14:59): It's becoming clearer and clearer to us that they had a very different question time pack in mind for today. So they've gone back to the reserve pack and all of the old chestnuts, all of the questions that we've answered before in this place and outside this place as well, which I'm happy to repeat for him. What we are proposing to do for people with balances of more than \$3 million in superannuation is make a very modest change to turn very concessional tax arrangements into concessional tax arrangements—for people with the biggest balances. We announced this policy more than two years ago.

Mr Taylor interjecting—

Ms Rishworth interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order. I'm going to ask the shadow Treasurer to cease interjecting for the remainder of this answer. The Minister for Social Services will cease interjecting as well. The Treasurer will return to the question.

Dr CHALMERS: He has taken a break from trying to chase the aluminium industry out of Australia to interjecting about a policy which has been publicly announced for more than two years now. If he's the shadow Treasurer he should know a couple of things. He should know that unrealised gains are calculated elsewhere in the superannuation system. If he's the shadow Treasurer he should understand that the arrangements for tax on superannuation would still be concessional for the half a per cent of people who would be impacted by the modest change we are proposing.

In fairness to the shadow Treasurer, he has made his opposition to this measure clear. I understand that. So the onus is on him now to find the couple of billion dollars a year that this would raise when it's fully mature, and we know where he'll go looking for those savings—and, again, that goes to the difference between the parties. We think we can make concessional arrangements at the very top end of super a little bit less concessional and raise money to fund our efforts to strengthen Medicare. Those opposite, if they're given the chance to find those couple of billion dollars each year, will go after Medicare again, because they did it last time. They'll go after housing. They'll go after pension indexation.

Those are the choices that are available to both sides of the House, and that's the difference between the parties.

Schools

Mr BURNS (Macnamara) (15:01): My question is to the Minister for Education. What is the Albanese Labor government doing to build a better and fairer school education system, and what alternative approaches to education would leave Australians worse off?

Mr CLARE (Blaxland—Minister for Education) (15:02): I thank my friend the magnificent member for Macnamara for his question. He knows, we all know, that when the Liberals were last in power they ripped the guts out of school funding. Thirty billion dollars was ripped out of schools. They were so proud of it that they set it all out in this document: the budget 2014 overview—not so much a smoking gun as a chainsaw.

We're still dealing with the consequences of that budget ripping \$30 billion out of schools today, because over the last 10 years the number of students finishing high school has dropped from 83 per cent to 73 per cent. That's in public schools, where that funding was ripped out. Remember that this is happening at a time when it is more important than ever before to finish school. It's more important than when we were kids.

This is what we've got to turn around. That's what the agreements that we have now struck with Western Australia, with South Australia, with Victoria, with Tasmania, with the Northern Territory and with the ACT are all about, and we want to do the same with New South Wales and with Queensland. Together this is the biggest new investment in public education by an Australian government ever, and it's not a blank check. This is tied to real and practical reform—things like evidence based teaching; phonics checks and numeracy checks in year 1 to identify children who need additional help, and then making sure that they get that help through more individualised support like catch-up tutoring.

A lot of parents spend a lot of money on tutoring. The difference here is that this is free, and it will save mums and dads a lot of money and provide their kids with the support they need to catch up, to keep up and to finish school—to help our children get the best possible start in life. It's what every mum and dad wants for their kids and what every child deserves. This is all about priorities—free tutoring for our kids under Labor, or free lunches for bosses under the Liberals—because if the Liberals win the next election all of this funding for free tutoring will be gone. They'll rip the money out just like they did last time. The Leader of the Opposition, old Tony Abbott 2.0 over there, says he'll cut, but he doesn't have the guts to say where he'll cut. You don't have to be Einstein to work it out. It'll be just like what they did last time. As the Treasurer said, it'll be Medicare, pensions, housing, veterans and this—cutting funding from our schools and cutting funding from our kids' futures. How cooked is that?

Cost of Living

Ms LE (Fowler) (15:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, since my election in May 2022 I have repeatedly raised concerns about the rising cost of living. As your government's term ends, what real reforms will you introduce now to fix the electricity market and bring down energy prices for families, small businesses and councils? Councils are now paying double just to keep the streetlights on, with those costs passed down to ratepayers. Australia needs more than just a one-off \$300 bandaid rebate.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (15:05): I thank the member for her question both in her capacity as the member of Fowler and as the deputy mayor of the council that she refers to in Fairfield. I also thank the member for the very terrific event that she and I were at, along with the member for McMahon; the member for Werriwa, the Labor candidate for Fowler, Tu Le; and others, where we celebrated 50 years since Vietnamese refugees migrated to Australia. These refugees were welcomed to Australia, and the Vietnamese community have made an extraordinary effort and contribution to our nation.

When it comes to the cost of living, of course, the most important thing that we can do is to get inflation down. What we have done is deliver inflation down to 2.4 per cent. When we inherited it, at time of the election of the member for Fowler, she would recall inflation had a six in front of it and was rising. It's now got a two in front of it and it's falling. One of the things that I talked about with people in Fairfield on Saturday evening was the fact that real wages are increasing. In addition to that, the member for Fowler's electorate has particularly benefited from the fact that every single one of her constituents who's a worker, working hard for their family, got a tax cut as a result of the changes that we put in place because we want people to earn more and to keep more of what they earn.

The SPEAKER: The member for Fowler, on a point of order.

Ms Le: It's on relevance. I asked about what reforms the Prime Minister and the government will introduce now to fix the electricity market and bring down energy prices.

The SPEAKER: Your question was also about the issue of the cost of living. I can appreciate that you want part of the question answered, but the Prime Minister is entitled to answer the question and to be directly relevant. Talking about inflation and tax cuts is addressing the direct relevance of the question, so he is being directly relevant, but I'll make sure he remains directly relevant for the remainder of his answer.

Mr ALBANESE: Constituents in Fowler have also benefited from cheaper medicines. More than a billion dollars has been saved. Of course, for an electorate with a lower-than-average socioeconomic outcome, our cost-of-living measures have been unapologetically aimed at particularly assisting low- and middle-income earners. There aren't too many billionaires living in Fowler, and we have ensured that everyone has had a tax cut. People are benefiting from cheaper medicines. Many of her constituents are benefiting from free TAFE. The urgent care clinics

are reducing the cost of health care. The crackdown on supermarkets is making a difference on inflation as well. Indeed, when it comes to energy, of course, I'm sure the member for Fowler supported our \$300 rebates that are making a difference. That's \$75, \$75, \$75 and \$75 that's clicking onto those bills, reducing the cost of the bills that people have to pay. We're also reducing the bills of small businesses in the member for Fowler's electorate. (*Time expired*)

Veterans

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel. What has the Albanese Labor government done to get through the backlog of veteran compensation claims, and are there any threats to this progress that would leave Australian veterans worse off?

Mr KEOGH (Burt—Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel) (15:10): I thank the member for Solomon for his very important question. I also thank him for his great advocacy on behalf of all the veterans in the Northern Territory and in his seat of Solomon and, of course, recognise his service in our Defence Force as well. As the member for Solomon said, when we came to government, the Department of Veterans' Affairs was so severely underresourced that there were some 42,000 veteran claims that were still waiting initial review by the department. That meant that veterans were waiting years and years for their claims for liability to be processed so they could access health care and access compensation.

Back in estimates hearings in November 2022, the former secretary of the department confirmed that the resourcing that had been provided by the previous government for the Department of Veterans' Affairs meant that that backlog would never have been cleared. The Albanese government engaged 500 additional claims-processing staff in DVA specifically to deal with this backlog. We have worked through that backlog. We are now seeing claims processed faster than ever before, making sure that veterans can get access to the support and the services that they need and that they deserve.

Meanwhile the Leader of the Opposition is saying that he wants to cut back on those staff that provide those vital services. He's saying he wants to get rid of those jobs. It's not just the jobs of the people that process the claims; it's the jobs of the people that process the invoices for the in-home supports, the people that make sure that taxis get booked to take veterans to their appointments and the people in the department that make sure hospital bills get paid and that hearing aids can be approved. All of the different staff that support our veterans—that's what the Leader of the Opposition says he wants to cut.

Then we hear the Leader of the National Party say: 'Oh, no, no. Actually we don't want to cut any of those people.' We always talk about the division that's created by the opposition. I didn't realise it was going to be from within their own team about whether they're going to support veterans or not. On this side, we're about making sure that veterans and their families get the support that they need and deserve. The opposition is putting that support at risk because they are putting the jobs in the Department of Veterans' Affairs at risk. That means, under the Leader of the Opposition, under the Liberal and also under the National Party, we will see that Australian veterans are going to be worse off.

Mr Albanese: Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.

STATEMENTS

Personal Explanation

Mr BIRRELL (Nicholls—Deputy Nationals Whip) (15:13): Under standing order 68, I'm able to make a personal explanation in relation to a matter of a personal nature.

The SPEAKER: Does the member claim to be misrepresented?

Mr BIRRELL: Yes, I do.

The SPEAKER: You may proceed.

Mr BIRRELL: During a debate in the Federation Chamber last night, I moved a private member's motion relating to classroom behaviour, and I was discussing the Senate inquiry recommendations about giving teachers tools to deal with this. In that debate, I intimated that my experience has been informed by a number of factors including the fact that my mother was a high-school teacher in the state system for over 30 years. In an attack on my position, the member for Lalor, the Chief Government Whip, said:

If I have to hear from one more male member in this place about how they know about schools (a) because their mum was a teacher or (b) because they went to a school, well—as a profession, we'd like to be valued for the work we do ...

I'm proud of my mother, her service, my relationship with her and its impact on my values and understanding of teachers in Australia, and the member's statement is an anathema to the kind of gentler parliament we seek.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members are entitled to explain where they've been misrepresented, and members on my right shall not interject to any members of the House when they are taking a personal explanation. It's highly disorderly.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Valedictory

Mr JONES (Whitlam—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services) (15:14): on indulgence—It's 15 years since I first stood in this chamber. In fact, it was in the seat now occupied by my friend the member for Canberra. I'm now a bit fatter and a bit greyer, but I'm still full of optimism for the potential of this parliament to transform the lives of Australians and our country for the better.

I want to thank my electorate for returning me here to represent them through five elections. Much has changed over those 15 years: the boundaries, the name and the demographics of my electorate. I was first elected as the member for Throsby but assumed the title of the member for Whitlam in honour of the former Labor prime minister when he passed away. There are now suburbs where cows once grazed and horses roamed. But together, over many, many years, we have achieved great things.

In my first term here as a backbench MP in the Gillard government, we worked hard to ensure and secure the future of our steel industry. It was hard work, with big and difficult decisions to be made, but because of those decisions we have a steelworks which remains the defining feature of our region today. It's making profits and providing valuable jobs to thousands and thousands of local families. We've got a world-class university which is educating thousands of local students—my number is 8507404; the hint is in the first two numbers—and it's attracting thousands more to the region. For many, the degree that hangs upon their wall at home is the first such degree that has appeared in that household, ever. I'm proud of that. We've got TAFE colleges which are helping to train the workers much in need of skills and providing the skills that'll drive productivity for generations to come. In fact, the TAFE colleges are the reason that my family moved to the Illawarra. My father trained generations of steelworkers who worked in the steelworks before he passed away.

We've funded halls. We've built bridges. We've upgraded roads and sports fields and provided support to community organisations. All this is good stuff, but the real legacy is not mine—certainly not mine alone—but the ones I contributed to as a part of a team, a Labor team, through Labor governments. We've rolled out the NBN to suburbs. We've provided the National Disability Insurance Scheme for familie2s, providing dignity and sustenance where once none existed. We're rebuilding TAFE, including free TAFE. We're reducing the HECS debts for thousands and thousands of Australian students, and we're doing the slow but essential work of restoring Medicare.

When I first got here my kids were knee-high. They're now young adults. My daughter, Jessica, is up there with us in the chamber. I'm immensely proud of both of my children. Paddy, who I've spoken about in this chamber before, is at school today, completing his HSC year. Jessica is here; she's finishing her studies to become a nurse—God knows, Australia needs more nurses. My children are amazing humans, but today I want to pay tribute to their mum, Julia; her partner, Luke; her mum Sally; her dad, Michael, and his wife Adrian. They've done so much to raise my children while I've been absent from our household. I want them to know that I never took it for granted. I'll be eternally grateful. I'm really sad that my mum, Margaret, who was here for my first speech, and my brother Adam won't be here for my last, because, sadly, they passed away in my time in this place.

I'm really rapt that that big unit up there in the gallery, my brother Luke, is here as the representative of my family. I'm grateful for his friendship—I'm look forward to spending more time with you too, mate.

My sister, Mandy, is not here, obviously. This is a difficult time of year for her. It's almost three years to the day when I stood in this chamber and I spoke of the passing of her son, Ollie, my nephew. I always think about him at this time of year. I hope for a better world for children to come.

In March last year, Brooke and I were married. Ours is a true love story. She's smart and charismatic, she has a smile that lights up a room and she's my person. On marrying her, I escalated to the presidency of the national society for men boxing above their weight.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr JONES: I don't know what the blokes in the room are laughing about; I've seen the membership register and every one of the blokes here is a member of that society, for so many reasons. I'm looking forward to the honeymoon we didn't have and those weekends we know very little about.

I'd like to spend a moment, if I could, reflecting upon some of what I think have been the great achievements of all the governments I've been in this parliament with and experienced over the last 15 years. I will start with a reflection on what I thought was a really brilliant contribution by former prime minister Julia Gillard which I don't think has had enough recognition. Former prime minister Gillard established a royal commission into child sex

abuse. Over four years it heard stories from thousands of Australians of abuse at the hands of churches and other institutions. There were over 1,000 individual contributions, 8,000 private sessions and 26,000 letters and emails, leading to over 2½ thousand referrals to police. What was so important about this was that for decades the victims had been denied; their stories, if ever told, were contested, and they were told they were not true. I can say, because I was part of some of those earlier discussions, that establishing this royal commission wasn't inevitable; it was contested, including in this chamber. It wasn't inevitable. It took courage, and I thank former prime minister Gillard for it. When we established that royal commission we sent a message: 'We see you, we hear you and we believe you.'

We often speak in this place of strength and weakness, and we reduce it to that concept of strength meaning power over others. I think there's another kind of strength; it's the strength that comes from the things that you overcome and the strength that knows it's more important to do things with and for people than to them. The royal commission was a really painful experience for survivors but a necessary piece of truth-telling and reconciliation. Survivors, including me, appreciate it—a point I've never disclosed because I didn't want to be defined by it and because I didn't want to detract attention from those who, unlike me, didn't have a voice or didn't have access to power to tell their story. There is power in being seen, being heard and being believed.

I acknowledge the role played by former prime minister Morrison. There was so much we had rancour and disagreement about during those COVID years. I was part of an opposition that genuinely tried to rise above partisanship and say: 'What's in the national interest here? We should agree where we can, and, even if we might disagree on some of the minute details'—God knows everyone knows my view about early access to super! But we put those issues aside and said, 'There is a national challenge here.' It was a really powerful reminder of the role and the importance of government. You will all recall those early weeks when we knew we were going into lockdown. All of us walked past or drove past the Centrelink offices, and it's burnt into our minds that there were lines of people snaking around the block—most of whom were standing in a queue at Centrelink for the first time in their life. And it's at moments like that that we were reminded of the importance of government and the people who work for government.

Within a few weeks, the Australian Taxation Office, whose principal business is to collect revenue, was converted from an organisation that collected revenue to an organisation that distributed it. In excess of 18,000 workers took their laptops, went to their kitchens or their bedrooms and operated from home, keeping households afloat and keeping small businesses afloat, and I don't think that they've ever received the acknowledgement that all of those workers deserve.

Today, there are government workers on the ground in Townsville providing post-flood support, and it'll be those frontline service agencies, whether it's the disaster relief agencies, Centrelink or the other services, providing those first-in emergency services and that information to thousands of Australians when we need it. They're coordinating disaster relief, they're patrolling the oceans to our north, they're going out in boats for weeks at a time—they're public servants. They're patrolling our borders. They're doing the detailed work and design to procure submarines or the equipment that keeps our troops in the field safe and secure. They're processing veterans' entitlements, access to essential mental health supports or payments to keep them sustained. They're providing cybersecurity, they're preparing budgets, they're mapping our oceans or they're ensuring that we have a detailed knowledge of all the minerals that this great nation has as a part of its bounty. It's a really important reminder to me that our government, our national parliament and the people who work for it really matter.

And I've got to say, you can get a headline for saying, 'We're going to slash 35,000'—or 45,000—'workers from our government,' but these are the people we're talking about. You can do it. We've seen the movie. You can slash those workers. We've seen the movie; we know what'll happen. There'll be winners and there'll be losers. The losers will be the Australian people; the winners will be the labour hire companies and the consultants. We can go back there, it is available to us, but I would suggest that it's a really bad call.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for a bunch of things, but, frankly, I want to thank him for backing a future made here. I grew up in a manufacturing region. The year before I left school, the steelworks halved its workforce. It's the reason I ended up a lawyer and not a boilermaker. We can argue about whether that was a good career choice or not! But I understand the importance of a decent, secure job—a skilled job—and the importance of industry to a region and to a country, because a country that makes stuff knows stuff. It has the important engineering skills, the biotechnical skills, all the skills that go into those complex engineering and production processes. Making stuff matters. I want to thank the Prime Minister and my friend, the minister for industry and a bunch of other things, for backing that project I strongly believe in. The world's changed. We need sovereign capability, and we need a vision to drive it. You've got to ask yourself, 'If it's not a future made in Australia, where's our future going to be made?' It's not going to be a secure future.

I want to reflect very briefly on my role as the Assistant Treasurer and the Minister for Financial Services, which has taken in the consumer affairs portfolio as well, responsibilities that I've had the honour of holding for over six years now. I've taken the approach that you're always going to get a better result if you have deep engagement with all of your stakeholders, not just some of them. So I've engaged deeply with the consumer advocates and with all the associations and businesses across the industry, and I think it's been absolutely critical to getting the outcomes we have. In a parliament that's shaped like this one, and in a Senate that's shaped like the one over there, building stakeholder consensus means you get a political consensus, and if you need legislative change that's the best way to get it—and I put a lot of effort into doing that.

I'd like to say a few words about that rancorous topic of superannuation. Everyone knows how passionate I am about it. I was there at the beginning of it. I'm older than I look! I've often thought, and I've always puzzled on this: if you were a complete stranger to the history of superannuation but you knew about the political philosophies of the coalition and Labor, and you came here and you observed our system, you would probably form the conclusion that superannuation was established by the coalition, because it's an essentially liberal idea. It's about self-preservation and it's about making a small contribution on a weekly or fortnightly basis to ensure that you aren't reliant on somebody else when you retire. What could be more liberal than a philosophy of self-reliance? So it has always just driven me nuts that this has been such an issue of political rancour in this country when you think of it like that. I strongly believe in it. I think our economy is stronger and our society is stronger for it. I've been very proud to work with my friend the Treasurer to ensure that we've left the system stronger as a result of this term in government.

In fact, some of the best things you contribute to in this place are not the things you start but the things you stop. I was very proud to be a part of an opposition where I worked with my friends former prime minister Keating and former prime minister Rudd, and the Treasurer and the Prime Minister to stop this idea that we were going to freeze the superannuation entitlements of Australians at 9½ per cent. It always struck me as crazy for us to suggest that we should collect 15 but the mob should only get 9½. At the end of June this year, all Australians will be receiving 12 per cent superannuation, and that's a damn good thing.

Of course it's not perfect. I've been in the forefront of people saying there needs to be reform. Their service standards are just nowhere where they need to be, and they need to lift their game. We need to do so much more to provide a better retirement experience, more retirement products, and ensure that the purpose of superannuation is seen through for the five million Australians who are either at or approaching retirement. But I'm proud to have been a part of a government that is delivering payday super. I'm proud to have been a part of a government that's delivering super on paid maternity leave—with my colleague Amanda Rishworth. I'm proud to have been a part of a government that sees the importance of delivering and improving financial advice. I had a great conversation with our colleagues on the crossbench earlier about the importance of realising our commitment to ban genetic testing for access to life insurance. I say this in front of the Prime Minister: this is Labor government policy, and we will ensure that this is legislated.

Can I say then a couple of words about the digital economy and the work that we've done in this space. It was in its infancy when I arrived. We were all handed BlackBerries. Do you remember them? It has transformed everything. It has disrupted everything. It has brought with it so many benefits. You can buy from your lounge room a product or a service generated just about anywhere in the world, and it arrives in the same week that you purchased it. You can make a phone, nay a video, call to somebody on the other side of the world for less than the price of a phone call. I remember growing up as a kid when it would be the exciting thing you did every six months—to make an overseas phone call—and it cost about a week's wages to do it. So the digitisation of the economy has changed everything, and we're so much better for it. But it has brought with it social, democratic and economic harms.

I've been delighted to work with my friend the Minister for Communications, and, again, as a part of the Treasury team, with the full support of the Prime Minister, on these challenges. The News Media Bargaining Code and the news bargaining incentive picked up and ran with a proposition introduced by the coalition. We improved it and modified it to ensure that it was appropriate to the challenges we now face. It'll be up to the next parliament to ensure that that is legislated.

On digital competition and unfair trading, and frauds and scams, which I'll say a little bit about in a moment, the Attorney-General's made a great contribution—where is he?—in upgrading our privacy laws, improving and ensuring that we knock the problems out of the CDR and digital ID. These are all a part of a comprehensive program of this government to keep people's money and information safe and to improve our digital capacity.

But I want to make this point. The digitisation of everything presents a big challenge for democracy and the sovereignty of this parliament. It brings with it geopolitical dimensions which will require a unity of voice and a unity of purpose. The laws of our parliament cannot stop at the internet, and when we speak to the rest of the world, we have to do it with one voice, not with fractured voices. These will be difficult conversations, to deliver on the

things that I've spoken about. There are big forces at play. We need to speak with a single purpose and with one voice. The laws of this parliament cannot stop at the internet.

We've spoken in broken voices and raised tones about antisemitism and racism. They lurk and fester online, but they increase their reach on social media platforms. So we can't be serious about the challenge of fighting antisemitism—in fact, all forms of bigotry and racism—unless we are serious about taking on the online vectors. Again, these are big, tough challenges, but we don't have a serious program to take on antisemitism and other forms of racism unless we are taking on the vectors through which they spread their reach, and they are social media platforms. It's a matter of deep regret that we appear to be going backwards and not forwards in that area.

Prime Minister, I'm asking for nothing—well, actually, that's not true! I'm going to ask for one thing. I want to talk about my scams bill. I put a hell of a lot of work into this one. Australians are losing seven million bucks a day. And we can do better. We have made significant improvements. I've attempted not to politicise the issue, because I think this should be something that enjoys bipartisan support to find its passage through the Senate. We've got a bill before the Senate at the moment. I understand it enjoys the support of those opposite. So it would be really good if we could get your people to talk to my people to get it through the Senate before we get up at the end of the week! Let's get it done!

I want to talk about a big Australian story. I want to just point to a bloke up there, my father-in-law, Fred Muscat. He came to Australia as a kid—a young adult, I should say—and didn't have a cent in his pocket. He worked in all the same jobs that migrants work in. He came from his town in Malta to Australia looking for a better life. Over his years in this country, he built a small business. He's a tradie who built a small business, provided for his family, raised two wonderful daughters and married a fiery Scottish trade unionist—which he passed on to his daughter, I'm pleased to say!

I often reflect on Fred's life and think that this is the Australian story. Too often, through the stories we tell in this place, we narrow and make the Australian story smaller than it really needs to be. It's a big story and it's lots of different colours and there should be a place in it for everyone—a place in it for people like my father-in-law, who have contributed so much to this country; people like my son; people like your sons and daughters; people like all of us. You know, we're a big, motley mob, and it should not be the role of this place to punch down or to make the Australian story smaller than it should be.

I'll finish by thanking some of my people, and I won't be able to do it all. I want to start with the Dharawal and Wadi Wadi elders who have done so much to make me feel at home in their yarnning circles and in their community. In particular, I single out Uncle Gerard, better known as Uncle G, Aunty Jodie Edwards and Uncle Richard Davies. They've had a tough couple of years, but they're great leaders and true survivors, and I love them to death. I thank them for their friendship.

It's a mark of a successful life in politics, I think, if you can honestly say that you will leave with more friends than when you started. It doesn't always happen. I'm really pleased that I've been able to do that. It's taken a bit of work. I see a bunch of them up there in the gallery. I see my schoolmates up there in the gallery, which is fantastic. I see Pete up there. It was so good to go with a bunch of guys I went to primary school with to see the Illawarra Hawks wallop the hell out of the Sydney Kings on Friday night. We like beating everyone, but nobody more than Sydney. It's so great to still be connected with the people I grew up with.

I see my friend Senator Gallagher over there. I still remember us drinking wine out of a box and singing terrible songs loudly on the floor of your flat somewhere in Woden long before either of us ever thought we would end up in this joint. I'm really pleased that we're still mates. Pete, Lou, Steve, Cassie, Katy—I'm so blessed to have you as part of my life over all these years.

It's sad that my mate Graham Perrett is going. That reduces the 'parliamentary friends of St George' down to one member, the member for Cunningham, so the weight is on you. To so many of my ministerial colleagues, I've tried to be a team player and I've tried to ensure that I act in the true spirit of solidarity. I can honestly say that I've enjoyed that back in spades and I thank you all for it.

To the Treasurer, to the finance minister, to the assistant minister for Treasury, the economic team that I've had the great pleasure of being a part of; to the Expenditure Review Committee who I've spent far too much time with over three years in government and three of my years in opposition: I thank you for allowing me to be a part of your deliberations.

To my staff—bear with me; I'm going to read a few names out. I'm going to start with Bel Robertson, my chief of staff. She's a truly amazing woman who—I'm going to let your secret through—actually worked for the Leader of the Opposition John Hewson in this building in the nineties. I was delighted to have her come and work for me because she is a competent, loyal, professional woman who has gone above and beyond in the years that she has worked with me. I'm proud to call you a mate and I'm proud to have you serve with me. I thank all of my staff, and

I'll go through them all: Caitlin Veigel; Hanzel Pador; Josh Cleaver; Georgia Roff; Tracey Masson; Deputy Mayor Linda Campbell; James Stevens—a very big brain and a big future on that one; Daniel Edmonds, the very same; Sophie Johnson, a friend, colleague and wonderful human being; Whitney Lisson, absolutely sensational; Jarrod Dellapina, who's not with us, but I thank him for many, many years of service; Lior Kalisse; Sam Ellis, Ros Anderson and Danielle Seraphin, to the three of you, thank you for telling me what DLOs do as I now know the importance of what you do as well; and Hugh Phillips.

A lot of staff have worked with me over the years and there are a lot of branch members I would like to thank as well. At the risk of missing one, I've got a list of them here and I'll table them. That way, when you go to google yourself or search in *Hansard*, you will find your name in there. I thank you all.

I want to, without stuffing your parliamentary careers, thank a few people on the other side. I won't give you all up but I see the member for Riverina here, the member for Wright. I call them personal friends. There is a leftie from Wollongong and a couple of conservatives from the Nationals and Liberal Party, a strange mixture, but I really enjoy their friendship. I find them to be decent human beings and have enjoyed their friendship over many, many years. We were in the same class. There are other people who I have admired from a distance on the other side.

To the secretary of my union—the CPSU—Melissa Donnelly, thank you for your friendship over many years. My life membership of the union sits on my cupboard in my office so everyone who walks in knows where I came from, and I am very proud of it. To all the stakeholders—I see Andrew up there and I know there are others, if my eyes were sharper I could pick you all out—I want to thank all the stakeholders that I've worked with over many, many years. It is important to remember the people you're first with. I see Jane Mulligan up there as well. Never forget the people who were there from the beginning; never forget the people who backed you right from the beginning, and I don't. I thank you, Prime Minister. You've been a good friend and a supporter of mine for many, many years, and I thank you for that.

For now, it's time for me to bundy off. Thanks for the ride.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Prime Minister) (15:46): On indulgence—Stephen Jones—or Jonesy, as he's always been known—has a great Labor heart and he's always worn it on his sleeve. He has served our party and his community in this place with passion and principle. I've known Stephen for a very long period of time. We've always voted for each other throughout our careers within the Labor Party and within our broader political engagement as well. I've been a big supporter of Jonesy, and have supported him going back to his heartland there in the Illawarra and on becoming the member for Throsby.

Stephen had a stellar career leading the Community and Public Sector Union, where he stood up for working people, understood that they needed to be valued and respected, and made an enormous difference. So Stephen has been a representative of both wings of the Labor movement—industrial and political—and he has throughout that done an enormous amount and left an incredible legacy. He is someone who leaves this place with more friends than with which he came. It's remarkable, thinking about it, as he was speaking, that I can't think of anyone who dislikes Stephen Jones or would regard himself an opponent of Stephen Jones. I wish throughout my career I could say that but it's not the case. Stephen Jones was someone who, as the representative for Whitlam, brought a real passion to an electorate that sometimes people speak about as being a safe seat. I think this applies on either side of the aisle. It is one of the reasons I'm against colour-coded spreadsheets to allocate funding. People deserve strong representation and they don't deserve to be left behind or to be taken for granted by anyone. I think that has occurred from time to time with governments, if you look at where funds were allocated for important community infrastructure or roads. Stephen Jones has been so passionate. I have visited BlueScope with him on any number of occasions. We have worked on projects and delivering services for that community, which has needed it. It's a community which has grown and changed, with the boundaries changing as well, but one in which every single member, regardless of what way they vote or what they do in their profession, knows they've had a local member who's been on their side.

I made Stephen the shadow Assistant Treasurer, a frontbencher, and he has grown into the Assistant Treasurer position. I join with Stephen in regretting how long we have spent in ERC meetings together in both opposition and government. The work that Stephen has done throughout the country holding forums—I know they've been held on a bipartisan basis—on scams, informing people out there about how to avoid being ripped off and the challenges which are there, where he speaks about how much is lost every single day—he has been passionate about that. He's passionate about superannuation and the role that it plays. It does not just lift up living standards and ensure that people can retire with dignity and with a decent living standard; it is also a national asset, the extraordinary level of funds that we have. When I spoke with President Trump this morning, I spoke about the combined Future Fund and our managed funds representing US\$3.1 trillion—more than the combined funds from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It is a huge legacy which has been fought for against those who would seek to undermine it.

I will never forget the role Stephen has played in issues where he has not ducked. Marriage equality is now pretty uncontroversial; I recall that wasn't always the case, frankly, within my party or within this parliament. Stephen was there from the beginning as an advocate, as someone moving private member's bills and as someone arguing the case at Labor Party conferences for people to have the same rights as everyone else. Guess what? Marriage for everyone else hasn't been undermined by more people having access to it—simple as that. I give a shout-out to Brooke. I was very pleased to be one of the guests at Stephen and Brooke's lovely wedding here in Canberra last year. That was such a great celebration of two people expressing their love for each other.

Stephen has always been concerned with looking after the most vulnerable—that social justice principle at the heart of Labor's ideals that people should not be left behind. That is something he has stood up for each and every day.

I've been a friend and comrade of Stephen's for a very long period of time, since well before I came into this place. We attended various meetings around the place—some of them public, some of them a bit quieter—putting together, planning and engaging with each other at the CPSU and around and about. Stephen is someone who's been a friend of mine and remains a friend of mine. Importantly, one of the things about this joint is that the people who you're going to have a beer with when both of you are not here—I've got a while to go yet, though, mate!—are the people whose friendship you really value. Stephen has been totally loyal to me on a personal level for a long period of time. I don't take that for granted. I'm a loyal person too, and I've been loyal to this bloke and will remain loyal to him outside of this place. I wish you and Brooke so much happiness for your future together.

When you came to me and had the discussion, as people do, about wanting this to be your last term and how you had made your contribution and you wanted to go in a different direction in life, I respected that. I look forward to watching with excitement. Everything that you do will make a difference, I have no doubt about that—not just for yourself but most importantly your life is one that's been dedicated to the union movement, to your political engagement and, in your personal life, to making your life better for others.

All of us have been made better and, of course, the government's been made better because of your contribution. I thank you.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (15:56): on indulgence—'The Jones Boy':

The whole town's saying he was a good boy

A nice boy

A swell boy

My apologies to the 1953 hit. I came into the parliament with the member for Whitlam in 2010. He was then the member for Throsby, and his seat had a name change. He's always been a friend of mine and a colleague of mine. I used to love the way every time—and I was a bit disappointed that in his valedictory he didn't use it—he would use that hand-shaking movement, rubbishing the Nationals and those Liberals, but he might have an opportunity tomorrow to rectify that.

I've always admired anyone who worked prior to parliament in the disability sector, and the member for Whitlam did that. I will never forget that speech he gave on behalf of his nephew. It was a deeply personal speech in February 2022, I think, and the whole parliament stopped to listen. That speech had great ramifications, and it was quite moving.

He came to Wagga Wagga in June last year for a scams conference. I well remember not just was it a well-attended scams conference—it was very bipartisan on this extremely significant issue—but he was so kind and gentle to a lady in her 90s Barbara Parnell, who's a lifelong member of the National Party. He was just so nice to her, as you would expect any member of parliament to be, and he brought that genuine warmth and sincerity. The fact that he praised me not only to Barb but also at the scams conference—I will remain indebted to him for that.

Mr Jones: I haven't filled out the National Party membership form yet!

Mr McCORMACK: I did give him one of those forms; I'm yet to get it back! He's given more than 1,100 speeches in this place, which is an effort. It'd be in the top percentile for number of speeches given by members since federation. I have got him on that! Every one of them had the passion and sincerity brought to this place from his electorate. I commend him for his role as a local member, I commend him for his role as a minister, and I commend him for his role as a friend.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Cost of Living

The SPEAKER (15:58): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Hume proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's failure to manage its crippling cost of living crisis.

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

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

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (15:58): Before I move to that critical matter, I've just a couple of brief words about my neighbour the member for Whitlam. We knew each other from before politics. We knew Julia as well before politics. Little did we know we were going to become neighbouring seats, but it has been a very civilised neighbouring relationship for the most part. I've enjoyed working with him on really critical issues across the region, including the 2019-20 bushfires, of course, and we share a passion, which might surprise some. That's a passion for the survival and the prosperity of the steelworks in the Illawarra and Port Kembla, because it was the first place I worked coming out of university and I think it's an incredibly important contributor to the region. Good on the member for Whitlam for the role he's played in the success of that important business, and thank you for your public service.

Three years ago—2022—seems like a long time ago now. It was the year Queen Elizabeth died and we were seeing COVID going backwards, which was a good thing, of course. It was the first year we saw large language models, with the emergence of OpenAI. It was on 2 May 2022 that I think a lot of Australians took notice of what the then Leader of the Opposition said, which was that life would be cheaper under Labor. That was almost three years ago; the anniversary is coming up. Labor and the Prime Minister at the time talked a very big game about lower electricity prices, cheaper mortgages et cetera. The sad reality, though, is that Australians have seen the exact opposite over the course of the last almost three years. Nothing is getting easier. Australians are paying more for their mortgages. Australians have paid \$50,000 in after-tax income in additional costs on a typical mortgage since Labor came to power.

I was talking to one of my constituents the other day. Before Labor came to power, their mortgage repayments were \$1,500 a week. Now, they're \$4,000 a week. That's \$30,000 a year in after-tax income that this small-business person has had to find. He and his wife run a small business in my electorate. They work incredibly hard. They're working extra hours to get by and to pay that mortgage. The stress on them is typical of the stress we're seeing on Australians right across this great country as they pay more for their energy. This guy makes pizzas and he uses a lot of gas. The price of gas has gone up by 34 per cent. Food is up 12 per cent. Rent is up 17 per cent. We know for a working family the cost of living is approaching an increase of 20 per cent, and incomes have not kept up with that. This is why we have seen the biggest hit to Australia's standard of living in our history. It's the biggest hit in our history, worse than for any of our peer countries. It's seen a bigger reduction than in any of our peer countries.

We also know that this government's own plan doesn't get us back to the standard of living Australians had in 2022, three years ago, until 2030. Right at the heart of this is Labor crowding out the private sector. We've seen record levels of insolvencies, but we are also seen record levels of government spending, over \$350 billion of extra spending from Labor. And, yes, we opposed in this parliament over \$100 billion for programs that have delivered nothing. They're not delivering the manufacturing we want to see and not delivering the houses we want to see.

If you're going to spend that kind of money then you have to find that kind of money. The way they are doing it, as we all know all too well, is by taxing Australians more. Australians are paying the highest level of personal income tax ever. The increase for Australians has been over 20 per cent since Labor came to power. Included in that is a tax grab from this Treasurer and this Prime Minister which they promised not to do. They promised not to touch franking credits. Well, they are going after franking credits. There is no doubt about that. They promised not to touch superannuation taxes. They are coming after that. We see that legislation coming through the parliament at the moment, and I will come back to that in a moment. They promised not to change negative gearing, but we know the Treasurer was working on a secret plan to come after negative gearing. Just today, the Prime Minister refused to rule out coming after negative gearing. He has been given so many opportunities. He laughs and carries on every time he is asked the question and never rules it out. He never has and I don't think he ever will, because we know that's exactly what he wants to do.

Australians know that on tax, Labor's word means absolutely nothing. In fact, we have seen new research just in the last little while from the Financial Services Council saying a staggering 73 per cent of Australians expect that Labor will make further changes to superannuation if they are re-elected—an extraordinary number. That is a complete loss of faith and trust in the stability of superannuation, which is so crucial to Australians' retirement. It's not hard to see why there's this lack of trust, because, as I said a moment ago, right now we've got new superannuation taxes going through this parliament. The Treasurer made a very ham-fisted effort today to explain why he was doing something that he promised he wouldn't do. They promised that they wouldn't come after superannuation. We know now that, according to Treasury's own analysis, a 20-year-old who earns an average wage throughout their life will have a superannuation balance higher than \$3 million in their early 60s, and they will be

hit by this new tax. Analysis of the ATO and census data reveals that that means that more than two million Australians under the age of 25 today will be hit by this additional tax to pay for Labor's addiction to spending.

But, worse still, part of this package is going after unrealised capital gains. Unrealised capital gains are unrealised. And, if you have to pay a tax, you have to pay it in cash, so you have to realise it. We know that the small-business people and farmers who have put land in their self-managed super funds will have to find a way to pay that tax when land is not going to give them liquidity they can draw on easily. So what's the answer? They're going to have to sell. They have to realise the unrealised capital gain. This is not rocket science, and it's why we haven't seen this kind of impost in the past. It's why we haven't seen this in countries across the world. But, in Australia, we've got a Treasurer who thinks this is a good idea.

You've got to remember that this was the brainchild of a Treasurer who has never worked in the private sector, unless you count 'six long months as Queensland general manager of a public relations firm'—six long months. That's a direct quote from the Treasurer's book *Glory Daze*, where he says how much he hated his six long months in the private sector, and he went straight back to what he's much happier with, which is lots of government. I'll save everybody the pain of reading *Glory Daze*, and I'll say this: there aren't many glorious days ahead of this lot on the other side of the parliament. I cannot recommend this book. I much preferred the member for Parramatta in the *Quarterly Essay*, where he advocated strongly for nuclear power. At least he's an economist, unlike the Treasurer.

But let's be honest about this tax. Labor's super tax is nothing more than an unindexed wealth tax. That will mean even fewer Australians will trust this government, this Labor Party, when it comes to the superannuation that they put away, hoping that it will be there for their retirement—that they think is their money, but that, sadly, this Treasurer and this government have decided is their own money.

There is a better way: getting this country back on track by beating inflation and boosting growth; through cheaper energy with a better mix of energy sources; through affordable homes, by breaking those infrastructure bottlenecks that we know are preventing the supply of extra homes in this country; by balancing immigration with the supply of housing; and by ensuring this country is getting back on track.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond—Assistant Minister for Social Services and Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) (16:08): I'm very pleased to be speaking today about our cost-of-living measures and how important they are for all Australians. I want to start by talking about the situation when we came into government. We knew then, when we came into government, that inflation was high and rising, real wages were falling, living standards were declining and people were going backwards. That was the reality. But, under our responsible economic management over these past few years, we now see inflation is almost a third of what it was at the election and is falling, real wages are growing again, living standards are rising again and we've recorded the lowest average unemployment rate for any government in 50 years. We've also overseen the creation of more than 1.1 million jobs—the most jobs created on record in any parliamentary term. So our economic plan is all about helping Australians earn more and keep more of what they earn and addressing many of those cost-of-living pressures. Now, there are a whole range of them, and I'd like to run through them.

Certainly when I'm out in my electorate, door-knocking at listening posts, people raise how a lot of these measures have assisted them. Our tax cuts for every taxpayer—in my electorate that's over 70,000 people—have made a huge difference. As I said, we know people are doing it tough. That's why these measures are important. The energy bill relief for every household of \$300 helps so many, particularly a lot of older Australians in my area on the New South Wales North Coast. Of course, our cheaper child care is so vitally important for families. Cheaper medicines are, again, so important for everyone, particularly older Australians. And what a game changer fee-free TAFE has been across the nation, as is reducing HECS debts. All of those measures are so vitally important. There are the wage increases for aged-care workers and childcare workers as well. I'm hearing every day from people in my area about what a difference they make.

Now, of course, all of these measures were opposed by the Liberals and Nationals, which is just appalling. I don't know how they, or their candidates, face people in their electorates when they're talking about the cost of living. Are they honest, and do they tell them that they actually opposed every one of our cost-of-living measures that are helping Australians every single day? What we do know about the Liberals and Nationals is that they have a lot of secret cuts and secret costs as well. We certainly hoped that we might hear about some of those today, but I don't know that we will. They don't seem to want to reveal too much of it. We know that the biggest threat to household budgets is indeed the cuts the Liberals and Nationals would make—about \$7,200 for each household. It would be devastating.

What we do know is a little bit about the expenditure they want to have—the \$600 billion on their nuclear power madness, which is just going to result in massive increases to power prices. I can tell you: people in my electorate

are not interested in the Liberals and Nationals plan. We hear many times, and we heard today, about the \$10 billion they want to spend on the long lunches for bosses. That's their absolute priority. What we don't hear about are the secret cuts.

We know there is that \$350 billion they say they want to make in cuts. Well, what I'd like to know, and what people in my electorate and throughout the nation would like to know, is: Where are they coming from? Where are those cuts going to be? Will they be in age pensions? Will they be in Medicare? Will they be in veterans pensions? We'd all like to know. People are very concerned. Will there be further cuts to education? Will they be to fee-free TAFE? We know they've got form across the board for a lot of these cuts, and there's a real concern in the community when it comes to that—that that's exactly what they would see again with the Liberals and Nationals in government. As I said, in my electorate, it comes up all the time: Where will those cuts be? Will they be right across the board?

I mean, tax cuts are so vitally important. As I said, more than 70,000 people in my electorate have benefited from them. I know that across the country at least 600,000 people have been able to access fee-free TAFE—and, importantly, access to all of that education and access to jobs. It's so important to be training our workforce for the future. In my region 5,000 people will benefit. In a regional area, that is huge. Every day people tell me the difference that fee-free TAFE has made in their lives as well. Again, this was all opposed by the Liberals and Nationals.

The other issue that people raise with me are their concerns about when the opposition leader was the health minister. This is something that comes up all the time, because it's a pretty shambolic record when we have a look at it. We know that when the opposition leader was the health minister he froze Medicare rebates for years. It was incredibly damaging. Of course, he wanted to put that GP tax in place. I was here when he was talking about how important it was. My community certainly fought back in relation to that. Of course, he cut \$50 billion from public hospitals. That was just horrendous right across the board. On top of all of that he said that there were too many free Medicare services. That's what he thinks. That's what the Liberals and Nationals think. They've got form when it comes to cutting Medicare and cutting health services.

Our government has worked extremely hard in rebuilding Medicare in terms of tripling the bulk-billing rate and putting a lot more funding into our public hospitals. It takes a long time. Ten years of cuts and neglect of our health system have been really devastating. But people remember that. People remember when the opposition leader was health minister. So there is going to be a very clear choice at the next election—a choice between building Australia's future with the Labor government and taking us backwards with the Liberals and Nationals. It's only going to be a vote for Labor that will stop the opposition leader from becoming prime minister and stop the Liberals and Nationals from getting into power. They will take us backwards and people will be worse off. We certainly know that that's the case.

When I'm out and about, talking and listening to the community, all these cost-of-living measures make such a big difference. We're also very proud, as a government and as MPs, of listening to our community about the concerns they have.

I would like to add this on one of my local issues that has been a very, very big concern and that we addressed last week. The Prime Minister was up in my electorate on the Friday, and we made a really important announcement—that the re-election of an Albanese Labor government would deliver \$3 million for our North Coast crime prevention infrastructure action plan. It's really good to have that plan in place. Again, this is about listening to the community and about Labor governments addressing these concerns. We've seen increasing youth crime in our area, and of course the community are very, very concerned about that, as am I. As a former police officer, community safety is my top priority. Right across the area, people raise those concerns. I do note, of course, that the New South Wales government has been very proactive. We've had 17 new police recruits to our region. That government has recently brought in stronger youth offender bail laws, and also Jack's law, in terms of tackling knife crime. We always need to have a whole suite of measures. In this announcement that we made, there's a million dollars for each council—the Tweed, Ballina and Byron councils—to be able to install crime prevention infrastructure measures, whether it's CCTV, lighting or landscaping; the councils can make that decision.

I really want to thank all the community that advocated for this—particularly the Ballina mayor, Sharon Cadwallader. I also want to acknowledge Alison Vickery, who led the community group, and all those people who filled out my crime survey. I was very pleased to be announcing this commitment from a re-elected Albanese Labor government. It's about listening to the community and the concerns they have. We've done that, as we do every day in terms of listening to people in our region about addressing those cost-of-living measures.

Of course, on Sunday, we did see an incredibly good announcement in terms of our investment in women's health. That is such an important investment. It's really good work that's being done. There's the absolute strengthening of Medicare, with more than \$570 million to deliver more choice, lower cost and better health care for women, and there's been a really positive response in my area. Look what it includes: the first PBS listing for new oral

contraceptive pills in more than 30 years; more choice, lower costs and better access to long-term contraceptives; larger Medicare payments and more bulk-billing for IUDs and birth-control implants, saving around 300,000 women a year up to \$400 in out-of-pocket costs; more Medicare support for women experiencing menopause; and the first PBS listing for new menopausal hormone therapies in over 20 years. This has been incredibly important for women right across the nation.

As part of that package, too, there'll be more endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics treating more conditions, and also contraceptives and treatment for uncomplicated UTIs directly from pharmacies—another great initiative. Again, this is about Labor listening to the community, acting on the concerns that the community have and delivering real reforms. This one is certainly needed, and I know there's been a really positive response right across the country in terms of our investment in women's health.

We're really proud to keep delivering all of our cost-of-living relief. It has made a huge difference. Certainly, it is only Labor that will take Australia forwards. Voting for the Liberals and Nationals just takes us backwards, and we know that that's exactly what they would do, because they opposed every single one of our cost-of-living measures that are so vitally important at this time.

Ms WARE (Hughes) (16:18): I rise to speak on the government's failure to manage its crippling cost-of-living crisis. I thank the honourable member for Hume for bringing this matter of public importance to this place.

Labor cannot manage the economy. We have said so many times in this place. My parents have actually said to me, after about six months of Labor, 'We didn't think that we would ever have a government that spent and mismanaged the economy the way that Gough Whitlam did,' but we've got it here. We have seen it in all of the numbers. We have seen inflation far too high for far too long.

The Treasurer says things like, 'Inflation is coming down,' but I have not met anyone in the electorate of Hughes who has said to me that they now feel that their grocery prices are any less. They don't feel that their insurances are any less. They don't feel that their sports registration fees are any less. They don't feel that their fuel is any less. Certainly their mortgages are no less, because, with 12 interest rate rises under this Labor government, people in my electorate have paid more than \$50,000 in additional interest payments over what they were paying under the former coalition government.

What has fuelled this inflation rate is \$347 billion in additional spending. Labor sit there and say that spending has gone to better TAFE services, for example—actually, they don't say it's better TAFE services; they say it's fee-free. Free TAFE. But what is the use of throwing money at supposedly free TAFE when only about 50 per cent of students that start at TAFE are finishing? Why not give students the opportunity to also attend a private vocational education training service? It's because underlying all of Labor's philosophy and thinking is centralising control—centralising control even of the VET sector. We have seen no assistance whatsoever for any apprentices who wish to avail themselves of private training.

We've also heard that a lot of this spending has gone on Medicare. I'm glad I have the opportunity yet again to speak about this government's absolute failure on health. Today in question time I asked the minister, Minister Butler: '27,000 small businesses have collapsed under this government. How many GP clinics have closed in that time?' He had to take it on notice. The minister had to take it on notice. Why does he, as the minister for health, not have that figure to hand?

A government member interjecting—

Ms WARE: I note that members over there are interjecting, but we've also heard announcements about women's health. Let me tell you what this government has delivered for the women in my electorate since being elected: absolutely nothing. They told me about it in Engadine on Saturday. I had a number of women come up to me and say that we need endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics. I'm in southern and south-western Sydney. Our nearest pelvic pain clinic is down in the Southern Highlands. I have written to the minister about this and said, 'We need one in southern Sydney to service the women in Hughes and adjoining electorates such as Cook,' and I have been refused that request. Also, on menopause clinics, there's been no assistance whatsoever from this government for the women in my electorate who are battling with menopause.

This government has totally failed on some of the very key issues that it should be addressing. Thank you.

Mr REPACHOLI (Hunter) (16:23): The Albanese Labor government is focused on reducing the cost of living. This is one of the issues that matters most to the hardworking people of the Hunter. Today we have the opposition trying to convince us that they could do a better job. Let's be clear, when it comes to reducing the cost of living, the coalition is like a chocolate teapot—they melt under pressure, deliver nothing and leave nothing but a mess. They are worse than useless. They seriously expect us to believe they of all people could do a better job of reducing the cost of living—the same mob who spent nine years driving up power prices, keeping wages low and making it hard

to see a bulk-billing doctor. They talk the big talk, but there is no action to back it up. They voted no to every single cost-of-living measure we have put in place.

Leading the charge is the member for Hume. The member for Hume has absolutely no idea of what to do when it comes to the cost of living. Remember, this is the same bloke who hid energy price hikes before the last election. He saw the numbers and didn't like them, so he shoved them in the draw and hoped no-one noticed. Now he wants us to believe he has a grand plan to help struggling families with the cost of living. Get real, mate! It's like putting a fox in charge of the chicken coop and being surprised when the feathers start to fly.

If you really want to understand the member for Hume and what Australians think of him, you don't have to look any further than his own Facebook page. This is the man who is so starved of support that he once replied to his own Facebook post with, 'Fantastic. Great move. Well done, Angus.' I mean, come on! Even his own supporters aren't willing to pat him on the back, so he had to do it himself.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): Member for Hunter, I need to interrupt you. This has been happening a lot this week. When you are referring to a current sitting member of this House, you have to use their titles.

Mr REPACHOLI: No worries. Sorry, Deputy Speaker. If self-congratulation was an Olympic sport, he would take home the gold every time. If only he put as much effort into passing cost-of-living relief for this parliament as he does patting himself on the back.

While the opposition reply to their own social media posts and plays silly games, we've been getting on delivering real cost-of-living relief. Let's talk about what we've done for the Hunter. More bulk-billing and better health care has made it easier to see a doctor without breaking the bank. We have delivered Medicare urgent care clinics so people in the Hunter can now get urgent medical attention at no cost, and two Medicare mental health clinics so people can get the mental health support that they need. There's been energy bill relief for thousands of households and small businesses across the Hunter. Hunter residents have already saved \$7.7 million thanks to our reduced cost of medicine. Over 6,700 families in the Hunter are benefiting from cheaper child care, making it easier for parents to work and support their families. Just this week, we announced the \$573 million investment into women's health, making contraceptives and menopause treatments more affordable.

These aren't just numbers on a page. This is real relief. These are real savings that are making a difference in real people's lives. And what does the opposition have to offer? Nothing. They voted no to our cost-of-living relief, no to tax cuts, no to better wages, no to cheaper child care, no to cheaper medicines, and no to lower power bills. The reality is if the coalition were in charge right now things would be worse off. There would be no energy bill relief. There would be less bulk-billing, and Medicare would be on its knees. The cost of medicines and cheaper child care would go spiralling out of control. There'd be no tax cuts. We're in government because Australians wanted the adults back in charge.

We know times are tough and that is why we are focused on easing pressures wherever we can. While the opposition just talks about helping Australians, we actually deliver. We will keep fighting for the people of the Hunter and people of Australia. We'll keep driving down costs. We'll keep making life easier for families, pensioners, small business owners and workers. To those opposite who think they can do better, we've seen your record. Australians know better. We know that there's going to be \$350 billion in cuts. We just don't know where because those opposite refused to tell us. I think Australians deserve better. They should know where these cuts are coming from. We know they need to find \$600 billion to fund their nuclear experiment that they think we're ready for. We know all of this is coming from an opposition who really don't know how to give us or Australians any information.

The only person who believes the shadow Treasurer can bring down the cost of living is the one-man cheer squad himself. Thank you to the member for Hume for supporting yourself because you seem to be the only one that does. Let's get Australia going again.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Opposition Whip) (16:28): Much as I like the member for Hunter, and appreciated his attempted comedy routine, it did nothing to support hard-working Australian families who are struggling every day with the cost-of-living crisis that the member for Hunter and the government opposite have presided over for the past nearly three years.

I might remind the member for Hunter of a few figures that may be worthwhile for the member for Hunter's consideration. Health costs are up some 10 per cent. Education costs are up 11 per cent. Food is up over 12 per cent. Housing is up 14 per cent. Rents are up over 17 per cent. Insurance costs are up over 18 per cent, and, very importantly, electricity costs are up over 32 per cent.

It doesn't matter how the member for Hunter wants to cut the mustard; electricity was up 32 per cent even before the rebates, and it is having a material negative impact on the cost of living not just for everyday Australians but for our small businesses and businesses right across this country. I know many businesses whose electricity costs have

increased by far more than 32 per cent under this government—some in the order of 200 per cent. Some of these are charities and other community organisations that take the scarce resources they receive in donations and grants and put them back into the community, and they are now less able to do that purely because of the cost of electricity. It is also then meaning that the cost for businesses to do business and keep their doors open—our cafes, clubs and pubs—is tough. The cost inputs to business through electricity alone are magnified through every single part of the supply chain. Everything we do has electricity somewhere in it.

The member for Hunter, in his contribution, referenced child care. I can say to the member for Hunter that a number of childcare centres I've spoken to in my electorate have decided it's too difficult to deal with the government's bureaucracy and red tape for the new childcare subsidy provisions—but they are giving their employees a 15 per cent increase anyway, which I think is terrific. But they're also increasing their fees. The Australian families in my electorate of Forde who are using child care are not paying any less for child care than they did two or three years ago; they are paying more because the government's red tape and regulation around the childcare subsidy is too difficult for some of these childcare centres to deal with. It is just another example of the failure of those opposite.

I've addressed child care and energy, and I will address bulk-billing. Those opposite in the government have been waxing lyrical about bulk-billing rates for the past week or so. The Minister for Health and Aged Care has tried to use the COVID pandemic as some sort of shield and cover for where the bulk-billing figures are at, so let's go back before COVID and have a like-for-like comparison. In 2019, bulk-billing in my electorate of Forde was at 96 per cent. What is it today? Eighty-four per cent—a 12 per cent drop in bulk-billing across my electorate of Forde.

The government can wax lyrical all they like about addressing cost-of-living issues, but the reality of the matter is that it is not making a material difference to what families across my electorate are feeling each and every day. And I haven't even got to the 12 interest rate increases, which, for an average mortgage in my electorate, are resulting in an additional \$50,000 of interest being paid by mortgage holders across my electorate. In addition, investors who own rental properties are also paying those additional costs, which is why rent has gone up. The government is failing to deliver, and only the coalition will get the country back on track.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Chief Government Whip) (16:33): It's a pleasure to join my colleagues today for this matter of public importance because the cost of living is a critical issue across the country, a critical issue in my community and a critical issue in the electorate of Lalor. I appreciate following the Chief Opposition Whip, who spent his first two minutes on a list of how much things had increased in cost—none of which I'm in a position to refute. But I ask the question, after seeing this big long list from those opposite about increases to costs for households: why did they vote against every cost-of-living measure introduced by this government to support families across the nation? That's the question. Why do they know how much everything has gone up by but choose not to act and support people so they can pay those bills? That's the ultimate question.

We know that we've worked hard on this side. We know there's still work to be done. We know people are still hurting. But we've made substantial progress on inflation. Wages are growing again, unemployment is low and we've seen the creation of 1.1 million jobs in one term of government, four out of five of which are in the private sector. These are things that Australians need to understand. They need to understand the hard work that's happened and some of the positive results from that. Average unemployment, under this Albanese government, is lower than under any other government of the past 50 years. We have unemployment at four per cent. Some would argue that that's full employment. It's the first time in 50 years that Australia has had unemployment at four per cent or better at the same time as inflation has been below three per cent. This is the soft landing that we would hope for and that economists would hope for. This is a Labor soft landing, because it is being done without driving unemployment. Inflation has come down without people across the country losing their jobs. Inflation has come down while we've grown jobs. Inflation has come down while we've grown people's pay packets, with increases to the minimum wage and with a 15 per cent pay rise for care economy workers.

These are important things. They're really important in my community. And those opposite have voted against them. They've voted against supporting students. They voted against tax cuts for all Australians. Can you believe that? They voted against it. They voted against the energy rebate. They voted against cheaper child care. They voted against cheaper medicines. Let's face it—I heard it said today that perhaps they don't want to see interest rate cuts happen. Perhaps that's not what they want, because they seem to like that Australians are in pain.

Let me tell you that we've heard a lot today too, and a lot across this week, about the \$600 billion nuclear fantasy that they want to fund through taxpayer dollars. They're not talking about private investment here; they're talking about money from the Australian public's pockets. We've heard about the \$350 billion of cuts they're going to find—their conjecture, not mine. They've said they're going to cut \$350 billion. The latest thought bubble is the \$10 billion for bosses' lunches, paid for by the taxpayer. There is no such thing as a free lunch—everybody in the world knows that—but those opposite think that the Australian taxpayer, on top of the pain they're in, should pay for these things.

Not only are they pretty much a policy-free vacuum; they're certainly a costings-free vacuum, given how long it took them to tell us how much the nuclear fantasy was going to cost.

I came in in 2013. I remember former prime minister Tony Abbott preaching, the night before the election—no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no cuts to the SBS or ABC, no cuts to pensions. I was here while they endeavoured to cut them all. Every single measure was on the chopping block in that cruel 2014 budget. So those opposite have form and Australians are awake to them. They know they will undo funding to schools and funding to hospitals just like they've done in the past.

Mr BIRRELL (Nicholls—Deputy Nationals Whip) (16:38): There is a cost-of-living crisis. It is crippling. Those of us who move around our electorates and talk to families know that it is crippling. The government has failed to manage it. There are a number of different topics we could discuss in relation to the cost of living. I'll pick three: energy, mortgages and rents, and food. I will also say that the cost-of-living crisis is crippling and that, if Labor stay in power, it will get worse, and I will explain why.

First, energy. People were conned during the election campaign. They were told that electricity prices were going to be reduced by \$275. Now, that was a huge promise during the election campaign. Who knows but there is probably a lot of people out there who believe the Prime Minister when he said it 97 times and, therefore, cast that ballot accordingly. Where does the \$275 come from? It comes from modelling by a company called Reputex, and the government has relied on that modelling to deliver this promise. I just want to quote to you what Aidan Morrison, who is the director of the energy program at the Centre for Independent Studies, said about this. He said the \$275 by 2025 number is the 'absolute laughing stock' of the policy debate in Australia—the absolute laughing stock! Not only that but what he says makes us think it might get worse. He says its twin, its sibling—and he is referring to the integrated system plan—has no better analysis behind it than the same people and the same report has been elevated to become the cornerstone of our most important planning document in relation to energy. So that makes me worry that the energy crisis is going to get worse if this is what we are relying on, and there are certainly a lot of problems with the integrated system plan. The Prime Minister has to go out during this election campaign and explain why the \$275 hasn't happened and what the new promise is. I would be interested to see what that is.

On mortgages and rents, the government's failure to manage inflation has meant that interest rates have stayed too high for too long. That has affected people with mortgages and it has affected people who rent properties. Core inflation is still outside the target band—still. The Treasurer gets up during question time and says it is falling. It stayed so high for so long. Just calculate what that has meant for those extra mortgage repayments over that period of time. Why has inflation stayed so high for so long, and a lot higher in Australia than comparable economies? It is because of excessive government spending. If you are going to spend, it has to be productive spending. For this government, a lot of the spending is not productive, and the state governments, particularly the one in the state where I live in Victoria, have to own a bit of that, too. It is not only spending but also the complete lack of focus on productivity. Now, when you have people who are in government who don't really understand private enterprise because of very few of them have worked in it, they probably don't understand productivity, and we've seen that play out.

The third thing I want to talk about his food. Traditionally, food has been pretty cheap in Australia. Why is that? Well, we have a great climate for growing food. We have also traditionally given farmers the tools they need to grow food. It has traditionally been a country that is small business friendly, and a lot of farms are small businesses. We have given farmers the tools they need, such as irrigation water, to grow produce such as fruit, dairy, vegetables. This government is taking those tools away. That has not only led to a crisis in confidence in investment but it is also going to get worse and is going to lead to families having to pay more at the check-out, because if you make it harder to run a farming business, prices of produce go up. What happens is people have to put their prices up or they say, 'This is too hard and I'm not farming any more.' Therefore, there are fewer people producing and there is less food. If there is less food then the laws of supply and demand say the prices are going to be higher. So families are feeling the pain of Labor's attack on agriculture at the supermarket check-out, and that is one of the key examples of this government's failure to manage the cost-of-living crisis.

Ms FERNANDO (Holt) (16:43): I find it absolutely laughable that the shadow Treasurer would stand in this chamber and try to lecture us on cost of living. This is the same opposition that will talk about anything—flags, foreign wars, manufactured outrage—but won't outline a single policy that will actually help families in my community. The Liberals have had plenty of time to come up with a credible plan but what have they done instead? They have tried to distract Australians with culture wars. They have voted against cost-of-living relief at every opportunity. They have spent more time fighting among themselves than fighting for Australians doing it tough.

When Labor came into government, we inherited a mess. Wages had been deliberately kept low for a decade under the Liberals as a part of their so-called economic plan. Inflation had a six in front of it, and it was climbing, and the public service had been gutted. Thousands of essential jobs were outsourced to overpaid consultants,

draining billions from the economy. This is the economic disaster the Liberals left behind. Since being elected, we have been working day in, day out, to address the cost of living for families, and our plan is working. Inflation has fallen from 2.4 per cent and is trending down. We have created more than 1.1 million jobs, with four out of five in the private sector, and unemployment is at the lowest average for any government in 50 years. Not only have we cleaned up the economic disaster left behind by the Liberals; we have also been rebuilding our health system, strengthening our education system and delivering targeted, responsible cost-of-living relief for communities like mine in Melbourne's outer south-eastern suburbs.

Unlike the Liberals, we understand what families in Holt and across Australia are going through. That's why Labor has delivered a tax cut for every single taxpayer, wage increases for the first time in a decade, \$300 in Commonwealth energy bill relief, cheaper child care, \$3 billion wiped off student debt, pay rises for aged care and early childhood educators, fee-free TAFE and cheaper medicines. Every single one of these measures is making a real difference for families in communities like mine, and every single one of these measures has been opposed by the Leader of the Opposition. The Shadow Treasurer wants to lecture us on cost-of-living relief. He should take a long hard look in the mirror, because the only time the Liberals have shown any interest in cost-of-living relief is when it benefits their wealthy mates.

Now I may have misspoken earlier when I said that the Liberals had no cost-of-living relief policy. They have one. Let me walk you through it. Imagine that you are a CEO of a big company, it's lunchtime, and you are feeling a little bit peckish and want to order lobster, caviar or steak tartare. Under the Liberals' cost-of-living plan, you can—all on the taxpayer's dime. This is what the Liberals call helping Australians. It's not lower power bills, fairer wages or making life easier for families but just perks for big businesses while working Australians are left to fend for themselves. I'm not sure which genius in the opposition came up with this plan or at which Gina Rinehart funded luncheon it was cooked up, but, while the Liberals hand tax cuts to the wealthy and luxurious lunches to big businesses, Labor is delivering real relief for working Australians.

The contrast couldn't be clearer. Higher wages and tax cuts under Labor, or lower wages and budget cuts under the Liberals. Labor is delivering for everyday Australians. The Liberals are only delivering for their mates in big businesses. We know that Australians are doing it tough, and that's why our government will keep working hard here in Canberra for communities like mine.

Mr KENNEDY (Cook) (16:48): After listening to the government speakers, it's clear that this is a government that has stopped listening. It oscillates, whipsawing, between telling us how good Australians have it, how good unemployment is—if you listen to the Chief Government Whip over there—how good wages are, how good it is that inflation is coming down. Then it whipsaws to say, 'Oh no, we're listening on cost of living.' The truth is that after two years of not listening on cost of living, after two years of divisive social policies, after two years of pushing everything else, they are now burning the furniture in a late attempt to try and say that they are listening on the cost of living. They are saying, 'We'll throw out energy subsidies; we'll subsidise everything,' unless it's a sustainable way to bring down energy costs like we are proposing with nuclear energy.

This government has failed Middle Australia. The school year is starting, and I recently heard a story in my electorate from a mother who was cutting expenses around the house and struggling with bills and even cutting their grocery bills. But the one thing she was hoping not to cut was the amount of food she put in her child's lunchbox, and she wasn't. These are the real faces of bad decisions made by a bad government on cost of living.

Across the board, people are hurting and families are reeling from prices going up. The average Aussie has had their mortgage go up by \$50,000. These government decisions have seen prices increase across the board. At the check-out aisles you are paying up to 12 per cent more. If you own your own house, you're paying 14 per cent more. If you are renting, guess what? It's worse. You're paying 17 per cent more. Electricity is up 32 per cent after the government subsidy. Gas is up 34 per cent. In Cook, my local electorate, unfortunately things are not looking good for my constituents, with 54.4 per cent of households saying they are financially stressed. If there is financial stress in Cook, there are parts of the rest of Australia that are doing it even tougher, with 31.5 per cent of households experiencing mortgage stress and 83.4 per cent of those renting experiencing rental stress.

The employee living cost index gives us an idea of what's happening to Middle Australia, those who are being employed by others. It's up 19.4 per cent since Labor came to power. If you are a hardworking family out there, that is what you are paying more. That is almost 50 per cent more than what CPI has gone up. So CPI is not the right measure. If you're an employee out there slogging it out, you have had double the increase of what CPI tells you and that is how you know you are poorer. That's why Australian families feel so much poorer. That's why for the last 21 months Australia has been in a per capita recession. What does that technical economic jargon mean? It means, for two years, you and your family have been getting poorer. It means, for two years, the average disposable income you have has gone down. This is the first time in Australia's living history that that has ever happened over that period of time. That's under this Labor government's watch.

What have the Labor Party in government done to cause this? They've spent an additional \$347 billion—\$30,000 per household—since the election. I can tell you that the households of Cook do not feel \$30,000 better off. They would have much preferred that \$30,000 to go into their pockets, to have cost-of-living relief through lower taxes and less government spending. Over the past two years, these policies have seen Australia have the biggest fall in living standards in the developed world. Australia has gone from the top of the pack to the bottom of the pack. The Reserve Bank governor, Michele Bullock, has been under increasing pressure from this government and says the Treasurer is 'fully aware of the inflationary implications of his own policies'. The International Monetary Fund is projecting that in 2025 Australia will have the second-highest inflation in the developed world, the largest fall in disposable income in the developed world and the second-highest inflation, just after the Slovak Republic.

After 12 interest rates under Labor, we now have the highest interest rate since 2011. Respected economics firm Deloitte released figures showing Australia's standard of living will not recover until 2030. The damage wreaked by those on the other side has taken three years. It's going to take us six years just to get back on track. Australia has had enough.

Ms BYRNES (Cunningham) (16:54): Here we go again—another MPI and another lie by those opposite. Whilst concern about cost-of-living relief has underpinned every step our government has taken, the 'no-alition' has run in the opposite direction at a rate of knots. They have opposed every single cost-of-living measure on this floor, and that's an absolute shame for the Australian people. When we came into government, we saw portfolio after portfolio decimated under a decade of neglect by those opposite. It was an absolute bin fire. But we rolled up our sleeves and we started cleaning up their mess. Australian families were faced with the rising cost of living, stagnant wages and increasing prices for essentials like housing, child care and energy, and they weren't doing anything to address it for 10 long years. Under the Leader of the Opposition—who, don't forget, holds the title of the worst health minister in 40 years as voted by Australian doctors—we saw bulk-billing rates absolutely plummet. With our government's record investments into Medicare, we have seen an additional six million bulk-billed visits between November 2023 and December 2024.

In Cunningham, we have seen a 4.5 per cent increase to the bulk billing rate for the same period, equating to 63,356 bulk-billed appointments. The Albanese Labor government has also made medicines cheaper, saving Cunningham residents over \$8 million by cutting the cost of medicines, lowering the safety net threshold and legislating 60-day prescriptions. On Sunday, the Minister for Health and Aged Care announced that we are investing a further \$573.3 million to deliver more choice, lower costs and better health care for women. This includes things like better access to long-term contraceptives, larger Medicare payments and more bulk-billing for IUDs and birth control implants, saving around 300,000 women a year up to \$400 in out-of-pocket costs.

The good news in health just keeps on coming. Last week, the Prime Minister and health minister announced an additional \$1.7 billion to fund public hospitals and health services next year. This is an extra \$407 million for New South Wales to help cut waiting lists, reducing wait times in emergency rooms and managing ramping. We're also funding and opening 87 Medicare urgent care clinics, including in Corrimal and Dapto in the Illawarra, so Australians can walk in and get urgent, bulk-billed care seven days a week without their credit card. This is in stark contrast to the opposition leader, who cut more than \$50 billion from public hospitals. That's not all. He's already slated massive cuts to our Public Service and institutions, people that are there to help the public get the services that they need. But he will not tell us exactly where he's going to cut those jobs until after the election. If he were a hairdresser, he'd work at Just Cuts.

On this side of the House, we are focused on helping Australians with the cost of living, providing much-needed relief, and there is a lot more to do. History shows that when Labor is in government, we invest in people and we build for the future. We have built things like the NDIS, the NBN, superannuation, paid parental leave, Medicare and the list goes on. Under Prime Minister Albanese, we are continuing this tradition of investing in the future for all Australians. From 1 July 2024, every Australian received a tax cut to put more money back in their pockets, and for the third year in a row, wages are rising, with over 2.6 million Australians receiving a pay increase. We are providing \$300 in energy bill relief for every household and \$325 for eligible small businesses.

To support students and our future workforce, we have made significant reforms to the HECS system and, if re-elected, we will include a 20 per cent reduction in student debt. This is massive—raising the repayment threshold from \$54,000 up to \$67,000, and lowering repayment rates. We've introduced a Commonwealth Prac Payment to support students undertaking mandatory prac placements in essential fields, such as teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work, because we know that students have been doing it tough for too long. We've also committed to making fee-free TAFE permanent, creating 100,000 fee-free TAFE places every year if re-elected. In Cunningham alone, we have seen over 5,000 Illawarra students enrolling in fee-free TAFE courses.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Chesters): The discussion has concluded.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, having earlier been referred to the Federation Chamber by way of a programming declaration, being returned to the House immediately, and all debate occurring in this Chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Chesters) (16:59): In accordance with standing order 113, I shall now proceed to put the question on the motion moved earlier today for the suspension of standing and sessional orders moved by the honourable member for Fairfax on which a division was called for and deferred in accordance with standing orders. No further debate is allowed.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided. [17:03]

(The Speaker—Hon. Milton Dick)

Ayes.....57
Noes.....81
Majority.....24

AYES

Andrews, K. L.	Archer, B. K.	Bell, A. M.
Birrell, S. J.	Boyce, C. E.	Broadbent, R. E.
Buchholz, S.	Caldwell, C. M.	Chester, D. J.
Coleman, D. B.	Conaghan, P. J.	Coulton, M. M. (Teller)
Dutton, P. C.	Entsch, W. G.	Fletcher, P. W.
Gillespie, D. A.	Goodenough, I. R.	Hamilton, G. R.
Hastie, A. W.	Hawke, A. G.	Hogan, K. J.
Howarth, L. R.	Joyce, B. T. G.	Kennedy, S. P.
Landry, M. L.	Le, D.	Ley, S. P.
Littleproud, D.	Marino, N. B.	McCormack, M. F.
McIntosh, M. I.	McKenzie, Z. A.	O'Brien, E. L.
Pasin, A.	Pearce, G. B.	Pike, H. J.
Price, M. L.	Ramsey, R. E. (Teller)	Ryan, M. M.
Spender, A. M.	Steggall, Z.	Stevens, J.
Sukkar, M. S.	Taylor, A. J.	Tehan, D. T.
Tink, K. J.	van Manen, A. J.	Vasta, R. X.
Violi, A. A.	Wallace, A. B.	Ware, J. L.
Webster, A. E.	Willcox, A. J.	Wilson, R. J.
Wolahan, K.	Wood, J. P.	Young, T. J.

NOES

Albanese, A. N.	Aly, A.	Ananda-Rajah, M.
Bandt, A. P.	Bates, S. J.	Belyea, J. A.
Bowen, C. E.	Burke, A. S.	Burnell, M. P.
Burney, L. J.	Burns, J.	Butler, M. C.
Byrnes, A. J.	Chalmers, J. E.	Chandler-Mather, M.
Charlton, A. H. G.	Chesters, L. M.	Clare, J. D.
Claydon, S. C.	Coker, E. A.	Collins, J. M.
Conroy, P. M.	Doyle, M. J. J.	Dreyfus, M. A.
Elliot, M. J.	Fernando, C.	Freeland, M. R.
Garland, C. M. L.	Georganas, S.	Giles, A. J.
Gorman, P.	Gosling, L. J.	Haines, H. M.
Hill, J. C.	Husic, E. N.	Jones, S. P.
Kearney, G. M.	Keogh, M. J.	Khalil, P.
King, C. F.	King, M. M. H.	Lawrence, T. N.
Laxale, J. A. A.	Leigh, A. K.	Lim, S. B. C.
Marles, R. D.	Mascarenhas, Z. F. A.	McBain, K. L.

McBride, E. M.
 Mitchell, R. G.
 O'Connor, B. P. J.
 Perrett, G. D.
 Rae, S. T.
 Rishworth, A. L.
 Scrymgour, M. R.
 Stanley, A. M. (Teller)
 Thistlethwaite, M. J.
 Watson-Brown, E.
 Wilkie, A. D.

Miller-Frost, L. J.
 Mulino, D.
 O'Neil, C. E.
 Phillips, F. E.
 Reid, G. J.
 Roberts, T. G.
 Sitou, S.
 Swanson, M. J.
 Thwaites, K. L.
 Watts, T. G.
 Wilson, J. H.

Mitchell, B. K.
 Neumann, S. K.
 Payne, A. E.
 Plibersek, T. J.
 Repacholi, D. P.
 Rowland, M. A.
 Smith, D. P. B. (Teller)
 Templeman, S. R.
 Vamvakinou, M.
 Wells, A. S.
 Zappia, A.

Question negatived.

BILLS

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025
Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER (17:07): In accordance with standing order 133, I shall now proceed to put the question on the motion moved on the second reading of the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes) Bill 2025, on which a division was called for and deferred in accordance with the standing order. No further debate is allowed. The question is that this bill be read a second time.

The House divided. [17:11]

(The Speaker—Hon. Milton Dick)

Ayes.....81
 Noes.....5
 Majority.....76

AYES

Albanese, A. N.
 Belyea, J. A.
 Burnell, M. P.
 Byrnes, A. J.
 Chesters, L. M.
 Coker, E. A.
 Doyle, M. J. J.
 Fernando, C.
 Gee, A. R.
 Gorman, P.
 Hill, J. C.
 Keogh, M. J.
 King, M. M. H.
 Le, D.
 Marles, R. D.
 McBride, E. M.
 Mitchell, R. G.
 O'Connor, B. P. J.
 Perrett, G. D.
 Rae, S. T.
 Rishworth, A. L.
 Ryan, J. C.
 Sitou, S.
 Stanley, A. M. (Teller)
 Templeman, S. R.
 Vamvakinou, M.

Aly, A.
 Bowen, C. E.
 Burney, L. J.
 Chaney, K. E.
 Clare, J. D.
 Collins, J. M.
 Dreyfus, M. A.
 Freelandar, M. R.
 Georganas, S.
 Gosling, L. J.
 Husic, E. N.
 Khalil, P.
 Lawrence, T. N.
 Leigh, A. K.
 Mascarenhas, Z. F. A.
 Miller-Frost, L. J.
 Mulino, D.
 O'Neil, C. E.
 Phillips, F. E.
 Reid, G. J.
 Roberts, T. G.
 Ryan, M. M.
 Smith, D. P. B. (Teller)
 Steggall, Z.
 Thistlethwaite, M. J.
 Vasta, R. X.

Ananda-Rajah, M.
 Burke, A. S.
 Burns, J.
 Charlton, A. H. G.
 Claydon, S. C.
 Daniel, Z.
 Elliot, M. J.
 Garland, C. M. L.
 Giles, A. J.
 Haines, H. M.
 Kearney, G. M.
 King, C. F.
 Laxale, J. A. A.
 Lim, S. B. C.
 McBain, K. L.
 Mitchell, B. K.
 Neumann, S. K.
 Payne, A. E.
 Plibersek, T. J.
 Repacholi, D. P.
 Rowland, M. A.
 Scrymgour, M. R.
 Spender, A. M.
 Swanson, M. J.
 Thwaites, K. L.
 Watts, T. G.

Wells, A. S.

Wilson, J. H.

Zappia, A.

NOES

Bandt, A. P.

Bates, S. J. (Teller)

Chandler-Mather, M. (Teller)

Watson-Brown, E.

Wilkie, A. D.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading**Ms RISHWORTH** (Kingston—Minister for Social Services) (17:14): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Future Made in Australia (Production Tax Credits and Other Measures) Bill 2024**Consideration of Senate Message**

Consideration resumed.

Senate's amendments—

(1) Schedule 2, item 1, page 37 (line 32), before "Each of", insert "(1)".

(2) Schedule 2, item 1, page 39 (after line 19), at the end of section 419-15, add:

(2) The regulations must not prescribe uranium for the purposes of paragraph (1)(zf).

Dr LEIGH (Fenner—Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury and Assistant Minister for Employment) (17:15): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS**Rearrangement****Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for the Arts, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Leader of the House) (17:16): I move:

That business intervening before notice No. 1, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

Days and Hours of Meeting**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for the Arts, Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Leader of the House) (17:17): I move:

That for Tuesday, 11 February 2025:

(1) standing order 33 (limit on business after normal time of adjournment) be suspended;

(2) so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the following from occurring in relation to business:

(a) in the House, notwithstanding standing order 31, at 8 pm the adjournment debate being interrupted and government business having priority until:

(i) business concludes, if earlier than 10 pm;

(ii) 10 pm; or

(iii) a later time specified by a Minister;

at which point, the debate being adjourned and the House immediately adjourning until Wednesday, 12 February at 9 am; and

(b) in the Federation Chamber, when the grievance debate is adjourned, the Federation Chamber continuing to meet, with government business being given priority until the Federation Chamber adjourns; and

(3) any variation to this arrangement being made only on a motion moved by a Minister.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Employment, Education and Training Committee

Report

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (17:18): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, I present the committee's report entitled *The future of work: inquiry into the digital transformation of workplaces*, together with the minutes of the proceedings.

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

Ms CHESTERS: by leave—On behalf of the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, I am pleased to present our unanimous report, *The future of work*, following the committee's inquiry into the digital transformation of workplaces.

The digital transformation reaches all corners of the workplace across all sectors. It affects staff, employers, consumers and the wider community. Artificial intelligence, AI, and automated decision-making, ADM, are contributing to this digital transformation and the evolving future of work. From all forms of AI powered self-serve checkouts to app-driven roster allocations and digitally enabled 24/7 workplace surveillance, Australian workplaces are increasingly using these technologies in a variety of functions. Worldwide, government and industries are exploring how to effectively manage emerging technologies whilst enabling growth in innovation.

To help future proof Australia and its place in an increasingly competitive and digitalised world, it is essential to have the right frameworks and support in place. This includes for employers, especially small to medium sized enterprises; workers; students; and regulators. It is the committee's view that emerging technologies with specific reference to AI or ADM be embraced by workplaces but in a safe, responsible and ethical way. To support this, Australia urgently requires proper safeguards to guide the development and implementation of these technologies. Robust regulation capturing all Australian workplaces and all workers is essential. Increasing investment in research and development into AI and ADM use in the workplace is also needed.

The committee found significant gaps in existing Australian regulatory frameworks regarding AI and ADM in workplaces. Worker protections are lacking, especially in regards to data and privacy. Tackling these issues is paramount to create safe and fair workplaces. Government and industry employers and workers have a role to play in promoting safe, responsible and ethical use of AI and ADM in workplaces. In this report, the committee has made 21 recommendations that focus on maximising the benefits of these technologies in the workplace, clarifying the obligations of technology developers and employers, enhancing privacy and data protection for workers, improving public trust in these technologies and strengthening Australia's workforce and capacities. The committee's report also identified that there are many immense benefits from AI and ADM systems—for example, enhancing productivity and efficiency, improving workplace health and safety, and strengthening compliance.

However, the committee is mindful that a poorly developed and improper use of these technologies can exacerbate workplace issues. For instance, these systems can be inappropriately used for invasion of privacy and workplace discrimination. The government must take a leading role and a proactive role in identifying and managing risks like these. Protection of data and privacy remains a primary concern of the government. The committee shares the public's growing concern around the use of data and privacy in relation to AI and ADM in the workplace. For example, the surge in technology enabling worker data collection by employers is a concern, as well as excessive workplace surveillance that is causing widespread harm to families, business and customers, and the lack of transparency and accountability in procedural fairness in employer decision-making.

The update to the Commonwealth Privacy Act and Fair Work Act could be an important step forward to help address these concerns, such as banning high-risk use of worker data like disclosure or sale of such information to third parties, requiring meaningful consultation and transparency with workers on the use of surveillance measures and data use by AI systems in the workplace and enabling within the Fair Work Commission a focus on dispute resolution for complaints about non-compliance with privacy obligations. These are just some of the many ideas in the recommendations that the committee has put forward. Supporting measures will be needed such as raising awareness of employers' obligations, as well as reviewing the resourcing requirements of the Fair Work Commission and Fair Work Ombudsman to address these concerns.

The committee supports the Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources's proposed mandatory guardrails to require developers and deployers of high-risk AI to take specific steps across the AI life cycle. The committee recommends that all AI systems used for employment related purposes in workplaces be classified as high risk and should attract these mandatory guardrails.

AI and ADM, as well as workplaces themselves, are constantly evolving. So it is a challenge that our workplaces must step up to meet. The committee notes that this may warrant a review of its report's recommendations to ensure that advancements are captured in any future reforms.

Finally, I'd like to take the opportunity to comment on the current reforms that are being led by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and the Attorney-General's Department. We did hear from these departments during our inquiry and we note the achievements that they've made thus far and fully support the work that they are doing.

The findings and recommendations contained in this report were informed by over 60 submissions and 11 public hearings. I would like to thank my committee colleagues for their hard work in this inquiry. I'd also like to extend my gratitude to all the individuals and organisations involved in providing submissions and for their appearance at the hearings, particularly the workers who spoke about their experience. Finally, I'd like to thank all the workers that we heard from who are at the front line of this digital transformation who shared their experiences.

This is the last EET committee report that will be tabled in this parliament, so I'd like to take a moment to thank the deputy chair of the committee, the member for Longman, as well as all the committee members, for their involvement and the good spirit in which they engaged with the three inquiries we held. I'd also like to take a moment to thank the secretariat of our committee for their hard work through this term. We would be lost as a committee without the organisation, coordination and way in which our secretariat worked with us. I commend the report to the House, and I move:

That the House take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (17:27): I move:

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

Question agreed to. The post-implementation report process is not part of the committee's legislative framework. Up to 75 post-implementation reports are outstanding, and, generally, reports are provided a year late. One in four reports have been provided more than two years post-practical completion, obviously limiting the committee's scrutiny. There is also no framework for using or publicly reporting the information in post-implementation reports. This process could be improved as part of the legislative reform that the committee has proposed to the government.

In looking back of the work of the committee in 2024, I would like to thank the members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for their participation in, and contributions to, the 47th Parliament. I'd particularly like to thank the outgoing deputy chair, the former member for Hinkler, Keith Pitt, and I record my appreciation for his practical and collaborative approach to the work of the committee. I will miss him. I also welcome the new deputy chair, the member for Dawson, and I look forward to working with Andrew.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the retirement of the public works committee secretary, Lynley Ducker, and I thank her for her work for this parliament and for the people of Australia; safe travels, Lynley, you've been a joy to work with. I commend the report to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Order. I thank the member for Moreton. It has been a pleasure to serve with him in this parliament.

Corporations and Financial Services Joint Committee

Report

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (17:31): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, I present two corrigenda to the committee's report, *Financial abuse: An insidious form of domestic violence*.

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025

Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms WARE (Hughes) (17:32): That's why we say that Labor simply cannot manage the economy. That's why we've seen inflation far too high for far too long. Labor cannot manage the budget. That's why we've seen \$347 billion in additional spending that has fuelled inflation. The evidence of the Albanese Labor government's failures has been mounting since first elected in May 2022. We have to remember that is only two years and nine months—that's all it's taken for our economy to almost completely collapse.

They've had \$347 billion in expenditure, but what do they actually have to show for this? What they have to show for it is higher prices, higher interest rates, more small businesses collapsing, and lower living standards. Since Labor was elected, prices overall are up more than 10 per cent. This includes double-digit increases across the board for many of our essentials. Health is up by 10 per cent. Education overall is up by 11 per cent. Food is up by 12 per cent. Housing is up by at least 14 per cent. Rents are up 17 per cent. Insurance and finance are up 18 per cent. Electricity is up 32 per cent—that's without the rebates. Gas is up by 34 per cent.

Under Labor's economic mismanagement, we're witnessing the longest sustained period of inflation since the 1980s. We've seen, for example, interest rates that have been hiked 12 times. In relation to energy bills, we were promised in the last election campaign—how many times?—97 times that the now Prime Minister would cut your power bills by \$275. Since then, instead, we've seen energy bills rise by an average of \$1,000 per household. In my home state of New South Wales, we are now in the ridiculous situation where during summer in Sydney, we've been asked by the New South Wales government not to use our washing machines during the day, and, also, to please try not to use our air conditioning during the day. Almost every day is over 30 degrees in Sydney during summer. That is the position that we have gotten to because of the decisions that have been made, particularly by Minister Bowen. I notice Minister Bowen is fairly quiet these days. I don't expect that he'll be front and centre in this election campaign.

We've seen living standards collapse by 8.7 per cent under this government. That's the biggest collapse on record, and it's bigger than any of our peer economies. We've even seen, for example, respected economics firm Deloitte release figures showing that Australians' standard of living will not recover now until at least 2030. In other words, it's forecast that it will take six years for Australians to make up the ground lost under Labor in two years and nine months.

The number of small businesses that have gone to the wall has been a complete tragedy—27,000 in two years and nine months. I know that, in my electorate of Hughes, we have many, many small businesses. Close to 10 per cent of my entire electorate work in the building and construction industry, for example. These are often family businesses, and so many of these have collapsed, and that's a real shame, because this government does not care about small business, but they are very happy to spend a lot of time with big business, particularly this Prime Minister.

So we've now reached the position where we are in a sustained household recession with negligible productive growth. And what is Labor's response to this? Denial, indifference—the Prime Minister tells Australians, 'Trust me, you'll be better off under Labor.' That message is certainly not cutting through in my electorate. I know, when I'm out doorknocking, when I've been at mobile offices, they are not saying that they are going to trust Labor on this. What I've found, to the contrary, for example—this is heartbreaking. Before Christmas I was doorknocking around Bardia. It's one of the new parts of my electorate; it's down in south-west Sydney. Down in Bardia, they are homeowners with mortgages. The median house price is around \$1.2 million. They are small-business people. They are private sector workers. When I was doorknocking, I had three women—when I said to them, 'How are things going for you at the moment?'—burst into tears and say: 'I don't know how I'm going to pay for Christmas. I've just had to pay my energy bill,' or 'I can't pay my mortgage this month.' That's dreadful. That's middle Australia. These are absolutely the people that this government should be governing for and should be assisting, but they're not.

I know that presidents of some of my local sporting associations and sports clubs have said to me that, for the first time in the 10 or 20 years that they have been involved with local sport, parents are coming up to them quietly and saying, 'Could I pay the registration fees off over a couple of months?' This is happening in the Sutherland Shire, it's happening throughout the Liverpool area, and it's happening down in south-west Sydney. That is what this Labor government has done to middle Australia; that's what it's done to Australian families.

They're on their knees now. But, I tell you what, they are getting very, very angry, the ones that I'm speaking to, and they are not trusting that this Prime Minister is able. Based on what's happened over two years and nine months, they have absolutely no confidence whatsoever that he is still fit to be Prime Minister and that he is fit to be the Prime Minister in our next parliament. There are many in my electorate that are saying: 'When is this federal election going to be called? We need this to be called urgently,' because they have said, 'We cannot afford, any longer, any more of this Labor government.'

We've got a situation with mortgage holders, for example. About one-third of Australians at any time are mortgage holders. The average mortgage holder in Australia has paid an additional \$50,000 in repayments just to keep a roof over their head. You've got to earn close to \$100,000 to have that \$50,000 to pay off your mortgage because those mortgage repayments of \$50,000 are, of course, net income. When I speak to small businesses, I say to them, 'The reason that you are finding it so tough at the moment is that, when mortgage holders have had to pay \$50,000 in additional interest repayments, that's \$50,000 they haven't had to spend in local businesses.' So as flow-on effects of this we've first of all had inflation, which has led to higher interest rates, which has then led to people having far less disposable income. That then has that immediate impact as well on our small businesses.

I've seen this in suburbs such as Sutherland in my electorate, where we have had record small retailers close. I've lived in the Sutherland Shire all of my life and, for the first time, I am seeing vacant shopfronts in Sutherland and vacant shopfronts in suburbs like Engadine. This has just not happened before. It has happened under this Prime Minister's watch. It has happened under Labor. It has happened under the Labor government. My parents are in their 80s and they said that, for their generation, if you didn't vote Liberal before Whitlam, you certainly voted Liberal after Whitlam or to get rid of Whitlam. They have said to me for a number of years that this government is Whitlam-esque in its spending. When we've had \$347 billion of additional spending, that is Whitlam-esque. As a matter of fact, I think that the spending of this government far surpasses that of Whitlam, with not the policy delivery to justify that level of expenditure.

We hear things like free TAFE. What is the purpose of just throwing money at a centralised, unionised sector and then saying, 'We've solved the problem of apprentices'? They haven't. They have thrown money at TAFE only. They haven't looked at investing in the private vocational education and training sector. Instead, they've thrown it at TAFE, where there is only a 50 per cent success rate for apprentices to get through. It's only 50 per cent for plumbers and only 50 per cent for carpenters who go down the TAFE path as opposed to 80 per cent of plumbers who go through the Master Plumbers Association or 90 per cent for those who go through the National Electrical and Communications Association.

We've got small businesses closing their doors and apprentices dropping out of their trades. This is the reality of Labor's cost-of-living crisis. Yet, despite all of this pain and suffering, the Prime Minister is just in denial. He offers no comfort, no solutions and no plan, except to be grossly insulting to Australians by saying things like, 'Australians have never had it better.' Never had it better? The Australians that I speak to have never had it worse. I tell you what, if the Prime Minister came to the electorate of Hughes and came down to south-west Sydney, he would well and truly hear from Australians who say, 'We have never had it worse.' That just shows a Prime Minister desperately out of touch with the people that he professes to lead.

I just want to speak very briefly as well about the blowout in costs of the NDIS. I've heard personally from constituents some dreadful stories about how they have had NDIS funding cut unexpectedly, have had their files closed. I'm talking about little Isaac, whose mum I met on the weekend. He is 10 years of age. I've gone directly to Minister Rishworth about this issue, because his funding has been completely cut, and this is occurring over and over again at a time when we are spending more and more and more on the NDIS. I fully support that we should be supporting people with disabilities so they can live their best life. But, again, this government cannot manage departments, cannot manage policy and cannot manage the country.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Opposition Whip) (17:45): It's always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak on an appropriation bill. These bills necessarily provide appropriations for the continued delivery of government services and to fund the decisions in the 2024-25 budget. In total, these bills appropriate some \$12 billion for the remainder of the financial year, the majority of which, some \$7 billion, is directed to ordinary annual services of government. Now, of course the coalition supports these bills to ensure the smooth operation of government and the uninterrupted provision of services that Australians rely on.

However, while we support the bills as a matter of necessity, we must also use this opportunity to highlight the grave economic mismanagement that has led us to this point, that sees Australians right across the country, not just in households but in small businesses, under increasing pressures, both through cost of living and cost of doing business. There is nothing this government can do to hide their economic mismanagement. They appear to have tried every trick in the book with little, if any, success because they simply don't understand how a market economy works, because none of them over there have worked in the private sector, or very few. It is why we have seen inflation far too high for far too long under their management.

Now, much of their increased spending is through the increase of ordinary government services; I accept that. But there are many parts of their additional spending which could have been much more carefully thought through given the inflationary impacts of the spending and the consequent impact on Australian households. In real terms, we have seen Australian households go back by the best part of nine per cent, an extraordinary number that Australians alive today, most of whom would never have seen their standard of living fall by over nine per cent in

three years, let alone a longer period of time. The evidence continues to mount, as we see this government's failure to deal with these fundamental issues of higher prices, higher interest rates, more small business collapses, and lower living standards.

So let's go through a little bit of the track record of those opposite for the benefit of the House. I'm sure my learned colleagues here contributing to this debate will repeat these statistics for the benefit of all concerned: health up over 10 per cent; education costs up 11 per cent; food costs up 12 per cent; housing costs up 14 per cent; rents up 17 per cent; insurance and financial services, 18 per cent; electricity, 32 per cent; and gas up 34 per cent. That's a pretty damning report card on the government's progress over the past nearly three years. As I said, they can dress this up any way they want, but those figures tell a story. I can say that, despite the government's rhetoric about lowering the cost of living and making things easier, when I talk to people in my mobile offices or when I'm out about in community, they're not seeing grocery prices in their shopping baskets going down. They're only going up.

One of the key drivers of cost of living is energy, because energy is in every single thing that we do. You need energy to make the petrol pumps work to put petrol in your car or to put diesel in your truck or ute. You need energy to run the cold rooms in your supermarkets, big warehouses, pub or cafe. Last week, we saw with the businesses that run the big warehouses to distribute food to our supermarkets that some of the cost increases for their electricity bills were up by 200 per cent or more. I know businesses in my electorate whose gas bills haven't gone up by 34 per cent but by 50, 60 or 100 per cent, and they're now talking about closing their businesses. These are businesses that are at the leading edge of innovation in their particular industry in this country.

The government's not interested in them. It's not interested in their struggles. They are interested in all the fancy stuff like Quantum AI. They are happy to hand over a billion dollars with no questions asked to a quantum AI company, yet a company that manufacturers leading-edge textiles in my electorate and, by the way, supplies our Defence Force is at risk of going out of business because the cost of gas has gone up by nearly 100 per cent for them. These are the everyday stories that those opposite have no idea about and no desire to deal with.

It's not going to get better; it's only going to get worse, because the impact of all of these increases accumulates over time. As the previous speaker, the member for Hughes, quite rightly outlined, Australian households are now spending or have spent an extra \$50,000 on interest costs on their mortgage because of 12 interest rate rises. That's \$50,000 they are no longer spending in the retail shop at the local shopping centre or at a local cafe or club, or maybe they've pulled their kids out of sport because they can't afford to pay the registration fees. Thankfully, the Crisafulli government in Queensland has brought forward the release of the Get in the Game grants to enable families to afford the registration for their kids. I thank them for that. All of these things have an impact on social cohesion and family harmony because of those financial pressures.

So far we've seen some 27,000 businesses go insolvent under this government's lack of leadership. I'll say, with no degree of hesitation, that that number will only continue to grow. What are they doing for small business? We've had a bill go through the House which removes the interest deductibility for a tax debt. We're seeing before this House a proposal to increase the cost of vehicles through making the emissions standards much tougher. We're seeing for maybe some larger businesses and others—I know some business people who were clients of mine in my former life who had business assets in self-managed super funds, and we know many in the agricultural sector have many of their assets in superannuation funds and, rest assured, those funds will be worth way more than \$3 million—that this government wants to introduce an unrealised capital gains tax. It would be the first time anywhere in the world that a government introduces an unrealised capital gains tax. What's going to happen to those businesses? If they don't have the cash in their super fund, will they have to sell the asset that they are operating their business from? Does this government actually care about that? Quite evidently, it doesn't. How many people are potentially going to lose their job as a result of that? I can rest assured that the government did no regulatory impact statement whatsoever to assess that risk—zero. So, despite everything this government says, it is doing the opposite of what it says it will do. I've said many times in this place and outside of here: you don't listen to what a Labor government says it's doing; you look at what it does because nine times out of 10 they are two completely and utterly different things. That's exactly what we're seeing from those opposite.

We are in a sustained household recession. We are seeing negligible productivity growth, and that proposition is only made worse by the introduction of broad-ranging increased IR laws that the government has introduced at the behest of the unions. We're seeing more red tape and more regulation in the IR sector that makes it even less attractive for businesses to employ people.

The Prime Minister tries to run the line that we should trust him. As I said before, on the evidence of his track record there's absolutely no reason to trust what he says. And if we have a look at the employee living cost index, which is an index measuring the true cost of living for hardworking Australian families, that cost-of-living index has risen by 19.4 per cent since Labor took government. That's almost 50 per cent higher than the CPI over the same period.

The reason the government can say they've run two budget surpluses is by no dint of credit to their budget management; it's courtesy of the very industries and businesses they're attacking and seek to want to remove from our economy. We've seen a 66 per cent increase in the number of people seeking assistance for their energy bills. We know that people are struggling to keep the lights on. As I said earlier, small businesses are closing their doors at an alarming rate, and yet we have a proposal from the coalition government to assist small business by giving them the incentive to take their staff out for lunch or dinner—this will support our local cafes and clubs and pubs, and every business I've spoken to thinks it's a terrific policy—as a reward for their hard work and effort and yet those opposite are demonising it. Yet at the big end of town—those opposite are quite happy to put their knees under boardroom tables and get donations from the big end of town—can claim that as a tax deduction. It's the height of hypocrisy from those opposite to say they support small business and workers. They don't by their very words and by their very actions.

We saw a revelation late last week of another \$11.1 billion blackhole in Labor's budget. What else are we going to find as we keep going through the books, because, rest assured, that \$11 billion is just the start.

There is an alternative at this election that's coming up. It is a coalition government. We are focused on strengthening our economy and getting our country back on track. We'll look to lower inflation. We'll look to rein in wasteful spending that fuels that inflation by reducing taxes, reducing red tape and reducing out-of-control union bosses getting stuck into small business. We'll make energy cheaper by ensuring a balanced mix, including more renewables, more gas and replacing retiring coal plants with zero emissions nuclear energy. We'll make homes affordable by funding critical infrastructure required for housing, helping first home buyers, restricting foreign investors and restoring a sensible migration intake. We're looking at supporting safer communities and getting tough on violent crime by non-citizens, boosting our defence and border protection and improving online safety for children. There will be quality healthcare, funded by more GPs, increased bulk-billing rates and more Medicare subsidised services.

On that particular note of subsidised Medicare services, I note with interest that the minister for health over the last few days has been waxing lyrical about their success in bulk-billing. I might remind the House that in 2019—before COVID, so it is on a level playing field—bulk-billing rates in my electorate were 96 per cent. What are they today? They are 84 per cent. That is a 12 per cent drop in bulk-billing rates. The minister for health, along with all of his other frontbench colleagues and those on the backbench, are so busy spruiking the successes of this government. Once again, look at what they actually do and what they achieve, not what they say, because they're not a true representation of what's happening. Only a coalition government will get Australia back on track.

Mr VIOLI (Casey) (18:00): I want to commend the member for Forde for that contribution. Like him, my community has gone through the same situation with bulk-billing. It was 84 per cent in 2019. In 2023, it was 73 per cent, under the Albanese Labor government. I'll talk more about that, but it's a great example of the spin of those opposite, when the facts and the data don't actually match. It's a little bit awkward for those opposite. They don't like to talk about it, but the numbers are there, and it's the reality. These appropriation bills, Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025, are important, because they bring together government spending, and we always need to make sure that that is appropriate and well targeted.

We've had some wins in my community, which is great, and we celebrate those when we can. The Don Road Recreation Reserve is one of the busiest reserves in the Yarra Ranges, within my community. It's used by over 10,000 locals. I've been working alongside Healesville locals and the Healesville Football Club to advocate for an upgrade to the pavilion. Recently, I had the shadow minister for sport, Anne Ruston, visit, catch up with the committee, tour the facilities and have a look at what needed to be upgraded, as we've seen a great growth in female and women's sport, but we need the facilities to match that.

It's clear that the Don Road Recreation Reserve is long overdue for an upgrade, as Healesville's population grows, and women's participation grows as well. I'm proud that over \$5.7 million in funding was secured through the Yarra Ranges Council as part of the Thriving Suburbs Program to build a new multipurpose pavilion and associated amenities. I know the football club at a senior level and also the junior football club are now working together with the soccer club to make sure that the whole pavilion, the whole facility, and that reserve can be fit-for-purpose for all those clubs. The upgrade will allow current and future generations to continue enjoying the benefits of sport.

There are many other clubs in my community, like the Lilydale Football Club, Lilydale Cricket Club, Mooroolbark Football Club, Mooroolbark Cricket Club, Belgrave Football Club, Belgrave Cricket Club, Yarra Glen, Coldstream and the Wesburn Junior Football Club, where I was on Sunday for their family day. I'm talking to all these clubs about the need for new facilities. The need is large in our community. Having this funding for Healesville means there is another club that we can deliver for, so that we can continue to work through the needs

in the community, because sport is really part of the core fabric of our community. It's what binds many people together and gives them that sense of purpose in how they communicate and how they spend time with each other.

As a great example of that, I was lucky enough to visit an event on Friday night to catch up with a good friend of mine Allan Pearce and his wife, Paula, to celebrate their commitment of over 20 years to the Healesville Cricket Club, as they move to Gippsland for their next adventure. We shared stories, and the part of that evening that was so special was, unfortunately, reminiscing about it being 16 years on from Black Saturday and the impact of it on our community. There were many past players there who I'd played with and hadn't seen for a long time. We came together, and it was like we were back at the club. That's what sport does. It builds a connection that is stronger than anything, and we need to celebrate and make sure that those clubs have the facilities they deserve.

Lillydale Lake was also able to get an upgrade for improvements of over \$1.5 million, again through the Thriving Suburbs Program. It's one of the busiest local destinations in the Yarra Ranges. The upgrades will allow families, walkers, runners and children to continue to enjoy our beautiful local environment at Lillydale Lake and will bring more tourists into our community. The upgrades will deliver enhanced and activated parklands, as well as improved local access, including pathways, car parking, recreation and fitness facilities for local residents and families as well as tourists. I continue to look forward to working with the Yarra Ranges Council on that project as it gets delivered.

There is no doubt that one of the biggest issues, if not the biggest issue, that's raised with me when it comes to underinvestment in my community is roads. Whether you're in the suburbs dealing with traffic congestion, dodging potholes on the Warburton Highway or the Melba Highway, or driving on unsealed roads in the Dandenongs and across the Yarra Valley and the Upper Yarra, it is clear that our road network needs improvement and additional investment. I've been advocating for better local roads, including for our local roads to be sealed, to end the days of dust, potholes and dangerous driving conditions.

Now, one of the first things that the Albanese Labor government did when they came to power was to cut funding from our local road sealing program. This was a program that was committed to by the former Liberal government. It was being delivered on time and on budget, in collaboration with the Yarra Ranges Council. The Albanese Labor government, when in opposition, committed to the program; there is a press release from the Prime Minister himself talking about how important this program was to improve safety in my community. Yet he cut that funding, and that cut impacted over 450 local roads that were due to be sealed. Again, as I have for 2½ years, I call on the Albanese government to honour their word, to honour the commitment that they made to provide funding to our community so that we can continue sealing local roads.

When I'm out doorknocking, talking to locals, particularly in Mooroolbark but also in Mount Evelyn and Lilydale, one of the biggest issues raised with me is the single-lane underpass at Hull Road and Mooroolbark Road. The underpass has been a bottleneck since I was a kid. I remember, when I was growing up in Yarra Glen and my uncle lived in Mooroolbark, that we had to go down Victoria Road, which then becomes Mooroolbark Road, and go through the underpass to get onto Hull Road, and I vividly remember the conversations my parents had about the frustration of being stuck at that intersection. That was over 30 years ago, and in that time the traffic has got worse. More people have moved into our community, which is a wonderful thing. We've had the development of Kinley, which has just started; there are more houses coming in—4,000 houses, 8,000 residents, right at that intersection. So it's crucial that we upgrade it, so that our community can get home sooner and safer. I will continue to fight for that upgrade. I want to thank all those in the community who have added their voice to my petition and our campaign for this upgrade, which is so sorely needed.

Health care is a fundamental right for all Australians. Despite what those opposite say, the facts are that, under a coalition government in 2019, in my community, bulk-billing was at 84.3 per cent. In 2023, under the Albanese Labor government, it had dropped to 73.2 per cent. Not only is bulk-billing down, but, due to the peri-urban and regional nature of my community, families are finding it harder to see a GP and the cost of visiting the doctor has skyrocketed in the last three years. GP bulk-billing rates have collapsed not only in my community but also across the country. From 88 per cent they've now fallen to 77 per cent. Community members are now paying record high out-of-pocket costs to see a doctor under Labor's cost-of-living crisis.

Our nation is also facing a shortage of GPs. The coalition has a plan to build our GP workforce by incentivising junior doctors to become GPs, particularly in regional and rural communities like mine. The Liberals will deliver quality health care, including doubling mental health sessions back to 20, after Labor cut this vital Medicare subsidised mental health support despite a report recommending that it stays. My community needs that support more than ever. The last census showed that the community of Casey unfortunately overindexed on those with mental health challenges relative to Victoria and the nation. I will prioritise quality health care, something that all Australians and all residents in Casey deserve.

The reason health care is so hard and roads can't be funded is the cost-of-living crisis that we are seeing under the Albanese Labor government. Data published last week by the ABC showed what I and many in my community know—that they're under pressure. Mortgage stress is at 42.3 per cent and rental stress is at 74.7 per cent in my community. Everyone in my community is hurting. There is no-one that is doing better today than they were when the Albanese Labor government came to power in 2022. We sit here in question time and hear the hubris from the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Prime Minister and the Treasurer about how Australians have never had it better, how great it is and how lucky they are. But Australians are struggling, with a 21-month per-capita recession. Everyone is going backwards, despite the Prime Minister promising to reduce energy bills by \$275 and despite promising to reduce mortgages. Mortgages have gone up 12 times. Interest rates have gone up 12 times under this Prime Minister. There is not one Australian, not one member of Casey, that is doing better today.

Another crucial issue that impacts my community every day, but particularly in emergencies, is telecommunications. We know how important reliable communications networks are for our community in the Dandenongs, in the Yarra Valley and in the Upper Yarra in particular. The coalition has a proud history of increasing local telecommunication capabilities, having delivered towers in East Warburton, Steels Creek, McMahons Creek, Mount Evelyn, Reefton and two in Chum Creek, all under the Mobile Black Spot Program. There was also funding for Kalorama, but unfortunately an appropriate location could not be secured. We also funded towers for Silvan and Menzies Creek under the Peri-Urban Mobile Program, with those locations being secured. I'm working with the telecommunications providers to make sure we can get those locations and get those towers up and running as soon as possible. So it was disappointing to learn in the 2024 May budget that Labor plans to axe the Mobile Black Spot Program and Peri-Urban Mobile Program, with no funding for mobile programs from 2027-28.

As I said in my first speech, we must invest in technology to provide reliable access for the safety of our citizens. A working phone line can be the difference between life and death. I will continue fighting for our fair share of telecommunications infrastructure to keep our community connected—every day but also in emergencies. In our community, communications are crucial. When you're living in the Dandenongs or the Upper Yarra, it is not 20 metres to your neighbour; it is kilometres. Local residents need that. I want to pay tribute to Belinda Young and the team at the Mums of the Hills in the Dandenong Ranges, who have done great work advocating for communications upgrades in the Dandenongs and all across Casey. They know how important it is, particularly for stay-at-home mums, who are looking after children and need to be able to call for support if something goes wrong. I want to thank Belinda for her continued advocacy, and I look forward to continuing to work with her to make sure that our residents can get the communications that we need.

But, unfortunately, we have seen under this government the spin about how great we have it as a country, but the reality is everyone is going backwards. Under this government, we've seen 27,000 small businesses go under. There have been no solutions to the challenges that small businesses face in my community or many communities across the country. We have seen, through these challenges, the failures of this government for the last three years. For the Australian people and for the members, residents and communities of Casey, if it's been this bad for this long under this government, imagine the damage they will do if they get another three years to send this country further and further into trouble.

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (18:16): I rise to support the passage of the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025, as well as the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025 and the Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025, as we all do on this side of the chamber. It's very important that we make sure the government has the funding that it needs to get through the election period and support the commencement of a new Dutton government before a budget can be passed by that new government at a later stage this year, so we very much support ensuring that the resources are in place for that important transition that is almost upon the Australian people because we desperately need a change in this country. Happily, even if the Prime Minister waits till the latest possible moment—I think the date is 17 May—by 17 May, we will have an election in this country, and the people of Australia will get the chance to cast their verdict on the last three years of this Labor government. I've got a sense of what they're going to say about all that when they get their chance at the ballot box.

It's been three tough years for the Australian people. It's been three years of a government wasting our money on the wrong priorities. We had the voice referendum. That was nearly half a billion dollars of money we'll never see again that came out of the pockets of Australian taxpayers. It was torched on that divisive, unnecessary distraction of a referendum—one that was comprehensively rejected by the Australian people but that didn't result in saving the money that was spent on it. Indeed, not just was it the cost to run it but the money that was invested in that campaign by a range of organisations—the tax deductibility of the donations into that campaign—was an enormous cost to the Australian taxpayer.

We've seen the Public Service grow by 36,000 people at the cost of \$6 billion a year. There are 36,000 more bureaucrats here in Canberra worth \$6 billion a year. That's a 20 per cent increase in the size of the public sector.

Are there many parts of government that are 20 per cent better thanks to those extra 36,000 people? I don't have people stopping me in the street saying: 'It's great that you've got those extra bureaucrats because I really feel like we're getting so much more out of our government because of them.' Far from that, in fact, the data shows that simple things like the KPI failures of Centrelink processing emergency payments for people in domestic violence circumstances, those fundamental elements of government, are an absolute disgrace, despite the fact we've got 36,000 more public servants.

This government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising, of course. Because they're not a good government, they have to try and look like good government, and that is very expensive. You have to spend a lot of money, hundreds of millions of dollars, on television advertising campaigns when you're an atrociously bad government to try and look like a good government, and this government is breaking all the records when it comes to advertising. It was nearly a quarter of a billion dollars—just over that in fact. I think it was \$260 million spent in this financial year alone across various government advertising programs.

The Future Made in Australia—that's going well. I'd up the ad buy on that one if I was the government! Hydrogen is going well. In my home state of South Australia I think the state government are about to announce that they're abandoning that as a hydrogen plant and converting it to a gas plant. They're not purchasing the electrolysers for that, and they'll probably use the tragic situation in Whyalla with the steelworks as an excuse to scrap that promise. Hydrogen ideas are collapsing around the country as we speak. So the hydrogen dream isn't going so well.

Solar panel manufacturing doesn't seem to be going very well. Then there's PsiQuantum, the 'Future Made in America' quantum computer that the Americans are happily receiving a billion dollars for—maybe not, though, because maybe the Queensland new LNP government will be looking pretty closely at that decision and wondering whether or not the Queensland taxpayer should be shovelling half a billion dollars of their hard-earned money into that very interesting PR exercise that is all about this government trying to look like they're doing things rather than actually achieving them for the people of this country.

The waste goes on and on and on and on, and it couldn't be happening at a worst time because it has never been harder to make the household budget stack up. People are really hurting in this high inflationary environment, with high interest rates, high rents, if you rent your home, high grocery prices and, of course, extremely high energy prices, which were meant to be \$275 cheaper for every Australian family. RepuTex did the modelling on that one—they staked their reputation on it, so possibly a name change could be recommended for that company—saying that this government was going to drop our power bills by \$275. Well, of course, the absolute opposite has occurred.

This leads to really difficult decisions for Australian families because they have had to cut back on some of the things that they had always been able to afford with everything else going up—cancelling family holidays, making difficult decisions when they're buying groceries. I met someone the other day who can't afford to buy fresh vegetables any more. She's buying frozen because the fresh is too expensive. This is Australia. This is Australia, and you're hearing those kinds of heartbreaking stories. It's because the government is wasting money on completely unnecessary things. Our taxes are higher than they need to be. And, of course, all that unnecessarily high government expenditure fuels inflation, and it's inflation that's hurting Australian families right now.

The solution to that is a change of government to get this country back on track. When the average Australian thinks about how they're going to vote at the ballot box in the weeks ahead I think it's a pretty simple proposition: Do you feel better off today than you were three years ago when the Albanese Labor government came to power? Have things gotten better for you or worse for you? Is this country on the right track under this government, or do we need to change direction? A Dutton coalition government is the change that this country needs.

In my own electorate of Sturt, when I think about the appropriation bills before us, I lament the lack of investment particularly in the vital Greater Adelaide Freight Bypass corridor, which has a number of components, which when completed will divert heavy freight out of the suburbs of my electorate of Sturt—getting them off Portrush Road and the future risk of them going down Cross Road through my electorate and the seats of Adelaide and Boothby—and get the freight around the back of the Adelaide Hills.

I was very proud to be a part of the government that put money into the Truro bypass with the South Australian Liberal government, which was the first part of building that freight bypass. Unfortunately, that project was the victim of the cruel and nasty infrastructure cuts implemented by this government last year. That has really hurt my community, and it's really hurt my city, because that investment was going to not only transform the economic efficiency of freight movements throughout South Australia and around Adelaide but make a dramatic difference to the safety of commuters and pedestrians, who don't feel it's reasonable to live in a city of 1.2 million people and have Highway 1 running through their suburbs. Small country towns, happily for them, had bypasses built around them decades ago, but we've still got a situation where heavy freight going from Melbourne to Perth travels through suburban Adelaide. It's completely ludicrous. We need to fix that. We were on the pathway to doing that, and,

regrettably, that was cruelly ripped away from my community and other communities in Adelaide by that callous decision to cut that project.

We've learned, on that project, that the South Australian government has submitted to the federal government a new business case, which, it seems, based on the Labor state ministers' commentary around it on radio, is a positive cost benefit. Even the state Labor government are hoping that the federal government will decide to reconsider their cruel cuts and again partner with them on that project. Having heard that revelation this week, I call on this government to release that business case and show people what that plan looks like, what it will cost and how it will benefit the people of my electorate of Sturt, the people of Adelaide and the state of South Australia. Burying that thing and hiding it from everyone is completely unacceptable and cannot possibly be tolerated.

To hear that the state government have given it to the federal government and said, 'Well, we've given it to the federal government; it's really up to them to decide what they're going to do next with it'—if this federal government refuses to release that plan, it will be an indictment on its lack of interest in investing in that project. An election is about to be upon us, and it is a very helpful and important debate to be had, equipped with all the necessary information, to compare the major parties' offerings on that project, like on many others, in the lead-up to the election. I hope Minister King is on the cusp of releasing that Greater Adelaide Freight Bypass business case which the state Labor minister said he provided to them. It's in their court to release it. We want to know what it says and we want to get on and build this thing. It needs to happen. We should have started by now. We've lost years because of this Labor government's cruel decision to defund one of those projects, but we're not giving up on it. We've got to get on with it. We want to see it get done.

The other thing that's very relevant in this appropriation bill that the Labor Party is going to have to confront and take very seriously is defence expenditure. We've recently had the confirmation of what we already knew: the Greens political party have said that their policy position at the next election is to scrap the AUKUS agreement and to scrap submarine construction for the Royal Australian Navy. They've already said they want to scrap the Hunter frigate program as well—so they want to shut down naval shipbuilding in Adelaide. Most importantly, this is disastrous for our national security. To take that capability away from the future of the Royal Australian Navy is absolutely treasonous. But the double whammy in South Australia is the collapse of one of the great bright shining future industries of our state—shipbuilding.

This is very relevant for the Labor Party because they've got to decide what they're doing with their preferences in the state of South Australia. If a candidate on a ballot paper has a policy position to shut down naval shipbuilding, they should be put last on that ballot paper. I'm sure that decision is forthcoming. It is very serious; we have not had this circumstance in a federal election contest in South Australia before.

The Greens party also want to shut down the oil and gas industries—so that's the end of Santos and Beach. With the difficult circumstances facing the steel industry, the concept of a political force like the Greens, who want to get rid of shipbuilding and oil and gas—the overall impact on the South Australian economy would probably be approaching around 100,000 jobs, as those decisions flow through the entirety of our economy. That is an economic Armageddon for my home state. Even though we sometimes think the Greens are a joke of a political party because that happens to be the truth, this has to be taken very, very seriously, and no credible political force and no major party, no party of government, can possibly countenance indulging such a dangerous, reckless outlook for the people of South Australia and, frankly, the people of the entire country.

We support the funding for the government, obviously. We look forward to this bill supporting the operation of the government through the election period that is upon us. We look forward to that campaign and to debating the significant issues that face the future of the entire nation and, as I have outlined, particularly the future of my home state of South Australia, the future of my constituents in the seat of Sturt. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (18:30): We are at a crossroads. Australia is struggling under the weight of the Labor government's economic mismanagement. Today, as we bring these appropriation bills to the chamber, bills that allocate \$12 billion to keep the country running, we must also confront the dire truth: this is a financial mess of the Labor's own making. The coalition supports these bills because we believe in ensuring essential services continuing but we cannot and will not ignore the shocking economic failures that have made this spending necessary. The reality is clear—everyday Australians are paying the price for Labor's economic incompetence. Australia is being plundered to keep this government afloat, a government that sees regional Australia as nothing more than a cash cow.

Since Labor's election in 2022, they have splurged an additional \$347 billion in taxpayers' money. What do Australians have to show for this uncontrolled spending? Families in my electorate are struggling to keep up with the cost of everyday essentials, with the prices on basics skyrocketing. Inflation remains stubbornly high, well above the Reserve Bank's target range. The price of food alone has increased by 12 per cent, and energy prices have risen

by 32 per cent despite Labor's hollow promise of cutting power bills by \$275. In just 2½ years, we've seen a 66 per cent increase in the number of hardworking Australians seeking assistance with their energy bills. Pensioners who have worked hard are making the decision: do they heat their homes during the winter and cool them in the summer, or do they eat?

Families in Capricornia tell me they are paying hundreds of dollars more each quarter for electricity, yet the government remains silent on real solutions. Labor's reckless energy plan is a disaster for Australian households and businesses. Just last week, Moody's confirmed it could cost up to \$230 billion over the next decade and drive electricity prices up another 25 per cent. This is yet another independent warning that Labor's renewables-only approach will hurt Australians, forcing families and businesses to the wall. Peak industry bodies like the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia are sounding the alarm, yet the government refuses to listen. In just one year, wholesale power prices have skyrocketed by a staggering 83 per cent, placing an unbearable financial burden on families and businesses. Despite Labor's promises, the cost of electricity continues to climb, leaving Australians struggling to keep up with soaring energy bills. The Minister for Climate Change and Energy assured Australians that wholesale power prices would be just \$51 per megawatt hour by 2025. Instead, reality has seen prices soar past \$100 per megawatt hour, more than double the promised figure. This failure to deliver affordable energy is yet another example of Labor's empty rhetoric, not matching real-world outcomes. Adding to this betrayal, Labor promised households a \$275 reduction in power bills, yet families are instead paying up to \$1,000 more. These rising costs are hurting everyday Australians, who are already feeling the strain of increased mortgage payments, grocery bills and fuel prices.

Labor's reckless energy policies driven by their ideological war on coal and gas have weakened the reliability of our power grid. By sidelining dependable base load energy sources, they have left Australians vulnerable to an unstable system that relies too heavily on expensive and unreliable renewables, with no proper backup in place. This mismanagement is not just a failure of policy; it is a failure that directly impacts every Australian household and business. Labor has no plan for affordability, no plan for reliability and no plan to keep the lights on. Meanwhile, Australians are paying the price. Interest rate hikes have added thousands of dollars a year to mortgage repayments. Young Australians who once aspired to own a home are now being priced out of the market entirely. The great Australian dream of homeownership is slipping further and further out of reach due to Labor's reckless economic mismanagement.

Labor's policies are directly hurting regional Australia. Their war on agriculture, their attacks on the resources sector and their anti-small-business agenda have made it harder for industries in Capricornia to thrive. Farmers tell me they are struggling with rising input costs, with fuel and fertiliser prices hitting record highs. This is not just a problem for them; it's a problem for every Australian who relies on affordable food and strong supply chains. Despite the Treasurer's assurances that relief is on the way, everyday Australians are seeing none of it. Labor's approach has been to throw billions at bandaid solutions rather than addressing the root cause of inflation. Handouts and subsidies may provide short-term relief, but they do nothing to fix the long-term structural issues that are driving up costs. While roads in my electorate were left to crumble from funding cuts and lives were lost on the Bruce Highway, Labor splashed \$450 million on a failed referendum that did nothing but divide communities. Just months out from an election, billions of dollars were finally found for the Bruce Highway in a last-ditch attempt to appease disgruntled voters.

The Labor lies and the incompetence of this government don't stop there. Independent analysis from the Parliamentary Budget Office has now revealed a massive \$11.1 billion black hole in Labor's budget, further exposing their economic mismanagement. While Labor claims it will maintain the Public Service at its current level of 209,150 employees, they have failed to budget for the cost, leaving a multibillion-dollar shortfall over the next four years. This is yet another example of their reckless spending and inability to properly manage taxpayers' dollars. So how exactly will Labor fill this gap? Will they hit hardworking Australians with more taxes, making life even more expensive for families already struggling with the cost-of-living crisis? Or will they cut vital frontline services, further neglecting the very people who rely on government support the most? The reality is that Labor's bureaucratic blowout is out of control. Since coming into office, they have expanded the Public Service by an astonishing 20 per cent, with wages surging by 11 per cent, all while ordinary Australians are being told to tighten their belts. It's time for the Labor government to explain why they're on this bureaucratic binge while ordinary people bear the burden. We have been clear that the Public Service must be efficient, effective and sustainable. For every new Public Service job, hardworking Australians face higher taxes to foot the bill. The coalition will sensibly consolidate the Public Service, protecting essential services while making smart reductions where there's duplication or excess capacity. It's about ensuring value for taxpayers, not more waste.

Instead of this government offering transparency or real solutions, all we get from Labor is denial, spin and empty promises. The coalition are committed to strengthening our economy and getting our country back on track. After

years of economic mismanagement under Labor, Australian families, businesses and communities need real leadership and a government that delivers results, not more spin and broken promises. Our plan is focused on restoring confidence, easing cost-of-living pressures and ensuring a better future for all Australians. We will bring inflation under control by putting an end to wasteful government spending that continues to fuel price rises. By cutting unnecessary taxes, slashing red tape and reducing the stranglehold of union bosses over small businesses, we will create an environment where families and businesses can thrive. Cheaper energy is also a key priority, and we will deliver it through a balanced mix of power sources. Housing affordability has become a crisis under Labor, but we have a plan to turn things around. We will fund the critical infrastructure needed to support new housing developments; help first home buyers enter the market; restrict foreign investors, who are driving up prices; and restore a sustainable migration intake to ensure housing demand does not outpace supply. At the same time, we'll make our communities safer by cracking down on violent crime committed by noncitizens, strengthening our defence and border security, and enhancing online safety measures to protect children. A strong and reliable healthcare system is essential for every Australian, and we would deliver it by increasing funding for GPs, boosting bulk-billing rates and expanding Medicare-subsidised mental health services. Under our leadership, health care will be more accessible, ensuring that no-one is left behind when they need medical care.

Right now, Australians across the country are asking important questions: are you better off today than you were 2½ years ago? Do you feel safer and more secure? Is our country more united than it was before? And, given all we've seen, can Australians afford another three years of Labor's economic failures and social division? The answer is clear: it's time to restore confidence in our economy it's time for a government that gets out of people's way and allows Australians the freedom to succeed, and, most importantly, it's time for a return to strong, decisive leadership that puts Australians first. The coalition have the plan, the experience and the vision to get our country back on track and ensure a brighter, more prosperous future for all. This is our promise to the people of Capricornia. This is our promise to regional Australia, and this is our commitment to getting our country back on track.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (18:41): The Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025 and Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025 are necessary appropriations to ensure the continued delivery of essential government service funding decisions made since the 2024-25 budget, which was announced in May last year. Now, that said, there is a lot to unpack when it comes to appropriations and this government. I'm always amazed about how many truck drivers listen to the federal parliament whilst they're traversing this wide, brown land. I'm always impressed by the number of truckies who contact my office when I speak in parliament about certain things. Sometimes they agree; sometimes they do not.

What this government did in its early phases and stages of running the nation's finances was to propose a 10 per cent annual increase to the heavy vehicle road user charge, which would see the tax truckies pay on fuel rise from 27.2 cents per litre at the time, up to 36.2 cents per litre by 1 July next year. They were figures produced by the National Transport Commission, and we should be doing everything we can as a parliament to ensure the smooth running of our trucks because they largely, and literally, carry the nation. All the goods that are ferried around our nation are done by a truck, and certainly during COVID, the worth of truckies was writ large because they were getting all those rolls of toilet paper to people. Every time someone went to the toilet, it seemed as though they needed 10 rolls. All of a sudden, we had a lack of toilet paper. Yet, it was so much more. It was groceries. In some instances, it was the vaccines. Our truckies helped to run and manage this country.

At the time, I can remember the then prime minister, the member for Cook, tasked me, as the transport minister, with the role and responsibility of getting our state transport and roads ministers around the table to agree on a national logistics code. I am still thankful to those transport ministers, most of whom were Labor ministers, as they did the right thing in the national interest. I'm afraid to say that the same cannot be said for this federal Labor government because they do not do things in the national interest. They want to whack taxes on our truckies. They want to make our farmers pay for the biosecurity measures of foreign goods coming in to compete with our own products on the supermarket shelves. Could you imagine any other country in the world doing that? Charging our own people, our own farmers—the best farmers in the world, the ones who grow the food and fibre—and making them pay for foreign competitors biosecurity measures so that they can compete on the same shelves in the same supermarkets for the same customers—that is, the Australian people.

When it comes to Australian people paying through the nose at supermarkets, and they are doing that, the Nationals and the Liberals have a better plan. We want to put in a supermarket commissioner as part of a suite of measures to ease cost of living. Cost of living is hurting household budgets. Cost of living is an impost and having such an impact on ordinary everyday Australians, many of whom cannot take any more. They are making decisions based on the disposable income that they have. They are making decisions as to whether they, depending on the season, cool or heat their house as opposed to putting food on the table so that their families can sustain themselves. This should not be Australia in 2025. This should not be happening in a country as wealthy as Australia.

I was amazed some time ago when a volunteer-run van arrived at the Murrumbidgee River at Wagga, down near the beach—the visit was well advertised—to provide free food hampers for people. Wagga Wagga is a good sized city, 70,000-plus people, and the number of people who came out to avail themselves of that generosity was quite remarkable. I regularly talk to my volunteer organisations, namely the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, which has a care van, and they report to me that the number of clients is increasing. They have not seen this volume, this number of people needing the generosity of the rest of the community, needing the spirit of giving that they are being called upon to provide. It's because people just can't make ends meet. It's because people are finding the cost of living too difficult. This should not be Australia in 2025.

People are getting their power bills—they were promised on 97 occasions by the then opposition leader, the member for Grayndler, the now Prime Minister, that they would receive a \$275 saving to their power bill. And do you know what? A lot of people were duped by that. A lot of people fell for that. There's an interesting thing about the tile put out by the Labor dirt unit at the time to say, 'Well, this is what's going to happen if you vote for a Labor government.' It wasn't that many months after the election the tile was slightly changed; an asterisk was placed beside the \$275 and a disclaimer added. The disclaimer put the \$275 saving off into the never-never. And you know what? That's the Labor way. That's what they do. They say something before an election and then they do the complete opposite after it. It's sad to say, but you can't take the Labor Party at its word. You cannot. You don't judge the Labor Party by its words; you judge the Labor Party by its actions.

People are hurting. They're hurting because they're paying too much for groceries. The Nationals in government would have a better way. We want to make sure, in conjunction with the Liberals, that we do put that supermarket commissioner in. We will ensure that farmers are paid a fair price at the farm gate for the toils of their labour, as they should be. Whether they are providing those supermarkets with vegetables or meat or whatever the case might be, they should be paid a fair price. All too often we know our farmers, the best in the world, are price takers, not price makers. We should also ensure, through this food commissioner, that people are getting value for money when they take their trolley to the cash register and pay for their goods.

Then you have the high power prices, as I mentioned previously, but more than that we've got people in regional Australia hurting because the price at the petrol bowser is going up and up and up. People in country areas use their vehicles much more than those in the city. You have families in country areas who are choosing to not take their children to sport, dancing lessons, dancing competitions, events and the like. Sport plays a huge part in regional Australia. Last Friday, the Southern NSW Women's Australian Football League began its eighth season. It involves 15 teams, from Wagga Wagga through to Griffith, in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. Women's Australian football is the fastest growing sport in the nation. I admire what AFL Riverina has done in trying to consolidate the draw so that there's a series of double-headers. The tyranny of distance is such that they're trying to reduce the amount of away games that teams are playing, but, still, quite often teams will have to travel. When you have to travel in the Riverina, you have to journey long distances to play your games. It's costly. There are women who play in that competition and families who are, unfortunately, having to make that tough decision for their kids—that they just cannot afford to fill the car up and journey to the away games or the away events, or cannot afford to take their kids to the annual agricultural show in a neighbouring town. All too often the neighbouring town is 100 kilometres away.

In the Parkes electorate, which is now more than 50 per cent of the land mass of New South Wales, the candidate for the Nationals, Jamie Chaffey, talks to me all the time about the huge distances that people have to travel for health appointments and business commitments. Mark Coulton has represented that electorate superbly for 17 years. With Mark you got a two-for-one deal, because you get his wife, Robyn, as well. I pay special tribute to them for the way that they have represented that electorate. I say 'they' because it has been a duo, been a team performance, a team effort. I know Jamie Chaffey will continue. He's got the commitment and the dedication to travel the length and breadth of that outstanding electorate. Whether the people are in Parkes, Riverina or in my great friend the member for Cowper's electorate, people have to travel long distances to make those commitments.

When it comes to medical appointments, it should not be so that, when in pain, you have to catch a plane. You should have those doctors, general practitioners and specialists in your home town. It's sad to say that one of the first orders of business that this Labor government introduced was to change the rules around the distribution priority areas. What you saw was doctors in rural, regional and, particularly, remote areas take their shingle off their GP surgery and move to the suburbs. They moved to the peri-urban areas of our capital cities. They moved to the coast. They moved to Newcastle, Wollongong or the Gold Coast, because, according to Labor, those were areas of distribution priority need. I don't deny that people on the Gold Coast or Wollongong or Newcastle need to see doctors too, but what we've been left with is areas of Australia where people can't get in to see a doctor for weeks and weeks. These are people who are in pain. These are people who are ill.

Labor tells a big story about its urgent care clinics. Good luck to those areas that have an urgent care clinic. I appreciate the fact that the member for Cowper received one in his electorate because of his advocacy, I have to say—and also the need. The people of Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and that region of the Mid North Coast of New South Wales deserve as good a health service as anywhere in a capital city. Every part of Australia needs and deserves and wants and expects the same, but urgent care clinics have been given to too many, I have to say, Labor electorates and to not enough of those electorates that are probably in the most dire need.

I know the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network will ease some of the problems of the doctor shortage in times to come, and I'm pleased to say that we're getting upwards of 30 young people—often, locals—going through the UNSW facility in Wagga Wagga. I'm very pleased to say that that is going to be an outstanding success in the future, but the results will take time to take effect.

A lot has been said in this place about child care. I have to say, it's interesting that some rural organisations, grain producers and farmers et cetera placed child care as their No. 1 item, above all other considerations, in their pre-budget submissions. The minister might be interested to know that that is so.

Dr Aly interjecting—

Mr McCORMACK: And I appreciate the efforts that she's going to, but it is not just about affordability; it's about accessibility and availability. When we talk about the childcare desert we are being genuine and meaningful, because we are desperately worried there are not enough childcare places in regional Australia.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Manager of Opposition Business) (18:56): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025. I want to deal with what is, in my view, a very interesting case study of the issues raised by Labor's wrongheaded decision to employ 36,000 more public servants at a cost of an extra \$24 billion. Since we've been talking about this, the usual union bosses and other bloviating bloodsuckers and parasites on the long-suffering Australian taxpayer have been out there complaining that if you cut public servants then service levels will fall.

Services Australia is designated to receive 7½ thousand of these new public servants over the next three financial years under Labor's most recent budget announcement. Services Australia is huge. It now has around 34,000 people and it has the largest call-centre operations of any organisation in Australia. But its service outcomes have collapsed over the last two years, and what has happened under the disastrous leadership of Bill Shorten is a very informative case study. The number of public servants has gone up, while the customer service performance has gone down. Let's have a look at some of the data.

One of the core jobs of Services Australia is to process claims made by Australians to receive a government benefit. If you made a claim for the age pension in financial year 2021-22 under the coalition, on average it took 35 days. In financial year 2023-24 under Labor, it was 76 days. If you applied for dad and partner pay in 2021-22, it took 14 days; under Labor, in 2023-24, 63 days. For the disability support pension, in financial year 2021-22, it took 40 days for Centrelink to process your claim; on average in 2023-24, under Bill Shorten's tender care, it took 93 days.

How long does it take you if you are so unwise as to call Centrelink seeking assistance? Well, if you called the families and parenting line, under us, in 2021-22, on average you waited 24 minutes and 45 seconds. That's not a great performance, but that's what it was in 2021-22. In 2023-24 under Bill Shorten, it was 50 minutes and four seconds—more than double the wait time. If you called the older Australians line, under us, in 2021-22, you waited 21½ minutes; in 2023-24, it was 44 minutes 31 seconds—more than double. So productivity under Bill Shorten collapsed. Services Australia has more staff doing less work, processing fewer overall claims. Service delivery outcomes have become worse.

Mr Shorten was asked about these issues in a media interview and he had this to say:

But the other thing to mention is demand is up. Demand is up on previous years. So not only do we have that, it's like the two jaws of the snake, we've got a decreasing number of people and we've also got more people than ever asking.

This is flat out wrong. Let me go through the data. Compared to the years in which the coalition was in government, customer demand faced by Centrelink is trending down. In the 2021-22 financial year, customer demand was 106.9 million; in 2023-24, it was 99.3 million. So demand is down. Mr Shorten said demand is up; demand, in fact, is down.

Compared to the coalition years, fewer claims are being processed by Services Australia under Labor. In 2021-22, under the coalition, 517.6 million claims were processed. In 2023-24 that number was 468.5 million. So it has gone down. Under the coalition it was 517.6 million; under Labor it was 468.5 million—fewer claims being processed under the Labor government. Yet what has happened to the number of Services Australia staff? That has gone up. On 30 June 2022, just after we left government, the total Services Australia APS headcount was 32,310. On 30 June 2024 it was 33,554—up, not down. The number of staff has gone up under Labor; the total amount of

processing work has gone down. In 2021-22, under the coalition, 7.99 million hours were spent on processing. Under Labor, in 2023-24, this fell to 6.54 million hours.

So what is the actual picture? What does the data say, compared to Mr Shorten's explanations in the media? The data says the number of staff is up, the amount of customer demand is down, the amount of processing hours is down and productivity is significantly down. And what does the customer, the citizen, the end user, see when they interact with Services Australia, as millions of Australians do? They see that the average time taken to process an age pension, as I've explained, was 35 days in 2021-22 under the coalition. In financial year 2023-24 it was 76 days—more than double. There are more staff dealing with fewer claims, with wait times in many cases more than doubling. That is a textbook example of a collapse in productivity.

What it tells us is that there is no simple, straightforward, linear relationship between the number of staff and the performance. What it tells us is that, when all of those bloviating, bloodsucking parasites on the Australian taxpayer—all of those union secretaries—get out there and whinge about the disastrous idea that we should in some way wind back on Labor's profligate use of additional public servants, their essential premise that there is a relationship, and that more public servants means better service, is directly contradicted by the data. It is directly the opposite of what we have seen in the last nearly three years in which Services Australia has been under the care and management of Bill Shorten. Bill Shorten has now left the building, but the damage that he has done is going to last for a long time.

Let's have a look at some of the factors behind this disastrous collapse in productivity that we have seen at Services Australia, which means more public servants and more money being spent by the poor, long-suffering taxpayer, yet worse service being delivered to Australians. The first thing Mr Shorten did was, where he could, dump external specialist providers and replace them with generalist public servants. Why? Because, of course, as a former union boss, and because Labor is the political arm of the union movement, he wanted more public servants who are union members. That was his overall priority. Customer service was a long way down the list of Bill Shorten's priorities. One of the things that's happened, therefore, is that 3,000 previously outsourced roles at Services Australia are now being done by permanent public servants. In December 2022 there was a decision taken to get rid of more than a thousand specialist ICT—information and communications technology—contractors from Services Australia. This has gutted the agency's capacity to continue to develop its information technology systems.

Another example was in June 2023. Services Australia axed a \$343 million contract with a specialist external call centre provider, Serco, and got rid of their 600 jobs. This happened even though Serco's call centre operations were much more productive than Services Australia's in-house operations. Don't ask me; ask KPMG, who did an assessment and found that Serco staff took, on average, 34 per cent more calls than the full-time public servants employed by Services Australia.

The second thing that Mr Shorten did, which has disastrously reduced the output, the capability and the productivity of Services Australia, is weaken the digital capability of Services Australia. According to the agency's assurance statement there has been a conscious management decision taken to pause automation processes, from late 2022. The stated reason for this decision is a 'revisiting of their risk tolerances'—whatever that particular piece of bloodless bureaucratic jargon means. It's a very odd decision because we know that Services Australia demonstrated under the coalition that it could improve customer service using automation.

After the ATO, the Australian Taxation Office, introduced Single Touch Payroll, Services Australia built on this by providing pre-filled online forms to Australians receiving JobSeeker and other benefits, making it easier for people receiving benefits to meet their requirement to report to the government the amount of income they receive from employment in a given week. It turned out that these pre-filled forms were very well used. Over 3.5 million income support related reports were made in 2022-23 using Single Touch Payroll pre-filled data.

We also know that Services Australia is grinding to a halt on the IT transformation work that was underway under the previous coalition government. Labor inherited six major ICT projects from the coalition, the biggest being the Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation Program. Today only two programs are still underway.

The third problem with what former union secretary Bill Shorten did is that he engaged in a ferocious politicisation of the income compliance program carried out under the previous government—a program, I might say, which in the 2016 and 2019 elections, when Labor was led by Bill Shorten, Labor submitted policy costings which assumed the continuance of the income compliance program. But, of course, Mr Shorten then turned around and engaged in a ferocious political attack. A clear consequence of what he did, including dragging a whole range of public servants before a royal commission, is going to be to make the Public Service more risk averse and less likely to think creatively and ambitiously about how best to serve the government of the day and in turn the Australian people.

Consider the rollout of voiceprint, digital assistants, digital identity and video chat appointments—all reforms delivered under the coalition. Consider in New South Wales the scrapping of the old motor registries, replaced by the new Service NSW model, which had been very successful and which was led by Victor Dominello, the former New South Wales minister, who did an amazing job. These new ways of service delivery at the Commonwealth and at the state level required innovative thinking from the public service.

It is clear from the royal commission's report that the central idea for the income compliance program was developed by officials within the Department of Human Services. They were generating ideas, which is, after all, what we want public servants to be doing. Now, let's be clear. There were mistakes made with that program. It was initiated based on the clear advice of the Public Service that the program was lawful. Once that advice changed, those mistakes were acknowledged on our government's watch, and we fixed it on our watch. But to take away from this, as Mr Shorten did, the idea that algorithms should not be used, that technology is bad, that innovation should not be encouraged, is a very bad thing, and it contributed to the collapse in service levels under Bill Shorten, under Labor, at Services Australia.

People in this place such as me use jargon terms like 'productivity is falling', which doesn't mean much to ordinary Australians. But I'll tell you what does mean a lot to ordinary Australians—when you apply for a benefit that you're entitled to, like the age pension, and you are waiting twice as many days to get that application processed because of the collapse in productivity and performance at Services Australia. When you call the older Australians line to ask, 'What's happening to my age pension application?' rather than waiting an average of 20 minutes and 30 seconds, as you did under the coalition, you now wait more than twice as long: 44 minutes and 31 seconds. That is what a collapse in productivity means to ordinary Australians.

I say to the House: we have seen a collapse in productivity and a collapse in performance at Services Australia under Bill Shorten. More public servants have been employed, but waiting times have blown out and the performance of Services Australia has collapsed. Australians have been grossly let down as a result, but it also gives the lie to this claim, made by union officials and other supporters of this government's agenda, that, somehow, more public servants means better services to Australians. The data shows exactly the opposite.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (19:11): Facts matter in politics. As we head into the election campaign, there are going to be a lot of facts which are thrown around. I want to make sure my electorate understands loud and clear the facts around discretionary grants. What has happened since 2016 in the electorate of Wannon is that we have received \$694 million in grants. Now, what has the neighbouring seat of Corangamite received in that period since 2016? Corangamite has received \$454 million. So remember that as opponents go about trying to use disinformation and misinformation to get away from that fact—Wannon, \$694 million; Corangamite, \$494 million.

What have we been able to achieve due to the fact that we have been able to get our fair share of grants funding? If you go to Ararat, you've got the Alexandra Oval Community Centre, the Ararat Boer War Memorial Fountain, the arts precinct and the Gordon Street Recreation Reserve.

In Colac there's headspace, the Colac Central Reserve netball courts, construction of the new cycling track at Elliminyt, the western oval drainage improvements and much, much more.

In Hamilton there is headspace, the Hamilton Regional Livestock Exchange, Melville Oval, the Pedrina Park netball courts and other sports facilities, and, now, we've just got a regional university study hub. Plus there are the Lake Hamilton community and aquatic facilities—that is, the playground.

In Port Fairy there was the waterfront development. There has also been the Tarrone Lane Bridge upgrade and other community investments as well.

In Portland there's headspace, the Portland Bowling Club, Bayview College, the Alexandra Park upgrade and the Portland foreshore.

In Warrnambool there are, obviously, the funds that went into saving Deakin University, into Hycel, into the golf club, into the racing club and into providing new lights at North Warrnambool. The list goes on and on and on.

So just ask those who are trying to deceive for the facts—since 2016, what has happened with community grants in Wannon versus those in Corangamite? They want to use misinformation and disinformation in their campaigns. The best way to deal with that is to remind them of the facts.

Why is this important for the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2024-2025 and the related bills? Because it is absolutely vital that government gets its spending right so that it actually benefits communities, grows communities, makes communities stronger and benefits the whole nation.

Sadly, what we have seen under this government is the exact opposite. We've seen increased spending at levels that we haven't seen for a long, long time—over \$30 billion in extra spending. But we've seen the wrong priorities, and we've seen that spending add to the cost-of-living crisis that this nation is facing right now. Rather than coming

into government nearly three years ago and saying, 'Inflation is the No. 1 issue that we must deal with,' this government said, 'We will have other priorities, like spending \$460 million on the Voice.' They took their eyes off the ball. What did that lead to? That has led to a cost-of-living crisis in this nation which has been felt right across the electorate of Wannon. How is that playing out? You are paying more for your electricity bills. You are paying more for your gas bills. You are paying more when you go to the supermarket. You are paying more on insurance costs. You're paying more when you go into the local cafe because of what they've done to the cost of business. All those things are a direct result of the Albanese Labor government taking their eyes off the ball.

That is why, if a coalition government are elected, we will make sure that cost of living is our No. 1 priority nationally. And what will we make sure is our No. 1 priority in the seat of Wannon? It will be reversing the cuts to road funding that have occurred under the Albanese Labor government and making sure that that the maintenance budgets of both the federal government and the Victorian state government for our roads is increased, because not only did the Albanese Labor government cut road funding to the electorate of Wannon but also they cut the percentage of the contribution they make to the Victorian state government to maintain important roads like the Princes Highway and the Western Highway. That is why we've seen those roads deteriorate. To double up as to why the priorities of both the Albanese Labor government and the Allan Labor government are so wrong, the Albanese Labor government has had \$2.2 billion just sitting there in a contingency fund for the Suburban Rail Loop. We all know that the Victorian state Labor government is too scared to present the business case to the Albanese Labor government on the Suburban Rail Loop because the whole project was cooked up on the back of an envelope. They will not present the business case to the Albanese Labor government. It's wrong priorities after wrong priorities.

What is happening as a result? My electorate of Wannon is suffering. But not only is my electorate of Wannon suffering; the whole nation is suffering. Day after day, people are finding it harder and harder to pay their bills. That is why any government that is elected in a cost-of-living crisis must first as a priority make sure that they address that issue, and this government has not addressed that issue. They have had their eyes completely and utterly off the ball.

It's not just cost of living and roads which are suffering as a result of that. We are also seeing it with regard to our health services. Do you think the number of GPs has increased in regional and rural Victoria and the seat of Wannon during the time that the Albanese Labor government have been in office? No. That's because they haven't had a focus on making sure that we get GPs where we need them. As a matter of fact, they deliberately made decisions which led to GPs being incentivised to move back into outersuburban Melbourne and into the bigger regions. We have suffered as a result. What we have to do is make sure that health for regional and rural Australia and for Wannon once again becomes a priority. Sadly, in the last nearly three years, that hasn't been the case. They haven't been focused on health like they should have been. As a matter of fact, it's very hard to know what this government has been focused on apart from itself and its ideological pursuits.

Let's take Minister Bowen as an example. What has he done? Has he spent his whole time in the last three years trying to drive your power bill down by \$275? No, he has not. Even though the Prime Minister said in more than 90 occasions before the last election that he would make sure that your power bill went down by \$275, the exact opposite has occurred. How has Minister Bowen tried to dissemble because he hasn't been able to address that commitment that was made by the Prime Minister? He has gone on this wild pursuit of a renewables-only approach to policy. What has that meant? It has meant that communities have been rolled over in his rampant pursuit of trying to get renewables right across the nation.

The worst example of this is what he has tried to do in putting an offshore wind farm off the coast of my electorate between Warrnambool and Port Fairy. He initially proposed it for Portland, and when he thought, 'That's all too hard,' he said, 'I will change the map,' and he put it off the coast of Warrnambool and Port Fairy. Do you think, once the community said, 'Sorry, Minister Bowen, we're not going to stand for that,' he said, 'I've made a mistake and I'm not going to pursue this'? Of course not; he doubled down and he continues to try to pursue this project, which is fanciful in nature and absolutely dangerous in what it might do to the local environment and to the local economy as a result of what it might do to the local environment. Wrong, wrong, wrong! Yet, Minister Bowen will not admit it.

What are the other areas where we've seen huge issues because of this government? Crime in Victoria is now a serious issue. Do you think that there has been any attention or focus given to crime by the Albanese Labor government? Do you think that they've said to the Allan Labor government in Victoria, 'This is now a serious issue which is playing out in communities and we want to work with you to create safety in local communities'? No, they haven't. What did they do at the start of their term in office? They abolished the one program that used to deliver community safety programs. The idea was that you had a program that could provide extra CCTVs, and extra lighting in local communities so citizens felt a lot safer walking home at night, and the Albanese Labor government

abolished that program. When it comes to crime, we have seen them do absolutely nothing to help local communities, especially local communities in Victoria, where crime is, sadly, becoming more of a prevalent issue.

As a matter of fact, in my portfolio space, what we saw as a result of their complete and utter bungling of a High Court decision was the release onto our streets of further criminals who were being held in detention. Sadly, we are still seeing the consequences of their bungling of that decision and of ministerial direction 99, whether it's in tying up court processes or by making sure the AFP and the state and territory police are spending time monitoring those released from detention, rather than making sure that they can deal with the lack of community safety that we're seeing more and more on our streets.

I say this, especially to those people in the CBDs at Warrnambool and in other towns—those small-business operators: we will do everything we can to keep local communities safe. We now know and understand that that is a critically important issue. Cost of living, health, roads, security: these are the issues that you know a coalition government, if elected, will make sure are an absolute priority because we want to get back to basics. We understand that you want to be able to go down the street, go to the supermarket and then buy yourself a cup of coffee without having to look at your wallet and wonder how you will be able to go home and afford to pay your electricity bill or your insurance bill. We understand that cost of living is crucial to you. We also understand that if you drive on local roads and that leads to rim damage or punctures to your tyres, that also adds to your cost of living, plus you get worried and concerned about your family's safety driving on roads.

We will go back to basics. We will make sure to focus on and seek to address all the failings that we've seen under the Albanese Labor government as quickly as we possibly can. We don't want the case where you're going down the street, you're going into the supermarket, you're looking at the shelves and you're wondering what it is this time you're going to have to tell the kids you couldn't afford to buy. We don't want Australians facing that reality more and more, and we will fix it.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr HILL (Bruce—Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (19:27): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2024-2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr HILL (Bruce—Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (19:27): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2024-2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr HILL (Bruce—Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs) (19:27): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Freeland): It being 7.30, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Aircraft Noise

Griffith Electorate: Schools

Mr CHANDLER-MATHER (Griffith) (19:30): It's been more than four years since the opening of Brisbane Airport's second runway, and Labor and the Liberals have done nothing to fix aircraft noise that is smashing thousands of Brisbane residents every single day. Interrupted sleep is a nightly occurrence for many people in Brisbane, and despite having heard from thousands of people on the issue, Labor and the LNP don't seem to care. People in Griffith are sick of token consultation and window-dressing. The solutions are right there in front of us. They are a cap, a curfew and more flights over the water. They are exactly the same solutions that Sydney airport has had since the 1990s. They haven't stopped Sydney from becoming a global destination, having cheap airfares or hosting the Olympics, but they have helped tens of thousands of people get a reprieve from severe, daily aircraft noise.

That's exactly why the Greens introduced a private member's bill into parliament to introduce those same measures for Brisbane. It's been four years, and I still haven't heard a single good explanation as to why Sydney deserves better than Brisbane. Why does the Prime Minister's electorate deserve better than Brisbane? These solutions have precedents in Sydney, and they have the backing of the community that are being affected by aircraft noise, but the Labor Party and the LNP won't give them the time of day.

Last November, the Greens brought on a vote for the government just to consider a curfew and cap for Brisbane Airport, and neither Labor nor the Liberals could even approve or support that. It was not to pass the bill but just to consider curfews for Brisbane. For three years, the minister for transport has refused to meet with the Brisbane Flight Path Community Alliance. Why? We know from the Greens' Senate inquiry into aircraft noise that she meets regularly with aviation industry representatives. She has plenty of time to meet with them, but when it comes to community organisations like the BFPCA—nada. When this government released its aviation white paper, which sets out the government's plan for the aviation sector out to 2050, why was there almost no mention of how the government intends to manage flight noise and no plan to actually deliver on high-speed rail by 2050? Instead, there was just huge aviation industry growth and private profits. In fact, the government plans to double Australian domestic air traffic as well as allow a five- to six-fold increase of Australian international air traffic by 2050.

The truth is that Labor and the LNP have decided they won't do anything which hurts the profitability of Qantas, Virgin or Brisbane Airport Corporation. Perhaps Brisbane Airport Corporation should have never been privatised in the first place. People affected by flight noise deserve so much better than Labor and the LNP. Both are so beholden to the aviation industry. The Greens got up a Senate inquiry that made 21 recommendations into tackling aircraft noise. We have a private member's bill. We've secured more flights over the water and brought this issue to the national stage. We just need Labor and the LNP to come to the table. To the people of Griffith affected by flight noise: I know this has been a long fight, and I know many of you are as frustrated as I am by inaction on this issue. I've been committed to this fight for a long time and will continue to take up the fight in this term of parliament.

Every week in four public schools across Griffith, a bunch of amazing volunteers head out to those schools, organised out of my office, to run free school breakfasts. In fact, we have now served over 40,000 free school breakfasts across our electorate. I want to give a special shout-out to a few select volunteers and, in particular, to a grade 6 student who's just graduated last year, Abbie. Abbie at Mayfield State School was rocking up, I think, every single week for almost an entire year. We worked out that she was individually involved in serving thousands and thousands of free school breakfasts herself. She is an absolute stand-out member of the Brisbane community and our electorate.

If people want to know, the entire program is funded out of a contribution from of my salary—all up, it's about \$80,000 now over this term. Crucially, the only reason this can run is because of the hard work of a bunch of volunteers in our electorate. We have spoken to so many families who are doing it tough at the moment. We know that, of the three million Australians living in poverty right now, 775,000 of them are children. In a wealthy country like Australia, no child should have to go to school hungry, but the reality is far too many do in a country where, at the same time, billionaires have made off with over half a trillion dollars worth of wealth. We'll continue to run and expand these programs in Griffith for two reasons: (1) to help people in the here and now; and (2) most crucially, to make the argument that, if we can do it, so can the federal government.

Reid Electorate: Community Events

Ms SITOU (Reid) (19:35): Tonight I want to acknowledge the incredible people who make our community so wonderful. On Australia Day, Peter Gainsford, general manager of the Inner West Council, was awarded the Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to local government. Prior to his appointment to the Inner West Council, Peter was the general manager of the City of Canada Bay, another council in my electorate. He is also a long-time resident in the community, so he has deep and extensive roots in my electorate. Peter has had a 40-year career in local government and exemplifies the career possibilities in this sector, rising from his first role as a carpenter's apprentice to general manager. As general manager, he has championed transformative change in the Inner West.

In recognition of his and the council staff's achievements, the Inner West Council was awarded the AR Bluett Memorial Award in 2023 for the most outstanding council in New South Wales. Some of the achievements of the Inner West Council under Peter's leadership include redeveloping Ashfield Aquatic Centre, introducing food recycling for every home, rolling out the biggest electric vehicle charging infrastructure anywhere in Australia and, later this year, completing the Cooks River to Iron Cove GreenWay. Thank you and congratulations, Peter, for your decades of service in the community.

I would like to recognise and welcome home the Briars women's rugby team, who had the honour of travelling to Japan in January to compete in the prestigious Nanairo Cup. It was the trip of a lifetime, and the players covered the cost of the trip themselves through fundraising. I visited their training session before they left to wish them well and was so impressed by their commitment to their club and their sport. The team included many international debutantes on their first overseas tour. They made it to the finals and played well, winning their first game 45-5 and their second game 38-10 and placing eighth overall.

Congratulations to the president of Briars women's rugby, David Lannan; all the coaches; volunteers; and players. A huge congratulations to women's player Ameena Kanj, who has also been selected to play in the Lebanon 7s national team. She'll be Briars women's rugby team's first international cap. A big thank you to coach Kruger Roache, who joined the club 12 months ago and elevated the quality and experience of the team. To everyone at Briars women's rugby: you've made us all very proud.

I would like to recognise and thank Communities for Communities in Canada Bay. They've had a wonderful summer of activities, including their annual Christmas carols. This volunteer-run charity began with a conversation between friends at the Drummoyne swimming pool. Since its inception in 2002, the charity has worked to create lasting partnerships between our community and communities around Sydney, around Australia and around the world. Through Christmas carols, Drummoyne fun days, the Gravy Day Apron Fundraiser, their gala dinners and other events, Communities for Communities demonstrate how to think globally and act locally.

This incredible organisation has engaged 1,800 volunteers; organised over 150 events; raised more than \$3 million; built 920 houses across Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea; and supported 2,400 families. Locally, they have supported the fabulous Lucas Gardens School in Five Dock since 2003, raising money for physiotherapy, classroom technology, the all-ability school bus, incursions to the school and the all abilities playground.

They have engaged in regional partnerships, working with the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council to empower Indigenous youth, and are raising money to support Australians affected by floods in Queensland and bushfires. To President Lance Brooks, Vice-President Hannah Rayment and every volunteer: thank you so much for your time, generosity and commitment.

Federal Election

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (19:40): As the election fast approaches, people are becoming more politically engaged than they are normally. Unfortunately, there will be the usual spin, smoke and mirrors, and vote-buying attempts. I've watched in dismay in previous years as taxpayers' hard-earned taxes have been thrown about with no planning or consultation just to buy a vote.

I want to assure the people of Longman that for six years, I've been working with our community groups, sporting clubs and local council, as well as everyday Australians who live in Longman, to really discover what it is that this community needs. These needs have been costed properly and methodically. I've taken those needs to Canberra, and I'll shortly be announcing which projects I've been able to secure funding for as an election promise.

In the past, other candidates have just made rash promises based on emotion, often without any planning or consultation, which has resulted in the City of Moreton Bay council often having to fund the shortfall at the cost of the ratepayer. This is completely irresponsible and unfair to the council, who have their own budgetary limitations.

This election is vital to our nation, as all elections are, because a good government will bring with it a better standard of living, which benefits all.

Over the past three years, we've seen a government, who, in my view, has had the wrong priorities and policies. As a result, the Australian people's standard of living has suffered. We have seen a record 12 interest rate rises, which have resulted in the average weekly mortgage repayment rising by over \$400. Not only have these interest rate rises hurt aspirational Australians paying off their family home; it has hurt renters. Mums and dads who have bought an investment property to assist with their retirement have suffered the same interest rate rises.

I spoke to one of those landlords in my community. He said: 'I work for the council, and my wife works in retail. We both earn a modest income, but the mortgage on our rental property has increased by \$400 per week. We simply had to pass on \$150 per week of that to our tenant, which we didn't want to do, but we had no choice. We've had to fund the \$250 shortfall out of our family budget, and we are barely scraping through.' This is not an uncommon conversation. In fact, sadly, it is more than normal.

Under this government, we've seen increases of 10 per cent in health, 11 per cent in education, 12 per cent for food, 13½ per cent for housing, 17 per cent for rents, 19 per cent for insurance and 32 per cent for electricity, before taxpayer funded government rebates. Labor continuously claimed at the last election campaign that Australians would be better off under their leadership, but the reality is the exact opposite.

The news just gets worse, with the International Monetary Fund projecting that, in 2025, Australia will have the second-worst inflation of any developed country—second only to the Slovak Republic. Let us never forget that while inflation and interest rates were exploding this government, for the first 18 months of their term, were obsessed with the divisive Voice referendum that cost taxpayers \$500 million.

But there is hope for the Australian people. If elected, the coalition will put Australians first by reigniting that great Australian dream of owning a home. This housing crisis, which Labor created by allowing 1.2 million immigrants to come into the country in the first two years of their government, drove housing demand up so high that prices became out of reach for Australians trying to get into the market.

If elected, we will reduce immigration to 140,000 for the first two years, and then increase it to 150,000 the following year and 160,000 the year after that. If elected, we will also ban foreign investors and temporary residents from purchasing existing homes so that housing becomes more affordable for Australians. Only the coalition will reduce the cost of living by responsible economic management.

We will strengthen Medicare and the health system to ensure Australians get better, more affordable health care. We will lower energy costs through our new energy mix plan, which includes not only renewables but gas and nuclear energy. We will ensure safer communities by getting tougher on violent offenders and boosting our border and defence forces.

So I say to all those in the community that I serve, when you vote, forget the spin, the inevitable untruths and the mudslinging. Simply ask yourself: Do I feel safer and more secure than I did three years ago? Am I better off than I was three years ago? It's time to get Australia back on track, led by Peter Dutton and his coalition team.

Austral, Ms Marbine

Ms SCRYMGOUR (Lingiari) (19:45): Today I rise to honour the life of a bright and inspiring community leader named Marbine Austral. Tragically, Marbine recently took her own life. I pay my condolences to her family and, particularly, to all of my people on the Tiwi Islands who are mourning. Marbine was an extraordinary person who lived an extraordinary life. She was the Tiwi Islands' first female ranger, an inspiration for women and First Nations people alike.

Just two years ago, Marbine walked the halls of Parliament House with many other Indigenous rangers and traditional owners to celebrate 25 years of Indigenous Protected Areas. She met many MPs and senators in this place. As a ranger, she was passionate about sustainable land management and conservation. At the time, Marbine also met with me and my Labor government colleagues the Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek, and the then Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, as well as Greens senator Dorinda Cox. I still have a photograph on my desk of the five of us together. Marbine was also present to witness the first dingo, Pumbah, to ever visit Parliament House, highlighting the protection of dingoes and to raise awareness of the cultural and environmental significance of these amazing animals.

Unfortunately, Marbine is not the first woman from the Tiwi Islands to take her life. Back in 2012, when I was the chair of the Select Committee on Youth Suicides in the Northern Territory, I wrote the report *Gone too soon*, in which I called for more to be done to address youth suicide, as too many of our youth were falling through the gaps and not getting the help that they needed. For far too many of our youth, particularly young women, there is not

enough hope to protect them from the impulse to end their lives. Clearly, things need to change if we are to stop losing our youth, particularly our young women, to their own hand at such a high rate.

Sadly, since October last year, three young women in my home community on the Tiwi Islands have taken their lives. But we're working hard to do something about this issue, which causes terrible pain and devastation for families and tightknit communities like the Tiwi Islands. I welcome our government's commitment of \$842 million, in partnership with the Northern Territory government and the Aboriginal peak organisations in the Northern Territory, which was announced last week, to continue to close the gap and to build a better future for Territorians in remote communities. Amongst its initiatives, this investment increases the availability of culturally-safe and qualified mental health supports, including scholarships for up to 150 First Nations psychology students. We have expanded the Indigenous Rangers Program to create a thousand new jobs, including 770 positions for First Nations women. We must all work together to support our First Nations women.

Although Marbine is no longer with us—and with the blessing of her family I'm using her name. In Tiwi tradition usually a person's name becomes pukumani and cannot be talked about for 12 months. They've agreed for me to use her death and what happened as an example for us—that we must end the silence on suicides and start looking at what we need to do to try and deal with this issue. Marbine and her family can be proud of all that she accomplished. She was our very first Tiwi Islands female ranger. She has gone too soon. She will be sadly missed. But I think the legacy that she leaves behind will serve as an important pathway for many young people: she went from school into a ranger position, which she was very proud of. I think if we can replicate that and encourage more of our young people to do that, then we will see better results in our remote communities to come.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander): How very sad. May she rest in peace.

Barker Electorate: Community Projects

Mr PASIN (Barker) (19:50): Last week, I joined volunteers at the Soldiers Memorial Gardens in Kapunda. Those gardens were officially opened in 1923 and have been an important place for the Kapunda community over the ensuing century. I'm pleased that I was able to announce last week that an elected coalition government would deliver funding of \$65,000 to progress the rejuvenation and restoration of this important community space, providing the project with a much needed funding boost. Dutton Park is a revered community space, and the volunteers who have been quietly but steadfastly working to restore the Soldiers Memorial Gardens should be commended for their dedication and for their commitment. This funding will support the exceptional work being done to honour those who served as well as providing a space for the whole of the Kapunda community to come and show pride in their community. If elected, a Dutton-led coalition government will strengthen local communities and create safer, cohesive societies, and it will get Australians back on track.

The Mount Gambier and District Saleyards Transformation Project has the potential to boost economic activity in the Limestone Coast and support the livestock industry at a time when the Albanese Labor government is making life for our farmers harder and harder. In fact, life is harder for all regional Australians under Labor. Labor has actively undermined and sometimes outright blocked economic development opportunities in regional industries like forestry, fishing, farming and manufacturing. Regional Australia and our nation, more broadly, are missing out on billions of dollars due to Labor's hostile regional policies. The importance of the Mount Gambier and District Saleyards Transformation Project is one such example. It is a project that was shamefully disregarded by the Albanese Labor government not once but twice, or three times if you include the cancellation of round 6 for the Building Better Regions Fund.

Labor consistently fails to appreciate the enormous contribution our farmers make to local communities, our national economy and the global food task. It's blatantly obvious that Labor is more interested in playing politics and prioritising states and seats that the Prime Minister is desperate to hold on to and win in the upcoming election. In stark contrast, an elected coalition government will lean back into and support Aussie farmers. Under an elected coalition government, \$7.5 million of federal funding would be made available to this project moving forward. That would benefit the Limestone Coast community and the wider agricultural industry. It would make sure the transformation project takes place, including improving animal welfare and occupational health and safety. That's because this side of the chamber understands that investing in our regions ensures that those regions will continue to be the powerhouses of our economy and the vibrant communities that are the lifeblood of our nation.

Finally, I don't know how many times I've stood in this chamber and talked about Kingston child care. It has been a lot. They have been in desperate need of a childcare facility for almost half a century. In 2019, the council and community formed an official working party to tackle the issue because it was impacting the economic fabric of the whole region. After deciding the only way to solve the problem was a purpose-built centre, there was planning and costings to obtain funding from both the state and the federal governments.

In the lead up to the 2022 federal election, I was honoured to provide a commitment \$1.8 million to make this childcare facility a reality. I acknowledge those opposite who matched the pledge—to their credit. Disappointingly, Labor's funding didn't eventuate until mid last year, and along came a new hurdle. Costs had massively increased in the interim. So there was the need for another funding application. I'm so pleased that the group of hardworking volunteers in Kingston, working to bring an expanded childcare service to a reality, will receive a grant of \$3.5 million. It's a massive win, and I welcome it. That being said, we must see action immediately because it's now handed to the South Australian state Labor government. We can't see the delays that we saw after 2022; otherwise, we will be back here asking for further grant funding to deliver this outcome.

Lalor Electorate: Infrastructure
Albanese Government: Health Care

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Chief Government Whip) (19:55): Life in a growth corridor is often complex. There are challenges and there are great opportunities. One of the challenges of life in a growth corridor is keeping up with infrastructure. That's why I was so pleased to stand with Minister Catherine King to announce a \$125 million funding for the M1 and Werribee main road interchange. This will see the redevelopment of an 80-year-old interchange turned into a double-lane bridge, which will relieve people trying to get off the M1 to return to their homes in Wyndham Vale and Manor Lakes, past the Werribee exit. It's an extraordinary thing to have the privilege to make those announcements. I want to thank all the members of the community who contacted me over the past 12 months to alert me to the danger that's been happening as people have been banking up in the emergency lane because Geelong traffic has the right of way there, so this modernisation will work for the first half of the Wyndham link to make sure the Ison Road traffic can move quickly through. I can't stress how much we need to get that work started to ensure the safety of locals.

We also announced a \$47.15 million commitment to untangle a very complex intersection on Ballan Road, Greens Road and McGrath Road, which is currently a large roundabout. It will get traffic lights and a modernisation, as well as some care and concern about the people riding and pedestrians using the area as well—both great announcements. I am really proud. Thank you to all those who alerted me to the congestion issues. I'm pleased to be part of a government that has heard that and is going to be part of delivering that solution.

The other thing I want to talk about tonight is to put context around what the Labor Albanese government has been doing in health. Let's just go through what that context is. We know those opposite need to find \$600 billion, supposedly, for their nuclear fantasy, and we know that they're talking about cutting \$350 billion out of the budget if they win government. I know they once famously said 'no cuts to health' before they cut \$50 billion from hospitals, from national partnerships. I know they tried to introduce a GP tax, and we beat that back from opposition. So, in response, they froze the Medicare levy for four years. The current Leader of the Opposition is responsible for that, followed up by the former prime minister and then health minister, Scott Morrison, extending that freeze for two years. They actively undermined our world-renowned universal healthcare system. They tried to Americanise our system and they would do it again. Don't take my word for it. We've seen it; they've got form.

But locally, those opposite did something I will find always hard to forgive. They cut Wyndham out of the priority area for the training of international doctors to Australian registration. This led to a 30 per cent reduction in GPs in my community. This side of government has reinstated that priority area, and we've seen the number of GPs rise in response in this first term. We've introduced cheaper medicines. We've done half a billion dollars for women's health. Also, not only have we reinstated that priority area, in government, those opposite delivered MRI Medicare rebated licences to Geelong, which already had them, while ignoring Wyndham and the whole of the west of Melbourne, which didn't have any until you got to Sunshine. This government has fixed that. In 2025 we will have a local MRI rebated licence, followed by a second one in 2026.

This government is delivering. We've tripled the bulk-billing incentive. We've opened 87 urgent care clinics across the country; there is one in Werribee. Those opposite, if given the opportunity, will decimate health care, decimate Medicare and decimate hospital funding, and do the small things that cut into our capacity to offer universal health care. It is something we on this side are very proud of and something Australians rely on.

BUSINESS

Orders of the Day

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Chief Government Whip) (20:00): I declare that the Federation Chamber order of the day government business Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 stands returned to the House for further consideration.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander): The matter will be set down for consideration at a later hour this day.

BILLS**AusCheck Amendment (Global Entry Program) Bill 2025****Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (20:01): We have a very deep connection with the United States. We have a political connection; they're one of the oldest continuing democracies. We have business connections, diplomatic connections and government connections through our military and intelligence agencies, but we also have a deep connection to the United States with people-to-people links. I say this from personal experience with my own family, my wife being an American and my three children being dual citizens. We travel to the US frequently, like many Australians. We're going to see more and more travel to the United States over the coming decade, particularly with AUKUS as we build out our industrial base, share technology and embed Australians with the United States military enterprise. Tourism is something that will continue—we see a lot of sporting connections and travel through that—and our industry, of course.

We want to work out ways we can make that travel a little easier, which is why the US Global Entry program is important. That's why this bill, the AusCheck Amendment (Global Entry Program) Bill 2025, expands Australia's participation in the US Global Entry program. What is the program? Eligible citizens of trusted partner countries can have access to faster entry and US passports, and we want to make this available to Australians and make life easier for them. This bill amends the AusCheck Act 2007 to establish the legislative basis for the fulfilment of Australia's background-checking obligations under the United States Global Entry program. When implemented, the Global Entry program will allow Australians access to expedited immigration and Customs channels when entering the United States. The bill achieves this objective by expanding the regulation-making power in the AusCheck Act to allow for the expansion of the AusCheck scheme for the purpose of GEP background checks.

To make this happen, the bill also makes a number of consequential and supporting amendments to the AusCheck Act, including new definitions in subsection 4(1) of the act to support the amendments relating to GEP background checks; amending the existing definition of 'AusCheck scheme personal information' to include information obtained by an agency for the purposes of GEP background checks; amending the definition of 'background check' in section 5 of the act to expand the types of background checks permissible under the AusCheck scheme for the GEP, which also includes a check for certain offences under the Defence Force Discipline Act 1982, which will meet the USA's eligibility criteria for the program; and finally, inserting a new section, 10AB, in the AusCheck Act which provides a regulation-making power to prescribe the matters in regulation that are to be covered by the AusCheck scheme when conducting background checks in connection with the GEP.

We support the policy intent of this bill. Very simply, we want Australians to have a better experience at the other end of their journey to the United States with expedited entry through Customs in the United States. Streamlined travel arrangements will benefit frequent travellers to the United States and promote better business linkages and people-to-people links.

The strategic background to this is AUKUS, a massive, multigenerational nation-building endeavour that will see a lot of people coming from and going to the US. I think it's really important that we start streamlining our military, our industrial base and our government to support this, but also arrangements like this will really facilitate those people-to-people movements.

I want to recognise the important work of staff at the Department of Home Affairs, who have been working on this important reform for many years. It's good to see this work finally coming to fruition. I note this bill was only introduced to the House yesterday, so we are still working through the detail. We will ensure the bill is fit for purpose in achieving its stated objectives.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Ms THWAITES (Jagajaga—Assistant Minister for Women, Assistant Minister for Social Security and Assistant Minister for Ageing) (20:06): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (20:07): As I rise to speak on the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, I do so with a certain amount of frustration for my constituents on the north-west, the west coast and King Island in the great state of Tasmania, a state which you will know, Deputy Speaker Freeland, is renowned for the production of renewable energy. It has done so for the past 100 years. Tasmania is already net zero. It is the only state or territory in the country to have such a status. It is a status that we are very proud of in the great state of Tasmania.

Along with that is our beauty. Tasmania is a beautiful state. Those who have visited my state will attest to that. Those who haven't need to get their backsides down to the great state of Tasmania and take all that in—our rugged coastlines, rainforests, arid farming regions and mountainous areas. It is a beautiful place of which I am profoundly proud. As I look out across my farm, I see the rolling green hills of north-west Tasmania, with the rich arable and volcanic derivative soil, growing potatoes, peas, beans, broccoli, carrots, onions and opium poppies, with black cattle off in the distance. In the far distance is the beautiful Bass Strait and our coastlines, coastlines that we are very proud of.

That leads me into this issue and aligns with this particular amendment, which seeks to put a smear on the face of our beautiful coastlines. In Tasmania, we have already taken the liberty over the last more than 100 years of making ourselves, as a state and as a community, 100 per cent renewable, as I stated at the beginning of my speech. We've done the right thing. We are the only state or territory to have done so. Why, then, do we have to look out our windows at our beautiful coastline and have that blemished by wind towers, some in excess of 280 or 300 metres tall? Why do we have to do that? Why do our shipping lanes, with currently unimpeded access both in and out of our great state, need to be impeded by such structures? As you would know and as you would appreciate, Deputy Speaker Freeland, everything in our state comes by boat, by ship. Very little is flown in and out; it mainly comes by ship into either Burnie or Devonport.

Our port in Burnie, which is Tasmania's largest port, is approximately five million tonnes, including woodchips that go to the Chinese market; minerals that come from our west coast; polymetallics, lead, copper, tin, zinc, silver, manganese, tungsten and many other minerals. These are loaded and shipped out through our Burnie port. Five million tonnes of containerised freight.

If we move to Devonport, the second-largest port in Tasmania, it is 3.7 million tonnes. It is the home of the *Spirits*. That's where our ferries come in and out of our passenger terminal, come in and out of the great state of Tasmania. These are both great ports, No. 1 and No. 2, in Tasmania. We don't want them impeded by 300-metre wind towers everywhere when we've already done the right thing and gotten ourselves to 100 per cent renewable. We are producing in excess of 10,400 gigawatt hours. That's enough to power one million homes and small businesses. We can do that. What we want to do is to develop the Marinus Link project, which will provide us the ability to trade excess renewable energy with our mainland colleagues who so desperately need it.

The other thing with hydro that people don't understand is that it is a base load energy. When you turn the tap on and the water runs down the hill, gravity does that—it's a great thing in Tasmania; we've got gravity! Heaven forbid, when that happens that energy can be used at any time. That means it is dispatchable and that means it is the sort of energy that the remainder of the country needs.

What we don't want to see is this renewable religion creeping into our great state, creeping along our coastlines and our beautiful outlook. I fear the government is pushing this legislation through so that they can achieve that religious ideology—

Mr Hogan: To further it.

Mr PEARCE: to further it—100 per cent! Instead of working collaboratively with industry, instead of working collaboratively with communities—communities need to have a say. It's their backyard. It's their view. Communities need to have a say in this process. My job isn't to say whether we should or shouldn't do something; my job is to represent the views of my electorate and put that to the government, put that to this place, so that my constituents are heard.

It's not my job to say whether something is right or wrong; it's my job to ensure that the process is followed. And in this case, in this particular bill, the process has not been followed. The process has been circumvented. This bill is a shortcut. This bill is being jammed through, and I fear trickery. It doesn't look good. It doesn't bode well for the views of my electorate, those good communities, those good people out there, who just want to have a say on what

they're looking at from their homes and their businesses. It's not on. I'm all about looking people in the eye and asking them how they feel. That's something the government hasn't done in this case.

The other issue that we need to talk about, when we start talking about Tasmania, is the ability for Tasmania to grow. Now, in order for any country to grow they need to grow their base load energy production. It unlocks industry and it unlocks potential. It aids in providing businesses with the energy that they need for 24/7 operations. I will use Tasmania as an example. As I said, Tasmania consumes around 10,500 gigawatt hours of energy each year. Around 86 or 86½ per cent of that is through hydro. It comes from 54 hydro dams and 30 power stations. Some have been operating for 110 years. That hydro energy is made up by wind and solar. We've already got that. In order for the wind and solar industries—if you like—to develop and grow, they need access to market.

That's where Project Marinus comes in. That's where the two dual 750-megawatt DC cables that go from my electorate into Victoria come in. It allows the excess renewable energy from the great state of Tasmania, which is 100 per cent renewable, to be exported and sold. It also allows the safeguard that, if we do run low on water, like during a dry year or a drought, we get import energy as well. It goes both ways. It's a wonderful option. We've already got that in Project Marinus.

It was initially a 600-megawatt DC cable, but there's a six-hour cool-off period with that cable before we can reverse polarity, so that's why we've now downgraded that to about 480 megawatts of energy, which is insufficient for our renewable operators to operate in the market. So, if you want to make energy cheaper in the state of Tasmania, then you need to make more units. How do you make more units? You increase the scale. How do you increase the scale in an island state that's not connected? We need those dual 750-megawatt cables that link Tasmania to the mainland. That allows more units to be made cheaper, and we provide reliable, cheap, baseload energy free from offshore wind. We've already got enough on our beautiful state.

However, we're seeing that process being stalled. We want to see Marinus move ahead. We want to see that expedited and moved ahead so industry can move ahead. Out of that 10,400 gigawatt hours of energy, Rio Tinto Alcan in Bell Bay, an aluminium smelter, consumed about 25 to 26 per cent of that entire production. So, you see, 25 per cent is being consumed by one business. That's a quarter. What we're saying is we need to grow that. We need to make more units. We need to make those units cheaper in order to make that reliable and cheap for Tasmanians first, and then, if we've got any excess, we can look after the mainland. We need to look after Tasmania first.

The other thing it'll do is create potential growth for future businesses. If you are a business somewhere, say the south of France, and you were looking for a place to start a business as a reasonable energy consumer, why wouldn't you set up in Tasmania? It's 100 per cent renewable. If Tasmania were its own country, it would be in the top 5 countries in the world to reach 100 per cent renewable, and it's not talked about. It's not spoken about, but we should be singing this from the hilltops. Tasmania is a great state. Tasmania has great potential. We don't need Mr Bowen at all—and I mean that from the bottom of my heart. I don't need him down there with his wind towers, and I particularly don't need him shoving this particular legislation through like the sneaky little minister that he is. We don't need that in Tasmania.

We're upfront, and I'd rather say to my constituents—I'd rather say to my people—'What do you think?' and have them look me in the eye and tell me what their heart tells them. This is their home. Families have lived here for generations, and I want my state protected. I want my constituents listened to. I respect my constituents. I respect them deeply, and all I'm asking is for this government to share that same respect. Show a little bit of contrition, allow this to go to public consultation, listen to people's feedback and follow the due process. It's not a big ask. It's fair, and, if Mr Bowen wants to be fair, then he's going to have to start getting a little more fair dinkum as far as I'm concerned because this bill sucks. This bill stinks; this bill reeks of sneakiness and underhandedness. It's almost evil.

In closing, my advice for Mr Bowen: have a little respect for the people of the north-west, the west coast and King Island in the great state of Tasmania. Think about where they're coming from, think about their position, think about their homes, think about their futures and think about their family, their children and their children's children. Think about that before you go ramming some piece of legislation through here, because, I tell you what, they probably want to do the same to you. Heaven knows it mightn't be a bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Freeland): Please address your comments through the chair.

Mrs MARINO (Forrest) (20:20): I concur that the Minister for Climate Change and Energy has not used the right process—a terrible process, in fact—for the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. But I just want people to consider the burden that Labor's massive renewables-only energy policy is having on regional and rural Australia. Just think about this: Labor's plan includes nearly 60 million solar panels, over 3,500 new wind turbines and 28,000 kilometres of new transmission lines, all in rural and regional areas. We know that the

government will need to double the size of the transmission grid just to connect all of this new renewable energy, but, if it's double the size, I suspect it will be double the price and the cost—cost that will be added to families' and businesses' power bills. As we know, these endless kilometres of wind turbines and solar panels and 28,000 kilometres of additional transmission lines are impacting rural and regional areas, and farmers and food production. This is also, sadly, dividing neighbours, dividing friends and dividing communities. That's appalling.

I'm also concerned about reports regarding the fine plastic coming off turbines over time and farmers having to make declarations that will affect their businesses, their markets and their profits in time. I read that farmers who graze livestock under solar panels, wind turbines or other renewable energy infrastructure must now declare it under the national on-farm livestock assurance program. Equally, I understand that this change to the Livestock Production Assurance program was quietly introduced in September. Farmers and producers are rightly very concerned about the potential consequences of this. Meat & Livestock Australia contracts a company called Integrity Systems Company to manage its Livestock Production Assurance process. This process requires farmers to identify any chemical or physical contamination risks to livestock from equipment or infrastructure that may be degrading with age. Solar panels and wind turbines are both cited as examples, because solar panels degrade as they reach end of life, and it will be farmers who bear the cost and the risk of these solar panels and wind turbines as they degrade. I just hope they're actually aware of these risks. We've even recently seen the collapse of a wind turbine.

I also read that the Minister for Climate Change and Energy has appointed Tony Maher as his Energy Infrastructure Commissioner to deliver the government's wind tower and transmission plans in regional and farming areas. Tony Maher, as we know, was the CEO of the National Farmers Federation for many years. I'd say to farmers, 'I hope you're aware that the role of the Energy Infrastructure Commissioner will be to deliver the wind, solar and transmission plans for the government, not for you.' I also wonder whether farmers will be made aware of all the current and future costs and responsibilities they will have, and I wonder whether their obligations under the integrity systems will actually be explained to them at all.

On top of all of this, farmers and small businesses will now have to report their scope 3 emissions. This endless green tape process will cost each one of us, those of us who are farmers. I can see this also, maybe, as a mechanism the Labor government will use to impose methane and additional carbon taxes on the farming sector once they actually announce their 2035 emissions reduction targets, which they haven't done and were supposed to do in February.

Mr Hogan: After the election, I think.

Mrs MARINO: Yes. It's farmers that are actually the targets. In the South West of WA, in what is the iconic and beautiful Geographe Bay, Labor has decided to build a wind factory. It has declared a zone of 4,000 square kilometres with massive turbines of nearly 300 metres from base to blade tip—close to 1,000 turbines—with prices and profits for investors underpinned by Labor's Capacity Investment Scheme, which now means the profits of these offshore companies will be underwritten by Australian taxpayers year on year. All of this is off the federal budget.

With the wind factory proposal, what we saw in the South West was a terrible and arrogant and superficial, badly named—misnamed—'public consultation'. It wasn't a consultation. It was typical of the steamrolling of regional communities that we're seeing in other states. Over time, I suspect our communities will be left with this rusting infrastructure in one of the most loved, visited and enjoyed areas in Australia, Geographe Bay. Of all places, Geographe Bay is the wrong place. This is for locals and for domestic and international visitors. This is where the diving, the fishing, the camping and the recreational and commercial fishing and boating happen. No wonder our communities are so strongly opposed to this. They didn't want it, and they are absolutely strong and active and vocal in their opposition, angered and frustrated by the process, a bit like that of this bill, of terribly arrogant and superficial consultation. It wasn't consultation at all. And the representatives at these sessions couldn't even answer basic questions for us about exclusion zones. They told us that the exclusion zones could range from 50 to 500 metres around each turbine and the actual distance would not be known for up to 10 to 12 years. How's that? Over time, our community would be left with rusting and aging massive turbines that need to be replaced on a regular basis or left for taxpayers to deal with. It's one or the other. It's a regular replacement. The Leader of the Opposition came to the electorate and said that we will not proceed. The coalition will not proceed with this project if the coalition wins government. I see that four of the proposed proponents of this project have pulled out of the application process. The deadline for the applications was pushed back twice and ended last month.

But here's something else. I also read that Australia's oldest commercial wind farm, the Chinese-owned Pacific Blue, has said it will not re-power the site at Codrington in Victoria, because it will be too expensive. So here we are. These are supposed to keep going. They're supposed to be endless wind and solar. We have a site that was commissioned—

Mr Hogan: Wind is supposed to be free.

Mrs MARINO: Right. We have a site that was commissioned in 2001, and it will have to be decommissioned in 2027 because it's too expensive to re-power. Will this be repeated? How often? The company has yet to announce what it will do with the neighbouring Yambuk wind farm, commissioned in 2007. We'll wait and see what happens there. I suspect the same will happen with offshore wind turbines as well.

Labor's renewables-only policy is failing the Australian people and failing business and failing families. The cost of energy is driving businesses absolutely to the wall or to fail or to consider leaving Australia. Labor's energy approach is actually five times the cost that Australians were initially promised. Families and businesses are bearing this cost. It is obscene, in a resource-rich country like Australia. It is absolutely obscene. Energy bills have risen by up to 52 per cent, and more than 27,000 businesses have been forced to close their doors. There's no doubt that soaring energy costs are a major reason for these closures. These high-energy costs apply right throughout your input—at all stages of your input. Every input will involve an energy cost, and that adds to your cost of doing business. Business and industry—ACCI and COSBOA's—concerns are being totally ignored by the government. How on earth can Labor talk about a future made in Australia when business, industry and households don't have affordable, dispatchable power? It's that simple. What is even worse, Labor is putting Australia's energy security into China's hands. Every 20 to 25 years, the wind turbines and solar panels that are made mostly in China will have to be replaced. We will be dependent on China for our energy security, and this will compromise our national security. Anyone in this House knows, and everyone should know, that energy security and national security are actually the same thing. You can't have one without the other.

In WA we are short of power, and in my electorate I have businesses and industries that are paid by AEMO to switch off their processing to feed the power into the grid just to keep the lights and air conditioners on in Perth. I've even seen what I think is power rationing over summer in the south-west in my area, even at my home and on our farm. Synergy, the state government owned energy generator, is supposed to provide between 220 and 250 volts to my house. Over summer it got down to 212 and 214 volts only. I've had Synergy out to have a look at this. We have to have a generator because we can't be sure we're going to have power. You can imagine, with this type of power and generator, then trying to connect the transfer box, what was going on in that space.

We've seen prices increasing in WA significantly. WA-owned power company Synergy recently sent me an email saying they were increasing my small businesses' power bills. It is happening to small businesses right across Western Australia. They are reporting 30 per cent increases in price in some instances. But Synergy offered me a special deal, a subsidised deal where, as a taxpayer, my taxes would be paying a government subsidy. This is the WA government with a hand in each of my pockets at once. This is just another example of the challenges we're facing with energy in Western Australia. As we know in WA, we have a significant amount of gas, and gas is the transition fuel in Western Australia. It is up to the state government and to Synergy to make sure that we have the power we need in our businesses and our households. It should not be that businesses and industries in my electorate have to turn off and stop their production just so that they can keep the lights on in Perth and keep enough power in the system. There is a shortage of power even in Western Australia, of all places.

Mr Hogan: Shame!

Mrs MARINO: Yes, shame! The greatest concern is when I'm watching the damage that's being done to rural and regional Australia, and when I look at those desperate farmers in Victoria, they've got no choice. They're just going to get steamrolled, and I am so concerned about them. There are also concerns around fire in those same communities, with insurance premiums going up. One thing leads to another, but none of this burden is felt by basically anyone on that side, nor by the government at all. On that basis, I conclude my remarks.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Opposition Whip) (20:33): It is a pleasure to rise on the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. It's interesting that the government wants to ram these provisions through the House, given that the bill is still under review by a Senate committee. It tells us much about this government's agenda and what they want to do. I know in some brief conversation I had with the member for Spence in the lead-up to my remarks, I noted that once again we see the government waxing lyrical about its green energy plans. As usual, the promise of the government's programs and policies bears little resemblance to the actual delivery and the impact on the ground. But we're used to that now, and the Australian people are increasingly waking up to that reality.

What we find is that Labor refuses to tell Australians how much offshore wind will cost and how much they will have to pay on their power bills. In fact, we have no idea what Labor's grand green scheme of 82 per cent by 2030 is going to cost the Australian people because they refuse to even make an attempt to detail what the true cost will be. As the member for Forrest rightly pointed out, there is a multitude of holes in this policy big enough to drive a Mack truck through.

Now, in this case, Labor is changing the rules after the fact, which creates uncertainty for investors and raises the risk profile for energy projects in Australia. The government has completely ignored industry stakeholders on this bill, rushing through legislation that directly affects major investment decisions without proper consultation. Well, knock me down with a feather. This isn't the first time this government has done this. They have a track record over the past three years of ramming legislation through this place, with a fig leaf of consultation. But, when you actually scratch the surface, there has been no consultation, or maybe at best, to give them a little bit of credit—which they're probably not due, but I'll give them a little bit—they've made some attempt to speak with their favoured groups but not all affected stakeholders. That's their track record. They speak to their favourite groups and not the full range of impacted stakeholders. More importantly what we find in many of the consultation processes is that they get people to sign non-disclosure agreements so you can't even have an open and public debate about the proposals the government is putting forward.

I find that incredibly interesting, because I seem to remember—and the shadow minister at the table might correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm sure he won't—that this current government came to power in 2022 promising an era of openness, transparency and letting the sun shine in.

Mr Hogan: Yeah, what happened to that?

Mr VAN MANEN: 'What happened to that?' the shadow minister at the table quite rightly asks. Well, it has only been closed doors, non-disclosure agreements and a failure to be transparent with the Australian people. With this piece of legislation we see exactly the same process being rolled out.

Now, it's interesting to note that the government has steamrolled ahead with offshore wind zones without any proper consultation, with a backlash across the country from the affected communities. But, interestingly, major players have also abandoned offshore wind projects due to cost blowouts, regulatory uncertainty and economic unfeasibility. Importantly—and incompetence is a hallmark of this government, so I'm not really that surprised—the government keeps pretending that offshore wind is booming. But the market says otherwise.

So where are we with all of this? Well, we're here today because the Labor government have been so rushed to get more onshore wind that they forgot to finish writing the regulations. As usual, it's about politics and not about the quality of the policy. The government is attempting to push a bill through parliament without scrutiny before the election so the minister—and I'm pleased to see that the minister is in the House for the final bits of this debate—can make announcements during the campaign. They're very good at making announcements, but the follow-up tends to be rather lacking. As I said in a previous contribution in this House today, nine times out of 10, if you listen to what they say, it's complete nonsense in reality. There's a vast gulf between what they say and what they actually do.

As we look at the government's energy plan overall, there's a continuing blank cheque for higher power bills. I remember, as the shadow minister at the table would remember and as my colleague the member for Fadden would remember, the Prime Minister promised 97 times during the election campaign that Australians would get a \$275 cut to their power bills. Instead, we are seeing families paying up to \$1,000 more under Labor's costly and chaotic energy plans. They tried to buy off the Australian people with a \$300 rebate this financial year. The Australian people are a bit smarter than that. We've seen in the last week or so Moody's confirm that it will cost up to \$230 billion over the next 10 years and drive up household electricity prices another 25 per cent in that time. This is yet another independent warning that the government's renewables-only approach will hurt Australians, forcing families and businesses to the wall.

I know from talking to businesses in my electorate that the cost impact for them business-wise of energy prices is extraordinary. They are seeing increases in gas prices of more than 50 per cent. I know in general we talk about 34 per cent in the household sector, but in the business sector there have been 50, 100 and 200 per cent increases in gas prices. That is making their ability to keep their doors open and keep hardworking Australians employed increasingly difficult. This government doesn't seem to really care about that. The government must explain why they continue to pursue a plan which hurts everyday Australians.

This government is also fond of talking about the environmental benefits of offshore wind. Interestingly, I came across an article recently by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. It released a final programmatic environmental impact statement on a wind development in the New York Bight. That's quite interesting reading. The report tries to gloss over the impacts a little bit, because it uses such interesting words as 'outlining measures to avoid, minimise, mitigate and monitor impacts'. Well, what are some of the impacts that they're seeking to minimise? They're seeking to minimise biological impacts. On what? Marine mammals, sea turtles, birds and fish. They could suffer due to noise, habitat displacement and changes in migration patterns. Even bats are mentioned in the report. What other impacts are they seeking to minimise? Physical and socioeconomic impacts. The potential effects on water and air quality, commercial and recreational fishing, tourism and scenic resources are all outlined.

What else? It says mitigation measures are not enough, although the report outlines numerous avoidance, minimisation, mitigation and monitoring measures. That, to me, tells a completely different story from what those opposite propose of the economic and environmental benefits of wind power in particular but also solar.

We've seen in Queensland the impacts of large-scale commercial solar farms on ridge lines in the Great Dividing Range and pristine bushland and koala habitats. These ridge lines are being bulldozed and massive wind turbines are being built. If a farmer wanted to do exactly the same thing, he would not be allowed to do that, but a wind farm company can come in and do that with very few questions asked. Where is the equivalence? If it was a mining company, they wouldn't be allowed to do that, but a wind farm proponent can. The double standard is just extraordinary.

As I look at all of these things, the amount of money involved and the lack of life span of these projects, and I look at the impact on Australian business and Australian households as a result, all I can think of and describe these projects as is a boondoggle. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a 'boondoggle' as 'an expensive and wasteful project usually paid for with public money'. I think that covers it! Google says it's 'work or activity that is wasteful or pointless but gives the appearance of having value'. I think that covers it very well. Wikipedia says it's 'a project that is considered a waste of both time and money yet is often continued due to extraneous policy or political motivations'.

That is the best definition of these wind farm projects and this legislation I could find. It's why the coalition stands opposed to this legislation and we stand implacably opposed to the energy policies put forward by this reckless and hopeless government because all its going to do is send Australia into bankruptcy.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Climate Change and Energy) (20:46): At the outset, I wish to thank all honourable members for their contributions. I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on the debate on the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The passage of the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 provides for the consistent and equal treatment of all applications under the offshore electricity infrastructure licensing scheme. It's necessary to ensure all feasibility licence decisions are underpinned by a fair and competitive scheme for all applicants regardless of which declared area they apply for or when their applications were made. These changes will clarify scheme administration and provide regulatory certainty for feasibility licence applicants as well.

The changes ultimately support the government's climate change and net zero objectives to allow the advancement of world-class offshore renewable energy projects. Offshore wind will provide energy security, reliability and affordability, while also benefiting Australia's national interests including job creation, regional development and investment in coastal communities and economies.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 20:47

NOTICES

Presentation

The following notices were given:

Ms Kearney to make a statement on Wednesday 12 February 2025 on the following significant matter—Women's health.

Ms Rowland to present a bill for an act to amend the Telecommunications Act 1997, and for related purposes. (*Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2025*)

Dr Chalmers to present a bill for an act to appropriate money for guarantees relating to banking in the Pacific region, and for related purposes. (*Pacific Banking Guarantee Bill 2025*)

Tuesday, 11 February 2025

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Payne)** took the chair at 16:00.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Brookie Fest

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (16:00): I want to share with the parliament an incredibly fun and vibrant festival that we have in Warringah, Brookie Fest. It was on last weekend. It's an amazing event that brings so many of our community together. Breweries, distilleries and eateries across Brookvale on Sydney's northern beaches came together to make a really fun festival. The festival had everything from Dachshund races, chilli-eating competitions and skate demos to ice-cold beers, delicious food, great cocktails and live music—everything that brings together a community and a lot of fun.

The businesses behind Brookie Fest are passionate, local businesses driving a local, vibrant energy and economy in the Brookvale area. There are a number of craft breweries and craft distilleries, including gin distilleries and others. There are also eateries and other options. Unlike other small businesses, our local brewers carry a huge financial burden, from growing inflationary pressure to the price of energy and issues around staffing. There's also the question of alcohol excise, especially on spirits, which has jumped 15 per cent in three years. Now that has a huge impact on the local distillery industry.

There is discrepancy in how we treat different industries, particularly craft beer breweries and distilleries. In September last year, the crossbench wrote to the Treasurer asking to reduce the impact of the alcohol excise on distilleries, and, while I appreciate the Assistant Treasurer's response, it did not go to the issue. Our independent brewers and distilleries are the cornerstone of our Warringah community. The closure of these businesses would have a flow-on effect on the local community. They employ locally and support small businesses in the area. It's important the government enact measures that will support these businesses. I call on the government again to freeze the indexation of alcoholic excise until 2026, to index the excise remission cap annually in line with inflation and to extend the deadlines for payback of excise debt to the ATO.

There is another event coming up that's going to be exciting. That is the Sydney Mardi Gras. I can't talk about that without talking about our incredible LGBTQIA+ community and Fusion Pride, a fantastic local project driven by members of our community. Warringah has changed a lot over the years. We're heading for our third year in a row of being part of the Sydney Mardi Gras and celebrating inclusion and all members of our community. I want to give a special shout-out to Sean Moran, who was a member of my team. He has driven that visibility and respect within our Warringah community.

AUKUS

Brand Electorate: Roads

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand—Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia) (16:03): The AUKUS agreement is the single largest defence investment in Australia's history, but it is not just an investment in submarines; it is also a generational investment in infrastructure right across the Brand electorate, infrastructure that will endure and will go beyond simply building submarines and upgrading the base but will ensure the enduring prosperity of Rockingham and surrounding suburbs.

HMAS *Stirling* is right on our doorstep, and our local community is proud to be home to Australia's submarine fleet and thousands of Royal Australian Navy personnel, their families and veterans of the RAN. HMAS *Stirling* has been undergoing significant works for many years now, which is welcome, but the ministers and prime ministers of the formal Liberal government would only ever drive through Rockingham on their way to this very important base.

Unfortunately, for the people of Rockingham, Safety Bay, Shoalwater and surrounding areas, the Liberals gave absolutely no thought whatsoever to the needs of the surrounding community. During their time in government, they did not commit one single cent to improving the local roads or infrastructure in the area. In successive elections, the WA Liberals have been all talk and no action—and there's no doubt they will do it again.

Nine years in the federal government and all the Liberals delivered for Rockingham was hot air. Only Labor is committed to fixing the road infrastructure challenges that face Rockingham right now. Indeed, only Labor has committed funding to fully assess how we improve local roads by utilising the remarkable opportunity that AUKUS provides us with. I've been working really closely with the fantastic member for Rockingham, Magenta Marshall, to make sure our community gets the infrastructure it needs and deserves.

With a joint investment of \$2 million, WA Labor and federal Labor governments have got the ball rolling on improving local roads across Rockingham. A much-needed study will find out the best ways to improve the traffic flow of the local road network to and from this all-important base. And that will include looking at the problematic roads like Parkin Street, Safety Bay Road, Hymus Street and Point Peron Road, which all can be a headache at the best of times. I live in the area. I've seen them. I know they're a problem. And we are dealing with it, unlike the government before us. We want to make sure service women and men and everyone who lives in the area gets home to their families instead of getting stuck in traffic.

But we also need to investigate how the proposed developments will impact on the environment and heritage so we can map out potential challenges and work out how to tackle them. This doesn't need just blase responses. We need to know how we can work with the very important Lake Richmond. We know how important it is to the environment and to the local community who live around it and to all those who come and visit each and every day. I'm really pleased and proud to be working with the member for Rockingham, Magenta Marshall, for the people of Rockingham.

Keppel Bay Sailing Club

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (16:06): The Keppel Bay Sailing Club has been a pillar of the Yeppoon community for more than six decades. Since its establishment in 1957, it has been more than just a sailing club; it has been a place where locals come together, where young people discover their passion for the ocean and where the Capricorn Coast has built a reputation for producing some of Australia's finest sailors. But, as our region continues to grow both in population and as a tourist destination, it became clear that this institution needed to evolve to meet the demands of the future. The club had outgrown its facilities, and there was a real opportunity to create a world-class venue that would not only serve our local sailing community but also drive economic growth and give new opportunities to the Capricorn Coast. That's why I successfully fought to secure \$20 million in federal funding to redevelop the Keppel Bay Sailing Club into a state-of-the-art facility that will benefit locals, businesses and visitors alike.

Mr McCormack: Hear, hear!

Ms LANDRY: And the former Deputy Prime Minister was very helpful in that as well.

This investment is not just about improving a building; it's about investing in the future of our region. The new Keppel Bay Sailing Club now supports over 100 local jobs and is attracting major corporate and sporting events, putting our region on the map and bringing in much-needed tourism dollars. Let's be clear, this kind of investment doesn't happen by accident; it happens because the coalition understands the importance of regional infrastructure. Unlike Labor, who continues to neglect the needs of rural and regional Australians, the coalition delivers real, tangible outcomes, projects that create jobs, grow local economies and strengthen our communities.

Thanks to this redevelopment, the Capricorn Coast now boasts a world-class venue that will drive economic activity for decades to come. The stunning new convention centre overlooks the pristine Keppel Islands. It has already become a drawcard for high-profile events, like the Capricorn business awards. This means more visitors to our region, more heads on beds in our hotels, more customers in our cafes and restaurants and more money in the pockets of hard-working local business owners.

But it's not just about tourism and business; it's about preserving and enhancing a community institution that has been at the heart of Yeppoon for generations. The Keppel Bay Sailing Club has provided a home for local sailors, a gathering place for families, an identity for the Capricorn Coast. Thanks to this investment, it will continue to do so for generations to come. This is the kind of investment our region deserves—one that supports local jobs, boosts the economy and ensures the Capricorn Coast continues to thrive. And this is what the coalition will always fight for—real investment, real outcomes and a stronger future for our regional communities. The Keppel Bay Sailing Club has been an institution for over 60 years, and now, thanks to this redevelopment, it is entering a bold new era.

Education

Mr LIM (Tangney) (16:09): For many of my constituents in Tangney, education is everything. It is the main reason why my wife and I migrated to Australia in 2002. We wanted to give our three children a world-class education. I am so proud I have also experienced Australia's greatest education system. I stand here speaking in English because in my 40s, after I migrated to Australia, I went to TAFE, and my wife and I both studied English. Later I decided I wanted to gain more skills, so I went back to TAFE, this time to study for the police entrance exam. TAFE is an important part of my story, and it is also an important part of the stories of many Australians, including those who attend Murdoch TAFE in my electorate of Tangney.

Since fee-free TAFE started in January 2023, there have been more than 500,000 enrolments. Now, with the Free TAFE Bill guaranteeing 100,000 free TAFE places every year, TAFE will be a part of many more people's success

stories. Fee-free TAFE has changed the lives of so many people, providing cost-of-living relief and a pathway to well-paid and secure employment.

Education is one of the topics that come up most often when I'm doing my doorknocking in my community. Rossmoyne, Willetton and Applecross senior high schools are all in Tangney. All three of these schools rank in the top 10 schools in WA. I am so proud to be part of a Labor government that is making the biggest new investment in WA public schools by the Australian government ever. The more than 21,758 people in Tangney with HECS debts have already started to see their debts reduced, with the Albanese Labor government having fixed the student loan indexation formula. And there's more to come, with Labor's plan to cut all student debts by 20 per cent if the Albanese Labor government is re-elected.

A Tangney constituent of mine named Adam, who lives in Leeming, studied teaching because he wanted to make a positive impact in the community. As a new teacher, he told me that he's so stressed from having his HECS debt and that this deduction would help take the pressure off his mortgage. That's exactly what Labor is doing: taking pressure off the cost of living and ensuring our education system is better and fairer.

Veterans: Graves

Mr PIKE (Bowman) (16:12): Since Federation, our nation's security has been maintained and our nation's identity has been forged by the brave men and women who have served Australia at home and abroad. Each and every one of these brave Australians deserves to be honoured both in life and in death. While 103,000 Australians have paid the ultimate sacrifice, thousands of others faced significant challenges when they returned home. Unfortunately, too many of these ex-service men and women are not honoured in the way they deserve, as their final resting places do not commemorate their great service to this nation.

The Australian Remembrance Army is a volunteer organisation committed to restoring and correctly commemorating the graves of Australians who have served. In Cleveland Cemetery, within my electorate, the Remembrance Army has been busy within the past month identifying unmarked graves of veterans. Through their research, they have confirmed 19 graves, all belonging to veterans of the world wars, that are unmarked, taking the total tally of Australian war veterans in the cemetery to 421.

Under the previous coalition government, federal assistance was available to organisations like the Remembrance Army as they undertook this valuable mission to appropriately commemorate the private graves of World War I veterans. The program benefited from a \$3.7 million funding commitment under the previous coalition government after a pilot program placed 1,189 markers on these resting places. Labor promised to match the coalition's \$3.7 million funding ahead of the election, but their first budget cut the funding by more than half, to \$1.5 million across four years, and it was revealed in Senate estimates late last year that Labor has now cut the funding to \$437,000 over four years.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs statement in Senate estimates last November revealed that funding of over \$18,000 was spent in 2023-24, to deliver only 42 graves. Given that some 271,800 service personnel returned to Australia from the First World War and the experts inform me that an estimated 12,000 are buried in unmarked graves, at the current rate it will take the federal government 283 years to complete this process. This is before we even get to the hundreds of thousands of World War II graves, which should also be appropriately commemorated. This simply isn't good enough. No matter whether they fell in service or not, every Australian who fought to defend our nation deserves to be honoured. I call on the government not just to reinstate the previous amount of funding that was available but to supercharge it, to ensure that the volunteer conservators and researchers of the Australian Remembrance Army can continue to do their vital work, not just getting through the World War I veterans but also getting on to those of World War II.

Future Made in Australia (Production Tax Credits and Other Measures) Bill 2024

Ms LAWRENCE (Hasluck) (16:15): Yesterday, I was lucky enough to join the member for Swan and to second the motion that she moved, speaking to the importance of our critical minerals sector and of passing the legislation for the production tax credits for both critical minerals, including rare earths, and hydrogen. I am absolutely shocked and aghast that last night the Liberal senators representing Western Australia failed to back that legislation in.

In Western Australia, we have over 135,000 workers who specifically work across the mining sector. A good portion of those people work in my electorate of Hasluck. They work hard. They work long hours. They fly north, away from family and friends for weeks at a time. They work in sweltering heat to make a future here in Australia, and they look to us. They called on us to be able to advance the production of our critical minerals and not just to dig them out and ship them off—which is all the Liberals care for, clearly—but to actually work on downstream processing, because that is where the future is. That's where the jobs are. That is what is going to lead to the production of renewable energy—through wind turbines and batteries—and EV cars. This is where Western Australia wants to lead. It wants to be a global leader on this front. The introduction of production tax credits was

the way in which we would change the rules of the game. It would absolutely put us at the forefront, attracting capital into Western Australia and bringing certainty to industry so that they can have the confidence to make the significant investments required to actually start to move into this downstream processing and production.

So where were the Liberals? Because we're coming into election season, I'm naming and shaming these members, because when they come knocking on doors I want people to know how they voted. I want my constituents to ask the Liberals who come onto our turf, 'What way did you vote on jobs for me, my family and my friends?' This is their record. The member for Canning, the member for Forrest, the member for O'Connor and, extraordinarily, the member for Durack, where most of these mines actually are, all voted no to this legislation. Further, Senators Cash, O'Sullivan, Dean Smith and Brockman failed to stand up for Western Australia. What on earth are they there for? They are there as Western Australian senators, not Liberal senators. They are there to back in Western Australia's industry. Where were they? They've let the Western Australian people down. They've let my constituents down. These are the jobs of the future, and people want certainty. They want to know that, irrespective of the election outcome, those jobs of the future will be there. But instead, sadly, we now have a Liberal and National opposition that hope to get into government but will be prepared to cut Western Australia's future. We will not let that happen. I will stand up for Western Australians, and I know that the voters of the electorate of Hasluck will absolutely back in jobs for themselves and their families and will back in a Labor government to provide those jobs.

Endometriosis

Mrs MARINO (Forrest) (16:18): I was very proud, in the run-up to 2018, to work on developing not only Australia's first ever National Action Plan for Endometriosis but the first national endometriosis plan in the world. I was very proud of that work. As a government, we provided funding to back up that particular plan. Part of that plan was to provide pelvic pain clinics, and that was part of our budget in 2022. These pelvic pain clinics and pelvic pain education are very important in managing endometriosis.

However, we lost government, and Labor refused to fund a pelvic pain clinic in my electorate in the South West of WA. One in seven women in my electorate will be affected by endometriosis, and the South West has the highest population outside of the metro area. So I investigated the process and found that the decision was not based on demographics or need in the community. It was actually based on the quality of an application, just like a school essay—a tick in a box. The government, the department and the primary health network in WA all significantly let down the women in my electorate—the majority of women who are outside of the metro area who need access to a pelvic pain clinic. There is a great level of need, it is a lifetime condition and there is no cure.

I was at the local bowling club the other night, talking about endometriosis, and women above the age of 70 and 75 were coming to talk to me about their ongoing experience with endometriosis and how they've suffered all their lives. That's why I want a pelvic pain clinic in my part of the world. There is, as I said, no cure, and if it gets to the heart and lungs it will kill you. I have made repeated requests for a pelvic pain clinic in the South West to ministers. It is something that is very badly needed.

Now, I have personal experience of endometriosis—not only myself but also through my daughter. I've been very blessed that she allowed me, in the run-up to the 2018 development of that first national plan, to tell her very raw personal story, and countless other women throughout the years have repeated their experiences with endometriosis.

In whatever I can do, whether I am the member for Forrest or not, I will keep working to try to secure a pelvic pain clinic for the South West. It is nothing less than the one in seven women who are suffering from endometriosis in the South West deserve.

Swan Electorate

Ms MASCARENHAS (Swan) (16:21): My goal when I was elected as the member for Swan was clear: to work hard every day, building a fairer, stronger, greener and kinder Australia. I wanted to make a real difference in the Swan community, and I've worked hard every day in this place to advocate for Swan and to listen to the people of Swan, to the things that matter most to them, and my track record has demonstrated just that.

In Swan we have delivered almost half a million dollars in energy efficiency grants across the entire electorate; almost \$100,000 in volunteer grants to support our dedicated community groups; and \$360,000 to Curtin University's AI empowerment project, which will help autistic adolescents with education and employment challenges. There's \$350,000 to the PeopleKind Group ARC light project. This is assisting young people in reducing social isolation and engaging with education and training. There's \$5.4 million to upgrade sporting facilities at the local grounds within the City of South Perth. There is almost \$1 million to Football West to promote female soccer, and \$7,000 to our local sporting champions.

I've made promises and I've delivered them. This includes \$2.5 million to upgrade the McCallum Park Active Area. It's delivered. We're in the process of delivering funds of \$5.3 million to upgrade the Queens Park Open Space. There's \$2 million to upgrade commercial kitchens at Bentley TAFE. This is being implemented right now. There

are funds for Forestville Primary School's basketball courts. There's also \$10 million in funding for cleaning up urban rivers. And that's not all. There are so many achievements to list, but I'm incredibly proud of the progress that we have made as the Labor government.

I believe in listening to the people of Swan, championing local voices and delivering real, tangible outcomes that make a difference in everyday life. Whether it's securing better health care, improving infrastructure or supporting our essential workers, I'm committed to working alongside Swan locals to achieve lasting change. We've accomplished a lot, but there is more to do, and the cost of living, housing and secure jobs are my top priorities. Swan is a better place under Labor, and I am proud of the real difference we have made. I will continue to work hard every day for the people of Swan because our community deserves nothing less—and everybody knows that, under the opposition leader, Australia will be worse off.

Tumbatrek

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (16:24): On 9 January 1997 Tony Bullimore, the lone yachtsman from the United Kingdom, was plucked from the Antarctic great Southern Ocean. The waters were freezing. His vessel had upturned, and he was in the capsized hull. Tim Fischer, then acting Prime Minister and Leader of the Nationals, announced to the world that the rescue had been made by our wonderful Defence people from Big Hill on the Hume and Hovell Track. It was on Tumbatrek, and he had a bevy of journalists there. Tim was a great raconteur. He was great at getting promotion for the tourism aspects of Mount Kosciuszko and the beautiful snowy valleys. He made every moment a winner. He was on his fabled Tumbatrek. He started it in 1985. When he left the parliament, the Tumbatrek went into recess. It was revived after a radio interview on the ABC at Junee. He dobbed me in to say that I would revive it. I had no knowledge, of course. This was two-minute Tim. We loved him. We still do, even though he's passed. When the Riverina boundaries changed and it went into Eden-Monaro, the member for Eden Monaro, Kristy McBain, the minister sitting opposite, continued the famous walk. I passed on Tim's famous walking stick to the minister. It was a little bit longer than she really would have liked, and she did request that she might take a couple of centimetres off the bottom of it. I said: 'Don't do that. It's Tim's stick. We need to keep it intact.' She subsequently passed it back to me because the boundaries are coming back into the Riverina. The poor people of Tumarumba would just like to be in the one electorate for just a little given time.

Tumbatrek on Saturday was just wonderful. It's 12.4 kilometres through the pristine wilderness. Kristy knows exactly what I'm talking about. I heap praise on Julia Ham, the Snowy Valleys mayor, and her council staff. They do an amazing job to hold this annual event. Grant Harris; his wife, Deb; Glen McGrath; and his wife, Vanessa, were at the front and the back of the walk. They kept everybody located. It's an amazing walk, and I urge and encourage anybody to do it. There were 150 people who took part. It was fabulous, and it does promote Tumarumba. It's a beautiful area. It's part of the Snowy Valleys Council. Like I said, it was one hell of a walk on Saturday. Big Hill was very well known. It took quite some doing, but may Tumbatrek long continue, whomever is representing that beautiful, pristine part of the world.

Eden-Monaro Electorate: Community Events

Black Summer Bushfires

Ms McBAIN (Eden-Monaro—Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories) (16:27): I concur with my colleague, the member for Riverina, Michael McCormack, who has done Tumbatrek with me a couple of times. It is such a fabulous event, which continues Tim Fischer's legacy but shows the beautiful, pristine nature of our communities across the country, most importantly in Tumarumba. I'm sorry to have missed it, and I do hope, for that community's sake, that they are in one electorate for a period of time, because they do get shuffled around. I have no doubt that, for many years to come, they will be in good hands with the member for Riverina.

I will comment on something that came up in our electorate. Five years ago, on 23 January 2020, during the Black Summer bushfires, we lost aerial firefighters Captain Ian McBeth, First Officer Paul Hudson and Flight Engineer Rich De Morgan Jr. These American aviators tragically died when their large air tanker, bomber 134, crashed during firefighting operations, and on 23 January this year, emergency service personnel, members of the community, many people involved in fighting that fire and representatives from Coulson Aviation came together to honour their service and sacrifice at the memorial. It was a real honour to join them at Peak View this year, as I have in previous years. Again I'd like to extend my sincere condolences to their families. The men died whilst trying to protect our community, and we are forever in their debt.

I give a shout-out to VIEW Clubs. For those of you who don't know, VIEW stands for Voice, Interests and Education of Women. VIEW is a leading women's national volunteer organisation, providing the opportunity for women from all walks of life to meet regularly, establish lasting friendships and help disadvantaged Australian kids through supporting the work of children's charity the Smith Family. It's driven by the mission of creating social change in Australian communities. VIEW empowers women to have their voices on issues of importance for the

future wellbeing of our society. There are more than 300 VIEW clubs around Australia, including in Adelong, Batlow, Bega, Braidwood, Bungendore, Cooma, Eden, Goulburn, Marimbula, Narooma, Queanbeyan and Yass, across the mighty Eden-Monaro. VIEW offers a friendship network, providing fun and a sense of purpose for members by supporting the education of disadvantaged Australian children. I'm honoured this year to be the guest speaker at Goulburn VIEW Club's International Women's Day event on 6 March. It's a tremendous organisation, and if you are looking to volunteer somewhere, join your local VIEW Club.

Finally, on International Women's Day I am proud to support another fabulous event in Eden-Monaro. The Queanbeyan evening branch of the CWA is holding a high tea in support of the Love Your Sister charity. Love Your Sister co-founder Samuel Johnson OAM—gold Logie award winner, everyone knows him—will be live in Queanbeyan on Saturday 8 March from 2 pm at the B in Queanbeyan. Tickets are on the Q's website from \$75. Come along and have a conversation. All money raised goes to that magnificent charity. Thanks, CWA.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Payne): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

BILLS

Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (16:31): Last Friday in Yass I had the opportunity to sit and talk at length with three concerned advocates, Hansie Armour, Rebecca Tobin and Andrea Strong, in relation to the powerlines on huge towers that are going to go through their wonderful part of the world. There has been a lot of controversy about these powerlines and the height of the towers upon which they will sit. These three advocates are genuine in their desires to see the lines placed underground, and had a number of cogent and reasonable arguments as to why this should be so.

The thing that often concerns me when companies and organisations and, dare I say, governments put in place infrastructure that is going to affect people's vista, communities or environment is that all too often when the representative is sent out to knock on the door or to visit the farm, they come there with only scant details of the actual project. When they come there again, it's a different person altogether. When they line up at the community forums which often happen as a result of community concerns being raised and not answered or met, again, it's a different representative. I'm not saying this is the case on this particular project, but it also bothers me greatly that these days we seem to have in this nation—particularly in New South Wales—projects placed under state-significant status. State-significant priority supersedes all local development plans. It overrides any community concerns. It rides roughshod over what a local government or a council can do about a particular project. Whether it's powerlines and towers, solar farms, wind turbines—you name it—it's stamped 'state significant' and locals do not get any say in that project. Generally, that project will be financed by an overseas company or a superannuation firm. They'll claim a whole heap of jobs in the construction phase, and that's all well and good—we all want more jobs. But often these projects come at a huge cost to local people, their amenity, their views and their environment. I think something really needs to be done with the EPBC Act, with these 'state significant' projects, to say 'enough is enough'. Locals must get a say. There has to be some consideration.

What we have before us is the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. It was introduced to the House, rather unexpectedly, with a view to being passed before the parliament rises. Many people in the corridors here will be telling you that this is the last parliamentary sitting week. We saw what happened on the last parliamentary sitting day last year when Labor rushed through a whole heap of legislation. Debate was guillotined, debate was gagged and bills went through—to hell with people's local concerns. People who have been sent here to represent their local constituents weren't able to speak on a bill. They weren't able to raise objections against a bill. Labor just bulldozed it through. Labor, which came to office in May 2022, said it was going to be—

Dr Webster: A kinder, gentler parliament.

Mr McCORMACK: a kinder, gentler parliament. They would not do this sort of thing, they said. But they did exactly what they said they weren't going to do. Not only did they do it; they did an avalanche of it. It was a tsunami of legislation being pushed through the House of Representatives and the Senate.

This bill amends the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021, under which offshore wind projects are managed. Let me tell you there is a lot of concern about offshore wind projects. I can remember the then Prime Minister, the former member for Cook, when there were some concerns about offshore exploration initiatives—these concerns were certainly raised, and people up and down the Central Coast, off Sydney and down to the

Illawarra were throwing their hands up at Labor. We heard their voices loud and clear. They were running to the media and they were doing everything they could to oppose it. But it seems that if you want to do an offshore wind project these days, that's fine.

The rush to renewables bothers me. But it doesn't just bother me. Whether it's offshore wind projects or whether it's on prime agricultural land, it is certainly bothering the farmers of the Riverina. Don Kirkpatrick and others will tell you there is only so much arable land that can be used to grow food and fibre. What we don't want is for that land to be covered with solar panels as far as the eye can see, covered with easements so that you can't do anything because you've got some dirty great big wind tower—or electricity tower or whatever tower—higher than the Rialto or the Eiffel, all at the expense of prime agricultural land.

Yes, you'll have willing sellers. It's the same as the Murray-Darling argument. You'll get the water minister and the environment minister saying, 'Oh, they're willing sellers.' Well, sometimes the land is owned by people who do not have growing food as their No. 1 priority. Yes, they own the land. But the trouble is that when you plonk down a massive tower, it often ruins the arrangements and the environment for all those around it who are wanting and desiring to grow food and fibre.

Mark my words: Australian farmers grow the very best food and fibre in the world. Nobody grows better food and fibre than Australians, yet Australians have been under attack from this government from day one. This government wanted to bring in a truckies tax. It wanted to bring in a biosecurity tax which was going to make our farmers—wait for this—pay for the biosecurity of foreign food coming in and competing with their products, Australian products, on Australian supermarket shelves. What country in the world would do that? What country in the world would penalise its farmers to that extent? No country would, and ours shouldn't either.

Our farmers are also under pressure. They're stressed because of the 450 gigalitres of water that is going to be taken out of the mouth of the Murray. What do you reckon they'll do with that water? They'll push it out of the mouth of the Murray. When Flinders and Bass were doing their circumnavigation of the country, the sandbars blocked up the mouth of the Murray, and it wasn't initially recorded as being the mouth of the Murray, a river-estuary system, because it was blocked up. What we do these days is push our freshwater out the mouth of the Murray and don't use it to grow food and fibre. It's just crazy. We've got those opposite who don't and won't want to build dams. I have to say that I, as the Deputy Prime Minister and the infrastructure minister, built the Camden dam at Scottsdale in Tasmania, where 85 irrigators are now growing tremendous food and fibre because of that project, but I digress. Let's talk about the bill.

There are some reasons—and sound ones—for this amendment. For example, it does close a loophole which enables rejected offshore applicants to be granted licences in smaller and/or different areas, but there are a number of areas of concern. The bill applies changes retrospectively. I always worry when Labor decides to do things retrospectively. I always worry when they want to go back and delve into the past and say: 'This bit of paperwork over here—we'll just get that, and then it will be okay. It was three years ago, but you know what? We'll just apply it retrospectively.' It always worries me. You can't trust Labor.

Mr Tehan interjecting—

Mr McCORMACK: Indeed, Member for Wannon!

There's no industry consultation. It does my head in that Labor in opposition always used to go on about the stakeholders, but Labor ministers won't take meetings. They won't. And they don't consult. It wouldn't matter whether it's electricity infrastructure, child care, health or veterans. Actually, I'll take veterans back. The veterans' affairs minister is actually doing a reasonable job. But there are so many areas of endeavour that Labor is not doing a good job on. It just worries me when stakeholders who know their sectors inside out aren't getting a say. They're just not getting a say. If they were, the bills coming before the House might be refined and might be better. They might be improved. We all want better legislation because we can pass it in a bipartisan way. Even in the Gillard government, 88 per cent of the bills which came before the parliament were passed in a bipartisan way because, I must say, that government probably consulted better than this government does. It did. True. Now it's political.

This bill will make it easier for the minister to announce multiple feasibility licences throughout the campaign. That's what, of course, he wants to do. The Minister for Climate Change and Energy just wants to push renewables onto an unsuspecting public. Why is it fair that regional Australia has to carry the brunt of the energy needs of capital city people who have no regard or scope or concern or understanding of what it is doing and impacting upon regional Australia? And you get those supercilious teals.

Dr Webster: Sanctimonious.

Mr McCORMACK: They are sanctimonious, Member for Mallee. They're dressed-up Greens. They're Greens with trust funds. The member for Parkes called them that. He sounded them out really easily and really quickly and really early. He summed them up. They want to stand and talk about what renewables we need in this country, yet

they couldn't care less whether regional Australia is just covered with renewable energy projects, and they don't give a jot that what is being sacrificed is prime agricultural land. I will always defend our farmers, and I'll always defend their right to grow the very best food in all of the world. The teals just think that that wonderful clean, green, fresh food comes from a supermarket fridge or aisle. It does not. It comes from—wait for it—a farm! They go around and they call these projects wind farms. Well, they're not wind farms. You can't farm wind; you can farm food. It should be known to those teals and the Greens.

We heard the member for Melbourne, the Greens leader, bell the cat in the 90-second statements just before question time. He wants a governance-sharing arrangement with Labor, and God help Australia if that is the case. God help farmers if the Greens get their hands on the treasury benches, and woe betide regional Australians—regional Australians who carried this country during COVID; regional Australians who bent their backs and whose brows sweated to make sure that we grew the food and the fibre and had the mining resources to keep the lights on, to keep the export balance of payments and to keep this country going when all those teals, all those city types and all those Greens pulled up the doona and pretended nothing was happening. That is the Greens way. That is the teals way. That is the Labor way.

It is the Liberals and the Nationals who have a plan to get this nation back on track. It is the Liberals and Nationals who understand farmers, who appreciate farmers, who applaud farmers and who will back regional Australians to make this country the best it can be.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (16:46): Last Thursday, I and the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, gave a clear-cut commitment to the electorate of Wannon. We will rescind the offshore wind farm which is proposed for off the coast of Warrnambool and Port Fairy—no ifs, no buts; we will rescind it. The reason we're here this afternoon is another reason why we made that decision—because Chris Bowen has a piece of retrospective legislation that he's trying to rush through this parliament that will change the rules around offshore wind farm zones. Once again, we're seeing that Minister Bowen makes a complete and utter mess of everything that he touches when it comes to energy and, in particular, when it comes to offshore wind zones. There has been no consultation, no environmental impact statements, no economic benefit statements—nothing—and that is why we are committed to making sure that that offshore wind zone is absolutely rescinded if the coalition wins the next election.

Let's go to this piece of retrospective legislation, the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. What is a government trying to do when it puts in place a piece of retrospective legislation? It's trying to clean up a mess—a mess of its own making; a mess made because it rushed things; a mess made because it doesn't have a clue about what it's doing; a mess made because the minister has an ideological bent towards a rushed, renewables-only approach which is devastating this nation. Why is the minister going down this path? He is going down this path because he's trying to do everything he can to disguise a commitment that the Prime Minister made on over 90 occasions before the last election—a commitment that now shall not speak its name, not from the lips of the Prime Minister or anyone on the Labor side of politics—and that was that your power bill would go down by \$275. And they said that they would do that by 2025. Well, guess what year it is? It's 2025. And has anyone seen their power bill go down by \$275? No. What has occurred? Everyone has seen their power bill go up. In Victoria, it has gone up by, at a minimum, \$750. That means they've been more than \$1,000 out. That is why the minister is rushing around, trying to do all this stuff, because he knows that, if he's going to be honest with the Australian people and look them in the eye, he cannot say to them, 'Yes, we have honoured that commitment.'

The minister will make a range of excuses to do with what's happened here and what's happened there et cetera et cetera, but the fact is the fact is the fact—they committed to reduce your power bill by \$275 and have not been able to honour that commitment. They don't even have the guts to say to the Australian people that they won't be honouring it. That is why the Australian people have woken up to this Prime Minister. They know that he will not be straight with them. As for Minister Bowen, to be kind to Minister Bowen, he'd be more at home in a circus than he would be in this federal parliament. It is incredibly hard to take anything he says or does seriously.

Let's look at the offshore wind farm proposed off the coast of south-west Victoria. Firstly, it was going to be around the Portland area. When he realised that he'd messed that up, he said, 'Alright, I'll put it on the coast off Warrnambool and Port Fairy.' Guess where he made the announcement that he wasn't going to do it in Portland and that he was going to do it off the coast of Port Fairy and Warrnambool? He made the announcement in Portland. He didn't even know where he was when he was making the announcement. It was beyond a farce. Then, with the community consultation process, the community said they didn't want this offshore wind farm, and a petition was presented to the parliament, which had 4,000 signatures and now has 7,000 signatures. Did Minister Bowen listen? No, he did not. Did he go to the communities and say, 'Okay, we've done the consultations, and therefore we've heard you, and we're not going to proceed?' No, he didn't. Guess how the consultations went? And I'm sure the member for Mallee knows a lot about this type of consultation. When all the officials came down, did they meet with the community as a whole? No. What did they say to the community? 'Oh, look, we want to meet you one by

one. We don't want to front up to a public meeting where there might be 200 or 300 of you and where you might say, "We don't want this," and there might be wild cheers and might say, "Well, maybe you should pack your bags and head back to Canberra with a clear message we don't want this." No. It's almost like a drafting race: you go over to that corner and you go off to that corner so that we can deal with you one by one, so there is no sense of the community coming together and being heard. It's a tactic they always try and use when they're trying to ram something through that isn't popular and that the community does not want. Well, the community wasn't going to buy that.

There were representatives of the community who met with Minister Bowen and said quite clearly, 'No, we don't want this to go ahead.' Yet, what did Minister Bowen do? He said, 'Well, I'm going to be tricky; I'm just going to redraw this offshore wind farm in a part of the south-west coast where I think everyone will say, "Okay, that's fine."' Did it have any details around where the transition line might go? No. Is the transmission line going to go through Port Fairy or is it going to go right across the seabed to Portland? We hear absolutely nothing. Does the minister come forward to say whether an environmental impact statement would take place? Does the minister let the community know that there are already deep concerns within his department about where the offshore wind farm zone is proposed? No, he doesn't. So what did we do? We put in an FOI request to his department to ask: 'Have there been serious concerns raised about migratory and rare whales? Have there been serious concerns raised about migratory bird species?' And guess what the answer was from that FOI request from within his own department. 'Yes, there have been.' Quite clearly, the area in his department which deals with this had already raised serious concerns about these issues.

Did Minister Bowen stop and think and listen and say, 'Alright, I've got community opposition from south-west Victoria, and I've got opposition from within my own department because they're worried about the environmental impacts; therefore, maybe I should just say, no, this isn't an area where we should be looking to put an offshore wind zone'? No, he didn't. He, in his purely ideological fashion, just kept on going and said, 'We will ram this over the heads of the local community.' Well, we've made it very clear that we are happy to listen and we are happy to act. That's why I and the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, made that announcement last week. This is quite clear an issue. It's an issue which has been on the agenda since last May. I would say to all candidates in the seat of Wannon: come forward and tell us what your position is. You've had nearly a year to do it. Are you for it or against it? Or, if you're going to sit on the fence, why are you sitting on the fence? What is your hidden agenda? That is what we need to know, and that is what we need to know quite, quite clearly.

Just so everyone is clear about what we're trying to achieve here, we're trying to make sure that a local community and their views are protected. This isn't something which is political. Do you know who did exactly the same thing? The South Australian Premier. This wind farm zone was, in its first iteration under Minister Bowen, going to go into South Australia. It was going to go across and into South Australia. Right across the shoreline, out from Port Macdonnell, there was going to be, also, a proposal for this offshore wind zone. And what did the Premier of South Australia do, along with the local community? They made it very clear to Minister Bowen they didn't want it. They didn't want it. So this isn't anything which is political; this is about local communities standing up and saying: 'We want to be heard. We want to be listened to.' I say to Minister Bowen: the best thing you could do, rather than putting forward retrospective legislation which shows how much of a mess you've made of this, is get the bit of paper which has put in place the offshore wind farm zone in south-west Victoria—get the bit of paper that has put in place the offshore wind farm zone off the coast of Port Fairy and Warrnambool—and rip it up. That is what listening to the local community would be all about, and that's what you should be doing, not trying to put through retrospective legislation which shows that you have made a complete and utter mess of this whole process.

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (16:59): I appreciate the opportunity to further contribute to the excellent points made by my friend the member for Wannon. He articulated at the end of his comments there the South Australian perspective of the Albanese government's now abandoned plans for offshore wind zones in South Australia. Indeed, it was the Labor Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, that turned his back on the federal Labor government's energy policy position—not just on this issue, I might add. He's a very pro-nuclear guy, Peter Malinauskas. He likes nuclear. He wants nuclear submarines in Adelaide. He thinks nuclear is safe. I think he has got to be a little bit loyal to his party and has to watch his words, but I think he'd be a very excited partner.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 16:59 to 17:19

Mr STEVENS: I think I was just making the point, before the bells went, that the South Australian Labor Premier, Peter Malinauskas, joined many others in opposing the South Australian component of the designated wind farm zone that Minister Bowen sought to create. As I was saying, there couldn't be a starker difference between the South Australian Labor Premier and the federal Labor energy minister when it comes to matters of the energy future for this country. The Premier in South Australia has been very open-minded on nuclear and very keen to embrace

the opportunities of the AUKUS submarine agreement for Adelaide. In fact, you'd think it was his idea from the way he discusses it and talks about it as his own. He's made many comments over the years in support of considering civilian nuclear generation to be a part of the mix in South Australia and Australia as a whole. Indeed, I strongly suspect that, if we win the election in the coming months, the South Australian government will be a very willing partner in discussions about nuclear in South Australia.

He's also probably pretty unpopular with Minister Bowen because the South Australian Labor government are extremely embracing of natural gas as an important fuel source for our energy grid well into the future. Of course, the Moomba gas fields that straddle the South Australia-Queensland border are a vitally significant industry for South Australia. The only ASX 100 listed company that's headquartered in Adelaide is Santos, who, of course, have a decades-long history of extracting gas from Moomba and piping it down to the rest of South Australia—and, of course, now there's also a pipeline that goes to Gladstone in Queensland.

So the Labor Premier in South Australia is not very much in tune with this federal Labor government. The Western Australian Premier, equally, is not very much in tune with this government on energy issues or issues of environmental red tape. I suppose they still have Jacinta Allan, the Victorian Premier, to hang out with if they choose to do so in the upcoming campaign. All strength to their arm on that. Maybe the one person who, when standing next to the Prime Minister, would enable him to feel that he is not the more unpopular of the two would be the Victorian Premier. 'Least worst'—what a slogan! There's a TV ad in that, I think: 'It could be worse.'

We're debating a bill that is a clean-up job for this government on significant flaws in legislation that have been revealed through a judicial decision. We in the coalition are very uncomfortable with the retrospectivity principles of this, on top of the policy principles of where this government is taking us. They went to the last election and said power prices were going to drop by \$275. Poor old RepuTex! I hope they've changed their name and got a new website, because their name is absolute mud. They are the company that did the costings on Labor's \$275 energy saving, and you wouldn't want to engage them for anything given what would happen when you google their name now, after they had their credibility completely destroyed by Minister Bowen and this federal Labor government's energy plan, which has delivered anything but cost savings for Australian families.

Hydrogen, regrettably, is coming unstuck all across the country, and I think that the South Australian government will very shortly announce that their hydrogen plant is miraculously going to become a natural gas plant. They've already softened this up through local media coverage, saying that the steelworks situation in Whyalla means that maybe their \$600 million hydrogen plant, which would definitely be more than \$1 billion now, isn't viable—not that that was ever the reason they gave for undertaking this hydrogen investment in the upper Spencer Gulf. They've been briefing out to the media that the turbines that they've purchased, which were going to run the hydrogen generation, can have natural gas as an alternate fuel source to hydrogen. They haven't purchased any electrolyzers yet. That's lucky—if they're not going ahead with this hydrogen plant—that they haven't been saddled with the huge cost of electrolyzers.

It's very conveniently looking like the South Australian government are going to be abandoning hydrogen, which is in line with everyone else in this country that is abandoning hydrogen, which this government says is an integral part of their future vision for the energy needs of this country. Whether it's offshore wind or the \$1½ trillion worth of transmission lines, which we don't want to see built—happily for the communities that will be affected, we've got such an incompetent government that they can't even successfully roll out an unpopular policy like \$1½ trillion worth of transmission. But it will probably ultimately come if we don't get rid of this awful government and their dangerous energy policies.

On all of the metrics that they were meant to hit when it comes to their energy vision for our future, they're failing. On some, we're lucky that they're failing, through incompetence. Of course, Australian families have been deeply, deeply let down by their failure to achieve the central promise of their energy policy plan, which was cutting household bills by \$275—a confirmed failure. So many families and so many businesses are now almost frightened to open that bill that they get in the mail with their energy retailer's logo in the corner. Some retailers might want to take their logo off just so there's a better chance of people opening their mail because of that bill shock that you get when you open your electricity bill, under a government that said it was going to cut your bill by \$275, and you suddenly find you've got to cancel the family holiday that you've done every year on that long weekend to the caravan park by the sea. You've got to pay your electricity bills, you've got to pay your rent or mortgage, you've got to provide for your family, and you've got to pay the grocery bills. It's that discretionary expenditure—the things that people look forward to and enjoy—that they're having to cut out of their household budget.

It's no wonder that we're seeing this anger, particularly in parts of Australia that are doing it the most tough, because this is not the life that they thought they were getting by voting for this Labor government. They shouldn't be mocked for thinking it was safe to trust Labor and that they wouldn't blatantly lie about cutting your electricity bill. We should live in a society where, when people that aspire to be prime minister of this country say something

like: 'Vote for me. I've got a costed policy here with good old RepuTex—so it's got a big stamp on the side saying, "This thing can be relied upon", it's not unreasonable for people to think, 'I'm sure he couldn't possibly lie to us about something like that and I would like my electricity bill to drop by \$275.' People would've fallen for that, and it's a great disgrace and a shame on those that perpetrated that fraud on the people of Australia that they were misled to that extent.

We've made it very clear that we have a very different vision for our energy future, one that people can count on and rely on, one that has been properly costed, one that is credible and is being pursued around the world by every advanced economy except ours—funnily, because we've got the largest uranium deposits on the planet. In fact, in my home state of South Australia, we have the largest uranium mine at Olympic Dam, run by BHP. Of course, we have not had a civilian nuclear generation industry until Peter Dutton, the opposition leader, and the coalition said: 'This has to be the future for our nation. This will bring us the security and reliability we need. This will give confidence to investors to invest in our economy, to set up businesses here and to bring businesses here knowing that there's a reliability of energy, one of the vital inputs to our economic recipe.'

Going to the people of Sturt, like my other coalition colleagues and candidates will be doing, we have a solution to this Labor mess. The bill before us is a great example of the chaos that energy policy in this country is in under our Prime Minister and under this Labor government. It has to come to an end, which is why we've made the very deliberate decision to put the most comprehensive energy plan out in the public domain with all the detail that people need to understand it properly. It's there to be scrutinised—very unsuccessfully from those who have tried so far, I might add—a plan that will achieve our commitment to net zero by 2050. I echo our shadow energy minister—it will be very hard to get to net zero by 2050 with nuclear; it'll be impossible to do without it. No-one on the planet has a credible plan to get to net zero by 2050 without nuclear, not a single person.

Apparently, our Prime Minister and energy minister know better than everyone else. We know what their track record is because we can see it in that \$275 electricity saving that they achieved for every household in this country. We oppose this bill. We more broadly oppose the chaos of energy policy in this country under this government. Thankfully for the people of Australia, there is an election coming within months, if not weeks. It's a great chance to get our country back on track, to get our energy policy back on track and to bring certainty, reliability and stability to Australian families and Australian businesses. I urge the House to defeat this bill.

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (17:31): As I rise to speak on the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, I reflect on where I am standing: the Federation Chamber, the chamber where non-controversial bills land and where non-controversial speeches are made, apparently. The shadow minister for climate change and energy earlier challenged why this bill is being sent to this chamber, which was used for covert purposes earlier in this parliamentary session in Labor's hope that the media weren't watching. Newsflash: they probably are. There's no press gallery here, but I can assure you the Australian public are watching this government very closely on energy policy. They are watching failure after failure from the Albanese Labor government to deliver the \$275 reduction in their power prices, which was promised 97 times to help Mr Albanese get into the Lodge.

Labor's energy approach comes at five times the cost Australians were initially promised. Australians are watching quarterly wholesale prices rise to a level of over \$100 per megawatt hour, when Minister Bowen promised that wholesale prices would be just \$51 per megawatt hour. Wholesale prices skyrocketed 83 per cent in the past year, with record highs in New South Wales and Queensland. So what was Labor's 2022 pre-election energy modelling? Perhaps it was complete and utter fantasy. Perhaps they accepted their modelling from their cowboy mates in the foreign owned wind turbine industry, for goodness-knows-what benefit to everyday Australians.

So we come to this bill, and the shadow minister mentioned in the House a 'protection racket'. He asked, 'Why is this government running a protection racket?' When you consider that the majority, if not all, of both the offshore and onshore wind turbine proponents are foreign owned, you have to ask if the Albanese government is acting in the national interest. Why are foreign owned energy companies acting like cowboys across Australia, dividing communities with sham consultations, as the member for Wannon said earlier? Why the haste to put this retrospective legislation through the parliament in what may well be the dying days of the Albanese Labor government?

Labor still hasn't told us how much offshore wind will cost or how much it will cost on our power bills. Given their track record, either they don't know or they don't care, as long as their cowboy mates in the foreign owned wind turbine industry get to railroad regional communities. You only need to look at their form—not only in my electorate of Mallee, as I was saying earlier this sitting week on the appropriation bill and Victorian Labor's fast-tracking of regulations to turn my electorate into a pincushion of wind turbine projects and a spider's web of transmission lines on prime agricultural land.

On transmission lines, let me add that there are people with very interesting lives who listen to parliament and are listening right now. One took it upon themselves to write to me, responding to my earlier speech this week,

saying, 'Nuclear energy will require transmission lines just like wind turbines do.' No, that's incorrect. The coalition's policy is to establish nuclear energy facilities to support energy jobs at existing coal-fired power sites in the existing transmission network. That's the nonsense that those opposite—and their ideological friends in the Greens and Climate 200-backed teals—propagate in Australia. They gaslight Australians that regional people want wind turbines. When you actually ask regional people, farmers facing the imposition of wind turbines, their answer is a 90 per cent no, they don't. That is a fact. Nuclear will not require the 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines across regional Australia that Labor is proposing.

This is a government waging an ideological war on coal and gas, offering damp squibs to coal and gas miners and workers—for instance, proposing coal-fired workers in the Hunter Valley be re-employed making solar panels. Never mind, that's in Labor's la-la land, where China already dominates the market and nobody in business would go anywhere near trying to take China on without serious subsidies. Labor has weakened the energy grid and Australians are being forced to rely on expensive unreliable renewables without the necessary firming power. Labor has no plan for affordability, no plan for reliability, and certainly no plan to keep the lights—and Aussie families are paying the price. It's time to embrace a balanced energy mix as a cheap, clean and consistent path forward.

I surveyed thousands of voters in my Mallee electorate and asked, 'Do you support extracting more gas for use in Australia?' This is in Victoria, remember, where the Andrews and Allan Labor governments cripple investment and exploration for gas. Over two-thirds of Mallee voters—68.6 per cent—said, yes, they support extracting more gas for use in Australia. Just 15.7 per cent said no. Incidentally, 46.5 per cent of respondents said that Australia's carbon emissions reduction targets are too high, and 62.5 per cent said they were likely to support nuclear power, like small modular reactors, as part of Australia's future energy mix. This is Australians talking. When asked whether they thought our energy system should prioritise reducing emissions, ensuring electricity is affordable or ensuring reliable supply, 57 per cent backed affordability. I don't think this Labor government gets it.

The Australian people are not mugs, but Labor is trying to take the Australian public for mugs. Australians see their power bills going up, they listen to the energy minister, Chris Bowen, say that renewables are the cheapest form of electricity, and they laugh. It's not, 'Ha ha, that's a funny joke.' It's a nervous laugh, which would be funnier if it weren't so painful. This government is a joke, but it's not the funny kind; it's the sick joke kind. I can tell you that Mallee voters cannot wait to render their verdict at the ballot box.

It gets worse, though. This vindictive brand of Labor that we currently have at federal and Victorian levels takes the insult one further. They determined that Mallee would be the state's primary renewable energy zone. There were going to be six REZs—renewable energy zones—but three of them suddenly vanished. Two others are in Mallee, and the other will point the foreign owned wind turbine cowboys to Wannon. But the big purple patch on the Labor REZ map is absolutely Mallee. 'Go bulldoze your way through Mallee,' they tell the foreign owned wind turbine cowboys. 'Pretend you care, but go your hardest. Conduct a fig leaf consultation, but, hey, we've got your back. We'll fast-track the laws; we'll have sham environmental approvals so you can get through.' Why? We know there is a rush for Labor's political target, a hypothetical emissions reduction target that is hurting every Australian in their power bills—a mad rush to a renewables future because Labor have thrown dirt in the face of coal and gas and said, 'Get out of our country!' 'Nick off,' they say. 'We've got abundant wind and solar.'

There's one problem. The wind doesn't blow at the precise moment everyone has their air conditioners on in the peak of summer when the sun has gone down. It's very thoughtless of the sun and wind to do that—to not shine and blow when Labor want them to for their supposedly green dreams! I can picture the minister, frustrated by the setting sun, saying, 'How will renewables be the cleanest form of energy if you keep going down all the time?' It's like King Canute yelling at the tide, a footnote in history. King Canute was actually trying to demonstrate that his power had limits and that nature, or God in his context, had a supremacy he could not counteract. But not the Albanese government, not the energy minister—they'll yell that renewables are the cheapest form of electricity, because they hope that, if they say it enough, the lie will become the truth.

I want to commend my colleague the member for Nicholls for moving a bill, the Requiring Energy Infrastructure Providers to Obtain Rehabilitation Bonds Bill 2024. The premise of the bill is a simple one. I have mentioned energy cowboys, the foreign owned companies that come and build projects. But who knows if they'll still be around to clean up the mess if they've gone broke, leaving these huge turbines in the ground, rusting away. Let's remember that the onshore turbines proposed for my electorate are at this stage potentially up to 280 metres high, 17 metres short of the Eureka Tower in Melbourne, one of Australia's tallest buildings. As I said earlier this week in the House, there's a turbine over 350 metres high proposed for Germany right now, which, if built here in Australia, would make it one of the nation's tallest constructions.

These energy cowboys, foreign owned companies, want to put massive turbines offshore. It seems to me that the member for Nicholls's bill—and I disclose an interest, a very passionate and strong interest, in the genesis of that bill—is a perfectly reasonable proposition. If you're putting gigantic infrastructure on Australian shores, you need

to put down the money to show you'll rehabilitate them when they are finished. Nobody has a crystal ball, and it's fanciful to suggest that, in decades or centuries to come, wind turbines will be a permanent fixture in our oceans, mountains and landscapes. They will become redundant and they will need to be removed. Requiring a rehabilitation bond is surely environmentally responsible.

The political children on the crossbench, principally the Greens, like to hop up and down and demand that miners rehabilitate land if mines go ahead. We have state laws that require that rehabilitation. It is the law of the land. Yet somehow if it's an energy project, such as wind turbines, no, the Greens go missing. Don't impose environmental rehabilitation requirements on wind projects! God forbid! As one older lady said at a public meeting I attended in Warracknabeal in my electorate, admitting she's not a very good shot, if a farmer shot an eagle they would be prosecuted, yet somehow, if a wind turbine chops one up, that's good for the environment, or it's okay with the activists.

Let's not forget that popular Counting Crows song, often wistfully sung by would-be environmentalists, bemoaning that 'they paved paradise and put up a parking lot'. Well, in my electorate of Mallee, they're wrecking paradise and building a very large pincushion, a pincushion of wind turbines, to punish Mallee voters for having the common sense to see Labor's energy pipedream for what it is. Labor are punishing the sensible Australians who yelled to the emperor that he isn't wearing any clothes and throwing them in the political clink. That's the nasty, vindictive behaviour by Labor in Mallee. Labor intend to punish regional Australians for supporting a sensible approach to energy policy, all so Labor can keep living their out-of-sight out-of-mind wind turbine fantasies in the inner cities.

I commend Peta Credlin from Sky News, and the *Weekly Times* for sharing my constituents' stories. Come out and take a look at the industrial wasteland Labor is creating on our paradise—our Grampians, our Wimmera plains and our Gannawarra wetlands. Australian voters can't wait for the election, and neither can I. Bring it on.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (17:45): It's an absolute privilege to follow the member for Mallee. I want to affirm the comments made in this chamber by the member for Mallee and the way she has articulated some of the failings of this government, as set out in this legislation.

For a starting point, I want to put on the record that there are those in this place that start their assumptions of the Liberal Party with none of us believing in renewable energy. Well, I shared this story with my colleagues before the debate started. I live in a regional precinct, and I had a journalist here in Canberra once say to me, 'When are you guys'—meaning the Liberal Party—'going to get on board with renewable energy?' You should have seen their face change—and it really gave light to what the Canberra bubble is—when I explained to them that I live in a regional area and that they would be hard pressed to find a single farm that did not have a windmill on it supplied by a company called Southern Cross Windmills. Their head office is situated in my electorate, and this year they are celebrating 150 years of manufacturing, making us the early adopters of renewable energy. When those windmills failed and we had to adopt new technologies, do you know what the technology was that most farmers went to? It was solar panels to run little Honda motor pumps to pump water for stock and for irrigation to provide the protein, to provide the fibre, to provide the vegetables—the food that goes on the plates of Australians. We were the early adopters.

I can tell the Labor Party something for nothing. If you want people to get on board with renewable energy, then you're doing exactly the wrong thing by making it even more expensive to use renewable energy. We were told on more than 200 occasions by those on the other side that under a Labor government power prices would be \$275 cheaper—that the wind blew for free and that the sunshine was free. They led people along, led the Australian people along, on the understanding that their power prices would go down. With the members in this chamber at the moment I could do a straw poll and ask them to think of their last electricity bill. I know what mine was. My electricity bill at home was over \$2½ thousand for the quarter. Go back three years when Labor was first elected, when we left office, the same power bill was 1,200 bucks. That's my household. I challenge—

Mr Laxale: Mine was 30 bucks. I have solar and battery.

Mr BUCHHOLZ: That's excellent. Embrace the technology!

Mr Laxale: That's right—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Scrymgour): Come on—

Mr BUCHHOLZ: No, I can accept the interjections. But the household price, regardless of the household benefits you're getting, have skyrocketed 83 per cent since the Labor government come to office. There is no disputing that, and that is just in the last year. Bowen promised, when Labor first came to office, that by 2025 he would get the wholesale price to \$51 a megawatt. Do you know where it currently sits, in the last year? Double that. The wholesale price is up around the \$100 mark and has been for the entire year. Since this Labor government has

come to office, I have seen crisis after crisis after crisis—a housing crisis, a cost-of-living crisis and now an energy crisis.

Why are we dealing with this legislation today? I remember one of the last sitting days of the last session of parliament; I think there were 31 pieces of legislation that were rushed through the parliament. There was no debate allowed on any of them. There was no contribution to be made. There was no scrutiny. There was no nothing. And at the core of this piece of legislation now, which arguably has had little or zero consultation with the public, the government is seeking to unwind those very bills that it looked to fast-track through this place. They rushed it and they made a mistake. As a result, there are unintended consequences of this piece of legislation, and it's why we will be opposing it.

I'll tell you what else gets people in regional Australia cranky: it's when the permits for windmills and solar farms get put in. I take this from a group of farmers whom I had the privilege of catching up with in Gladstone; they were from a small community called Kabra. They were complaining that the country that they owned that was being eartagged for wind turbine development was subject to a different set of rules that they were—the people who owned the place. If they wanted to build a road up to the top of the hill and clear a pad to build some infrastructure or a beautiful house site, that would not have been permitted for them as householders. But complete strangers could come in with the protection provided by the EPBC Act that made them exempt from the very rules that would have applied to the farmers. Not only are they getting it wrong on the other side of this chamber, but they're also upsetting honest, hardworking Australian men and women in regional Australia, who are having to put up with the consequences of this sham legislation. The Kabra families were concerned for the livestock that they had. They voiced to us a number of concerns that they had about construction, but, most of all, as I said, they were concerned about the inequity—that there was one rule for the developer and then there was one rule for them. They thought that that was just simply un-Australian.

As I said earlier on, the Prime Minister promised on many occasions to cut power bills by \$275, but, instead, families are paying more than a thousand dollars under this costly and chaotic energy policy. Moody's last week confirmed that the installation of renewables would cost about \$230 billion over the next 10 years and that that could only drive electricity prices up another 25 per cent in time. There are families that don't have solar panels and batteries and are in the same situation as I and many other Australians are, where our power bills are incrementally increasing under the failed environmental and energy policy that this government presides over. Can I remind you how hard it will be for those that are already at the brink?

Throughout my electorate, I have a number of churches and charity groups. Out the back of most of them—St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army—they'll have food banks and they will provide cash. This will be my sixth election, and there was a period of time early in my representing the community when I would attend these food banks to assist and offer my time. Those presenting would be people that had fallen on hardship, like kids renting. The new norm at these food banks is mums and dads who work every day. They put their kids through school. The pressures on the family budget are so clumsy, so incumbent and so prominent that they're relying on the charity of others in the community just to get by under this government. I think it's absolutely farcical when the Prime Minister, early in his piece when campaigning at the last election, said that things would be better under a Labor government. I assure you that for many hundreds and hundreds of families in my electorate that is far from the case. This energy bill is only part of it.

I worry about the future as we move into election mode. What power will our country have? What will our energy prices look like in the event that there is a hung parliament with Labor at the helm and a teal-Greens crossbench? I can't think of a single teal seat or Greens seat that's got a wind turbine farm in it. They're all united in the fact that they want them. But guess where they want them. They want them in my beautiful backyard; they want them on my farms. They want them on the people of Canberra's farms, they want them in regional Australia, and they want them in regional Queensland. We are saying: 'You can't have this double standard. If you want them, you have them. You take them in your electorate. Don't jam them down our throats.'

One of the local government authority areas in my electorate is called the Scenic Rim. Just think of those two beautiful words—pristine. Without a doubt, in a heartbeat, people in inner-city Brisbane are saying, 'You've got to have them out in your area because we just can't have them here in my electorate.' Labor's renewable-only approach isn't working. I can't think of one matrix where they are meeting their targets.

Our option is for a balanced energy mix. We want to be clean, and we want to be consistent with the pathway forward. We've had an open discussion with the Australian public about nuclear. We want to have a conversation about gas. We will have a conversation about high-energy low-emissions coal-fired power stations. Our coal exports have actually increased under Labor. For a period of time, our coal exports surpassed our iron ore exports. We don't talk about that. It was interesting to hear the member for Sturt talk about our uranium deposits; they're the largest in the world. What are the emissions from uranium? They are zero.

We heard other speakers speak about reclamation work on coal mines. But where is the standard to be applied to the reclamation costs for pulling wind turbines and solar panels out? What's the cost of trying to dispose of those assets? It's all uncoded; it's all unknown. But when we put up a costing to say, 'This is what it's going to cost, and the life of a nuclear power plant can be over 80 to 100 years,' the zealots come out and say, 'We can't have clean energy that way.' It's their whole *modus operandi*. It's how they treat the farmer: 'There's one set of rules for the turbine and one set of rules for the farmer. We'll calculate nuclear one way and we'll calculate the disposal of renewable assets a completely different way. In fact, we may not even calculate that to put it into our overall prices.' People are seeing through this. The Australian public are seeing through it. They are reminded about the farce every time their power bill arrives.

For colleagues in the House, I will be opposing this bill. I oppose this bill because it was ill thought out. It shouldn't have seen the light of day in the first place. I understand what Labor are trying to do. They're trying to fix an anomaly that was rushed through the parliament without scrutiny, and they've been caught. I oppose the bill, and I oppose the increase in power bills from this bill. We oppose Labor's higher energy prices. Only a Dutton led government will fix Australia.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Opposition Whip) (18:00): Renewable energy undoubtedly is a wonderful thing. In South Australia, we have led the nation in the establishment of renewable energy. In fact, there is 2,400 megawatts of installed capacity in South Australia. But there is a bit of a rider here. While we've got 2,400 megawatts of installed capacity, AEMO will not allow the wind generators to generate more than 50 per cent of that at any one time. When I drive around my electorate, which hosts many of these wind farms, it's one of the reasons that, when the wind seems to be strong enough and the price is good enough, they are still not turning. The reason they are not allowed to operate is that the grid, without some base-load generators—like gas in South Australia's case—is too unstable.

South Australia has led the charge on renewable energy, and I think there's a lesson here for the rest of Australia. Around 70 to 75 per cent of our electricity is coming from renewable energy. We have double that of the next mainland state. I might say your state, Mr Deputy Speaker Wilkie, is in front of that, but you are running on historical hydro assets. But, for the mainland, South Australia leads the charge at around 74 per cent. The next state is Victoria. They have half that, around 32 per cent.

It's not the only thing that South Australia had led the charge on. Not only do we have double the next state's renewable energy but we have, by a margin of 50 per cent, Australia's highest retail price. You cannot disconnect the two events. It's not possible to say that South Australia has 75 per cent renewable electricity, but it's just a quirk of nature that somehow our retail prices are 50 per cent higher than the next state, which is New South Wales, by the way.

This is having an unbelievably detrimental effect on South Australia and our industries, our manufacturing industries in particular. I met with a number of rather large ones in recent times that are bemused by the fact that, in a place where we have adequate renewable resources, also fossil fuel resources and, of course, nuclear resources, somehow we not only are leading the nation but are right up amongst those in the world on electricity prices. The issue really is—and I did hear the previous member for Bennelong interject, talking about his power prices—that there is an embedded and hidden subsidy system that supports renewables. That is why a wind generator, or a solar cell for that matter, can sell electricity into the market at a profit when the wholesale price is minus \$60 a megawatt. They sell, at a profit to them, at minus \$60 a megawatt hour.

What makes up the difference? It is the retailers, who are forced to buy this energy off the generators at a negative price, who then slip it onto our retail bills; that's why South Australia has such high retail bills. But it's not detailed on our retail bills. It doesn't tell us the reason your retail bill is so high is that we are paying a subsidy to the wind generators that have cut off the traditional forms of generation. I think any system that is so confusing that the man on the street can make no sense of it all is pretty difficult. If you've got a long afternoon, I'll explain to the parliament how the bidding stem works; it's a complete mystery within itself. It's hiding the reality and its punishing industries along the way, which is why we have that higher price.

This bill is about giving the minister—it's an oversight fixing up a problem from before, perhaps—more power to approve offshore wind. I've visited Germany. I was very interested in their *Energiewende*, which is their transition from fossil fuels to renewables. I have a friend in the German parliament who is beside himself at the moment at the speed at which they are losing industry in Germany. It is being shipped out to countries that don't care so much about emissions, it would be fair to say. When I read up and when I checked when I was there—it was a little while back now—basically, offshore wind generators cost about three times the price of onshore wind generators. Why on earth would someone build them offshore if they're more expensive to build? That obviously it has to feed back into the price at some stage.

The reason is—particularly in Germany but also here in Australia, we're finding now—that people don't want to be looking at them. They want renewable energy, but they don't want it on their patch. The previous speaker just

touched on that, somewhat. We don't see wind farms in and around capital cities. We don't see them in Adelaide on the Mount Lofty Ranges. But we do see them when we get further north and out of Adelaide, in the hills around Burra or Port Augusta. It's okay to have them up there, but we certainly don't want them where the general public has to look at them. It's pretty much the same with solar farms. Some of my farmers welcome the wind farms; they pay pretty well per tower installation. Not so much do the rest of the community, as a rule, because they get to look at the turbines and they largely don't get any financial benefit. And they're not big employers. In the end, there's a fair bit going on when they're constructing them. I was only recently looking at some farms that have been constructed around Burra, which is a beautiful part of the world, and the mess they have made on the tops of the hills. They've ripped out native vegetation, which is hundreds of years old. It's disgraceful, really—nothing else. A farmer would never be allowed. We have non-clearance rules in South Australia. They've been there for 30 years. Farmers aren't allowed to clear their land, but it seems that, of course, windfarm operators are. They're all in the country.

It makes you wonder where we're going here in Australia with our energy policies overall. Last week, we had three industry groups come out and implore the government to slow down the closure of fossil fuel. They said that Australia will not meet the 82 per cent target for 2030, which the government set for itself. I don't think there's much doubt about that. Not only are wind and solar approvals at a low point—the government has trumpeted them, but they are actually stuck with all kinds of approval problems at the moment—but also the thousands of kilometres of transmission lines that the government has designated are meeting local hostility. The government has worked to try and overrule local opinion here, again, and that's not really taking the community with you. If these things were so good, people would open the gate. It seems also that green hydrogen has hit the wall after an initial surge of great enthusiasm when we see Twiggy Forrest of Fortescue walk away from green hydrogen in Australia and say that he thinks the government should keep investing in it but he's not going to, thank you very much. AGL have walked away. In South Australia, we have the state government intending to build a green hydrogen plant in Whyalla and run an electricity generator off of that. Only this week, we're seeing the Premier taking issue with GFG Alliance, and there may be good reasons to do so, over a whole lot of issues. But let me point out that, when the hydrogen plant was proposed by the South Australian government, there was no talk of an offtake agreement with anyone else. They were going to use the hydrogen themselves, for their plant. My understanding is that they've ordered the generators but they haven't ordered the electrolyzers. I think the state government had thought they would build it. They put down a budget figure—I don't think they'd scoped it at all, from what I'm told by industry insiders—of around \$600 million. I can't find anyone in the industry who thinks they'll build it for less than double that, and I think the reality of green hydrogen is starting to sink in around the world.

I make the point that about a dozen years ago in South Australia we were the epicentre of hot rocks. We were told very confidently at that time that South Australia would be running on hot rocks by the middle of the 2020s. There's not one hot rocks facility, because in the end, after the initial enthusiasm, the costs actually beat the projects. You just could not find a cheap enough way of developing the hot rocks industry to generate electricity. It would have been perfectly clean electricity. So would nuclear generated electricity, as far as that goes. It would have been perfectly clean. It would have worked well. It was just way, way too expensive. It seems that that may be the path for green hydrogen, as much as we all hope it will happen—and I hope it will happen. It would be wonderful for my electorate if some of the projects that have been proposed get up. It would be wonderful for the world and for generating electricity. But it has to be at a price that is at least somewhere near being competitive with current electricity-generating systems. Otherwise, we won't do anything in Australia. We just will not be able to afford it. At the moment, we're seeing cafes closing up, and they're blaming their electricity prices. As for manufacturing, I have a couple of very large mineral processors in my electorate, and I know how much they are struggling with the cost of energy at the moment, particularly the electricity prices.

Minister Bowen has told us we're going to need 22,000 solar panels a day—somebody should line them up on a patch of ground and let people get their heads around it—and 40 seven-megawatt wind turbines a week. So they're looking to push for offshore wind at three times the price and have found that communities are no happier with those proposals than they were with the ones on the land, given the impact on the fishing and tourism industries.

There are alternatives. Last week I had the pleasure of going to Port Augusta and listening to Miss America 2023, Grace Stanke, a nuclear scientist and engineer, talk about her life, how she got to be an engineer in a nuclear plant and what a fan of nuclear energy she is. She explained to us all the things that happen around us that are powered by nuclear energy in one form or another or made with nuclear isotopes—things like smoke detectors and the radiotherapy that saved her father's life and perhaps mine as well. She spoke of how she enthused she was as a young woman about the fact that this source of energy already does so much good in our society. Why wouldn't we take it and do more good with it by providing cheap, clean, emission-free electricity to the world?

It's very rewarding for me, because I've had some communication with the Port Augusta community and I'm finding very low levels of resistance there. I'm not saying they're welcoming it with open arms at this stage, but they are more than happy to sit down and have an intelligent conversation about it. Having government members or their associates circulate pictures of three-eyed fish is contemptible, quite frankly. We should be having a more mature debate in Australia about these important issues than that.

This legislation is about a ministerial override, and that's the kind of thing that should scare all of us all the time. It's being jammed through in the dying days of this parliament, it must be said. This is probably the third last sitting day of this parliament, and the government want to get it through in an awful rush, against the will of communities—communities that are not keen to host these offshore wind platforms, which threaten their tourism, threaten the scenic beauty of coastal communities and threaten fishing communities, whether those threats are real or imagined. I guess that beauty is always in the eye of the beholder, but it's fair to say that there are concerns in those communities, and it's quite clear that the government has not run a thorough consulting process and taken the communities with it. It's very important. If governments want to lead the Australian public they should be prepared to speak with them and take their views on board. I'll be opposing the legislation.

Mr JOYCE (New England) (18:15): In my time in politics there are few things that really get under people's skin in such a form as they will change their vote. The independent power swindle is most definitely one. It is not renewable; there is nothing renewable about thousands of tons of concrete and steel that is placed on a hilltop, or solar panels with cobalt and lead in them, where we don't quite know what happens if it gets into the groundwater. Or there are the bisphenol A and microplastics, which from these wind turbines will blow over the ground to be consumed by cattle and sheep. If you eat them, the micro plastics go into you. We've now got studies where we see it gets into the bloodstream and crosses into the brain, because it goes on a blood-brain transfer. There was a good report out the other day showing a spoonful of microplastics in people's heads. It can't be a joke because now in the stock insurance schemes I've got to nominate how I keep stock away from them, even though I don't have them. This is a nightmare we're creating for ourselves.

What happens if the cadmium and the lead get into our groundwater? What exactly do we do? How do we press reverse on that? We're not allowed to graze around them either, because of the concerns. We're seeing the decommissioning right now of some of the wind towers. The argument is about who is responsible for it. What we're seeing on farms is some farmers have been sucked in to become hosts. The swindle factories—that's what they are, and I'll tell you how they'll rip you off later on—are not really interested in anything but collecting money in a big dollops from well-meaning people who do want to do something about climate change. They use guilt to rip them off. With the farmers, they are so honourable! They say, 'We'll pay you \$3,000 a tower.' Sometimes the price of a megawatt unit of power is up to \$17,000—like on 5 February. You might think, that means you're going to pay that farmer for maybe half an hour of what the wind tower produces—maybe a day at best. It's nothing. But here's a trick: the farmer is responsible for the decommissioning.

Andrew Dyer, who was the Labor Party ombudsman—not us, it's not something we put up—came back with a report and he was very diligent. He's a professor of law at Monash University. He said it's between \$400,000 and \$600,000 to decommission one that is structurally sound—and this is now probably a year or so old—and up to \$1 million per tower that has a structural imperfection. So if you're a farmer who has 12 of them, that's a \$12 million impairment on the place. These farmers are not going to get \$12 million from anybody to pull them down, so you are going to have properties with a negative value. You're going to have the issue of microplastics that are fouling the land—that is definitely on the cards. You're going to have the issue of bisphenol A. You've got the issue that no-one is responsible for decommissioning them. You've got the issue that these companies that set them up become \$2 companies—they flip their liability; any liabilities and they go. That's out there.

This is amazing, I reckon these people need an award. If there were an award for lobbyists for the biggest rip-off ever put onto the Australian people, these lobbyists should have gotten it. Remember, they always told us it was the cheapest, and if it is the cheapest product you shouldn't need to subsidise it at all. Let's start with the capacity investment scheme. Can anybody actually tell me—because we believe in transparency—how much we're paying these people under capacity investment schemes? Surely, we have a right to know. It's the taxpayer's money. Why can't we see how much money we're underwriting to intermittent power precincts? Let's never call them renewables. They're intermittent power precincts. That's what they are. We use this romance nomenclature such as renewables and farms. That's part of the swindle to massage you into a position of compliance. Who knows what we're getting for these capacity investment schemes? Are we paying them a 10 per cent return? I've heard 15 per cent. I've heard 18 per cent. It means that, even if they don't produce power, they get paid. I would like to buy a cattle place and say, 'Well, even if I don't produce cattle, you can just pay me a portion of the \$10 million; pay me \$1 million a year.'

When you give way to these bat-poop crazy ideas—guess what?—they build them everywhere! Why wouldn't you? Yet, we're not supposed to know it's commercial-in-confidence. Well, that's rubbish! It's just covering it up.

Be transparent. Be honest. Tell us what's in it. The next thing is that we're creating a product that people have to buy. I can say, 'You have to buy this type of power.' Surely, if it's the cheapest, I'll buy it because it's the cheapest. Why do I have to buy it? Do you have other products in other shops where you say that, if you go, you have to buy that type of potato or you have to buy that type of laundry detergent? Why do we have to buy this product that they keep telling us is the cheapest? Shouldn't it stand on its own two feet and you buy it because it's the cheapest? Don't just buy it because you're told to buy it. Why does a country tell you to buy certain products? Well, socialist countries tell you to buy certain products. What type of country hides agreements that are underwritten by taxpayers' payments? Well, Australia. There's one. Then we build their transmission lines for them. We're told we're going to spend all this money for 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines.

Do you know any other businesses that say, 'Well, I'm going to start carting all your produce free backwards and forwards to the supermarket? Where does that come from? So we're going to do this stuff for them for free. Then there's the next swindle. We have corridors that are pushed through farmers' places. Right now, there are security guards demanding access against the farmers' rights and being backed by the police if they don't do it. The farmer has to get an occupational health and safety check to go on his own land. We're doing this in Australia. Once they get their corridors and push it through, they're basically divested from the farm, their private asset, and guess what they do? They sell it to a Spanish transmission company. Guess what they sell it to them for? Billions of dollars. So they've divested the asset off the farm, passed it through to the hands of a state government, and then onsold it for billions of dollars to an overseas organisation. It's divesting a private individual of their assets. This whole thing stinks!

We went through the pricing. This was pure genius. You get a product that you need 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, both night and day, but instead of selling it as required, which is 24 hours, it's sold in five-minute blocks. Who dreamt that up? How convenient. Anybody can produce for five minutes. You look up, and the sun is shining. I can bid in. There's a bit of a breeze; I can bid in. But they're so cunning. If you argue against them, they say, 'You're a denier! You don't believe!' There's that religious metaphor that charges in when any cult-like structure starts. They use the religious metaphor whenever they fail to try to guilt trip you in. So there's five-minute blocks. Let's say we've got 100 units. If there's a bit of breeze, they come in and say, 'We're so cheap,' and they bid negative for 20 units. They know full well that AEMO will need 80 or 100 units. Then coal comes in, and they're going to charge you \$70 a megawatt hour. Then gas comes in, and they're \$150 a megawatt hour. Then it goes all the way up to batteries. Then the strike price happens, where AEMO says, 'Got it.' Then everybody gets paid the highest price. Why don't you get paid what you bid for? What other market do you go to where you bid low but you end up owning the house? Do you go to a sale and say '10 bucks' and walk away and say, 'I'm going to end up with a house,' because that is how it works? It defies logic.

As I said in here just the other day, the spot price was at 57 bucks. The price in the stack went to \$17,000, and no-one blinks in this country. No-one blinks and says: 'Hang on. There's something wrong with that.' There is something morally wrong with that, because it's not magic. Poor people—people who can't afford electricity—pay. I saw Mission Australia just then on television. People are living in their cars. We just sit back and go, 'Oh.' We have been so gullible that we've been sucked into this idea that it's somehow morally prudent and imperative and the top of the moral apex tree. We should put aside all our lateral vision, all our clear understanding, and actually get these intermittent power companies, bring them into the Senate, into here, sit them down and start getting some truth about this whole thing so we can stop ripping Australians off.

Stop being so naive. Stop being so gullible. Just be what you're supposed to be in this joint—a politician. It's on all sides. There's no side that's pure on this. It's this because it's worked this way for ages. Always ask yourself the question—we know it; we're all politicians—to follow the money. Who's making a motza out of this? What's driving that person? Has anybody sat down, had an inquiry, dragged these people in and said, 'Let's have a talk to you?' They might say, 'You don't believe in climate change.' It's nothing to do with climate change. I might; I mightn't. It's got nothing to do with it. I want to know where our money's going. I want to know what's going on here. Tell me. I need to know. I've got a right to know. It's my job, actually. I get paid pretty good money to find out the stuff you're trying to hide from us. When you see this, you sit back and think about it. If you sit back and have this unquestioning belief, beyond reason and beyond observation and you just blindly believe something, it's called a cult. Very smart people, decent people, get sucked into things like that. It's because they don't question. You don't have to be a cynic. You don't have to be a stoic. You just have to understand that you've got to question stuff.

We're seeing it now. Ultimately, these things fall over. Green hydrogen's fallen over. Where are the taxpayers' dollars that have gone into that? Are we going to get them back? Are these people going to pay us the money back? Of course not! 'See you.' They're gone, gone with our dough. Are we going to see it with all of these other things? Ultimately we'll be smacked on the backside by reality. As people go broke, as no manufacturing goes here and as it becomes self-evidently a total debacle, I wonder if then we'll have an inquiry where suddenly an epiphany will

happen in this place. They'll say: 'What on earth did we do to our nation? How did they get away with that? Who was in politics at that stage? Why were they so naive? Why didn't they haul them in? Why weren't the questions asked?' For us who were here, what are we going to say to those people? What are you going to say to them when you see these field of intermittent power precincts that just don't work. They work for about 30 per cent. You can get to about a 30-per-cent saturation of the market, and after that it just does not work. Physics beats philosophy every day of the week.

This bill is emblematic of fiasco. The minister found out he had powers he didn't know about and now wants to get rid of them. Remember that this is the same minister who stands up with that smirk on his face pretending that he's all over the subject matter, all over his brief, has got it all under control and is actually divining a new energy system for Australia.

I'll close with this: whatever you think, if you go outside and look up at the sky, have a good look at it—that arc of heaven—just watch it and observe it both night and day, and then go down to the chamber and ask the question—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wilkie): It being 6.30 pm, the debate is interrupted. In accordance with standing order 192(b), the debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The member for New England will have leave to continue speaking for his last 15 seconds when the debate is resumed on a future day if that is his wish.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That grievances be noted.

Education

Ms SPENDER (Wentworth) (18:30): I'll focus my remarks this evening on education and the need to do more to support not only public education but also independent schools, as well as university students in my community of Wentworth. Wentworth is fortunate to have some wonderful schools, but options for public high school education are thin on the ground. Whilst half the kids in our area attend a public primary school, less than one in five continue into high schools in the state system. This isn't because there's a lack of demand. In 2023 a survey by parent group CLOSEast found that three-quarters of parents wanted to send their kids to a co-ed public high school. But the options just aren't there, and they've been getting reduced further by recent decisions by the New South Wales government. Just last week the state government revised the boundaries for Inner Sydney High School, meaning parents in Double Bay, Centennial Park and Woollahra will no longer be able to send their kids to that school. Inner Sydney High School was only opened in 2020, after years of campaigning by members of that community. Parents are rightly outraged. As one said, this is a decision that 'divides the community'. When many families are already struggling with the cost of school fees, this could drive even more to leave our area.

I'm proud of the advocacy by our community which secured over \$40 million to upgrade Randwick High School and make it co-ed, but we still desperately need more options for public education in Sydney's east. That's why I've been working with a local architect and expert in urban school design to develop a vision for a new high school in the east. The options are incredibly exciting, but time is running out, with much of the land available in the east slated for development, and new opportunities are very hard to come by.

Parents in Wentworth are demanding action on public education. More than 3,000 local people have called for a new public high school in Sydney's east by signing my petition. They want the New South Wales government to listen to our community and to take action to plan for a new high school before it's too late. Their voices need to be heard by both the state and federal governments, and so I ask leave of the Federation Chamber to table a copy of this petition.

Leave granted.

Ms SPENDER: As well as promoting public education, we also need to continue to support our terrific independent schools. First, that means maintaining funding for independent schools in line with their schooling resource standard entitlement. There are some in this place who seek to pit public education against independent schools, pushing a false narrative that they're competing for a fixed bucket of money and claiming that support of one comes at the expense of another. I don't accept this, and this is not how the system works. We are a country where every parent should have the right to choose the school they believe is best for their child, and, over many years, we have had a bipartisan consensus on funding schools in line with the Gonski review's SRS. We want all schools to get to that 100 per cent of their entitlement. It means properly funding public schools, and it means continuing to support independent schools.

In Wentworth, independent schools, including Catholic schools, receive on average around 5½ thousand dollars per student in state and federal funding. At a New South Wales level, this compares to about \$22,000 per student,

per public school. For most people I speak to, this seems like a reasonable balance, and so I urge all parliamentarians to commit to ensuring that all schools, including independent and Catholic schools, receive their full SRS funding.

The second way we can support independent schools is by providing greater certainty around when funding is provided. Currently, the Department of Education determines a capacity to contribute score for each school community every year, which, in turn, determines their level of funding. However, last year, CTC scores for the 2025 academic year were not released until 12 November 2024. This left independent schools in my electorate with just a couple of months before the new funding arrangements came into effect. That's not enough time to deal with significant changes in funding.

Data from Independent Schools Australia shows that around one-fifth of independent schools nationwide saw a funding decrease as a result of changes to the CTC score, with one school experiencing a funding cut of more than \$1 million. For many schools, these funding changes can only be dealt with by cutting programs, changing staff levels or increasing fees. This means we need to have more than a couple of months to plan for this. The situation is also challenging for parents, who can face higher school fees with just a few weeks of notice before the school year ends and the new term begins. When many are already struggling with the cost of living and keeping their kids in school, it's an addition challenge they could do without.

It's right to have a fair funding model for independent schools which reflects the capacity of local communities to contribute to the cost of their kids' education. But we do need to provide certainty and stability around this funding and give schools and parents time to adjust if there are changes. Announcing CTC scores in mid-November when funding changes happen in January is not providing that certainty and stability. I, therefore, support calls from schools in my area and across the country for CTC scores to be calculated and released earlier in the year to give sufficient time for schools to adapt. At a minimum, I urge the government to provide schools with at least six months between the finalisation of CTC scores and the new school year. This would help provide much-needed funding stability for schools and parents and allow them to better plan for the year ahead.

I want to talk about keeping a lid on student debt. There are so many people young people in Wentworth who feel like they've done the right thing—worked hard at school, gone to uni and got a good job—but now feel weighed down by student debt and don't think they'll ever be able to buy a house or get ahead like their parents did. I'm proud that pressure from the crossbench led to changes in HECS debt indexation last year, which will wipe \$3 billion of student debt off for three million Australians. That is good. That is what the crossbench has been standing up for. But we need to do more to support young Australians studying for their future, who cannot afford crippling US-style student debts. We need to do three things.

First, we need to create a smarter system of indexation. Right now, graduates are charged interest on debts they've already paid. That's because our current system doesn't account for repayments that people make to their student loans throughout the year. The Universities Accord recommended changing this. But so far we've seen no action. A simple fix would be to change the date of indexation from 1 June to after the deadline of individual tax returns. This would mean we stop charging interest on debts that the students have already paid.

Second, we need a fair treatment of student debt by financial institutions. Currently, APRA guidance for HECS debts is one sentence long and requires student debt to be treated the same as other types of loans, including buy now, pay later. This is despite the fact that student debt repayments are income dependent, unlike other forms of credit. The Australian Banking Association say they would be open to considering HECS debt differently, but, until guidance from the government says otherwise, their hands are tied. Government needs to step in.

Third, we need to get rid of the failed job-ready graduates program that has unfairly penalised arts students. Arts degrees bring essential skills to the workplace, to our society and to our humanity. Our young people are more productive, happier and more committed to members of society if they are allowed to follow their skills, their interests and their passions at university. Trying to shoehorn them into other paths with clumsy, expensive and inequitable fees is counterproductive, and it didn't even work. We need to get rid of the unfair and ineffective job-ready graduates scheme put in place by the last Liberal government and give students starting arts degrees a fair go.

Housing

Parramatta Electorate: Pongal

Dr CHARLTON (Parramatta) (18:39): Housing is one of the defining challenges of our time. It's not just about bricks and mortar; it's about affordability, stability and opportunity. It determines where we work, live and raise our families. As the member for Parramatta, I'm proud that our community is leading the way in addressing this challenge. The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that Parramatta has approved more dwellings than any other local council area in New South Wales: 1,620 so far this financial year. That's more than 10 times the New South Wales council average of 145 new approved dwellings. In fact, Parramatta is No. 1 out of 125 local government areas in New South Wales when it comes to housing approvals. On top of these approvals,

we have large new developments in the pipeline. Thousands of homes are planned for North Parramatta, Westmead South, Rydalmere and the Parramatta CBD. These numbers reflect the fact that Parramatta is pulling its weight, and then some, to meet the housing demand in our growing city.

But with this rapid development comes the responsibility to ensure that growth is balanced and sustainable and that the voices of our residents are heard. Parramatta residents understand the need for new housing and support the growth of our community. We know that, without new homes, affordability will continue to worsen, locking more Australians out of homeownership and driving up rents. But our community also believes that development should be done the right way: preserving green spaces, protecting heritage sites and ensuring that infrastructure keeps pace with population growth. Parramatta is doing its fair share, and so it's only fair that Parramatta residents have a meaningful say in how our city evolves.

Of course, the housing crisis is not just a Parramatta issue; it's a national challenge that has been brewing for decades. As minister Clare O'Neil has explained, the fundamental problem is that Australia has not built enough homes to meet demand. The data is clear: house prices have far outpaced wages growth; homeownership rates have plummeted, particularly among younger Australians on lower incomes; and rental affordability is at crisis levels. We need to build more homes, more quickly. But right now the construction industry is grappling with significant shortages of labour, skyrocketing material costs and financing challenges that make many developments unviable. Our planning system is too slow, limiting the ability to increase housing supply where it's needed most.

The Albanese government understands the scale of this crisis and is acting decisively. We've set an ambitious national target to build 1.2 million homes over the next five years. To achieve this, we're working in partnership with the states, industry and local councils to streamline planning approvals, boost construction productivity and increase the skilled workforce. We're also making the biggest investment in social and affordable housing in more than a decade through the Housing Australia Future Fund. Additionally, we've increased Commonwealth rent assistance, putting an extra \$1,000 a year into the pockets of more than a million households, and we've introduced new laws to strengthen renters' rights. For those aspiring to homeownership, our government is making it easier for first-home buyers through the Home Guarantee Scheme, which is already helping a third of all first-home buyers into the market. We're pushing for the passage of the Help to Buy Scheme, which would help 40,000 Australians including nurses, childcare workers and teachers achieve their dream of owning a home.

Building more homes is the long-term solution to this crisis, and that requires all levels of government, industry and the community to work together. We need to train more workers, invest in modern construction techniques and remove unnecessary barriers to development. In Parramatta, we're already leading the way, but we must ensure that our community's voice is heard, that our heritage is protected and that our city remains a great place to live. Housing is about more than numbers; it's about people. It's about ensuring that every Australian has a safe, stable and affordable place to call home. That's what we're fighting for, and that's what we'll continue to deliver.

What a fantastic celebration we had yesterday. Pongal 2025 was bigger, brighter and more joyful than ever, and it was truly an honour to be part of it. The energy, the warmth and the incredible spirit of the Tamil community made it an unforgettable event. Pongal is an ancient festival celebrated in the south of India and Sri Lanka. It's about thanking the sun, Mother Nature and the farm animals for their contribution to a bountiful harvest. I want to take a moment to thank the Tamil Arts and Cultural Association and, of course, Anagan Babu for their tireless efforts in organising such a spectacular gathering. It takes immense dedication to bring an event like this to life, and every year it just keeps getting better. To the talented dancers, musicians and performers: your artistry was breathtaking. Thank you to the Canberra Tamil Association, BollyFit dance studio and Cultural Martial Arts. You brought Tamil culture to life with every step, every note and every beat. The passion and pride of your performances were truly inspiring, and I know everybody in the audience felt the same.

Pongal is more than a festival. It's a celebration of gratitude, hard work and togetherness. It reminds us to appreciate the blessings that we have and to honour the contributions of our families and communities. It reminds us to look forward to the future with hope and optimism. These values are at the heart of the Tamil community, and they're values that make Australia stronger. As the member of parliament for Parramatta, which is home to the largest Tamil community in the country, I am incredibly proud of the contribution that Tamil Australians make right across the board, whether it's in business, education, health care or the arts. Your impact is profound, and our nation is richer because of it.

This month we also celebrate Tamil Heritage Month, an opportunity to reflect on the deep history, resilience and cultural legacy of the Tamil people. It's a heritage that spans thousands of years and it's one that continues to flourish here in Australia. As we reflect on yesterday's celebrations, let's carry forward the joy, the unity and the spirit of Pongal throughout the year ahead. Thank you again to everyone who made it such a special occasion. I look forward to celebrating with you all again next year.

Sunshine Coast: Infrastructure

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (18:47): The Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia. Data suggests we're growing by about 8,000 new residents every single year. The population of the Sunshine Coast at the moment is about 350,000 people. By 2041, it will have reached half a million people. We can look at these statistics and we can take pride in the fact that we are a lifestyle capital. We can take pride in the fact we are such an attractive region that other people want to come and join us. However, we have to also recognise that there are growing pains here. When a region grows at such a pace, it is absolutely critical that we have infrastructure being built ahead of the population curve, and this is a massive challenge on the Sunshine Coast.

It also explains why I've been working so closely with my colleagues—in particular Llew O'Brien to my north and Andrew Wallace to my south—to ensure that, as a team, we go in to bat for our broader region to make sure that we unlock the capital required to ensure infrastructure keeps up with that population growth. It is why we have successfully achieved an outcome of \$3.2 billion for upgrades to the Bruce Highway. It is how we were able to unlock a \$181 million concessional loan to ensure the Sunshine Coast Airport could be turned into an international airport. It also explains why we were able to achieve a \$390 million contribution from the former coalition government for an upgrade to the rail line, the B2N line, with upgrades through to Nambour.

It also explains why we were successful in ensuring that we had money put aside for rail through to the coastal strip. For the first time ever, we now have rail funding allocated, with the rail going on to the coastal strip of our region. We have \$2.75 billion now allocated from the federal government towards that \$5.5 billion total envelope of funding when you add the state government's contribution. It's a reminder, too, of what it means to be a federal MP, to be given the honour to serve your local community. Down here in parliament, there's always a lot of talk, chatter, and words that are said. Ultimately, we are judged by our performance and what we do. I'm proud to say that working as a team with my colleagues on the Sunshine Coast, we have gotten stuff done. Indeed, between getting elected in 2016 and the end of the coalition government in 2022, I can't find a region in Australia that received as much federal government funding for infrastructure as we did on the Sunshine Coast. This is all about ensuring we work as a team and go after what the Sunshine Coast needs most.

This leads me to talk about the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This will certainly be one of the greatest events Australia has ever hosted. Indeed, it will be the greatest of all time. When it comes to the Sunshine Coast's role in the 2032 Games, there are a string of sports that we will be hosting on the coast, including the marathon, road cycling, mountain biking, kiteboarding and the football and basketball preliminaries, as well as the marathon and road cycling for the Paralympics.

I remember very well that, in the former government, I played that role as the Prime Minister's representative and leader of the negotiations on behalf of the federal government to secure that 2032 bid. I remember being very proud of those sports that we were able to carve out for the Sunshine Coast. So much as I'm a sports fanatic, as much as any person is in Australia—we Australians love our sport—we can't lose sight of why we went after the Games in the first place. It wasn't to host the Games per se. It wasn't about our love of sport. In truth, we went after the opportunity to host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games because it provided South-East Queensland with an opportunity to unlock capital to build infrastructure for our future. That wasn't a secret plan. In fact, we were very upfront with the Olympic movement at the time. The IOC embraced that. Under their 'new norms', as they call it, their vision for future Olympic and Paralympic Games is not that the host region change its area so that it can fit the Games but rather that the Games change what it does to fit the future vision of that area; in other words, a vision where the local community is empowered to leverage the Games to create the future they envisage for their own residents, for their own nation. It's with that spirit that we decided to bid for the 2032 Games, and we won that bid.

This takes me to the importance of ensuring the Sunshine Coast wins regarding infrastructure for our future as we prepare for the Games. There are two particular projects I want to point to: (1) I believe the single greatest game-changing infrastructure we can have on the Sunshine Coast is heavy passenger rail running along the CAMCOS corridor along the coastal strip; and (2) I believe it's high time the Sunshine Coast had a multipurpose convention centre. Both of these things are not new ideas for the Sunshine Coast, but what we've been lacking up until only a few years ago was the catalyst to bring these projects on to accelerate the delivery of projects we need for our future. Therein lay the key to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It allowed us to secure funding that otherwise would not be available.

A multipurpose convention centre should be based on the grounds of the new CBD in Maroochydore. That is why the basketball preliminaries were so important to the Sunshine Coast when we secured the games. Now there are two options: either you hold the basketball preliminaries at Kawana, or you hold them in Maroochydore. I recognise that the former council of the Sunshine Coast wanted them to be held at Kawana. I disagreed with them then, and I still disagree now with those who insist that it should be held at Kawana.

There are good reasons why we need to ensure that we don't just have all basketball courts consolidated at Kawana, but the real reason I want it at Maroochydore is because, by hosting the basketball preliminaries at Maroochydore, we have the opportunity to leverage public funding together with private capital to build that multipurpose convention centre as a lasting legacy for generations to come. And so, as the state government now reviews what should happen with managing the games after really going in the slow lane under the former Palaszczuk-Miles government, I am unashamedly still out there, putting forward the very case I put forward when we put our bid on the table for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the first place—basketball preliminaries at Maroochydore. Why? Because our region deserves a multipurpose convention centre.

Secondly, it's rail. The basic thinking about having an Olympic sport at Maroochydore was a provided rationale for bringing rail off the existing line along the coastal strip all the way up to Maroochydore to ensure that, as people attended the games from around the world, they could get to those preliminaries. At the very least, they also needed to get to the games very early in the morning to watch the marathon. Of course, despite the fact we carved out money for the rail, both the Albanese government and the Palaszczuk-Miles government stalled the project for three years, amidst a hyperinflationary environment, so of course the price tag has gone up. The former Labor state government suggested it could be as high as \$12 billion. We need to unite as a region and continue to advocate for that rail line as part of an integrated system with a mass transit solution.

Health Care

Schools

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (18:57): In late April 2023, just a little under two years ago, my son Charlie had just had his second birthday. He's like all toddlers. They're at child care. They're running around. They do pick up the occasional cold. He woke in the morning, and it was a cold, so we didn't feel the need to reach out to our GP or go to the doctor straightaway. But, as the day went on, the cough got worse, and he started to become distressed. So I did then ring our GP clinic to say: 'Is there any chance that I can get Charlie in? I'm a bit worried that he might have croup. I'm really concerned about this cough.' And, of course, the clinic was full. They no longer did after-hours bulk-billing services. They no longer did after-hours services. They didn't have the GPs to be able to do that on rotation. At this point, there is no after-hours bulk-billing service or after-hours GP services anywhere in Bendigo, despite it being a regional city of over 120,000 people. The clinic were incredibly apologetic and said, 'Look, unfortunately, Lisa, there's just no space.'

I did then get a call back from my GP to say: 'I'm really sorry we can't get Charlie in. What's happening?' I described the symptoms, and he said, 'Your only option is to go to the ED.' So, with a young son at two, my mum came over to take care of my daughter. I'm at the ED with my son. The nurses were fantastic. They did the triage and said: 'We suspect it's croup, but you are going to have to wait for the GP to be assessed to get what we all know helps with young children and croup—the steroid. It's the wonder drug that gives them that ease and helps them sleep and helps them recover.' And it does. When your child gets that steroid, it is extraordinary how much comfort it provides and how well and how quickly they bounce back.

But it was a seven-hour wait. Croup is quite a common condition. But, because we didn't have the bulk billing services or even the GP services after hours in my electorate, we were at the ED, and we were not alone—hence why it was a seven-hour wait. As I sat there in the waiting room with my son, who was crying, upset and distressed—I was trying to get little breaks outside for the cool air to help him breathe and settle and then take him back inside, and I didn't want to lose my place in the queue—I looked around the ED waiting room, and the majority of the people waiting to see a GP were in a similar situation. There were older people. Over a third of the people in the room were parents with children under the age of five. Some, who'd been there before, had even taken their dinner and had a packed meal ready, because they knew the wait would be so long.

This was the situation in my electorate before the Labor government opened a Medicare urgent care clinic just around the corner, and it opened not that long ago. So now families who find themselves in the situation that I found myself in with my son, Charlie, do not have to go to ED. There is now an alternative: they can ring up and make an appointment on the day at the Bendigo Medicare Urgent Care Clinic. It is a vital service that can be done as a result of funding from our government, because we prioritise Medicare and we get that families, particularly those with young children, need to have access to those GP services and after-hours services. It is making a difference, and I can hear it in the conversations that I have with the mums and dads at swimming or kinder drop-off. Everybody loves this service, but it's only happened because of a Labor government. It has only happened because we have put the resources into Medicare.

This is on top of the other changes that we have made to Medicare by tripling the bulk-billing incentive to make sure that concession card holders and children are bulk-billed and to encourage GPs to take up that option to bulk-bill children and concession card holders. We are rebuilding and restoring Medicare. It started to collapse under the

previous government, when the now opposition leader was the health minister. I was here at that time. He froze the Medicare rebate, and it was a slow death for many Medicare bulk-billing services. It made it impossible, with freeze after freeze after freeze. With the cost of delivering care going up and GPs not earning more, it put pressure on it. I watched it in my electorate with service after service. First they cut back their after-hours services because they couldn't get GPs to work back if they weren't being incentivised to do so. Then clinic after clinic dropped its bulk-billing. Some dropped it altogether. Some dropped it for all people unless they were children. For some, it was just by the GPs' choice. So we were in this freefall of bulk-billing, which was collapsing in front of us, and it goes back to what started with the previous government.

That is why I'm so proud to be part of a government that is rebuilding Medicare. As a result, we are seeing more GPs bulk-billing in my electorate. We now have an after-hours service which is just around the corner from our emergency department at the hospital and which is helping people get the urgent but non-emergency care that they need. This is what Labor governments do. This is why we've started to rebuild Medicare, making sure people can get access to the health care that they need and taking that worry away from parents so they do not have those long waits at emergency.

It's not just Medicare and urgent care where we are rebuilding. We are restoring fairness to the way we fund our public schools and our school education system. The previous government, when Malcolm Turnbull was Prime Minister, put in legislation that capped the amount of Commonwealth funding that could go to states for public schools. What we've done in this parliament—and I can remember speaking on it in this very chamber—was to turn that cap into a floor. That's allowing our government to negotiate an increased funding agreement with the state of Victoria. That means that we have now got a commitment to see our public schools get to the schooling resource standard and get to the point where our public schools will receive the same amount of funding per student as our independent and Catholic schools. This is the point I want to reiterate: our independent and Catholic schools were already being funded by the Commonwealth and the state government to this resource standard. The schools that were not receiving the same amount of money per student were our public schools. This is what we have done as a government; we have restored the fairness to public school funding to make sure our schools in Victoria get it.

In the conversations I've been having with parents and in the conversations I've been having with local media and with community members, there is a bit of shock. They say: 'I thought we sorted this out with Gonski. I thought it got done.' No; we thought we had but then the coalition were elected—the Liberals and the Nationals—and this is where we separate. This is where we differ. This is where who you vote for matters. There is an ideology that does drive governments, and the previous government's ideology did not prioritise fairness in our funding and fairness in the funding of our schools.

This is why, when I talk about jobs, health and education, I'm asking people to think about who is going to be best to make sure that it is a fair go for all, that we do have fairness in our system and that, regardless of post code, you have access to the quality health services you need, whether that be Medicare urgent care centre visit, or your GP being able to bulk-bill you, or you or your parents having access to cheaper medicines for longer through the changes made to the PBS. Whether it be your children or your grandchildren, regardless of school you choose to send them to, they should be receiving the same amount of public funding. Yes, schools may charge fees on top of that—that is their choice—but they get the same amount of public funding. The role of this place is to ensure that we have fairness and integrity when it comes to working with our states to deliver these vital health and education services. It's a choice that people will make about who they believe will deliver better for health care and for education, who will be better for Medicare and who will be better for our public schools.

It is a choice that we ask all Australians to make, and I ask people to think about that as their first and second top-tier issue when they go to the election: who will be better for Medicare and who will be better for education? Who will make sure everybody gets the quality health care that they need and the education opportunities that we should all be afforded in a country like Australia.

Albanese Government

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (19:07): Ever since I was elected in 2016, I've worked to build a better Wide Bay. That has involved working with the community to identify local solutions and seek assistance from government to get the right outcomes. I've worked with many community, sporting, veterans and service groups across Wide Bay to help them get the support they need and work with the community and my coalition colleagues in Canberra to secure funding for the Gympie bypass and the Tiaro bypass. But over the last three years the challenges Wide Bay and our nation face have been made so much harder by the Albanese Labor government.

Labor's bad decisions, warped policies and wrong priorities have made life harder for everyone. At the last election Prime Minister Anthony Albanese promised a better future for all Australians, but if you ask yourself, 'Are you better off now compared to three years ago?', I bet the answer is no. The answer is no because of Labor's homegrown inflation disaster, which has seen an 18 per cent increase in the cost of living. The answer is no because

Labor has delivered seven quarters of negative growth, giving us the longest per capita recession for 50 years. It's no because productivity has crashed 5.6 per cent, and real disposable incomes have fallen by 8.7 per cent. It's no because Labor promised a \$275 reduction in our power bills but instead Queenslanders are paying \$948 more than Labor promised. It's no because gas is up 34 per cent, insurance is up 19 per cent and savings are down by 10.2 per cent. It's no because Labor has given us the worst six months of business insolvencies on record, with 27,000 businesses going insolvent over the last three years. It's no because mortgages have almost tripled. It's no because Labor wanted to divide our country by race. It's no because Labor's economic, energy, immigration and industrial relations policies are driving up inflation and stretching household budgets to breaking point. These failures are hitting homes and businesses in Wide Bay, and we can't afford another three years of Labor.

When you look back three years, before Labor was elected, you can see that real progress was being made across Wide Bay. This Labor government has abandoned regional communities like ours. I worked to extend mobile phone coverage to 19 new locations throughout Wide Bay. But, in the time since Labor was elected, they've not funded any new mobile phone sites. With the 3G shutdown, which occurred under Labor's watch, mobile phone coverage has seriously deteriorated.

In Maryborough, we secured \$28.5 million to build a new projectile-forging plant, creating a hundred new jobs and boosting Australia's defence capability. A \$700,000 commitment is helping to upgrade the Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum. We invested more than \$25 million replacing and upgrading bridges in Fraser Coast, Gympie and Noosa, including the replacement of Coondoo Creek Bridge on Tin Can Bay Road to better connect Cooloola Coast with other communities.

In Noosa, I worked with organisations like Sunshine Butterflies at Cooroibah so that they can share their magic with more families. I helped secure \$2.5 million to build a new community house at Peregrin Beach and another \$2.5 million to build the Sunshine Beach Surf Club. I also worked with Katie Rose Cottage Hospice at Doonan to secure \$1.5 million to increase its capacity. In Murgon, I worked with my friends at the Murgon Men's Shed to help them bring the railway museum to life. Veterans in Murgon have a dedicated drop-in centre thanks to a \$450,000 commitment to help them access advocacy services. A \$1.65 million fossil and fine arts museum, 55 Million Years Ago, is showcasing Murgon's paleontological history.

In Gympie, a \$1.8 million project is underway to create a new place to honour our veterans, and 200 new jobs have been created at Nolan Meats through a \$5 million investment to extend their production line. I also helped a number of sporting groups to access funding, including the Granville Tigers hockey club, Noosa Dolphins, Noosa pickleball and Maryborough district hockey club.

Anyone who knows me knows how concerned I am about improving road safety. As a former police officer, I've seen the tragic aftermath of fatal crashes on the Bruce Highway. I fought, with my colleagues in Canberra, the former Queensland government and the Albanese Labor government to make the highway through Wide Bay as safe as it is from Gympie to Melbourne. In 2018 a huge community effort resulted in an \$800 million commitment by the former coalition government for the Gympie bypass, transforming one of the deadliest sections of the Bruce Highway into one of the safest.

I worked with the community to secure \$269 million from the former federal government for the four-lane Tiaro bypass, but state and federal Labor governments put lives at risk by going slow on this vital project. The former Queensland Labor government said the detailed design would be completed by the end of 2023, that tenders would be called in 2024 and that construction would start in February this year. But none of that was true. The detailed design has only just been completed, the tender hasn't been called, and construction has not started.

The Albanese Labor government has failed to deliver the new major projects on our stretch of the Bruce Highway, much of which, between Gympie and Maryborough, is rated less than three stars out of five for safety. It's been revealed that the bulk of the recently announced \$7.2 billion safety upgrade funding won't be available for many years to come. State and federal Labor have proven that they can't be trusted with our safety on the Bruce Highway, but I won't give up fighting for the safety of my locals. We need to get Australia back on track, and that starts with a government that understands and delivers for our region, not ignores it, as the Albanese Labor government has done.

I'm looking to the future to continue my work with the community to deliver for Wide Bay, including fighting to extend mobile coverage across Wide Bay, particularly in areas such as Boobyjan and Teewah Beach. I'm keen to work with local community and sporting groups to help them get the support they need, including funding for a new clubhouse for the Noosa Dolphins rugby union club. Improving the capacity of other sporting clubs in Wide Bay is a priority for me as well, and I'm working with the Gympie and Maryborough district hockey associations to upgrade their clubs. I'm also working with the Noosa Women's Shed to secure funding for their shed, and with the Gympie Pistol Club to redevelop their clubhouse.

So many families and businesses have experienced economic pain caused by the Albanese Labor government. The statistics I outlined at the beginning of my speech tell of the hardship inflicted by this government. We can't afford another three years of Labor's weak leadership and economic incompetence. We need to get Australia back on track, and I'm working with the coalition to deliver the right policies and the right priorities to deliver for Wide Bay and make Australia prosperous, secure and united again.

Newcastle Electorate

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle—Deputy Speaker) (19:16): The Albanese Labor government has been steadfast in delivering for Newcastle. Creating more than 20,000 new jobs, easing cost-of-living pressures for families, investing in skills and training, and addressing key infrastructure needs, Labor's commitment to our region today and into the future has never been more evident. Our government's most significant achievements have been our focus on creating jobs, driving the transition to net zero in a methodical and orderly manner and providing economic stability. Through major investments in clean energy, Newcastle has become a hub of innovation in the transition to renewable energy. Labor know the pivotal role that Newcastle, as Australia's largest regional economy, will play in our plans to build Australia's future.

Labor's ambition for a future made in Australia is clear. We want Australian workers to make more things here. To do that, we need to train Australians for that future, and that's why we're investing in education, research and development, and opening the doors to university and TAFE to ensure our country has the skills we need to reach net zero and build our future here in Australia. Labor's free TAFE has already given 600,000 Australians the chance to learn new skills for new jobs at no cost. As we move to a net zero global economy, Newcastle is leading the charge in transitioning to a cleaner, more sustainable economy and ensuring that workers are not left behind. That's why we're locking in a further 100,000 free TAFE places each and every year.

But we aren't stopping there. Labor is also establishing a \$65 million net zero manufacturing centre of excellence at Tighes Hill TAFE—a game changer for our region. This TAFE centre of excellence will play a pivotal role in building new net zero manufacturing skills for workers in our region. With this new facility we will be able to grow the workforce to support the renewable energy industry of tomorrow; build on the partnerships between TAFE, universities and local industry; and drive down power bills, because we know that renewables are the cheapest form of energy and getting more into the system sooner will bring down prices.

We've also just delivered almost \$21 million for a new future industries facility at the University of Newcastle, which will bring together students, small and medium enterprises and the community to test and scale up new technology and to upskill people in Australia's energy, resources and manufacturing sectors for this net zero economy.

These investments in Tighes Hill TAFE and the University of Newcastle's Future Industries Facility, coupled with our investment in renewable energy projects like offshore wind, solar, green hydrogen, ammonia and aluminium, pave the way for a bright future for Novocastrians and position us as a leader in the industries of today and tomorrow.

Work is underway on the clean energy precinct at the Port of Newcastle, which is backed by a \$100 million upfront investment by the Albanese Labor government. Significantly, this precinct will repurpose a 220-hectare industrial site on Kooragang Island that was once destined to become another coal-loading terminal. Instead, it will now be used to facilitate clean energy—its production, storage, transmission, domestic distribution and international export. The clean energy precinct reached a major milestone in October last year, signing agreements for key design work and environmental impact studies covering electrical infrastructure, water services, general infrastructure, storage, berth infrastructure and pipelines to the berth. A formal advisory agreement has now also been signed with global leader Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

The clean energy precinct is a major economic boost for our region. The exciting potential of new industries like offshore wind and green hydrogen and ammonia to shift our region's economy to net zero and position us as a global leader in new energy cannot be overstated. Newcastle and the Hunter have powered Australia for generations, and this project ensures that we'll continue to do so for many generations to come. Decarbonising our economy is the greatest economic transformation since the Industrial Revolution, and establishing the clean energy precinct at our port will ensure good local jobs are created and protected into the future.

Labor is also making great progress on high-speed rail, which represents the next chapter in the economic story of Newcastle. The Newcastle to Sydney route will open a host of housing, employment and business opportunities for our region, as well as providing sustainable low-emissions transport. Ahead of the 2022 election, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese launched plans for a high-speed rail in Newcastle, committing \$500 million. Since then, we've established the High Speed Rail Authority, with an office and community information hub in Newcastle. We've completed the necessary geotechnical drilling, and now we're in receipt of the highly anticipated business case. It's

an exciting time for Newcastle, which will be the birthplace of high-speed rail in Australia. This is what building Australia's future looks like in Newcastle, and only a Labor government will deliver it.

While we work to create a future made in Australia, we remain focused on easing the cost of living for Australians. Our economic plan is all about helping Australians earn more and keep more of what they earn. It's not a 'mission accomplished', because people are still under pressure, but we've made some welcome and encouraging progress on the cost of living in the past couple of years. Under a Labor government, inflation is low, wages are up, and employment is also up, with more than one million new jobs created under this government. Just last week we celebrated a major jobs boom in the Newcastle region. Since coming to government, almost 20,000 jobs have been created in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, highlighting a nine per cent increase. This surge in new jobs is great for Newcastle and our region. We've got more Novocastrians working, which is great for workers, families, business and industry alike. By investing in infrastructure, innovation, training and skills, Labor's building Australia's future with good, secure, well-paid jobs at its heart.

We've also made good on our promise to save GP access after hours, having restored the clinics at the John Hunter and Mater hospitals to their full capacity, as well as opening a new Medicare urgent care clinic at Charlestown. This new urgent care clinic offers walk-in care seven days a week across extended hours, and, importantly, it is completely bulk-billed. This means you can access high-quality health care, and the only card you'll need will be your Medicare card. More than 2½ thousand people have received bulk-billing care through that clinic since it opened its doors just two months ago. We've also announced an 11 per cent increase in funding to public hospitals in New South Wales and Labor's historic boost to women's health to deliver more choice, lower costs and better health care for the tens of thousands of women in Newcastle.

Women have asked government to take their health care seriously, and Australia's first-ever majority female government has listened. Labor's investment of more than half a billion dollars will save women and families thousands of dollars across their lifetimes. These changes include new PBS listings for oral contraceptive pills, lower costs for and better access to long-term contraceptives and more support for women experiencing menopause, as well as PBS listings for more new menopausal hormone treatments, and more endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics, including one in the Hunter and Central Coast region. It's about time that women in Newcastle had more choice, lower costs and better healthcare. Only Labor can be trusted to protect and strengthen Medicare. We know there's more work to do and we're working hard to improve our system each and every day.

The Albanese Labor government's also easing cost-of-living pressures for students. We've already fixed the student-loan indexation formula, which cut \$3 billion in student debt, with most students receiving that credit or refund in December last year. But we're going a step further. A re-elected Labor government will cut a further 20 per cent off all student loan debts, wiping around \$16 billion in student debt for around three million Australians. In Newcastle, that means the average deduction of around \$5,700 for more than 25,000 students. Along with these record investments in our region, Labor's primary focus has been around cost of living. That's why our government made sure that every taxpayer got a tax cut, that every household got energy bill relief and that people have access to cheaper child care, cheaper medicines, a stronger Medicare, free TAFE and student debt relief.

The biggest threat to household budgets and to Newcastle's future is indeed a coalition government. We know this because we know people would be at least \$7,200 worse off under the coalition government based on their approaches to wages, tax cuts and energy bill relief alone. It's time that we gave up on giving tax breaks for bosses' long lunches and focused on the needs of everyday Australians. *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Andrews): There being no further grievances, the debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

BILLS

Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr PIKE (Bowman) (19:26): I know the member for New England spoke before me, and I think he left about 10 seconds on the clock. I was intrigued as to what he was going to contribute in the final 10 seconds, but that's alright. I'll pick up where he left off. We are, of course, at an interesting hour of the evening to be sitting in the Fed Chamber. We usually would finish up for the night after the grievance debate. But, of course, this being probably the last sitting week before the end of this parliamentary term—who knows, potentially—I think that we're getting a little bit messy with the order of the House, where things are going and which legislation is going to be debated in which chamber. I suppose that's understandable.

That is our primary concern around the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which we're dealing with this evening. The coalition's concern about this bill is that it hasn't been thought through, that there hasn't been consultation with industry, that it's been rushed through in what will presumably be the final sitting fortnight of the term and that it's all to resolve an issue that the minister created earlier in the term through the sloppy development of legislation. Of course, he's trying to fix it with some regulation, but that regulation will only apply moving forward.

What this bill seeks to do is apply those same changes to the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021 retrospectively. When you end up in a situation where you are creating legislation to fix problems retrospectively it is not ideal. That's not the way that things should be done in this parliament. It's the way that we occasionally have to do things. Of course, we're all realists and understand that we don't live in a perfect world. But a situation where we've got to come here in the final dying hours of this parliament and try to retrospectively fix something without any consultation, without the proper input and the proper processes that we expect to occur in this place and without the opportunity to go out to those who are experts in the industry to get their perspectives on what these changes mean and what the impacts will be on their industry—in this instance, those who are involved in the development of offshore electricity—leaves us in a very difficult position. How are we supposed to deal with a bill like this without the information that we need in order to properly assess this?

Of course this bill will pass through the lower house. But I think it's worth taking the time this evening to talk about our concerns and to talk about the process that's been less than ideal in the development of this bill and about the opportunity—or lack of opportunity—that we've had to give this the proper assessment that I think all legislation that comes before this house should be able to enjoy.

This bill amends the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021, under which offshore wind projects are managed across this country. And we've seen a lot made of offshore wind projects that have failed to get off the ground or perhaps are still in development across this country; they have created controversy within the communities where they have been proposed. This bill amends the act to specify that the regulations made by the minister on 12 December last year—it's interesting, actually, that those regulations came in after parliament had risen for the year. I don't think that's a coincidence; I think there was a deliberate attempt there to try and avoid any parliamentary scrutiny around the regulations. The government are now trying to apply those regulations retrospectively to feasibility licence applications submitted before the regulations were made in December last year.

We, as the coalition, have some serious concerns about what the implications are there. We have serious concerns with the retrospectivity of the bill. As I mentioned, this isn't normal process. It is an unusual thing to occur in legislation in this place—for a bill to be brought in to have retrospective application. We're also concerned about the procedural irregularity of this process. Normally, when we have a bill that has such a major impact upon an industry, we would expect to have an opportunity for the department and then the parliament to actually have proper industry consultation in relation to what it means. We would expect to have a call for submissions on this bill, to have a committee investigate what this means and provide a report to the parliament, and to consider that—and to consider that in the contributions we're making in the debate around this bill. Particularly, that should be doubly so when it has retrospective application.

We know that those regulations are currently being reviewed by a senate standing committee, and it seems unusual that we would press ahead with this bill, which, in effect, will apply those regulations retrospectively, at the same time that somewhere else in this building a senate standing committee is reviewing those regulations and determining whether they are a good outcome for the industry and whether they are something that should be tweaked. Given the minister's first attempts to fast track this bill through the parliament without scrutiny, especially given its retrospective nature, we think it's appropriate that we actually refer this legislation to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee to investigate. I don't think that's a tall order; I think that's entirely appropriate.

Yes, we are reaching a point where an election is going to be called, and there is all sorts of speculation around this building about when that might be. We may not be here again, and that committee may dissolve and have to be reformed and have to look at this bill again when it's reintroducing in a new parliament. But I think that's entirely appropriate. I don't think the government has made the case for why this needs to be pushed through in the final few hours of this parliament and why we're sitting late tonight. Not that I'm complaining. I've got nothing better to do than to debate this bill.

Unfortunately, we are concerned that Labor have completely ignored industry stakeholders on this bill, and they've been rushing through this legislation, which, of course, directly affects major investment decisions, without proper consultation. Those who are engaged in the process of developing proposals for offshore projects know that these are not inexpensive activities. These are not proposals that are made lightly. Certainly, it seems to me that we owe those who are making that sort of investment in this country the opportunity to have their say, to at least have

their concerns aired and to have those in this building who have to speak and vote on legislation actually review their feedback. We should consider that feedback and then incorporate it into our discussions and deliberations.

I think this is very much rushed, and it is not the way that legislation should be done. There are instances, of course, when we need to have retrospective legislation. We all appreciate that, and we all appreciate the fact that there need to be times when we do rush through bills. We've had a few opportunities like that in just this term of parliament, when we've rushed things through both houses of parliament in a single morning. We've had times where we've had to come back to the place when we weren't expecting to and vote for bills under guillotine rules, but I don't think this bill falls into that sort of category. I don't think this is the sort of bill where it's something that's totally uncontested and something that needs to be desperately done for a particular reason in terms of timing. I think this bill can wait until the next parliament. I think it can be considered properly by a committee. Certainly, that's what we're keen to do and what we're proposing as the coalition.

Unfortunately, we've only got this bill before us today because Labor was so rushed to get more offshore wind projects that they forgot to finish writing their regulations. This is essentially fixing a mistake that was made earlier in the term. We feel that Labor is attempting to push this bill through the parliament without the appropriate scrutiny before the election so that the minister is free, during the course of the election campaign, to make more announcements in relation to offshore developments.

One major theme of this whole term has been the concern that communities have had across, up and down. When you think about Western Australia and when you think about the proposals that have happened in the Illawarra and—we had the member for Newcastle speaking earlier—when you see the outcry within the Newcastle and Hunter communities at the offshore proposals that have been made there, you think, 'There are a lot of communities up and down the coastline of this country who are concerned about what the prospect of offshore energy developments means for them, means for their amenity and means for the cost of their energy.' I think we owe it to them to take great care in developing legislation and regulation in this area. I think we deserve the opportunity to hear from them and to hear from the proponents. It's a novel suggestion, I know, but I think we owe it to them to take great care before we start proceeding with any changes when it comes to the legislation and the regulations that govern the development of offshore energy in this country. Unfortunately, that's not the way that the federal government is pursuing this at the moment.

The bill will apply new rules to feasibility licence applications. An act of parliament in this regard is only required because the government expects that retrospectivity may adversely affect rights or impose liabilities. Otherwise, regulation would have sufficed. Of course, this is all due to the fact that, in 2024, there was a Federal Court decision, *Seadragon Offshore Wind Pty Ltd v Minister for Climate Change and Energy*, that found that the minister was wrong to deny an application for a licence when he could have lawfully awarded a licence for a non-overlapping area. This is the crux of the issue that's been created here.

In response to that decision, the minister's regulatory changes, which occurred back on 12 December—a convenient time to introduce regulatory change, when everyone is knocking off for the year—are a disallowable instrument, despite the disallowable instrument currently being under review by the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation for another 12 sitting days. So they've got another 12 sitting days to consider this. Are we going to get another 12 sitting days? I'm not quite sure. I don't think we will somehow. I think that'll take us well and truly away.

The government has brought forward these legislative changes to retrospectively apply those regulatory changes they made in December. Unfortunately, as the consequence of that—and part of this is due to the timing and the nature of this presumably being the last sitting week—the government has had little or no consultation with industry, including the investors who will be impacted by this decision. I had a search this morning when I decided to speak on this bill. I desperately, frantically searched for any comments from any of those investors and stakeholders. No-one has had an opportunity to put their thoughts together. Researching hard, I couldn't find a thing. That's concerning because it means that it hasn't been properly thought through by industry, that the standing committee hasn't had the opportunity to properly review the regulations and that, unfortunately, we're here late to try to push it through.

I think the answer as to why we're doing that is that it gives the Labor government more opportunity and more room to make feasibility licence announcements during the course of the federal election campaign, which is impending. This is of concern to us when we look at the impact that those licence agreements have already had on the communities that have had these sorts of developments proposed. This is of deep concern to us. It's not the way that legislation should be handled. If you look back at the government's record on energy prices and their reckless pursuit of a renewables-only profile for our energy production, you can see the real impact that it's having on Australians. And it's not just the cost of energy. It's not just that we know that the underlying cost of energy has gone up 30 per cent in the course of this term; it's the impact that it's having on these communities.

It's not just offshore projects that are impacting them. We've seen the impact of renewable energy projects, particularly in my home state of Queensland, when we look at some of the environmental damage that has been done in areas like Rockhampton from wind projects. When you look at the former Queensland government's pumped hydro project, think about the forest that would've been destroyed in the process of developing that project. Thankfully, it's now been scrapped. But these are the sorts of impacts that don't make the news, unfortunately—or, if they do, it's very rare.

These are the sorts of impacts that need to be considered. It's not just the economic impact. It's not just the impact on the reliability of the energy system in Australia; of course, that's an issue that's going to come more and more to the fore as we approach the end of this decade. It's the impact that it has on the community and the opportunities for those communities who are being affected to have a proper say over the regulations and the legislation that govern the development of these sorts of projects. I'll leave it at that, but we are deeply concerned about where this is heading.

Ms WARE (Hughes) (19:41): I rise to speak on the Electricity Infrastructure Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. We are opposing this bill, on our side. I think we need to start with looking at what this legislation is all about. This legislation is in response to a massive loss that the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, had in the Federal Court at the end of last year. I say that as a recovering planning, environmental and housing lawyer! In the case of *Seadragon Offshore Wind Pty Ltd v Minister for Climate Change and Energy*, the Federal Court held at the end of last year that the federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy may lawfully grant a feasibility licence for an offshore wind farm development over a smaller area than applied for by the applicant. So this legislation concerns offshore wind.

About 20 years ago, when I was a partner in a law firm, I had a client who was looking at onshore wind projects down in the state of Victoria. We negotiated and negotiated, and in the end the deal did not go ahead for the simple reason that the economics of onshore wind did not stack up in that particular location.

I have always been absolutely committed to net zero. Those on our side have said—and through our leader, Peter Dutton—that we have absolutely committed to the net zero target by 2050. How we get there is where we disagree with those on the other side. The Minister for Climate Change and Energy and the Prime Minister have completely and utterly stuffed energy policy in this parliament under this Albanese Labor government. We have some ridiculous examples of energy policy. Let me start with the big announcements during the election campaign. We're coming up to the three-year anniversary of the '\$275 cut to power bills' that we were allegedly all going to get. Instead, most Australians have seen their power bills increase by a thousand dollars. That was the big headline—they were going to reduce; they haven't. Let's look at some of the ridiculous examples of how their energy policy is playing out in practice.

Victoria—your home state, Deputy Speaker McKenzie—because of the decisions by the state government under the former Premier, is now importing gas when it has enough gas to power almost all of Australia. It has said no to gas, which is supported by the federal minister—'No to gas; we don't want gas.' Instead, we're now importing gas into this country at the same time that we are exporting gas to some of our trading partners, such as India. How on earth is that any sort of way to run energy? The dislike of gas has meant that Labor has now moved firmly to committing only to renewable energy and, as our coal-fired power plants are coming to the natural end of their lives, what this government has failed to do is develop any other sensible base-load power. Solar is fine when the sun's shining. Wind is okay in certain circumstances—when the wind is blowing. When it is not, what do we do?

We've relied on coal for years and we are rightly now moving away from the coal of yesteryear, but Labor will not even look at embracing nuclear energy, which has been embraced by all of our other major trading partners. It's been used for years in Europe and in America. In my electorate of Hughes, I do of course have the only nuclear plant in the country, and I'm very proud of the work that's done down at ANSTO. They do work with nuclear medicine and they do a lot of work in nuclear research, and it's certainly not the position of the coalition that we would be in any way expanding that for nuclear power. But I said in my first speech in this place that it seems to me ridiculous that we are not looking at harnessing the nuclear technology and the expertise that we already have in this country and how we can use them to reach net zero.

Nuclear energy is now safe. I have said on many occasions as well that my 15-year-old self that had posters of *Midnight Oil* and used to wear the 'no nukes' T-shirts would be shuddering at me promoting nuclear in this way. But the nuclear energy of the 21st century is very different to the nuclear energy of the past, and it is well and truly time that we embrace this, because the government's approach on this is, with respect, pig-headed and obstinate. Why is it that Minister Bowen won't even engage in any meaningful discussion on this? I have invited Minister Bowen to come out my electorate of Hughes to have a look at the nuclear facility; he refuses. Why is that? Why bury your head in the sand so much? Why stand there and say that he is a person of science and innovation and then refuse to consider or even go out and visit a plant to learn more about the nuclear industry?

Nuclear power will eventually be in this country. We just need to look at the many contributions that nuclear has made to our country already. Every single person in Australia that has to have any sort of treatment for cancer is availing themselves of technology that has been developed through the nuclear medicine facility at ANSTO in my electorate. Thankfully, we have signed up to the AUKUS arrangement for nuclear powered submarines. This will be a big boost to our industry. It's a very important defence relationship, and it reflects the importance that both America and Great Britain have to Australia historically and militarily.

If we say that nuclear can be used in medicine to save lives, and nuclear needs to become part of our defence and our security to protect Australians, why can't nuclear be used to power our homes? That's the question that Minister Bowen absolutely refuses to answer. When I return to wind power, which is the subject of this legislation, I am a proponent of looking at a whole hybrid mix of energy. I think that wind plays a part, and solar—certainly in a country as hot as ours with as much sun as we get—has a very big part to play. But so too does gas and so too does nuclear.

But now, with Labor's offshore wind projects, for example, it has been shown the investors and the proponents of those offshore wind projects have pulled out down in the Illawarra. They've said, 'This is not going to work here.' The local communities down in the Illawarra, which is not too far from my seat of Hughes—local fishermen and local environmentalists—have said it is completely unacceptable that this will happen in our electorate. Minister Bowen has kept saying, 'No, it has to go ahead.' It's not going ahead now, and the communities were right. They were right to stand up to this government and to the minister and say: 'Why are we going to rip up our sea beds? Why are we going to potentially interfere with the whales' migratory patterns? Why are we going to do all of this in the name of supposedly saving the environment? Are we going to destroy the environment to save the environment?' It makes no sense, and Australians are far more sensible than the Prime Minister and the minister for the environment give them credit for.

When I first did some work on onshore wind projects, there were many sites that were identified where the economics did not stack up, and local communities were so opposed to those going on in their community that they fell away. I think that part of the reason that Minister Bowen is so supportive of offshore wind is that onshore wind has failed. Onshore wind has largely failed. There are some parts and some companies that have been able to make it work, but, overall, the approach has not worked.

So I say to the Albanese Labor government, and I say to Minister Bowen: come out to my electorate. Have a look at nuclear. Don't put all of your eggs into the renewables-only basket. It makes no sense. Our energy going forward is absolutely crucial for households, for families, for businesses, for our manufacturing, for our industry. Why won't Labor open their eyes, open their minds and consider nuclear as part of the mix to resolve our energy crisis going forward?

Debate adjourned.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:56