

Income Tax Assessment Act to \$50,000; and removing the taxation point on the cessation of employment under that act as well. In respect of the disclosure issues, they're contained in recommendations 10 to 18 on page 48 of the report. They go to issues such as a maximum of 15 per cent discount under the taxation act in respect of the startup regime. Importantly, at recommendation 10, we make the point that the government should proceed with the proposal that they've already announced on 13 November 2018 and discussed in the Treasury's *Employee share schemes: consultation paper* dated April 2019.

In conclusion, we believe that there are opportunities for Australia to incentivise employee share schemes and to remove some of the disincentives that currently exist in the system around taxation arrangements and disclosure, and ensure that Australia is globally competitive when it comes to not only encouraging people to commercialise their innovations in Australia and produce them here but encouraging the take-up of ownership in those schemes, and ensuring that people have the opportunity to buy shares and to be offered shares, at a discount, in an innovation and produce that here in Australia.

I commend the report to the parliament.

The SPEAKER: The time allotted for statements on this report has expired. Does the honourable member for Chisholm wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a later occasion?

Ms LIU (Chisholm) (10:11): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Ms LIU (Chisholm) (10:12): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

The SPEAKER (10:12): I inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 110, the honourable member for Fisher has withdrawn notice No. 1 standing in his name. The order of precedence for the remaining private members' business notices as determined by the Selection Committee's report adopted by the House on 11 August 2021 remains unchanged.

MOTIONS

Aged Care

Dr HAINES (Indi) (10:13): I move:

That this House:

(1) recalls the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety made multiple recommendations urging the Government to immediately improve the supply, diversity, and affordability of aged care across rural and regional Australia;

(2) notes that it is now more than three months since the Government announced \$630 million over five years to improve the respect, care and dignity shown to rural and regional Australians in the aged care system, including their families;

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) explain exactly when and how it will deliver tangible progress on aged care in rural and regional Australia, particularly through:

(i) rapid improvements to the supply of quality fit-for-purpose residential facilities;

(ii) lowering the wait times for home care packages, which remain unacceptable;

(iii) preventing aged care providers from exploiting consumers through excessive administration and management fees through greater transparency and consideration of imposing caps; and

(iv) specific measures to improve skilled workforce training and retention in rural and regional Australia, including through improved pay, conditions, and staffing;

(b) fully commit to recommendation 86 of the Royal Commission by ensuring at least one registered nurse is on site at all residential aged care facilities at all times; and

(c) implement the recommendations of the Multi-Purpose Service Review, which was completed almost two years ago in October 2019, as soon as possible; and

(4) raises specific concerns about the urgent need for a high-care residential aged care facility in Bright in regional Victoria which has gone without a dedicated aged care solution for over three decades, and implores the Government to work proactively with the Victorian Government and Alpine Health to implement an effective solution as soon as possible.

I'm speaking here today because we cannot, and must not, forget about aged-care reform. It's close to six months since the aged-care royal commission handed down its report, yet it has all but disappeared from the national conversation. In this casual way of forgetting, successive governments have overseen 30 years of slow collapse of the aged-care sector, and we can't let that happen again. That's why today I'm calling on the government to explain when and how it will deliver tangible progress on aged care—because, while the pandemic rages, millions languish in the same conditions the commissioners described. The heartbreak of residents who have returned to Zoom calls for contact with loved ones must be salved by clear evidence that, irrespective of lockdowns, the royal commission reforms are tangibly progressing.

System reform can be slow. It is, by definition, hard. That doesn't mean, though, that we can delay. Aged-care services in rural and regional Australia have thin markets and workforce challenges, and their context-specific models of care call for fit-for-purpose funding responses. Residential aged care in the alpine town of Bright is one example. It has no high-care aged-care facility. Bright hospital is part of the Alpine Health multi-purpose service. This community has called for a dedicated high-care facility for three decades. Without one, older people are forced to leave the only place they know and move to another town. Their spouses may be too old to drive to visit them and public transport for relatives and friends is sporadic or non-existent. This is heartbreaking and emblematic of the epidemic of loneliness that so many older Australians face.

In Bright, the answer is clear: Alpine Health's feasibility study sets out a plan for the redevelopment of Bright Hospital as an integrated health service, with a dedicated high-care residential facility with co-funding by state, community and philanthropy. But they need federal support, and I'm calling on the government to step up for this support. Right now, the Commonwealth prohibits funding to capital infrastructure for multipurpose services such as Bright, and this simply doesn't make sense. The facilities are outdated and deteriorating. Aged care is a Commonwealth responsibility. While the MPS model was established to be flexible and to integrate aged and acute services for small rural communities, this government excludes MPS from grants that every other aged-care provider can access, including the Aged Care Approval Rounds, which some non-MPS services in many towns across my electorate have received. The government agreed to revisit its ban on funding capital infrastructure in its responses to the 2019 MPS review and the 2021 royal commission report. Yet, that's the last we hear of it: no money in the budget and no straight answers in ministerial meetings. So I call on the government to urgently implement the recommendations of the multipurpose services review without delay.

Quality aged care needs expert staffing. This government needs to fully commit to recommendation 86 of the royal commission report by mandating that a registered nurse is on site at residential aged-care facilities at all times. As a former nurse, at a rural bush nursing aged-care centre many years ago, and as a volunteer and director at a larger aged-care facility, I know that having nurses on site benefits not just the residents—whose care is complex, ranging from chronic pain management, diabetes control, wound management, mental health issues, cognitive care through to palliative care support—but also the personal care attendants by providing them with expert help and timely advice. Having registered nurses on site 24/7 supports an overworked and stretched rural GP workforce. Just ask the local doctors and they will tell you how many out-of-hours visits and avoidable hospital visits 24/7 registered nurse care prevents. And imagine if this included the expertise of nurse practitioners, who face non-sensical barriers to providing care to those who need it most.

The royal commission recommended that this be phased in from 16 hours a day in July 2022 to round-the-clock care by July 2024, yet the government committed to 16 hours per day, which will not be mandatory until October 2023. This is not good enough. The need for clinical care doesn't operate in shifts and cannot wait for two years. I know that finding the workforce we need will not be easy, because of the long-term erosion of the sector, but we need to get cracking. I call on the government to act and act quickly to benefit the hundreds and hundreds of aged-care residents and workers in my electorate of Indi who are providing care, dignity and respect under difficult conditions.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Dick: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (10:14): I thank the member for Indi for moving this motion and providing the opportunity to speak on a topic I care deeply about. To achieve the required outcomes in the aged-care sector is not an easy feat. It's something that the Morrison government is not shying from—quite the opposite. There is good reason that one of the Prime Minister's first acts in his role was to call for a royal commission into aged care. He said he believed we owed a duty of care to every older Australian to ensure they have respect and quality care. This is something I'm proud of and something I know that we as a government are committed to delivering on.

After 10,000 public submissions and 23 public hearings with 641 witnesses over 99 days, the 148 recommendations made in the final report are the product of considered scrutiny of Australia's aged-care system.

The Morrison government recognises the importance of these recommendations and will act to fulfil the recommendations to give our older Australians the dignity they deserve after a lifetime of service to our country.

Our comprehensive response to the royal commission final report is driven by the principles of respect and care through the lens of five broad pillars: firstly, supporting older Australians who choose to access home care—Australians tell us they want to age at home, and we back that in; secondly, that quality and safety in residential aged care delivers dignity alongside care—something we need to ensure; thirdly, investing to drive improvements in residential aged-care services and sustainability, which will involve providers partnering with the community and government to deliver this; fourthly, that growing a passionate and skilled aged-care workforce is absolutely essential—this will be constrained in the time of COVID and it will ensure a laser-like focus; and, fifthly, governance—we need oversight standards and accountability. This is a new era that has already commenced in this parliament, with many of these already starting to have legislation around them.

The Morrison government cares for the dignity of Australians as they age, with \$630 million invested to improve the supply, diversity and affordability of aged care across rural and regional Australia, in recognition of the contribution they have made to our country. The government has already guaranteed additional funding to support services to meet the royal commission's recommended minimum 200-minute care time standard and to have a registered nurse on site for 16 hours per day.

Importantly, the Morrison government has announced there will be a \$29 million investment in allowing allied health professionals to train in rural and regional areas as well as upgrading older diagnostic imaging equipment. We understand there are issues of workforce in rural and regional Australia, and it is something we are working hard on. I commend the member for Indi on raising this incredibly important issue. This will provide benefit to at least 80 medical practices and is crucial in working towards the full achievement of recommendation 86—and not only this; it will also improve skilled workforce training, as the member for Indi has called for.

The member for Indi has also called for the government to lower the wait times for home-care packages. The member will be pleased to know the government will provide an additional \$6.5 billion to release 80,000 additional home-care packages over the next three years. This is massive. This is no small fry; \$6.5 billion is an incredibly important record investment in this area, for what we need for all our futures. The member will be pleased to know we are also increasing investment in the workforce through additional training and care minutes. The Morrison government is confident that home-care packages will be allocated and taken up by Australians faster.

This funding also includes \$370 million for aged-care providers to improve buildings and expand into underserved regions. The Morrison government foresees about 1,400 construction jobs being created and, pivotally, benefit for 471,000 senior Australians in remote and rural areas. This is key. Moreover, \$35 million will be allocated over the coming four years to allow these remote and rural aged-care providers to access additional temporary and permanent workforce as well as incentivise the retention of current permanent staff—again, a critical investment. In addition, \$13 million has been invested to ensure that Australians in regional areas can access offices for aged-care support.

The Morrison government is committed to getting the response right so that all Australians can age with dignity and respect. They deserve it.

Ms McBAIN (Eden-Monaro) (10:23): [by video link] I acknowledge the commitment of the member for Indi in bringing on this motion regarding aged care for discussion today. Today I want to speak about a fair go. Our Prime Minister said that he believes in a fair go, that those who have a go in this country will get a go, that if you put in you get to take out. So my question is: when is the Prime Minister going to give older Australians a fair go? When is this government going to accept that people in aged care have put in? They've worked hard, they've built this country and they have earned our respect. They deserve so much better than a system that has neglected them. It's about time the government gave them a fair go.

The royal commission into aged care made multiple recommendations, urging immediate action to improve the supply, diversity and affordability of aged care across rural and regional Australia. Our regional communities know how important it is to have local aged-care facilities, because regional people want to grow old with dignity, surrounded by their families, their friends and the environment and culture that was central to their younger years. Unfortunately, the choices for many people in my electorate, including those in Jindabyne and Cooma, are limited. Communities in my electorate have older populations. They are people who have lived in places like Bombala and Batlow their entire lives, and they have no plans to leave. They want action so that they can access an aged-care system that allows them to stay connected to their communities.

We all know our aged-care system needs an overhaul. My mum worked in aged care for 15 years, and my nan spent her last years in an aged-care facility. I heard firsthand some of the difficulties my mum had trying to deal

with regulations while making sure that residents were front and centre in her care. Mum talked about this part of her working life as having been a privilege. For my mum and for everyone else who works in aged care, caring for, connecting with and protecting those who contributed to our communities is far more than a job. But let's not forget that it is a job. Care work is hard work. It is physical work. It is emotional work. It's because of this work that our older loved ones can live the life they deserve.

This work is still undervalued by this government. Our aged-care workers have been on the frontline of this pandemic for over 20 months. Everyone can see that our aged-care workers are having a go. Surely it's time for this government to give them a fair go. At the moment aged-care workers are some of the worst paid people in Australia's economy. Staff are overworked and under enormous pressure to provide quality care when they're exhausted, because there just isn't enough support. These workers are doing their very best in a system that is broken. There needs to be an increase in the hourly rate of aged-care workers not only because they deserve to be compensated for the difficult work they do but also because we need more of them.

We need to be encouraging more people to take up careers in aged care. It's an industry that's growing every year due to our ageing population, and a career in aged care is a really viable option for many people living in our regional communities. But how can you encourage someone to enter a career where they will likely be overworked and undervalued? This country deserves a better aged-care system—a system where services can employ more trained and better-paid staff so that the overall standard of care increases. I strongly believe that we need staff-to-patient ratios, and these ratios need to be looked at based on the needs of residents. It baffles me that we can regulate ratios for childcare centres but that this government seems unable or unwilling to consider ratios for our other most vulnerable cohort. The royal commission concluded that the retention, attraction and training of staff would be crucial to lifting care standards as Australia ages, but today there are fewer than half the enrolments in TAFE studying health and welfare in age and disability than there were in 2013.

This government is already failing to live up to promises to fix longstanding staff shortages, despite the royal commission's outlining of it as an urgent priority. Time and again we have seen this government presented with recommendations, but I worry that the lessons that have come out of the royal commission are falling on deaf ears. We don't have time to waste. We need action now and we need to make sure that we get this right. My hope is that this government will finally hear the calls of all Australians and do what we need it to. I hope the government will finally give our older generation and our aged-care workers a fair go, because they've more than proved that they deserve it.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (10:28): I thank the member for Indi for the opportunity to speak on this important motion. And I thank the member for Eden-Monaro for her comments. She is right: regional and rural Australia need the services and infrastructure in aged care. But the important thing to note is that we are not running a fast-food drive-through here. We need to make sure that we have careful and deliberate planning when it comes to aged care, and the government is certainly addressing the recommendations that were provided in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. That is why in the budget this year in May the Treasurer stood at the dispatch box and announced a \$17.7 billion package for a once-in-a-generation reform of aged care, including measures aimed at improving aged care particularly in rural, regional and remote Australia.

I want to acknowledge the work done by the previous minister for regional health, the member for Parkes, and to acknowledge all of the rural and regional members in this parliament, not just on this side but in the parliament. And I do respect the member for Indi. She comes here with a long, proud history of health care—she does—and the member for Macarthur, too; I had dinner with him not that long ago, when COVID allowed us to do those things, and certainly the topic of rural health was first and foremost in our discussions.

I was very pleased that the latest Aged Care Approvals Round, announced recently, delivered new residential care places and capital funding for the Riverina electorate, because Riverina is a microcosm of Australia—certainly of regional Australia. That ACAR included \$197,560 in capital funding for the Uralba Hostel at Gundagai and 36 residential-care places for the Signature aged-care centre in Wagga Wagga. Signature has already started earthworks for its new development on what was once the south campus of the Charles Sturt University in the suburb of Turvey Park. This sort of infrastructure is so important to our areas. Whether it's Wagga Wagga, which is a big regional hub, or a small town or district, they need their residential aged care. I certainly take onboard what the member for Eden-Monaro said about loved ones—family members—who have lived in a particular area. She cited Bombala, but it doesn't matter whether it's Bombala, Bega or elsewhere in our great nation. Those people have contributed mightily to their local areas, and they deserve the very best of care and aged-care coverage, whether it's home packages or whether it's residential living, in their twilight years, which should be some of the best years of their life, when they can spend time with loved ones and with family and friends in the community to which they have contributed so mightily.

That's why I was pleased that in the ACAR provisions there was funding for 45 beds for Harden aged care. Unfortunately, Harden aged care was closed earlier this year and residents were moved to nearby centres. Cowra proponents were going to take over the facility, but they needed a \$4 million capital investment, which is not part of the ACAR round; they needed a business improvement fund, which they were able to get—hundreds of thousands of dollars. But the 45 beds was essential, and that is a viable, very much on-the-go aged-care centre at Harden, which could be taken up by a proponent, and I certainly hope that is the case.

I just want to take on the comments of Mark Douglass. Sadly, his mother passed away when she was moved out of Harden aged care. He says, 'Old people are worthy of our care and respect and are not a commodity to be carelessly disregarded or traded as entries on a balance sheet.' He's right, and we all know that. That's why our government is doing everything we can to address those issues in that important royal commission. We're doing everything we can as far as services and as far as infrastructure is concerned for aged care, because aged people deserve the very best treatment and respect in what, as I said, should be their very best years. We will continue as a government to provide that service and level of support for them.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (10:33): [by video link] I'd like to thank the member for Indi for bringing forward this motion regarding aged care. Once again, we're seeing a government that's big on announcements but that fails on delivery. We are seeing a government that simply cannot keep its promises. It's been three months since \$630 million was announced by this government to go towards improving regional and rural aged care. That \$630 million is vital. It's essential to improving the lives of our most vulnerable people. We know this because the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which we on this side of the House fought so hard for, told us. From that interim report called *Neglect*, we know how important this issue is. That report urged the government to immediately improve the supply, diversity and affordability of aged care across rural and regional Australia.

We know that the priority of those opposite is not about better service but about cutting costs, and we've seen that in health care. In the eight years since the Liberals have been in government the cost of seeing a doctor in my electorate has risen by 35 per cent, and that's why I'm pleased Labor has forced an inquiry into rural and regional health care, which will also assist older people in the community. We have seen the ramifications of this government's cuts and neglect to the aged-care sector. Earlier this month we learnt of the critical workforce shortage that the aged-care sector is expected to face in coming years. We are facing a shortage of more than 110,000 workers over the next decade. And yet this government has overseen significant cuts to workforce training enrolments, impacting the sector right now, with those seeking to train in this industry going backwards.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research revealed that since the government came to office there are 4,000 fewer health and welfare support workers and 3,000 fewer aged and disability carers graduating. This is a cut of more than 7,000 to those coming through this vital, essential skilled workforce. This is a workforce—largely older women—that our country has relied upon at the frontline during the pandemic. We are putting the effort of this pandemic onto the shoulders of these incredible workers, who are doing such hard, taxing physical work every day in these aged-care centres. These workers are exhausted, and we know that because they've come to the parliament and they've told us on a number of visits that they are exhausted. They are overstretched. They are under-resourced. All they are begging for is time to care and decent pay for the work that they do. They are exhausted and overstretched.

I reject the blame-shifting when it comes to vaccination that we have seen regarding aged-care workers. A public health order now mandates that all residential aged-care workers in Tasmania must receive a first dose by 17 September—fair enough—but this government has failed to put the structures in place, and it has left the workers high and dry. Aged-care workers were told they were at the front of the queue and that they would get easy access to the vaccine at work. They weren't and they didn't. We need to make vaccination easy and available for workers, not shame them, these incredible workers who do such incredible work.

In my state of Tasmania the Health and Community Services Union has heard reports that because of chronic short-staffing some aged-care residents are being left in incontinence pads for hours and chronic dehydration has become a widespread issue across a number of homes. But, as the harrowing royal commission made clear, they simply lack the resources they need to take care of older Australians. If you state the obvious, we need more highly skilled carers and support staff in this sector, not fewer. We need to do better by our incredible aged-care workers and the incredible work that they do.

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:38): As a country, we are facing some of the most challenging weeks of the pandemic since it began in 2020, and it's our seniors who are amongst the most vulnerable. The standard of support and care that they are provided during this time cannot afford to be compromised. That is why we want to take this opportunity to thank the carers, the nurses, the cleaners, the cooks and the doctors who do such amazing work making sure our senior Australians are treated with respect, care and dignity.

I rise today to speak on Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which recognises the inspiring effort of our nurses and carers. It also brings the challenges of aged-care services across the country into clear focus. The Morrison government is committed to transforming aged care, and the royal commission's monumental report, with 148 recommendations, delivers a challenging but achievable road to reform. It recognises the obstacles facing aged-care providers in rural and remote areas and the need to strengthen and support the aged-care workforce in these communities.

In response to the final report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety the Australian government will deliver a \$17.7 billion package, a package that is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change aged care for the future. In response to recommendation 54 from the royal commission, we are investing over \$630 million to make sure the aged-care system is more accessible for senior Australians living in rural and remote locations.

The Morrison government is also strengthening its capacity to understand the service gaps in these rural and remote areas. It is making sure our seniors can continue residing in the parts of the country that they not only call home but feel most at home at. This package is critical in making sure that they can continue to have this freedom, and it ensures their desire to be independent does not have to diminish with age.

The opposition has noted it has been more than three months since our government announced the \$630 million investment. I want to paint the full picture to reinforce that we are only three months into a five-year plan which has been mapped out clearly. It is an ambitious plan, one the Prime Minister has acknowledged will take considerable time given the scale of change we want and need to achieve. But it is a plan that is achievable, and it responds to the individual needs of senior Australians. It gives them the opportunity to be involved in their own care and fosters a sense of purpose which cannot be taken for granted. The plan is aligned with five key pillars: home care, residential aged-care services and sustainability, improving access to and quality of residential care, workforce, and new legislation and stronger governance.

Just last month Minister Colbeck announced the allocation of \$150 million in capital grants—the single largest investment in residential aged-care infrastructure in Australia's history, 97 per cent of which was allocated to services located in regional and remote Australia. We're not wasting time getting underway, with a total of 72 projects that have been funded and are expected to be completed over the next six to 36 months. It will see a reduction in shared rooms, better amenities, more dementia friendly environments, more sustainable services and improved access to quality care in areas of need.

Senior Australians shouldn't feel like they are waiting out their lives. Those of us with parents or grandparents in the system know they deserve the best possible quality of life at the bare minimum. With 32 aged-care homes and over 22,000 locals aged over 65 in my electorate of Bonner, the news of this package has been applauded by our local aged-care facilities. I'm regularly visiting these facilities as it is an opportunity for me to personally thank the staff, learn about what's happening on the ground and learn about where the support is needed. I've been able to hear the thanks of the staff at some of these local facilities for our government's commitment to restoring trust in the system. They always make me feel at home, as do the residents that I get to spend time with, and just recently I had the pleasure of hosting morning teas for the residents at Aveo aged care in Manly and those at Wishart Christian Village. We must continue to make sure our senior Australians know how valued they are as part of our community.

I'm proud to represent the Morrison government, who recognise the importance of aged care now and into the future. We have to take considerate, responsible and thorough actions to provide critical funding, resources and training to the sector. What an accomplishment it is to be rolling out this in every corner of the country.

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (10:43): [by video link] I thank the member for Indi for this very important motion. As the former speakers have noted, this is such an important issue. Australia's population is ageing. In Warringah 15 per cent of residents are over 65 years of age, and that percentage will rise. Many people in Warringah are in aged-care facilities or are supporting family members who are. I look forward to speaking to many of them at a forum that I'll be hosting online in a few weeks time to hear their accounts firsthand.

The provision of adequate and compassionate aged care is important now, but it will be increasingly more and more important in years to come. The Sydney North Health Network is projecting that, between 2016 and 2036—so not too far into the future—there will be an increase of 46.3 per cent in the 65-plus age demographic. This makes it essential that we have in place well before then a planned, compassionate responsible system for aged care—a system that provides the level of care that supports dignity and grace in older age.

The two-year long Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety showed the deep cracks that exist in the existing system, and I think all Australians stood aghast as we heard the repeated testimony of such horrendous malpractice and tragedy. The 2,500 page commission report is a testament to the depth of reform

needed to right the system. The royal commission made 140 recommendations to reform the system, and we are currently uncertain of the stage of implementation of many of them. The member for Indi has highlighted several consequential recommendations, particularly for rural and regional communities, and I echo the calls for the government to tell us when and how they will be implemented.

I strongly agree with recommendation 86 of the royal commission, which would ensure at least one registered nurse is always on site in residential aged-care facilities. Currently—and this is a little mind boggling—there is no minimum staffing requirement or skills mix in the legislation. Whilst we do it for so many other industries, it is really astounding that we are not doing it for our most vulnerable and elderly. It's something I have been calling for since the 2019 federal election and which I will continue to advocate for. Just this week I met a local nurse working in aged-care homes who detailed the continual staff shortages that have led to poor outcomes in the past in the care of people. In this facility there are 55 residents with moderate to severe dementia and only one registered nurse on shift—one for 55 residents. Made worse, in one facility, the RN went home overnight and left only assistants in nursing to manage the care of residents overnight, which caused issues for the RN returning to the shift in the morning, because they have to play catch-up. This is probably comparable to a lot of aged-care facilities all around the country.

Over 10 per cent of aged-care facilities operate on ratios of one RN to over 100 residents every day, despite the majority of residents, some 86 per cent, being diagnosed with at least one mental health or behavioural condition and over 50 per cent of residents having high complex healthcare needs. These are Australians in a vulnerable state and with complex needs. It is simply not right to have so little proper care afforded to them.

The government in its response to the royal commission partially accepted recommendation 86, including minimum staff time standards and committed to these in the proposed Aged Care Act. They will come into effect in phases. The first is to begin on 1 October 2023, and will provide 200 minutes per day per resident with personal care workers and enrolled nurses and 40 minutes of that time with an RN, increasing to 215 minutes and 44 minutes respectively by 1 July 2024. I welcome that commitment, but it really is not good enough. From 1 July 2022 there should always be at least one RN for morning and mid-afternoon shifts and one RN on site per aged-care facility. We really have to move quickly and implement that recommendation.

Recommendation 72, which aims to achieve equity for people with disability receiving aged care, is also incredibly important. I presented a petition of nearly 20,000 signatures in December 2019 in relation to the age discrimination that exists for people once they are over the age of 65 in relation to the difference in support between NDIS and aged care. There are, sadly, many more issues, but I commend the government and urge greater action in implementing the recommendations.

Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (10:48): I thank the member for Indi for bringing this motion forward today. Indeed, ageing, along with death and taxes, is right up there in the inescapable realities of our human existence. I'm also very pleased to take this opportunity to mention my wife's nan Maxine Mitchell, who passed away last week at the very ripe old age of 96. She did extremely well. All the best to Warren, my father-in-law, and the rest of the family. Maxine, along with Peta's other nan on her maternal side, aged in residential settings. We are seeing this as increasingly one of the trends in modern Australia. So it's absolutely appropriate and very welcome that the Morrison government is continuing to invest in aged-care settings in the home, and of course that includes regional and remote areas as well.

I note that a component of the motion today speaks to tangible progress on aged care in rural and regional Australia. Now, this government certainly understands that senior Australians in regional and remote areas want equitable access to the care that they need, regardless of where they live, so that they can stay close to their loved ones and communities for as long as possible. This government also recognises that there are significant challenges facing aged-care providers in rural and remote areas and that there's a need to strengthen and support aged-care workers in those communities.

In response to the final report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Australian government is delivering a \$17.7 billion package for a once-in-a-generation reform of aged care, and this includes measures aimed at improving aged care in regional and rural Australia. In particular, recommendation 54 from the royal commission calls on the government to identify and address gaps in services to ensure equitable access to aged care in regional and remote locations. So the government has responded to this recommendation in the most recent budget, including through measures like the \$630 million investment to make the aged-care system more accessible for senior Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or living in rural and remote areas.

The government is strengthening its capacity to understand rural and remote service gaps and to develop policy solutions. The government announced recent results of the 2020 ACAR, which included the allocation of \$150

million in capital grants—the single largest investment in residential aged-care infrastructure in Australia's history—and 97 per cent of this funding was allocated to services located in regional and remote Australia to fund projects that improve access to quality and sustainable aged-care services.

The government's \$17.7 billion package of aged-care reforms will benefit senior Australians, and some of these initiatives are specifically targeted to promote sustainability and choice for the uptake of services in regional and remote Australia. For example, the budget measures include \$396.9 million over five years to enable aged-care providers to make the needed improvements to their buildings and to build new services. This is in addition to the \$150 million I mentioned earlier in capital funding. An investment of \$106 million is also in place over four years to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer experience and uptake of and access to aged care. There's \$62 million over four years to support the delivery of viable high-quality aged care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and this will assist, in particular, those consumers to stay connected to country and culture and to meet travel needs of those who need to travel to deliver services. There is also \$64 million to deliver a viable, high-quality, integrated care package to older Australians in regional and remote locations.

The government's investing in very practical support measures, including \$5 million to support professional workforce capability development and also \$25 million for the Rural Locum Assistance Program, and the key intent here is to lighten the burden and increase staff retention. So these are some of the many measures by which this government remains committed to supporting the aged-care sector.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (10:54): I thank the member for Indi for bringing this motion to the House today. Older Australians helped build this country. They've worked hard and earned the respect, dignity and peace of mind that this government should be providing them now in aged care. But nothing could be further from the truth for so many Australians. The eight long years of steadfast neglect from the Morrison Liberal government have been shameful.

In my electorate of Newcastle, doctors, nurses, academics, lawyers, private business, government agencies and aged-care workers themselves have all stepped up to help rebuild an aged-care system from the ground up. We know the value of an age-friendly community and recently formed the Hunter Ageing Alliance, which will take a lead in helping Newcastle to make this transformation. Founded by Dr John Ward, a geriatrician, Viv Allanson, CEO of Maroba aged care, Professor Julie Byles, the Global Innovation Chair in Responsive Transitions in Health and Ageing at the University of Newcastle, and Catherine Henry, an elder lawyer and advocate, the Hunter Ageing Alliance pulls together an incredibly passionate and talented group of people who are determined to get all levels of government, businesses, NGOs and citizens to focus on older people and work together to make Newcastle an age-friendly community.

If the federal government isn't prepared to show leadership, our community stand willing and able to fill that void, but they shouldn't be expected to shoulder the burden of this government's incompetence. The Prime Minister and his government are responsible for aged care. They're responsible for the funding cuts and the terrible neglect revealed by the aged-care royal commission. We've heard appalling stories of people going hungry in aged care, of open wounds going untreated and of shocking acts of elder abuse. Despite the 21 expert reports, and knowing full well that older people are suffering in aged care, the Prime Minister fobbed off, delayed or rejected outright key recommendations of the royal commission. Of the 148 recommendations, over half aren't being implemented properly or implemented at all.

Mr Morrison's record proves he can't be trusted to fix aged care, and it is aged-care workers who see firsthand the shocking impact of this government's negligence. They want more staff, more training, more help. Aged-care workers in my community tell me they aren't able to meet the emotional and clinical needs of their residents because there aren't enough staff. The job they once considered to be rewarding has become a source of pain and despair for so many. They're anxious and scared about catching the virus and infecting residents, because they know so many could die. The Prime Minister promised these frontline workers that they would be vaccinated by Easter. Well, here we are in August, Prime Minister, and there are many who are still not fully vaccinated, and it is not for want of trying. The Prime Minister has bungled the vaccine rollout so badly that one of my local aged-care facilities, a not-for-profit, had to bus all of its staff two hours south to Sydney to get them vaccinated so it could ensure protection.

I've noted previously just how cruel it was for Novocastrians to find out that this Prime Minister sat by and watched our region robbed of Pfizer vaccines, all the while sitting on a secret stash of his own. They were vaccines that could have helped Newcastle as we faced our own COVID outbreaks in aged-care facilities. Many of the workers in those facilities have not been fully vaccinated. The reason? Because this Prime Minister has failed his job. He was too slow to act; he failed to secure enough vaccines for everyone in time. His complacency has left aged-care workers and the vulnerable Australians they care for at risk, and now thousands of older

Australians have been isolated from their families for weeks and months because the Prime Minister has delivered the slowest vaccine rollout in the developed world.

You need to take responsibility, Prime Minister, for fixing our aged-care system. It's been 100 days since the May federal budget, and there is zero evidence that there has been any progress on critical aged-care reforms during that time. Shame on you! Don't leave our aged-care workers and older Australians just to fend for themselves. That's not the kind of Australia we know or indeed that we want to live in. It's really time for you to step up, Mr Morrison. People in my community are doing absolutely everything they can to ensure that the most vulnerable of our aged-care residents and citizens are protected. As I said, it's not for want of trying that these people are not vaccinated. You need to get us vaccines and get our aged-care workers vaccinated now.

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (10:59): As a nation we must all strive to do better when it comes to caring for our elders. I congratulate the member for Indi on bringing forward this motion, because it is important to highlight the significance of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, what the government's response has been to date and, most importantly, how we must continue to listen to and engage with our community. We need to hear the ideas and the challenges as we go forward, and I'm listening. Recently, I met with a group of Northern Tasmanian medical professionals concerned about the exodus of staff from residential aged care. Some of the ideas they discussed included the need to look at the culture in parts of the aged-care sector. I was interested to hear their ideas about how to attract and retain staff and it made me reflect on ways to encourage more young people into the sector with a view to long and rewarding careers.

It's important to acknowledge that, for so many in this sector, the royal commission has been a particularly painful period. I've had conversations with many aged-care workers who received abuse or were blamed for the failures in the system that were brought to light through the commission. To these workers and to all who give so much to those in their care, I would like to say that you are seen and you are valued. I've listened to concerns about how there's not always enough support for nursing professionals and ways to overcome that, including more ways that aged-care facilities can receive support for clinical care. We can't expect employees in this sector to sustain this career path for the long term if we can't ensure that they have the support they need to do their job effectively and if their efforts are not respected and appreciated. It's detrimental to the carer and also to those in their care.

The royal commission highlighted concerns from communities like mine across the nation. The government has listened to the experiences of the Australians who gave evidence to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and is taking action to implement recommendations, with reforms to deliver vital services and improved quality, care and viability in aged care. The Australian government is delivering change through our \$17.7 billion aged-care reform package. The government is acting on the recommendations. The response includes a five-year implementation plan underpinned by five pillars: home care, supporting senior Australians who choose to remain in their own home; residential aged-care services and sustainability, improving and simplifying residential aged-care services and access; improving residential aged-care quality and safety; supporting a growing and better skilled care workforce; and new legislation and stronger governance.

Expanding on the challenges of home care, I, like many other representatives in this place, am told of frustration at longer than expected wait times for home-care packages. The government is responding and investing more in home care so that senior Australians can access the care they need to live in their own homes for longer. There is \$6.5 billion for an additional 80,000 packages in the current budget. These packages are now being released, with 40,000 released in the 2021-22 year and a further 40,000 in the 2022-23 year. This means that those currently waiting for a home-care package will get access to the care they need sooner.

I'd like to highlight the work of some excellent support services available to senior Australians and those who support them. The Australian government has provided the Older Persons Advocacy Network with \$4.3 million to help deliver education, information and advocacy services for senior Australians and their families. This is particularly relevant during these times of extensive national lockdowns. OPAN offers a wellbeing check service to ensure the provision of emotional or social support, particularly for the people who have reduced or cancelled home-care services due to pandemic concerns. It's available to both home-care package and Commonwealth Home Support Program recipients. Other supported services include the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement and the My Aged Care contact centre. I encourage anyone seeking support, particularly those in my northern Tasmanian community, to reach out to these important and valuable organisations. The future of aged care is not without hope, but we do have a lot of work ahead of us. I will continue working in the best interests of senior Australians and their families and I will continue to listen and advocate for the support that they need.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): I thank the member for Bass for her contribution. I understand that it is the wish of the House that this debate continue and on that basis, I will allow the debate to continue. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (11:04): [by video link] I rise to speak to the motion from the member for Indi, and I thank her for this motion. Like every other failure of leadership by this government, with respect to aged care we seem to be 'dawdling to destruction'—to use the *Age's* Peter Hartcher's phrase—rather than running to victory. The government would have you believe that they have listened to the evidence given to the royal commission into aged care, and, thankfully, there is a commitment to billions in extra money and a commitment to a new aged-care act. But with this government there is always the need to read the fine print.

This motion refers to recommendation 86, which is where the royal commission into aged care recommended the adoption of a minimum staff time standard. Specifically, they recommended:

From 1 July 2022, the minimum staff time standard should require approved providers to engage registered nurses, enrolled nurses, and personal care workers for at least 200 minutes per resident per day for the average resident, with at least 40 minutes of that staff time provided by a registered nurse.

In addition, from 1 July 2022, the minimum staff time standard should require at least one registered nurse on site per residential aged care facility for the morning and afternoon shifts ...

They also recommended that from July 2024 at least one registered nurse be on site at all times. How did the government respond? You hear from them a commitment to 200 minutes of care per resident per day, but the only reference to registered nurses is a reference to the very minimal requirement of one registered nurse on site in the morning and afternoon shifts.

I raise this not to diminish the role of the enrolled nurse or the personal care worker. Of course they are integral to the care team. But they should not be expected to deal on their own with the complex and advanced care that is now part and parcel of every aged-care facility. As one registered nurse, who's been the manager of a number of aged-care facilities, wrote to me: 'Currently, in residential aged care, it's not uncommon to support residents with intravenous therapy for antibiotics, syringe pumps for complex pain management, indwelling and suprapubic catheters, subcutaneous hydration, and PEG feeds.' This clinical management requires a level of complex nursing knowledge and skill that would be applicable to nursing patients in an acute hospital setting. Despite this, all the Morrison government could manage was to affirm the minimum requirement for an RN on site 16 hours a day.

For many older residents, this could well be the difference between life and death in an emergency. It's the difference between proper palliative care and poor palliative care. It's the difference between running from crisis to crisis over a shift and being able to provide consistent care. It means supervising and mentoring the rest of the care staff and building on their knowledge and care practice. It means that registered nurses will be able to respond to emergencies. It was for all of these reasons that the royal commission made its recommendations. I would add that getting a registered nurse 24/7 and minimum staffing ratios is especially essential in rural and remote areas and small facilities.

Aged-care facilities have grown from having an average of 30 to 60 beds back in the 1990s to now having around 80 to 150 beds. On top of that, the standards of single rooms with ensuites, multiple dining and lounge rooms, and wider corridors mean that the footprint of each facility is larger than ever and makes it harder to monitor and access residents. We now have consumer directed care and resident choice: when to get up, when to shower, when to eat. That all increases the workload of the care team.

Like many Australians, and as a former nurse, I am sick of the stories of neglect in aged care. I'm sick of the penny pinching. Even as I speak, and despite the royal commission, there is a long list of major aged-care providers out there right now who are trimming their rosters and cutting staff hours. I'm prepared to name, in Melbourne, Menarock aged care and the Royal Freemasons, for example, who are doing just that.

The Morrison government's failure to lead on climate change makes Australia look like a rogue nation. Their failure of urgency on the 'it's not a race' vaccination rollout has put us all in the most perilous of positions. Their failure to heed the calls to get Australians and those who have helped Australians out of Afghanistan is both a political failure and a moral failure. And now our elderly, our most vulnerable, are left at risk. The government act as if they were mere bystanders and not the government they were elected to be. Our elderly citizens deserve much better.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (11:09): I thank the member for Indi for bringing this important motion forward. It has dated a bit since she tabled it, of course—we've had a budget since then and \$17.7 extra billion have been allocated over the forward estimates to aged care.

Let me preface my remarks by saying that we're dealing with difficult issues in Grey on aged care at the moment, in particular in Whyalla. Whyalla Kindred Living, which was Whyalla Aged Care, a community organisation, is having to close one of its three facilities due to a lack of staff. People jump on the bandwagon and say that is because, of course, staff are not treated well enough or not paid enough or whatever it might be. Most of them—almost all of them—have gone to the hospitals. But it demonstrates a problem that we really have,

which is a lack of staff generally in country areas. Of course, if there weren't 15 or 18 vacant positions at the Whyalla Hospital for registered nurses, they would've stayed at the aged-care facility.

This is a problem that we are seeing right across the board, where skilled Australians just do not want to go to, live in or work in our regional areas. It's a blight on our nation, and it's not restricted to aged care, let me tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker Claydon. I can demonstrate the same problems in virtually any industry across the board and on aged care in particular.

This motion carries the intonation that the government is not trying or is failing on aged care. I point out that before the \$17.7 billion boost that was announced in the budget that, in fact, aged-care funding in Australia had increased from \$13.3 billion per annum to \$23.9 billion per annum from when we came to government in 2013. That's in fact 50 per cent in real terms. If money were the only issue, it would make you wonder why we still have any problems at all. On home-care packages, which is a place that the government has taken some criticism on along the way, let me say that there were 59,300 when we came to government in 2013 and there are now over 183,000. By the time the funding that was announced in the budget comes through by 2024 there will be 275,000. It's a growth of 500 per cent or more. So government is investing back in aged care in a very significant way. The package in the budget, which accelerates or lifts the amount of funding available to all facilities—but in particular to country facilities—for additional specialist care, and a lift of \$10 a day in the base rate, will all make a difference. It'll all make a difference.

These are very important institutions in our regional areas: not only do they look after our loved ones but they also employ a lot of people. There's a lot of opportunity there, and government is also investing in training for aged-care workers and registered nurses—which seems to be the very tight spot in my community at the moment. I make the point to my constituents that there is a good university in Whyalla and there are uni hubs in Port Augusta, Port Pirie and Kadina which are all capable of delivering nursing degrees. This is a great way to get into work. You can be very sure that for a long time in Australia there are going to be plenty of work opportunities in aged care and indeed in the National Disability Insurance Scheme and other associated issues. It's one of the reasons we are facing such a tight time at the moment.

On those issues in Whyalla: as I said, we've seen the hospital absorb or attract a lot of these workers from aged care, which has led to a terrible position where we have 37 people that have to be relocated and there are only about 19 positions available in Whyalla. We're working with the families to get through that at the moment. It was brought on, though, I guess, by a perfect storm, where we've got this underlying shortage of aged-care workers—of nurses and of skilled workers in the country—but we also have the demand for them to work on COVID testing stations and COVID injecting stations. We've had very little import of nursing-degree-credentialed people into Australia in the last 12 months. So there's much work to be done, but we're working hard.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (11:14): First of all, can I thank the member for Indi for bringing this motion to the House. It is very important. Whilst I think much has been said about the need for this motion, I'm a little alarmed still about some of the language that's coming from the coalition. I will remind the member for Grey: this is not a 'bandwagon', and, no, money is not the only answer. This is a fundamental lack of government that has occurred in Australia for the last eight or nine years, under this coalition government. The royal commission occurred, even though the government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to it—and that's because this government does not understand the importance of aged care and the problems in aged care.

I've had a lot to do with aged care over the years. In my earlier time as a young doctor, I spent some time working as a GP locum with Radio Doctor, and I was often called to aged-care facilities after hours to provide care. I had a lot of respect for my mother-in-law, Nea Chambers. After her career as the nursing manager at Camden Hospital, she then ran a number of nursing homes, including Kilbride Nursing Home and Camden Nursing Home, in Campbelltown and Camden respectively, run by Kennedy Health, now owned by a publicly listed company, Estia Health. She was very, very proud of her skills as a nurse and of the quality of care she provided in aged care. Just as an aside, my daughter Amelia has just had a baby, a little girl, and she has named her Nea after my highly respected mother-in-law, and I'm very proud of that.

Aged care has changed a lot in the last 20 years. With an ageing population, and a population that's living a lot longer, people are going into aged care later, they're staying for shorter times, and they have much more complex medical needs. I fully support the call to have registered nurses on duty 24 hours a day in aged-care facilities. It is very important because of the complex medical needs of the patients in aged care. As has already been mentioned, these can include multisystem disorders and the need for things like gastrostomy care, dementia care, seizure care and physiotherapy, the need for pain management, and the need for occupational therapy and rehabilitation. These complex needs in aged care have changed a lot over the years. It is very important that we meet those care needs for our most vulnerable patients, and I know that that depends on the standard of nursing care that is being offered and on the level of education of our aged-care providers.

I'm very pleased with the standards of aged care being provided in my electorate of Macarthur. I've been to most of the aged-care facilities. The registered nurses, the enrolled nurses and the aged-care staff are doing a fantastic job. I know that is not occurring in every aged-care facility around the country, and it's very important that those standards are maintained, whether you live in the inner city, metropolitan, outer metropolitan, rural or regional areas. This is something that this government has not understood and still does not understand.

In my electorate, unfortunately, we have still have many people in acute hospital beds who require aged care, either residential or in-home aged care, but because of the delays in accessing aged care they have to take up an acute hospital bed. That's not good for hospitals and it's not good, particularly in this time of COVID-19, for those patients. It is putting them at risk to keep them in an acute hospital setting where we are admitting patients with COVID-19. Our immunisation program in aged care has been lacking. The government seems to still have a very lackadaisical approach to this, in terms of both staff and residents. We've recently had a tragedy at Liverpool Hospital where a number of patients died after having caught COVID-19 in the hospital. Much more needs to be done. This is a government that does not appear to understand and a government that has failed to provide adequate aged-care support during its eight, going on nine, years of government. From the language I've heard from the coalition today, I'm not convinced that anything has changed.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (11:20): Aged care is extremely important, and it's important that we get this situation right. If we don't get it right, even following through on all the recommendations of the royal commission into aged care, what could end up happening, particularly in rural and regional communities, is that aged-care homes may be forced to shed residents, and that's one thing that I do not want to see. I don't want to see any aged-care home in my electorate or anywhere else being forced into the position because of new regulations, with their red tape requirements and ratios, where they have to go to some of their residents and say, 'Look, we now can't meet the requirements and we're going to have to tell some of you to leave in order for us to meet the requirements.' That is beyond the pale, and I will talk about that in a minute.

Firstly, about the motion at hand which talks about \$630 million I've got to say that yes, there was an additional investment of \$630.2 million over five years to deliver improvements in aged-care service delivery for vulnerable groups of seniors, but this is part of a \$17.7 billion package of aged-care reforms—\$17.7 billion that is going into aged care. It's not small beer; it's \$17.7 billion going into taking care of some of our senior Australians in their days, months and years of need.

Going on to the issue of proposals in the motion before us today, proposals out of the royal commission, the ones that worry me are the requirements around ratios and the requirements around registered nurses. I know it's very politically popular to say, 'There should be a registered nurse present at all times; there should be certain nurse-to-patient ratios.' But I received a call from Marana Gardens, a not-for-profit aged-care home in my electorate last week. They would love to have additional nurses. They are offering \$35 per hour and above for registered nurses to come on board. That's what they can afford, and they're not getting people. Nurses are not coming to places like Bowen to meet the need there. So, if there are requirements imposed upon them, I would say that within a year Marana Gardens will have to downsize, and that is going to cascade in and in on itself to the point of non-viability. So that \$17.7 billion is just simply not going to be enough. How high is that figure going to go, and at what point is the going rubber band break because it's now financially unsustainable? These are the questions that need to be addressed, and we need to be very careful about what we're imposing upon the aged-care sector.

This will be made all the worse right now if people working in the aged-care sector who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 are forced to leave their job. It's a vexing question. I've got mixed views on it. I can understand the rationale; I don't agree that anyone should be mandated to take any vaccine, but what's happening as a direct result of all of that is people are losing their jobs. I have had people in the aged-care industry in my electorate come to me to tell me that they are losing their job or have lost it as a result of this. That is happening, and these requirements are going to be more problematic for that sector if it has even fewer employees. I just say to members in this place: be very careful for what you wish for, because, if it turns out that you're going to have aged-care homes sending residents out on to the streets, that is not going to be the ideal outcome. Very quickly, there are people that are qualified to be RNs but they don't meet the English proficiency requirements. If we could relax that, we would have more RNs in these places, and I'll be putting that to the aged-care minister this week.

Ms MURPHY (Dunkley) (11:25): [by video link] The member for Dawson just asked us all to be careful what we wish for. I'll tell the chamber what I wish for. I wish for an aged-care system where every member of my community feels that their parents can go and live the last five, 10, 15 or 20 years of their lives, with dignity, being respected, in comfort, fed well and getting the medical care that they need. I wish for a system where the people who work in it, who are predominantly women, are paid what they deserve, are given the respect that they deserve and have the training and the career opportunities that they deserve. I wish, on behalf of my community,

for an aged-care system where people who want to spend the last few years, weeks, months or even days of their lives at home are able to do so, whether or not they are rich or poor, whether they are workers or whether they are people who have investments. My wish on behalf of my community is for an aged-care system where everyone is treated equally and has equal access to the care that they deserve as members of our community. My community doesn't think that's too much to ask for. I don't think that's too much to wish for. Member for Dawson, that's what we on this side of the chamber are calling for.

When I stand up and say that the aged-care system is in crisis, I say that because day after day I have members of my community contacting me because the aged-care system is letting them down. I say it because people like Joanne from Frankston contact me and say that their parents are still waiting for a level 3 and 4 My Aged Care package. They were offered level 1 in the interim, but it turns out that they're better off not taking the level 1 because it's not as good as the assistance they're already getting, and they have to wait for a level 3 and 4 for who knows how long. Phil from Frankston is still waiting for a level 3 package. He was initially told it was 12 months away, and now it will be at least another four- to 12-week wait. His service provider has exhausted the funding, and he's got to wait to see if he can get the next level. Vishna and Margaret from Skye contacted the office because they've been in the system, trying to get the appropriate My Aged Care package, since 2018.

My wish, for my community and for Australians everywhere, is that people like Joanne, Phil, Vishna and Margaret don't have to be anxious for their loved ones and for themselves but can access a system that works. My wish on behalf of my community and my electorate is that the residents of Mount Eliza who had their parents and their grandparents living in an aged-care facility that was being run by people who had been banned from running chicken farms because they were cruel to animals didn't haven't to go through what they're going through now, as that facility has been put into administration. My wish is that local residents didn't have to contact my office, saying: 'How could this have happened? How could the government have let, for so many years, people who clearly should not have been running an aged-care facility run an aged-care facility? Now we are worried about what it means for our parents.'

This government was dragged kicking and screaming to a royal commission and seems to now want to say that throwing money into the gaps that it caused itself is going to be enough. It's not. In order to get the aged-care system working properly we have to fix the crisis in the workforce. We have to treat workers with respect and value their work and deliver them a career path. We need minimum staffing ratios. We need a minimum number of people in aged-care facilities caring for some of our most vulnerable Australians at every point in time. We need nurses 24/7. And the Morrison government should stand up now and support wage cases brought by workers before the Fair Work Commission so that the predominantly female workforce in aged care can get paid what they deserve. This government won't fix workforce issues, but it must. Administration and workforce—two really important things that this government is walking away from.

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (11:30): I would just point out to the previous speaker, the Member for Dunkley, that it was, in fact, the current Prime Minister who, as one of his first acts in office, created the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety way back in September 2018. I suppose it doesn't surprise me, but it always disappoints me, to hear those opposite try to blame our government for everything, when, in fact, the serious issues that we see within aged care have existed for decades, and it's the responsibility of all of us to make sure that every single senior Australian is safe and gets the care that they deserve. That is precisely what the Prime Minister and our government have been working very hard towards, including that very important first step, which was establishing the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. We believe, and we know, that all Australians deserve an aged-care system that places their needs and their wellbeing at its centre. That's what the Morrison Liberal government is delivering on. We are doing this through record investment into Australia's aged-care sector and, of course, working towards the implementation of the recommendations of the royal commission.

In response to the final report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the government is delivering a \$17.7 billion package for once-in-a-generation reform of aged care, including measures aimed at improving aged care in rural and regional Australia. The reforms will provide better, fairer aged care and deliver respect, care and dignity for our senior Australians. Through the largest investment in aged care and the largest response to a royal commission in Australia's history, we are not only providing support for the sector but implementing measures which will provide greater transparency and certainty, which will empower the recipients of care.

Our five-pillar plan consists of home care, residential aged-care services and sustainability, residential aged-care quality and safety, workforce, and governance. This will deliver genuine change for senior Australians and those needing care. The government has mandated a number of changes to improve the transparency and comparability of home-care pricing information and has required all home-care providers to publish a

standardised pricing schedule of common services and costs on the My Aged Care website, including their package management costs. Over time, this increased pricing transparency is also expected to drive out the system of unreasonable costs, as consumers will be able to change providers who charge prices that they do not consider reasonable. This empowers recipients to vote with their feet, delivering greater freedom and choice and, of course, transparency.

The Morrison government called for the royal commission and, at each step of the way through that process, we've sought to address the immediate priorities to improve the aged-care system. We understand the needs of the sector, particularly through the pandemic, which is why, in addition to our once-in-a-generation reforms to the sector, the Morrison Liberal government has invested \$90 million to ensure residential aged-care providers remain financially sustainable and has provided funding to support workers and residential aged-care residents to be COVID-safe throughout the pandemic.

The staff within our aged-care sector have contributed so much to Australia's efforts in minimising the impacts of the coronavirus over the past 18 months. Through the outbreaks and necessary pandemic restrictions, their diligence and dedication in caring for our senior Australians and their families and loved ones has been simply inspiring. They have cared for our most vulnerable Australians with tremendous poise and grace, and have adapted to rapidly evolving conditions. I want to personally thank all staff within the sector for their professionalism, their commitment and their resilience throughout this period—the care providers, the nurses, the clinical staff, the doctors who operate on site, the physical therapists, the cleaners and the cooks as well, and the many volunteers who have worked so closely with the staff to make sure everyone gets the care they want. The work they have undertaken is absolutely extraordinary, and I've seen that outstanding care in my electorate of Boothby through the regular visits that I have made to so many wonderful homes.

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (11:35): Caring for those in aged care is of course a priority of the Morrison government. That's why it was the Prime Minister who first called this royal commission into aged care. Some of those on the other side, including the member for Dunkley, like to say this government was dragged kicking and screaming—this is inflammatory language those on the other side have used, and it's simply not true. Of course it was the Prime Minister who called this royal commission into aged care, and of course we on this side care deeply about our senior citizens.

I thank the member for Indi, here in the chamber now, for moving this private members' business motion, because it gives me the opportunity to talk about what the government is doing across the aged-care sector. In the last federal budget, some months ago, the government announced a record investment into aged care across five key areas of reform, with a total of \$17.7 billion over a five-year period. It's a once-in-a-generation package, never before seen in this country. Before I outline those five key areas of reform: the member for Cooper suggested \$17.7 billion was penny pinching. I can't see how \$17.7 billion worth of investment into our aged-care sector can be penny pinching in any way, shape or form. Those five areas of reform are: home care; residential aged-care services and sustainability; residential aged-care quality and safety; workforce; and governance.

Importantly, to the member for Indi's motion, this funding of course includes regional and remote Australians. Regional and remote Australians want equitable access to the care they need—of course they do. We all agree that that is what we want across our nation for those in regional and remote areas and for our elderly. The government recognises the significant challenges faced by aged-care providers in rural and remote areas, and to strengthen and support the aged-care workforce is one of the solutions for those communities. That's why one of those key planks that I set out just a few moments ago, that was in the last budget, is workforce, to address these issues. As we know, the country is facing a workforce shortage issue, as outlined by the member for Grey just a few moments ago.

The government has 33,800 subsidised vocational training places for new aged-care workers, and we will be needing those. I encourage Australians to come forward and retrain, to go into the aged-care sector. There will be: \$228.2 million for a single assessment workforce; \$135.6 million for financial bonuses for registered nurses to help with retention—that is really important; and \$9.8 million for a national recruitment campaign, which includes regional and remote Australian locations. The government is investing in additional practical support for aged care in rural and remote locations, including—and the member for Indi will listen with great interest—\$5 million in professional support to improve the workforce capability and financial sustainability of rural and remote providers. This will be made available through the expansion of the Remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Service Development Assistance Panel, commencing in 2021-22.

There will be \$25 million over three years to expand the Rural Locum Assistance Program, to assist aged-care providers affected by high staff turnover or sudden departures of key personnel in rural and regional areas by providing increased access to a temporary surge workforce while they recruit. An incentive scheme for permanent

placements in regional and remote areas will also increase staff retention; this assistance will be available in the coming months.

Additionally, an investment of \$630.2 million has been put forward to strengthen governance, which will give more-equitable access to aged care for First Nations people and special-needs groups, those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and those living in rural and remote locations. We've provided \$21.1 million for new structures, including a National Aged Care Advisory Council, a Council of Elders, and an Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care. We've provided \$630.2 million to help regional, rural and Indigenous Australians to access quality aged care and \$13.4 million to improve rural and regional aged care across the country. Australians are living in their homes for much longer, and that's a good thing for our society. In response, the government has budgeted for more homecare packages for aged care across our country. They are some of the key planks, and there is significant investment going into the other ones—residential aged-care services and sustainability.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Postponement

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (11:40): I inform the House that pursuant to standing order 110 the honourable member for Forde has postponed notice No. 3 standing in his name.

BILLS

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment (Cost Recovery) Bill 2021

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Charges) Bill 2021

Treasury Laws Amendment (2021 Measures No. 1) Bill 2021

Assent

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Report

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11:41): On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works I present the following reports:

Referral made May 2021 (5th report of 2021) (sent to the Speaker on 20 August 2021, pursuant to standing order 247)—Report, August 2021.

Referrals made May and June 2021 (6th report of 2021) (sent to the Speaker on 20 August 2021, pursuant to standing order 247)—Report, August 2021.

Reports made parliamentary papers in accordance with standing order 39(e).

I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the reports.

Leave granted.

Mr ZAPPIA: Report No. 5 of 2021 considers one proposal referred to the committee in May 2021. The proposal was the Department of Home Affairs Parramatta fit-out, with approval sought from the committee to carry out the works at 101 George Street, Parramatta, in New South Wales. The estimated cost of this project is \$24.76 million excluding GST. The project aims to consolidate three existing Home Affairs office buildings in Sydney's CBD into one site at 101 George Street, Parramatta. The consolidation will reduce the leased office space from approximately 22,000 to 14,000 square metres and generate savings of approximately \$7 million per year.

In addition to recommending that it was expedient that the project go ahead, the committee has recommended that the Department of Home Affairs continue to engage with staff to ensure that all concerns are taken onboard and to take meaningful steps to facilitate the redeployment and retraining of workers who are unable to relocate. The committee considers this to be important as, although the relocation and savings are significant, staff welfare is a vital factor in any organisation.

Report No. 6 of 2021 considers two proposals referred to the House in May and June of 2021. The first project was the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications Christmas Island Stormwater, Landslide and Rockfall Mitigation Works Project. The estimated cost of this project is \$28.9 million, excluding GST. The project aims to reduce the risk of injury or death, asset damage, and social and economic disruption from flooding, rockfall and landslides on Christmas Island by installing fit-for-purpose stormwater and