

(7) A determination made under subitem (2) has no operation after 31 December 2021.

(8) This item is repealed at the end of 31 December 2021.

These amendments make minor changes to schedule 3, the industry code penalties under part IVB of the Competition and Consumer Act, and amendments to schedule 4 with respect to the modification power.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (09:51): Labor actually welcomes the government's change of mind on the amendments moved in relation to schedule 3. These go to recommendations that were made by the ACCC, when the parliamentary joint committee reviewed the operation of the penalty provisions within the franchising code and related instruments. It's worth retelling the submission of the ACCC to that inquiry. It made the point that its ability to seek civil pecuniary penalties and issue infringement notices was fundamental to the ACCC's enforcement toolkit. The lack of consequences for breaching the franchising codes was undermining the ACCC's ability to ensure code compliance. Where penalties were insufficient, the franchisors were likely to factor that into their egregious behaviour and just build that into the cost of doing business, or doing business unfairly, in respect of their franchisees. Where penalties were unavailable, there's no incentive for a franchisor to comply with the codes. The ACCC noted that the penalties currently available under franchising code were small in comparison to those that were available under the Australian Consumer Law.

The amendment that the minister brings before the House goes some way to addressing that anomaly, and we support it. Indeed we made it well-known at the second reading stage of this bill that, if the government didn't do this, we would be moving amendments here and in the other place to that effect. Labor will be supporting this amendment.

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness, Social and Community Housing) (09:53): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (09:54): I'm pleased to speak in support of the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021. With all respect to my fellow Western Australian, the member for Tangney, who is also the assistant minister who introduced this bill, this is not the stuff that gets headlines. It doesn't attract attention. For many people it is pretty dry—just dealing with red tape and improving the regulation of certain occupations and industries. For those who don't work in those industries or occupations, they won't be aware of the problems that it addresses, nor will they be consciously aware of the benefits which will flow. Yet these reforms introduced by this bill will not just impact upon those who work in these industries; there will also be benefits which flow more widely. These reforms are part of the government's economic recovery plan and complement existing work by governments to reduce red tape for business.

Our first point to note is that these changes are the result of cross-government agreement. In August 2020 the Morrison government announced that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments had agreed to introduce a uniform scheme for the automatic mutual recognition of occupational registrations, subject to the passage of legislation. In December 2020 the Prime Minister, the state premiers and the Northern Territory Chief Minister signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on Automatic Mutual Recognition of Occupational Registration, which included a commitment to monitor the implementation of AMR and to support ongoing improvements in the regulatory environment. The changes presented in this bill represent the most significant reform to Australia's mutual recognition arrangements for occupational registrations since they were introduced in 1992.

In essence, this bill improves occupational mobility and helps our skilled workers take up job opportunities whenever and wherever they arise. This bill introduces a scheme for the automatic mutual recognition, or AMR, of occupational registrations. AMR allows carpenters, electricians, surveyors and other registered professionals to do the same work they are licensed to do at home in other states without applying for additional licences or paying

further fees. AMR will remove unnecessary tension in labour markets that makes it costly and time consuming for workers to deliver services across state borders.

Over 19 per cent of Australian workers require a registration or a licence to perform their work. Some occupations, including many within the health sector, are registered nationally. But most trades and other professions, such as builders, plumbers and real estate agents, are registered on a state-by-state basis. Regulatory requirements and processes for most registered professions are managed and set differently in each of the eight states and territories. These differences make it harder for tradespersons and other professionals to move across borders for work, raising the cost for employers to fill job vacancies and reducing competition and choice for consumers.

Issues with the current system have been articulated by numerous professional bodies, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, which has noted that the current system creates disincentives for employers to offer their apprentices opportunities to work across multiple states and territories, and, in turn, ensure that they have constant work. This is because it takes time and it is complex to have their existing studies recognised by regulators across multiple jurisdictions.

Mutual recognition under the existing AMR has helped reduce barriers to occupational mobility across borders for a range of occupations. Around 12 per cent of new occupational registrations were made under mutual recognition in 2019. However, a person is still required to apply and pay for additional registration, even though they have already paid for their current registration in another state or territory.

In a 2015 study the Productivity Commission found that the current mutual recognition arrangements generally work well but that there would be cost savings from automating these processes. The Productivity Commission recommended governments give higher priority to expanding the use of automatic mutual recognition of occupational registrations to improve the efficiency of mutual recognition arrangements for individuals and businesses.

Some of the key benefits of the AMR, which is being introduced through this bill, include increased flexibility and mobility for individuals and businesses so that they can easily move across borders and provide services nationally. It will lead to greater competition, leading to lower prices, greater choice and better-quality service for consumers, including businesses. It will allow individuals and businesses to save on registration fees, on paperwork and on the time involved in filling out that paperwork. It will lead to increased output, investment and productivity and less downtime following infrastructure outages or natural disasters. There will be improved safety from improved information and data sharing across regulators to support compliance and there will be improved performance from regulators adopting a more risk based approach and people with disciplinary actions being excluded from AMR.

On the issue of the benefits, PwC took an economic review of the costs and benefits of AMR in 2020, and it estimated that AMR is expected to increase GDP by \$2.4 billion over the 10-year period from 2021 to 2030 from a better allocation of labour and capital in the economy. GDP would be higher over the period due to an increase in labour productivity from administrative savings to individuals and regulators no longer needing to submit or assess multiple occupational registrations. This will lead to an increase in GDP of \$1.14 billion over the 10-year period.

There will also be labour productivity benefits as more individuals choose to operate across jurisdictions for part of their working year, better matching registered individuals with jobs where they can deliver the greatest benefit. This will lead to an increase in GDP of \$462 million over the 10-year period. And the additional savings that the PwC report identified were through capital productivity from returning to business as usual faster following natural disasters as interstate labour is able to more quickly mobilise to respond to critical and immediate large-scale infrastructure outages. This will lead to an increase in GDP of \$808 million over the 10-year period. PwC found that over 124,000 registered people will benefit from reduced administrative costs, and a further 44,000 registered people may benefit from increased labour mobility across sectors and jurisdictions.

The PwC modelling indicated that all jurisdictions will benefit from implementing AMR, with gross state product expected to rise over the 10-year period in each jurisdiction. The modelling does not include potential efficiency gains from removing unnecessary or inconsistent registration requirements over time. Cutting red tape may not attract attention; it may never get a headline, but ensuring that there is an appropriate balance in the regulatory environment to ensure that there are not unnecessary, costly or inefficient regulations while maintaining the standards of protection for consumers, the environment, animal welfare and the safety of workers and the public is actually a very important role for all governments. On this basis I am happy to commend this bill to the House.

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:02): I rise to speak on the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021 and on the amendments to the bill, which have been circulated in my name. This bill seeks to introduce a uniform scheme of automatic mutual recognition for licenced occupations across the states and territories. The principle of providing greater ease for those with licenced occupations to pursue their trade across the various jurisdictions in Australia is a worthy principle indeed. The bill amends the Mutual Recognition Act of 1992. This act was born of the economic reforms of the Hawke-Keating era. It was a period of significant microeconomic reform. This reform wasn't headlined 'Floating the dollar' or 'Opening up the Australian economy' but was nevertheless an important piece of microeconomic reform at the time.

About 70 per cent of the Australian workforce today is required to obtain a licence in order to undertake their work, and automatic mutual recognition, as I said, enables those who have licences to pursue their work in other states. Back at the time of the Mutual Recognition Act in 1992, then senator John Button, as the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, said in respect of mutual recognition:

It is a good example of cooperative federalism at work in the national interest. Honourable senators have said that the aim of mutual recognition is to remove artificial barriers to interstate trade in goods and services and to remove the artificial barriers to the mobility of labour caused by regulatory differences amongst the States. We have had many decades of experience in trying to work with regulatory barriers of that kind, and this legislation will go a long way to improving that situation immensely.

If the legislation does that, it will enhance the competitiveness of the Australian economy. It is a major step forward in the achievement of micro-economic reform and will lead to the establishment of a truly national market.

To that end, the bill which is before us today seeks to build on the mutual recognition regime by applying an automatic component to it. I note that it is part of an intergovernmental agreement which has been signed by all the states. The agreement is due to come into effect on 1 July this year.

To describe in its simplest terms the architecture of automatic mutual recognition, it applies a drivers licence model to licenced occupations. That is to say that, if you have a drivers licence given to you in the state of Victoria, it entitles you to drive in the state of Western Australia. Western Australia would, if you were driving there, have all its enforcement arrangements apply to you. Were you to be speeding in Western Australia, that would reflect on your Victorian drivers licence. That, in effect, is the architecture of the mutual recognition which is being proposed in relation to all licenced occupations in Australia and how people would engage in their trade in jurisdictions other than where they obtain their licence. So the principle of this makes sense.

There are, however, a number of issues which have been raised by a number of stakeholders which are present in our mind as we move forward and which underpin the amendment to the bill I will move. The principle of the drivers licence analogy needs to acknowledge that we have consistent road rules around Australia, but when it comes to a number of licenced occupations there is nothing like the same consistency in the way in which those regulations are in place across the jurisdictions in Australia. An example of that is the licensing of electricians, which varies considerably from state to state. So, while one can see what is sought to be done here, given that nothing like the consistency applies in relation to electrical occupations compared to road rules, which is the basis of the architecture here, there is the risk for unintended consequences to apply.

Those unintended consequences could happen in a couple of ways. The first is that people who are in a jurisdiction where the licensing requirements are not as significant as others may go into another jurisdiction where licensing is stricter and find themselves in a situation where they are not able to comply with the standards of the second jurisdiction. Equally, in seeking to comply with those standards, they may well run afoul of them and then find that that flows back in terms of their ability to pursue their trade in their home state.

To that end, it is the position of Labor that we are seeking an inquiry in the other place in respect of this bill to be clear about how this would impact on various occupations where there is significant divergence in relation to the way in which those regulations apply across the jurisdictions. That is particularly the case in respect of high-risk occupations, electrical trade being an example of that but really so are all the occupations which require licences within the building industry. That is where there is a significant degree of risk. Again, to that end, the amendment that I will move today is to have the licenced occupations which are involved in the building industry removed from the application of this bill. That is the intent of the amendment that is being circulated in my name. That is the amendment to the bill that we will move in this place.

While we acknowledge the direction of this bill, while we acknowledge the intent—the significant benefits in relation to deregulation that it implies and the ability for people to move with greater ease in the working of their trades across jurisdictions—it is important that reforms of this kind are done in a way that doesn't have unintended consequences in relation to the health and safety of those working in the industry and the quality of work that is ultimately done for the consumers of this country. It's important that we look at all of those questions very carefully and that there is the ability to have an inquiry of that kind and move through that process over the next

few months so that we are at a point within the parliament to consider this in its finality prior to the implementation date of the intergovernmental agreement, which is 1 July this year.

So, noting the benefits, the principle behind this bill, and noting our concerns about the unintended consequences and the detail of that, and the need to have an inquiry in the other place, and noting with all of that the amendments that we will move in order to deal with that here, Labor will be pursuing this bill on that basis.

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (10:11): I rise to speak on the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021. I strongly support the amendments to this bill to be moved by the shadow minister for national reconstruction, employment, skills and small business. The shadow minister's motion to exclude electrical and construction workers from this bill is essential. Without the amendment, this bill would make the electrical and construction sectors less capable and more dangerous. Put simply, this bill will mean that the same standard will not be applied across the nation, exposing workers to risk and varying the quality of workmanship. This bill seeks to introduce a uniform scheme of interstate automatic recognition into the Mutual Recognition Act. It would allow workers to move interstate with their accreditation and pick up work more easily. It sounds good, but the devil is in the detail. It will open the door to different standards of workmanship across our nation. Ideally, we need a national standard of accreditation that ensures that all employees in a trade are provided with high-quality skills and training that is consistent. This amendment is important now.

The government says that this is about cutting red tape, but in practice it will create inconsistencies in the quality of work in critical industries. Rewiring a house, building foundations for a new home or completing a renovation need to be done to the highest standard. We all need comfort that these works are done to a high standard of safety and quality. We need a national set of regulations, but we also need to ensure that these safeguards are consistent across all states and territories. Without this amendment, we lose the safeguards that are already in place.

So, this bill throws the baby out with the bathwater and it leaves workers vulnerable, and it doesn't guarantee the high quality of workmanship we all have come to expect and value. Right now the system wins out through the oversight by the states. When one state falters and slackens on safety requirements, the current arrangements have built-in checks. When an electrician or a construction worker moves interstate, the new state will monitor their practice. When someone with substandard training moves interstate, they will be identified. States can flag a slackening in standards that is happening in other states, and then they can pressure the licensing state into closer oversight. This is a valuable, natural mechanism through which substandard and unsafe practice is identified and removed from the sector. This is a good thing. It's an effective way of managing risk. But if we pass this bill without the amendment, the checks and balances will be lost.

Labor supports the objective of mutual recognition to enable workers to seamlessly move between states. We certainly believe that, wherever possible, red tape should be removed, and we want to make people's lives easier. It's a worthwhile goal. People should be able to transition their skills across state borders and have freedom of movement within Australia, but it should not be done in a way that puts workers at risk and reduces the high standards within the construction and electrical sectors. Without this amendment, this bill undermines this outcome. The safety of the electrical and construction sectors is paramount. Safe electrical and construction work is something that we must have. We do not want to see serious injury and death. Let me make this point. What is at stake is not just a matter of regulation. This bill could be a matter of life and death for electrical workers, for apprentices learning on the job, for families at home, and for everyone at their places of work, leisure and education. These are high stakes professions, and they must be treated with respect, with national safeguards incorporated in regulations. It's not rocket science, but it is important. We should be trying to harmonise these rules, but we shouldn't be trying to ride roughshod over the differences, because those differences represent differences in real world practices that make a difference to all our safety.

Labor stands firm on defending the right of qualified tradespeople to move around the country and work in different states. We support safe, secure jobs for tradespeople, but we need to ensure that, while workers have this freedom to move, they are protected against risk, and that the quality of work remains consistently high. That is why we need this amendment. I thank the deputy leader of the Labor Party for putting forward this amendment, and I hope that an inquiry into this matter will proceed. Without it, this government will do real harm to workers and families across our nation.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (10:16): My electorate has, to its eastern boundary, the South Australian and Victorian borders. I grew up in, and live in, the city of Mount Gambier. That's 18 kilometres from the Victorian border. All along my electorate's eastern boundary are communities like Mount Gambier that exist in very close proximity to the Victorian border—in many cases much, much closer to the border than Mount Gambier is. Indeed, I have constituents who own property that spans the border. So, when the concept of mutual recognition of licences and registrations was first canvassed in this place, I've got to tell you that I got excited.

A bill like this one—the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 202—is not the kind of legislation that normally gets members of parliament excited, but, when you live in a community that's so close to a jurisdictional state border, you understand the kind of rubbish that you have to deal with because of the difference in regulations and red tape spanning those state borders. In effect, in my community, these borders are nothing more than artificial lines on a map. We traverse them daily and, on many occasions, multiple times a day. That was highlighted during the lockdown. It was increasingly clear to me that, during the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 response, decision-makers were making decisions about cross-border travel in circumstances where they'd never lived in a cross-border community. For many of them, travelling across a border is an opportunity to pull the car over and take a happy snap with the family as you're travelling, for example, into Victoria. In my case, when I had very young children, when they were having trouble sleeping, I would put them in the car and drive them to Victoria because it was a convenient 36-kilometre, two-way trip. Invariably, they'd fall asleep. The joke in our household was that the way we got our children to go to sleep was to drive them to Victoria.

When you live in a community like mine, when you represent a community like mine, stories of frustration experienced by tradesmen and tradeswomen, by real estate agents, by plumbers, by architects and by others abound. There are examples where an electrician attends a rural property and can work on the homestead but can't work on the shearing shed. There are examples where a real estate agent can sell one portion of a property but not the other and needs to work in consultation and collaboration with, for example, a Victorian real estate agent.

We don't have a lot to thank COVID for, but there are some silver linings on the dark COVID cloud, and I'd respectfully suggest to you, Madam Deputy Chair, that this is one of them. COVID forced the Prime Minister and first ministers to work in an expedited and collaborative way like they've never had occasion to work before. That model thankfully, through the good agency of the assist minister, means that we can achieve this kind of reform which is eminently sensible, is a great example of common sense, but that could never be achieved in the 120 or so years since Federation.

So what does it mean? Well, it means that if you're a tradesman in my electorate and you're qualified in South Australia you don't need to write off to the requisite authority in Victoria for approval to undertake work in Victoria. You can simply move across the border and do that work. The best example which I can give you is this: when you gain your driver's licence you don't then have to register that driver's licence in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania, you're simply entitled to drive. Your driver's licence is acknowledged in a mutual way by those other jurisdictions and so it will be for professions that require licences and registrations across the country. That includes builders, electricians, plumbers, architects, real estate agents, security guards and one profession that I don't think will get a lot of attention in this debate, but is so important, teaching. In my electorate there are very many teachers, very many of whom do occasional and part-time teaching to supplement, perhaps, other incomes or part retirements, who live in Victoria but can't come to where the population centres are in South Australia and teach without going through the unnecessary regulatory steps to seek approval and these things. That's a silly circumstance.

I'm very pleased that this sensible change has met with widespread acclaim. I'm not surprised it has met with the approval of many bodies across the nation. I think this is the kind of sensible reform that shows the parliament and parliaments of this nation at their best. Let me quote the Australian Professional Teachers Association who said, 'Many teachers in one jurisdiction currently do not pursue employment in another jurisdiction because of the red tape and cost involved to simply become registered.' That will be a thing of the past. The Civil Contractors Federation states: 'The implementation of reforms that improve worker mobility and enable them to move more seamlessly between projects and at less cost is critical to achieving a more efficient delivery of Australia's infrastructure pipelines.' It stands to reason. If workers have to pause the work they're doing to seek approval through an administrative process that invariably takes time. Not only does it delay that work, but it acts as a dead weight on productivity in this country.

These reforms, according to PwC, will benefit over 124,000 workers—to be honest, I think that number is set conservatively low—who currently work across borders and will no longer have additional fees associated with their licences or registrations. In addition, an additional 44,000 workers are expected to work across borders following these reforms. I can think of many in my communities who speak to me regularly about simply not quoting on work across the border, because they'd never gotten around to being registered. I think about the many border communities in my electorate and what they went through during COVID-19 because of state border restrictions, and I don't think we have a deep enough appreciation for much of, nor have we seen the full impact of, that psychological sequelae. I'm so pleased that this legislation will provide a direct benefit to them.

I support this bill. It's a winner for those of us that represent cross-border communities. It's a win for common sense. Let's hope we see many more reforms like this because of the architecture that has established itself at the

prime ministerial and first-minister levels as a result of COVID. May that be the silver lining on this dark COVID cloud. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (10:26): It takes a particular kind of arrogance and incompetence to take a really good idea and turn it into something that's a potential threat to people's safety, but that's what the government has done with this bill, the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021. It's a good idea in principle to say that people in this country should have the right to move in between states and take their qualifications with them; I think you'd find most people would agree with that. But when you go below that level of principle and work out how to make it happen you can immediately see that there are some issues that have to be worked through.

If you're an electrician, the rules that apply, the standards that apply and the kinds of equipment that apply—voltages and work practices—might in fact differ from state to state—indeed, potentially even from region to region. That is why at the moment, in many respects, there are state systems of registration and understanding and state levels of training. If you're a teacher, you can very readily see that, because the state governments have so much responsibility for our schools—they set the curriculum and put in place standards to deal with the safety of students and of staff that work there—training in one state might not be automatically applicable to another state. That is why, over many years, the bodies and the people that work in this area—electricians, teachers, others—have put some thought into how you get the right balance to make sure not only that people can move between states but also that public safety and welfare are not compromised. In the electrical industry, mutual recognition—that's the technical term—arrangements already exist. But they take into account those very important issues of safety.

It's also important to understand that the registration system we're talking about here isn't just a licence to work for the worker; it is also in many respects a guarantee for the public. You presume that, if someone is a registered builder or electrician in your state, they're trained to a certain standard and that that work is going to meet a certain quality. That's why, in those industries in particular, they've said that when you move from one state to another there are certain things that have to be complied with in order to have your licence recognised from one state to the next—in part because it's about protection for the public.

You will find universal agreement on the idea that people should be able to work across the different states of Australia. What you will also find, if you bother to look—which the government clearly hasn't—is that the people who are doing the work at the moment and who understand the systems of registration and licensing have put some effort into making sure that you can do it in a way that promotes mobility but doesn't compromise other standards, including standards that protect public safety. So if you wanted to bring a bill to this place that allowed people to move across Australia but also protected standards, you could probably do it. But you'd start by sitting down and talking with the workers and the unions and the employers and the regulators who work in this industry to make sure that you are lifting everyone up to the best standard rather than allowing a race to the bottom.

But the government has come along with a special kind of arrogance and complete incomprehension and taken a really good idea and turned it into something that could be a threat to peoples' safety. What they've come along and said is that this will work in a really simplistic way where, even if there are particular standards applying in your state that are about protecting the public or ensuring that work is done to a certain standard, you no longer have to comply with them. The problem with the way the government has done it is that it's going to encourage a race to the bottom. It will mean that, provided you're registered in one state, it automatically applies to another state even if that other state has got higher standards. So the state and territory governments, who've got the responsibility for looking after their people and ensuring that all electrical work or building work, for example, is done according to a certain standard, or that teaching meets certain standards, are now going to have that potentially undercut.

That's why what the government needs to do is take this bill back to the drawing board and go and talk to the people who work in the industry and who understand the system of regulations so that we can have a system of mutual recognition that works for people so that they can cross borders—because that's what we all do in this country—but that also doesn't undermine the standards that are put in place at the state and territory level to protect people. It is good that there are amendments being moved. We will support those amendments to ensure that areas like the electrical industry and construction industry, where so many issues of safety are at play, are exempt from this. But we should go further because the bill can't be supported in its current form.

The teachers union made a very important point in their submission on the draft exposure bill—that this will have a negative impact on children's right to quality and safe education. Their submission, that it's an ill-conceived, unsolicited, redundant and untargeted regulatory intervention, is absolutely right. And it's of a piece with the government's response to the COVID crisis. The government see a crisis and, in that, an opportunity to pursue their trickle-down deregulatory agenda. We've seen that with their removal of the protections consumers

have against bad behaviour by big corporations and director and executives. That's exactly what they've tried to do on that front. We have seen it with their approach to handing out billions of dollars in corporate welfare in the hope that somehow it will trickle down to jobs. But it isn't and it won't. Instead public money is being used to help billionaires buy private jets. And we're seeing it here as well. The last speaker said, 'Wouldn't it be great if, coming out of the COVID crisis, there's a silver lining from that dark cloud—and this bill is it.' No, it's not. This bill is using the COVID crisis as an excuse to do something that could potentially undermine standards, public safety and peoples' right to a good education across the country—and that's what the people who are involved in the sector say.

This bill can't be supported in its current form. The government needs to go away and redraft it, in consultation with the people who are going to be affected, and then come back. I come back to this point: I suspect that you would find universal agreement across this place on the idea that, with qualification, people should be able to move across borders. But you do that by either lifting everyone up to the best standard or by encouraging a race to the bottom. This bill is encouraging a race to the bottom. It's got big problems. It has been rushed here and it should not be rushed through this place. If the government insists on putting it through in its current form—it can't be supported as it is.

The Greens will be supporting the amendments that will be moved, but we need to go further because we have an opportunity here to deliver something really good for the community, something that will maintain standards, maintain public safety and also allow people to move across states with their qualifications, but this bill ain't it. The government seems to have an allergy to talking to workers, talking to representatives of workers and talking to regulators who might actually know more about this than the government itself does. If we withdraw this bill, go back to the drawing board, come back with something that isn't about a race to the bottom but is rather about lifting standards to the top, then I suspect it will be supported and it will probably sail through this place. But, as it is, we can't support something that potentially poses a threat to peoples' welfare and peoples' safety and also threatens to undermine standards in this country.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (10:35): I rise in support of the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021. Before I came into this place, I was a builder for 10 years, a qualified carpenter and joiner. I then went back and did a law degree and ended up practising in construction law. I have been intricately involved in the building industry for the last 32 years, either as a hands-on builder or as a building lawyer. I have reviewed a number of pieces of legislation on behalf of the Queensland government and written a number of reports for the Queensland government. As much as I often in this place pay the Queensland government out at every opportunity, I will not pay them out in relation to their licensing scheme in the building industry.

We all know that the way that we administer occupational licensing, whether it be for carpenters and joiners or for just about any other trade or business or profession, is very different between the states and territories. We are still a collection of six colonies when it comes to occupational licensing and that's to our regret. When it comes to the building industry, Queensland has, in my considered view, the best licensing scheme for those in the building industry, bar none. We know that there are other states that certainly take a lesser approach.

I've heard members opposite, and indeed the member for Melbourne, talk earlier about a race to the bottom. If this was a race to the bottom, I would be opposing the bill. I have fought all my professional life for better standards in the building industry. It's very important that we, I believe, have the best standards for occupational trades in this country. We've seen what can go wrong in the last few years with some of our building failures in New South Wales and in the ACT. What we don't want to see are those sorts of building failures and shoddy building practices being replicated in other states, and this bill would not permit that. I'll come back to that in a moment.

Let's just talk briefly about the merits of this bill in the first instance. I've heard speakers before me talk about the merits of deregulation. A New South Welsh person doesn't need a Victorian driver's licence when they drive into Victoria, and most Australians would understand that is a good thing. We live in a federation. We want to try, as best as we humanly possibly can, to provide all avenues for businesses to be able to engage in work around the entire country. I don't think that anybody would quibble with that.

That's particularly so when we, as a country, are clawing—some would say rapidly, in fact—our way out of this pandemic, from an economic perspective. We need to provide as many opportunities as we can for businesses to compete on a national and, indeed, a global scale. But we'll start with the national scale. We need to encourage Victorian builders—in fact, we'll need Victorian builders operating in New South Wales. One of the beautiful aspects of this bill, particularly in times of recovery from natural disasters, is that we can surge workforces. When there's a natural disaster in New South Wales, as we've seen, and in my home state and my own home area of South-East Queensland, the reality is that we don't have enough trades to surge workforces without calling upon other states. We've all seen the way that works, say, with the CFA or the SES; we always call upon other states.

The same thing happens in the building industry: when we have a major flood, fire or a cyclone we call upon practitioners—occupational licensees—from other states to come and help us out. So the concept is not foreign and it's a sensible one. The concept will open up opportunities for occupational licensees around the country. These are sensible provisions.

I want to return to the concerns that have been raised by those opposite in wanting to refer this matter to a Senate inquiry. They say that's because there are concerns that some states don't have the same requirements of those practitioners and that having this automatic mutual recognition scheme would somehow lead to a race to the bottom. That argument would have some merit but for the fact that section 42S provides a minister—no, let's talk examples, because it's probably easier that way.

Let's take commercial builders operating in New South Wales. I think it's pretty well accepted that commercial builders in New South Wales do not need the same sort of rigour or to meet the same standards as commercial builders in Queensland, reiterating my views earlier that Queensland has the highest licensing standards of all the states. If Mick de Brenni, who is the Queensland minister responsible at this point in time, believed that the licensing requirements for New South Wales commercial builders were unsatisfactory in allowing them to operate as commercial builders in Queensland he could exempt those builders from operating in Queensland. Section 42S of this bill enables him to do that and I accept that he may well do that in certain instances—I just use that as an example for the sake of argument. Mick de Brenni, the Queensland minister responsible for the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, could exempt New South Wales commercial builders from taking a commercial building licence or acting as commercial builders in Queensland if he were of the view that allowing those practitioners to operate in Queensland would be injurious to consumer protection, or the environment, or animal welfare or the health or safety of workers or the public.

That same principle applies across all of the occupational trades, whether it be electricians, plumbers or carpenters. If a state minister was of the view that a particular trade in another state or territory did not meet the same standards then the minister could exclude that trade from operating in Queensland, for example. That's really important because, as the member for Melbourne spoke about earlier, not only does that eliminate the race to the bottom but it does the opposite—it encourages those states that do have lax licensing standards of their occupational trades to lift their game. I can assure you that, if occupational trades in a particular state or territory are made exempt by Queensland, for example, those occupational trades will be onto their own state government to lift the licensing requirements and to lift the standards so that they can compete on the national stage.

This will have the absolute opposite effect to what those members opposite are arguing. It will not be a race to the bottom; it will lift the standards of all occupational trades. That would be a very good thing in my world, in the building industry, in particular but also across all occupational trades. No-one would quibble with lifting the bar rather than lowering the bar. Whether it's the building industry, the teaching profession or whatever it might be, we should all be aspiring to look at nation's best practice. I have been a practitioner in the building industry for the last 32-odd years and I can guarantee you that Queensland has the best licensing standards. I know it's not perfect. No system designed, facilitated or administered by a human being is perfect, but it's the best there is in the country. All the other states and territories will be encouraged by this bill to lift their standards to ensure that residents in their state can compete on the national stage.

I haven't heard all of the debate in this place, but I imagine that, if someone hasn't done it already, someone will raise the argument: what's to stop a resident of Queensland who can't meet the tough licensing standards from applying for their builders licence, their electricians licence or their carpenters licence in another state or territory that has lax standards and saying in their home state, 'I've got my licence from another state. I now want to operate as a builder in this state'? Again, section 42A of this bill prevents people from doing that. Under section 42A of the bill you cannot have your principal place of residence or operate a business in, say, the state of Queensland and get your licence in Victoria, New South Wales, Tassie or the ACT. If you're a resident of Queensland—in that you have your principal place of residence in Queensland—or you operate your business in Queensland, that's where you have to get your licence.

These are really sensible reforms. I totally get that those members opposite have some concerns. We don't want to lower the bar. I want to assure you that this is not lowering the bar. This bill has been considered. These concerns around lifting things up rather than lowering them down are contained in the bill. No-one wants to see repeats of the shoddy building work that we've seen in apartments in New South Wales. We don't want to see that replicated across Australia. No-one would.

This bill would protect, under section 42A and 42S from that sort of conduct. It's a sensible bill. It would enable contractors and occupational trades to operate without having to get individual licences in every state. That's a good thing. That's a sensible thing. I'm still a registered builder in Queensland and it costs me \$600 or \$700 a

year. I don't want to have to pay that in every state and territory in this country. This bill will prevent that from happening. It's sensible. I recommend it to the House.

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (10:52): I rise to speak on the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021. The bill seeks to introduce a uniform scheme of automatic mutual recognition. Automatic mutual recognition will allow workers to move across states or territories and bring with them their accreditation to work in their trade or profession. This legislation is backed by an intergovernmental agreement for automatic mutual recognition with all states and territories consenting to the bill. But, as we have heard, there are major concerns with this bill as it stands. Labor's position here is clear. We support the principle of allowing workers to move around the country in pursuit of work and have their qualifications recognised via a mutual recognition scheme. However, the Labor Party will initiate two mechanisms to make this legislation better.

We intend to refer this bill to a Senate inquiry. Stakeholders have noted some concerns with the legislation, including issues with differing compliance and regulatory responsibilities in each jurisdiction and the possibility that this legislation may well remove the incentive for jurisdictions to introduce uniform work place standards. As we've heard here this morning, the last thing we want is a race to the bottom when it comes to standards. A Senate inquiry will allow for these concerns to be discussed and add changes that can make the bill better.

The shadow minister will move a substantive amendment, which seeks to exclude electrical and construction workers from this bill. This is a sensible amendment that can be done right now. The bill doesn't remove differences in standards between the electrical and construction industries in different states. It just ignores those differences as if they're not there and treats all states the same, but, despite that, the differences still exist. Mutual recognition has existed since the early nineties. There is already mutual recognition for many occupations and moving to automatic mutual recognition for many occupations does make sense. Many different industries have worked hard to standardise the laws for their particular occupations since mutual recognition laws commenced. Getting as many occupations in Australia as possible to that same position is good policy and is something we need to see states and territories working towards. Regrettably, that national standard has not been achieved for some occupations. The electrical occupations are one of those. If you want to standardise occupational outcomes in the country, the first thing that needs to happen is that state and territory rules have to be standardised across those occupations. That is the first step. You have to lift all state and territories to the highest possible standard, one that's recognised and endorsed by the industry. When I say 'industry', I mean all representations of the industry—that is, employers, unions and their members, government and even the training institutions who train people to meet those standards. Instead, what we see here is an attempt by the government to bypass all that hard work and bypass what is going to make standardisation across the country possible to then take that last step of automatic mutual recognition. The government calls all of that hard work, all of this trouble, red tape. They pooh-pooh it. I call it blue ribbon. This is blue ribbon that wraps around working people to make sure they come home safe at the end of each day and to make sure the consumers are also wrapped around and kept safe.

For those industries that have already achieved this level of standardisation, making mutual recognition automatic makes perfect sense. My profession, the nursing profession, has gone through this process. It took years. The industry, as I described before, worked together. We set standards right across the board. In fact, the trade union, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, of which I was national secretary and of which I am still a very proud member, played a very leading role in that process. It took years and years to actually write the standards that levelled across the whole country the requirements for someone to practice as a nurse. Once we did that hard work—and I'm proud to say the ANMF actually owned the copyright on those standards and the bill of ethics and the code of conduct for a long time—that was then handed over to the national body. All that work was given to the national body and all those individual nurses boards became one under Ahpra.

That is the proper way to do this. For those industries that have already achieved that level, automatic mutual recognition absolutely makes sense. But you have to do that work first. For a small number of occupations, this work hasn't been done. This bill means there could be very dangerous outcomes for consumers. There could be unacceptable safety risks for workers and it could put members of the public in danger. Those occupations that have achieved this standardisation, as I said, followed a very clear path. The automatic mutual recognition proposal, as it is here, does the opposite for some occupations to what I just described. It ignores all the very significant differences that currently exist between states and territories—differences in qualifications and training, differences in licences, differences in laws that they practice under, differences in standards that need to be achieved to get a qualification and differences in industry application. These are important things. They're not just things that you can ignore and hope go away because you've introduced a bill that says, 'Hey, there's mutual recognition across the country now; let's forget about all those differences.'

This bill says: 'Regardless of what you need to know, just go and do what you want in each place and we're not going to do the work behind it that is going to make it safe for you to do your job. By the way, if you do step in

there not knowing what the rules are, not knowing what the regulations are and not knowing what the requirements are, and something goes wrong, it's all your fault.' It is all very well for the previous member to say, 'But the minister can stop you working there if they think it is not going to be right,' but this bill doesn't allow, in any way, for people working in different states to even know that.

The fact is electrical occupations already have a mutual recognition system in place, and it's working. It's a system that maximises portability of skills but balances that portability against the risks that come from not having standards set across states and territories. The government's proposal removes the existing system of balancing those risks for electrical occupations and replaces it with a scheme that ignores them. It's interesting to watch this process unfold here with the government's bill, because there really is no recognition from the government that unions have an important role to play in all these issues.

The ETU, the Electrical Trades Union, is playing an exceptionally sensible role here. I thank them for their hard work in highlighting the problems with this bill. They want to unite the trades across the country. They want to develop the best universal standards that they can to protect their workers and consumers and develop the best outcomes for all. They are at the coalface. Their members are the ones working on these sites. Their members have an intricate knowledge of the issues at hand.

Labor seeks to be cooperative on any measure that makes it easier for Australians to secure good jobs, including giving workers the opportunity to move around the country and maintain the ability to work in their chosen trade or profession; however, we must ensure that any new legislation has no unintended consequences that would negatively impact workers or standards, and we are concerned that this bill will do just that. The amendments are sensible, and I ask the House to support them.

Dr HAINES (Indi) (11:00): I rise to speak briefly on the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021 as the proud representative of the thriving cross-border community of Albury-Wodonga and the surrounding areas. When I ask my constituents about this bill, they say the same thing: this is common sense. Border residents will tell you common sense is not too common when it comes to the New South Wales and Victorian border. We're still reeling from the COVID border closure where the New South Wales border slammed shut in July last year, cutting our families in two, cutting our economy in two, and the economic aftershocks continue to eat away at us. I was told only yesterday by the mayor of Wodonga, Kevin Poulton, that Victor's Restaurant & Events, a mainstay on the Lincoln Causeway is shutting up shop for good. His business was decimated by blow after blow inflicted by city politicians playing to a city audience. They still see the country as a backwater at the margins, and our community was caught in the crossfire. And the emotional toll is still there. My constituents remain fragile, struggling and uncertain about whether a border can slam shut again. That's why I'm enthusiastic about welcoming this bill.

Albury-Wodonga is one of the main places that will benefit. This reform introduces an automatic mutual recognition scheme that makes it cheaper, easier and faster for people who work in registered occupations to work in multiple states. This applies to tradies of all stripes—electricians, plumbers, builders, architects, real estate agents and many more. In Albury-Wodonga alone, technicians and trade workers are the second largest professional class, making up 15.6 per cent of the population. You'd be hard pressed to find a tradie in Wodonga who doesn't do jobs across the border and vice versa. It's a fact of life. It's how our businesses operate. But these workers need to apply for two registrations to do this work—one in Victoria, one in New South Wales—and this can cost in the hundreds or thousands of dollars, and it's a real red tape nightmare that we simply don't need in a border community.

It must be said at this point though that I haven't heard tradies screaming out for this change. In honesty, that's because they're used to it and they just get on with it; they put up with it. It's what you have to do in business if you live on the border. It's what you have to do to survive. Registering in two states is one of the dozens of inconveniences that living under two sets of rules creates for every person every single day in a border community. But city tradies don't have to pay twice the number of application registrations or renewal fees like my constituents. And all they're asking for, all I'm asking for is fairness, and this is what this scheme will deliver.

A huge number of people in my area cross the border every single day for work. They live in one state and work in another. In 2016, over 20 per cent of people who worked in Albury lived in Wodonga. In the Indigo Shire, 14 per cent of people in towns like Beechworth, Yackandandah, Rutherglen and Chiltern cross the border for work. Our labour market is very mobile and they move to follow the work. In these times, when the economy is jumping around, with the end of JobKeeper only days away, we need to slash every bit of red tape that might prevent them from taking up new opportunities or sinking their confidence.

For tradies moving to the border from Melbourne, this change can't come quick enough. We're seeing a huge influx of people from the city seeking a better life in our region, and they want to hit the ground running, but, for

most, it will be the first time they've worked in a second state. Stephen Donaghey, the regional manager of the Master Builders Association of Victoria, flagged this with me as an issue. He told my office that it can take up to 12 weeks to apply for and then receive a New South Wales registration, which means that, if you've got a job tomorrow, you can't go to work. Imagine how much work they could miss out on. It's not a good start to life in the country. By making the ability to work automatic, they don't need to complete a form a dozen pages long, they don't need to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars in registration fees and they don't need to wait for months for the tick of approval. They can just get on with it.

This change also promises to make it easier for a surge capacity to rebuild communities after natural disasters. The bushfires of 2019 destroyed many thousands of hectares of prime countryside and devastated houses and buildings. Many people wanted to help out to rebuild, and we had hundreds of volunteers on the ground building fences, bulldozing and rebuilding houses from the ground up. The last thing you want to do is greet this goodwill with a 10-page stack of paperwork.

This bill has the backing of peak groups in my community, who I speak to regularly about issues affecting our small business sector. Neil Aird of Business Wodonga, which represents the interests of thousands of businesses, is very confident that this move will be widely supported by the members. And Steve Donaghey and Ross Mitchell of Master Builders have thrown their support behind the reform, with some words of caution. I'm grateful to them for their time to discuss this reform and for their explanations about how it will play out in practice. However, they did have some concerns about the bill and how it will be implemented, which I've raised with the assistant minister, and I'd like to thank him and his office for their time in clarifying its operation.

In regard to obtaining state based warranty insurance, I've been reassured that insurance providers will not require either Victorian or New South Wales registration in order to obtain cover in each state. Having the single registration will be enough, and it will be recognised as such. I'm also pleased that there are measures in place to prevent licence shopping, which has been raised as a concern for both consumer safety and the integrity of the professions. Noting that Victoria and New South Wales have different continuing professional development obligations, I call on the government to really consider making these requirements more uniform, too. Significant information will need to be provided to people who are working in occupations about what work they can and can't perform in the second state. For instance, in Victoria the domestic builder registration allows builders to carry out work in classes 1a, 1b, 2, 4 and 10; in New South Wales, 1b is not termed 'domestic'. We need clear guidelines for each state about what people in each state can do.

Thinking through this bill has brought back painful memories of the permit system that was in place for six months or more on the very same border that this reform seeks to address. The New South Wales premier shut the border with very little notice and promised that there would be a permit system. When we woke up to a closed border, the permit system was a complete shambles. We saw police checkpoints and constant queues that made people hours late for work, if they were able to get to work at all. Businesses were shuttered, never to return. People's lives were completely torn up. Before then, the border was simply a bridge you drove over to do your shopping, go to school, run your business or get to hospital. Now it's a barrier that could close at any time without notice.

As the government slowly added postcodes to the list of border communities over the months following that closure, it was extremely clear that they had no idea how border communities work. And what we see across governments is a profound lack of understanding of how people like us live on the border and how interconnected our communities are. There is no shortage of cross-border problems that we face every day. They cause everything from headaches to heartbreak—road rules and anomalies that learner and probationary drivers deal with when crossing the border, different certificates for the responsible service of alcohol in every state, healthcare provision that stops at the border, the availability of the services under the NDIS, and bushfire apps. I could go on and on.

The New South Wales and Victorian cross-border commissioners were created to work through these issues, and during the border closure they did a mighty fine job at it. I want to pay tribute to their work. But there's still so much work to be done when it comes to border anomalies. I welcome the assistant minister's invitation for ongoing discussions about how we can further reduce these barriers to bring our cross-border community back together again, stronger than ever, after this traumatic year of separation.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (11:08): I would like to thank those members who have contributed to this debate. The Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021 introduces a uniform scheme for the automated mutual recognition, or AMR, of occupational registrations. AMR allows builders, plumbers, architects and other registered professionals to do the same work in other states that they are licensed to do at home, without applying for additional licences or paying further fees. Safeguards are embedded in the bill to maintain high standards of consumer and environmental protection and animal welfare. The health

and safety of workers and of the public will also be protected. Workers will face oversight by local regulators, and anyone who is subject to disciplinary action will be excluded from the scheme.

AMR is an important national reform that will increase the resilience of the Australian economy, contributing to economic and jobs growth. The scheme reduces the burden of regulation on businesses and workers. AMR will particularly benefit workers in cross-border regions and help communities to respond and rebuild following natural disasters. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as whole.

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11:10): by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) and (2) together, as circulated in my name:

- (1) Schedule 1, item 87, page 17 (line 30), omit "This Part", substitute "Subject to subsection (4), this Part".
- (2) Schedule 1, item 87, page 18 (after line 5), at the end of section 42C, add:

Exclusions

- (4) This Part does not apply to:
 - (a) a building, maintenance or construction industry activity; or
 - (b) an electrical occupation activity.

Note: A consequence of this Part not applying is that there is no automatic deemed registration under section 42D.

- (5) In this section:

building, maintenance or construction industry activity means building, maintenance or construction work authorised to be carried on under an occupation that requires registration under State building, maintenance or construction licencing legislation.

electrical occupation activity means electrical work authorised to be carried on under an occupation that requires registration or licensing under State legislation.

As I articulated in my substantive speech in relation to the bill proper, Labor is moving amendments to seek the exclusion of those licensed occupations which operate in the building industry from the application of this bill, given the varying forms of regulation that exist in relation to those licenses. It's important that as we move forward with this bill that, as laudable as the principle is, there aren't unintended consequences in relation to the health and safety of those working in these industries, along with the outcome of their work and the benefit to consumers. To that end, Labor seeks to move the amendments that I have just done.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the amendments be disagreed to.

The House divided. [11:16]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes67
 Noes59
 Majority.....8

AYES

Alexander, JG
 Andrews, KJ
 Archer, BK
 Broadbent, RE
 Christensen, GR
 Coulton, M
 Dutton, PC
 Evans, TM
 Fletcher, PW
 Frydenberg, JA
 Goodenough, IR
 Hamilton, GR
 Hastie, AW
 Hunt, GA
 Joyce, BT
 Laming, A
 Leeser, J
 Littleproud, D
 Martin, FB

Allen, K
 Andrews, KL
 Bell, AM
 Chester, D
 Connelly, V
 Drum, DK (teller)
 Entsch, WG
 Falinski, JG
 Flint, NJ
 Gee, AR
 Haines, H
 Hammond, CM
 Hawke, AG
 Irons, SJ
 Kelly, C
 Landry, ML
 Ley, SP
 Liu, G
 McCormack, MF

AYES

Morrison, SJ
 O'Brien, T
 Pasin, A
 Pitt, KJ
 Ramsey, RE (teller)
 Sharkie, RCC
 Simmonds, J
 Stevens, J
 Taylor, AJ
 Thompson, P
 van Manen, AJ
 Webster, AE
 Wilson, RJ
 Wyatt, KG
 Zimmerman, T

Morton, B
 O'Dowd, KD
 Pearce, GB
 Price, ML
 Robert, SR
 Sharma, DN
 Steggall, Z
 Sukkar, MS
 Tehan, DT
 Tudge, AE
 Wallace, AB
 Wicks, LE
 Wilson, TR
 Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
 Bandt, AP
 Burke, AS
 Burns, J
 Butler, TM
 Champion, ND
 Claydon, SC
 Collins, JM
 Dick, MD
 Elliot, MJ
 Frelander, MR
 Giles, AJ
 Gosling, LJ
 Hill, JC
 Jones, SP
 Kearney, G
 Khalil, P
 King, MMH
 Marles, RD
 McBride, EM
 Neumann, SK
 Payne, AE
 Phillips, FE
 Rishworth, AL
 Shorten, WR
 Snowdon, WE
 Swanson, MJ
 Watts, TG
 Wilkie, AD
 Zappia, A

Aly, A
 Bowen, CE
 Burney, LJ
 Butler, MC
 Chalmers, JE
 Clare, JD
 Coker, EA
 Conroy, PM
 Dreyfus, MA
 Fitzgibbon, JA
 Georganas, S
 Gorman, P
 Hayes, CP
 Husic, EN
 Katter, RC
 Keogh, MJ
 King, CF
 Leigh, AK
 McBain, KL
 Mulino, D
 O'Connor, BPJ
 Perrett, GD
 Plibersek, TJ
 Ryan, JC (teller)
 Smith, DPB
 Stanley, AM (teller)
 Thwaites, KL
 Wells, AS
 Wilson, JH

PAIRS

Buchholz, S
 Coleman, DB
 Conaghan, PJ
 Gillespie, DA
 Hogan, KJ
 Howarth, LR
 Marino, NB
 McIntosh, MI
 O'Brien, LS
 Porter, CC
 Vasta, RX
 Wood, JP

Byrne, AM
 Chesters, LM
 Templeman, SR
 Thistlethwaite, MJ
 Mitchell, RG
 Murphy, PJ
 Owens, JA
 Vamvakinou, M
 Mitchell, BK
 Bird, SL
 Rowland, MA
 O'Neil, CE

Question agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (11:20): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (2021 Measures No. 1) Bill 2021**Second Reading**

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts) (11:21): by leave—I wish to correct the record in relation to the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (2021 Measures No. 1) Bill 2021, introduced in the House this morning. When introducing the bill there was an error in the second reading speech which referred to measures in relation to regional captioning which are not included in the bill. I would like to clarify that the bill introduced does not remove requirements on regional and remote broadcasters to provide captions beyond those provided by metropolitan broadcasters.

Biosecurity Amendment (Clarifying Conditionally Non-prohibited Goods) Bill 2021**Second Reading**

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (11:22): I present the explanatory memorandum to this bill and move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill is about ensuring the integrity of Australia's biosecurity framework, to protect our \$61 billion agriculture industry and valuable and unique environmental assets from the incursion of pests and diseases.

A strong biosecurity system is critical to Australia's prosperity. Biosecurity laws protect agriculture, tourism and other industries, plant and animal health, the environment, and our market access. They are necessary to allow us to trade and for our nation to continue to thrive.

This bill clarifies the validity of determinations made under section 174 of the Biosecurity Act. These determinations specify that certain classes of goods are conditionally non-prohibited goods which must not be brought or imported into Australian territory unless they are covered by an import permit or unless alternative conditions specified in the determination are complied with.

The bill confirms that goods specified in such determinations are conditionally non-prohibited goods, and confirms the validity of any conditions imposed by the determination. It does not create or change classes of goods listed in the determinations, or the conditions that are imposed on such goods.

Conditionally non-prohibited goods pose a significant level of biosecurity risk if the specified conditions are not complied with. This can have serious consequences for Australia's biosecurity status, market access, plant, animal and human health, the economy and the environment.

In an increasingly complex trade and regulatory environment, it is important that goods which present an unacceptable level of risk of pests or diseases are subject to appropriate conditions before they are brought into Australia. These conditions include requirements for treatments or packaging, for example, a requirement to treat wood articles imported from specified countries with methyl bromide to prevent the goods arriving in Australia with the hitchhiker pest brown marmorated stink bug present.

Determinations made under section 174 of the act therefore play a central role in enabling the Australian government to manage biosecurity risks, and to prevent goods which present an unacceptable level of biosecurity risks from being brought into Australian territory. The passage of this bill will ensure clarity for our stakeholders, thereby benefiting Australian farmers, the agriculture industry, the environment, the economy and all Australians.

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (11:25): I want to be clear that Labor does not intend to hold this bill up. Of course we understand the biosecurity risks that could impact on our vital agricultural industry in Australia.

As outlined in the explanatory memorandum and by the minister just then, the purpose of the Biosecurity Amendment (Clarifying Conditionally Non-prohibited Goods) Bill 2021 is to amend the Biosecurity Act 2015. The amendments clarify the validity of determinations made under subsection 174(1) of the act in relation to specifying that certain classes of goods are conditionally non-prohibited goods. According to the explanatory memorandum, conditionally non-prohibited goods are goods specified in a determination in force under subsection 174A of the act. That provides that the Director of Biosecurity and the Director of Human Biosecurity may jointly determine that the specified classes of goods must not be brought or imported into Australian territory unless specified conditions are complied with. The explanatory memorandum also outlines the conditionality that