

grams. It will also have \$100 million in new funding and \$50 million from the formerly proposed Clean Energy Program for new initiatives.

I am pleased to advise that I have already had discussions with the office of the member for Groom with respect to our requirement to introduce legislation to parliament in November of this year for the purpose of trying to put in place the legislative framework that establishes ACRE in this calendar year. That is very important. I also want to put in place, side by side with that legislation, an interim advisory board. The first task of that interim advisory board will importantly be to make funding recommendations to me before the end of the year on the most prospective solar applications received under the original Renewable Energy Demonstration Program guidelines. The accelerated deployment, commercialisation and demonstration of renewable energy technologies through ACRE will clearly complement the government's investment in research with the Australian Solar Institute, and industrial scale demonstration, through the Solar Flagships Program.

I am also pleased to advise the House today that the government has now decided on the design of the Solar Flagships Program. This is important because this is about baseload reliable energy from the renewable energy sector. Details can be found in the fact sheet that I released today at www.ret.gov.au. I commend the establishment of ACRE to the House and look to the support of the opposition for the facilitation of this legislation in November of this year.

Victorian Bushfires

FRAN BAILEY (3.19 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware that under the highly centralised, inflexible model of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, imposed on the communities in my electorate of McEwen, local residents are denied the ability to determine how their communities should be rebuilt? Given that current research of disaster recovery clearly says that top-down, inflexible and standardised approaches are ineffective and dysfunctional, and given that the Commonwealth has invested many hundreds of millions of dollars for the benefit of affected communities, will the Prime Minister provide a commitment not just to my communities but to any future communities affected by disaster that models for recovery funded by the Commonwealth ensure flexibility and give priority to local knowledge and expertise when deciding when, how and where community infrastructure will be rebuilt. Further, will the Prime Minister initiate a COAG agreement on flexible community driven models for disaster recovery?

Mr RUDD—I thank the member for McEwen for her question and I also acknowledge the representatives of her community from Marysville who are with

us today in the public gallery. I had the opportunity, together with the member for McEwen, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction, Bill Shorten, to meet with representatives of that community prior to question time today. It was a good meeting and we discussed some of the matters which have just been raised by the member for McEwen in her question.

Marysville was appallingly hit in the bushfires, as we know. I am advised that 34 people died in Marysville and four in Narbethong. Around 530 properties and 95 per cent of the retail businesses in the commercial centre of Marysville were destroyed. The primary school, the retirement village, the community centre, the post office, the medical centre and the police station were also destroyed, as well as a large number of accommodation places, including conference facilities.

I also thank the group for their presentation to me of a Wallangarra gum both as a token of their appreciation of support from various levels of government but also as a symbol of what they described to me as the toughness and resilience of their own community. I indicated to them that we would make arrangements to have that gum planted at the Lodge.

On the specifics of the honourable member's question, which go to flexibility in recovery and reconstruction projects on the ground, I noted very carefully what the honourable member said. She was not critical of the level of support from the Commonwealth on these matters; what she is concerned about is the flexibility of the implementation of these programs on the ground. In the discussion we had before question time with representatives of the Marysville community I said the following—and I am happy to repeat it publicly: we need to find in the future a better balance in what is necessarily a highly centralised command and control system for dealing with the immediate occurrence of a natural disaster like a bushfire and the immediate aftermath. As you enter the recovery and reconstruction period, how do you then intelligently devolve greater responsibility and therefore flexibility to local communities to give effect to the best way of getting those communities back on their feet? That is a principle which I instinctively respond to.

How do we actually make that work into the future? This is a much more complex task, as I am sure the member for McEwen will fully appreciate. But she asks in good faith if the government can now examine how this could be reflected for the purposes of learning into the future from natural disasters. My undertaking to her is that we will now undertake such an examination.

In terms of the usefulness of using COAG to frame that for future purposes, my response to her on that question is that, once we have examined her proposal

and, based on the principles that I have just reflected on behalf of the government, reached a conclusion on it, we will then advise her as to whether we think that can be properly advanced through the COAG process as well. The key, and I think the honourable member agrees with this, is that we have to get the balance right between the sorts of responses which are necessary early in dealing with these challenges and then the sorts of flexibilities which are necessary later on.

The good representatives of Marysville, for example, gave me a very important fact before in their presentation to me, namely that a large number of the houses in Marysville are in fact owned by—and I use their term; I hope I do not offend anyone else by using this term—part-timers: those who reside in Melbourne but have a second house in Marysville itself. How do we therefore make it more possible for those houses to be rebuilt? That is a really tricky and practical challenge which we are now going to wrestle with and see if we can do anything more on, because the existing arrangements deal with owner-occupied dwellings and principal places of—

Opposition member interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr RUDD—I believe that the character of this discussion is very much a bipartisan one, and I would hope we can continue in that manner.

The member for McEwen has rightly asked these questions. As we have sought to do since February of this year, we will continue to work with her on a bipartisan basis on the two specific proposals that she has put forward.

Finally, I inform the House and the community which is here represented that, under the recovery plan, projects for Marysville and surrounds, as I am advised, that have been identified for funding support are as follows: \$5.2 million for the Marysville community learning, health and recreation hub; \$9.2 million for the restoration of Lake Mountain Alpine Resort as a major summer and winter tourist destination; redeveloping and upgrading Stevenson Falls, \$2.6 million; reconstruction of Marysville police station, \$2.4 million; construction of the Marysville Rebuilding Advisory Centre; development of the Marysville and Triangle urban design framework, \$500,000; restoration of the Marysville caravan park, \$500,000; construction of a Marysville skate park, \$150,000; and construction of a Triangle walking and cycling trail connecting communities in the Marysville area. There are also other projects which I will not list.

This, for the community at Marysville, is still very much the beginning. I have spoken about physical reconstruction. As the parliamentary secretary, the minister and the member indicated to me earlier today, as did members of the community themselves, with the emo-

tional and psychological scars of what occurred back in February, the deep and difficult process of healing has barely begun. Our responsibility as a parliament, as both the Leader of the Opposition and I said at the time when this natural disaster occurred, is to maintain our solidarity with these communities brick by brick, house by house, school by school, community by community, until these communities are restored. That remains the commitment of the Australian government.

Wheat Exports

Mr CHAMPION (3.27 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Will the minister update the House on recent commentary about the Productivity Commission's review into wheat-exporting arrangements?

Mr BURKE—I thank the member for Wakefield for the question. Members may be unaware that yesterday the National Party got really mad. In a very cranky media release was yesterday, the shadow minister for agriculture referred to the Productivity Commission review of the wheat export marketing arrangements. He was concerned about the timing of it and the timing of the first period for submissions coinciding with the wheat harvest. In his media release, he said: 'Anyone with even the slightest knowledge of the wheat industry in Australia'—

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The minister is responsible for many things, but one of them is not commentary. Apart from the fact that the question should have been ruled out of order, his answer cannot be relevant if he is making commentary. I would ask you—

The SPEAKER—The member will resume his seat. The question was allowed by the chair. The minister was called; the minister is responding to the question.

Mr BURKE—As the shadow minister said, this is 'the busiest time of the year for grain growers with harvest in full swing.' He went on to say that anybody who would have called for this timetable, referring particularly to my office and the Productivity Commission, 'knows absolutely nothing about the wheat industry' and 'is devoid of any basic agriculture expertise.' The problem that the shadow minister did not refer to is that the Productivity Commission actually had no discretion as to the timing of this review. The legislation itself, under section 89, demands that the review be held—

Dr Southcott—Mr Speaker, a point order on relevance: yesterday the minister gave a straight answer. He has today—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member will resume his seat.

Dr Southcott interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member has not got the call.