carbon tax was. And yet, to Mr Ferguson's undying shame, he was one who breached the promise that the Labor Party would never introduce a carbon tax.

In the north of Australia, which I represent, Airnorth has just started a new direct service between Townsville and Darwin. It is a great service, but the cost is going to increase by \$7 each way because of the carbon tax. Come 1 July, prices for airline travel all across Northern Australia will have to go up because of this ridiculous carbon tax, which will just add to the cost of living of all Australians.

Question agreed to.

### WikiLeaks

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (15:30): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research (Senator Evans) to a question without notice asked by Senator Ludlam today relating to Mr Julian Assange.

I recognise that Senator Evans was sent in here for question time in his representational capacity—this matter is not in his portfolio—but what a remarkable response I received from him. I asked whether the Prime Minister knew of a sealed indictment against Mr Julian Assange which has been made by a secret grand jury in the United States. We do not have the grand jury system in Australia; there are very few jurisdictions that still have grand juries. However, we need to learn a great deal about it.

What the Prime Minister sent Senator Evans in to question time with by way of a brief was remarkable. I have been foreshadowing that I was going to ask questions about Mr Assange all day. I told the press gallery this morning that I was going to ask the these questions of the Prime Minister, and I foreshadowed them in the MPI discussion earlier today. The first question was: what does the government know about this attack on the democratic rights and citizenship entitlements of an Australian? The answer that came back through the brief given to Senator Evans was vacant and ambiguous, and that is a perfect description of the Australian government's response to these matters over more than a year. When is the Australian government going to step up and do its job?

The Prime Minister of the country did not necessarily know, Senator Evans told us—although he did not directly engage with the substance of my question—whether or not such an indictment existed. So, even though some ex-State Department guy in Texas running a little intelligence organisation apparently knows—his knowledge has been revealed in an email which was one among a drop of five million emails from Stratfor—the Australian government apparently does not. Or maybe it does; that is what we are seeking to find out.

Mr Burton, who is the former deputy chief of counterterrorism at the US State Department and who is now the vice president of intelligence at Stratfor, turns up in a large number of this drop of five million emails. His Australia Day message for Australia in 2011 was:

Not for Pub—We have a sealed indictment on Assange. Pls protect.

The 'we' that he refers to is the US government. If our government knew of this, why weren't we told? If the Prime Minister—or perhaps the Foreign Minister or the Attorney-General—knew that the attack on Mr Assange was coming, why wasn't the information shared with the Australian people? Why wasn't it shared with me at any time during the interminable series of questions on notice I have asked and the freedom-of-information requests that I have lodged to try to assess exactly what the game is and how deeply involved and implicated in it the Australian government is? Some conspiracies turn out not to be theories at all.

The second question I put to Senator Evans was whether the Australian government had any intention of taking any action whatsoever—anything at all; name one thing—to protect against the very real threats now being levelled at this journalist, Mr Assange, who works for a publishing organisation. In a short time I will test the Senate's views on whether it agrees that Mr Assange is indeed a journalist and that the WikiLeaks organisation is a publishing organisation. There is a motion on the *Notice Paper* which I invite senators who are with us this afternoon to take a quick look at. It does not call on the Senate to do anything—heaven forbid!—but to recognise that Mr Assange is indeed a journalist, as the British High Court and the Walkley Foundation have done.

The Prime Minister, through the minister's vague and ambiguous answer this afternoon, did not seem to indicate that anything at all had been done. Here is an idea: call in the United States ambassador. That is why the United States ambassador is here in Canberra—to keep the flow of communication open about matters of relevance between states, particularly between allied states. I have not had much luck in my request to meet with the ambassador; maybe it will jump a little bit higher up the to-do list after today—we will see.

The third thing I asked the Prime Minister was whether she plans on taking any action and whether the government would perhaps stop obstructing my freedom of information requests and put some material on the record. Let us know, because the Australian government in this matter will turn out to have been either complicit or ignorant—either we have been kept in the dark or the government has been keeping secrets. The Prime Minister and the rest of the cabinet may think that the rest of this information will be disclosed

when they are good and ready. Perhaps it will be disclosed along with a story of somebody killed in action as a result of the wiki-drop. The existence of such a story has also been disclosed in the email drop, so perhaps the strategy now is to wait until the appropriate time and then tell the world public through the world's media organisations that there has been a death and that it is Julian Assange's fault and then to move to unseal the indictment. What a breathtakingly cynical strategy that would be!

I think it is time that the government put some material on the record, because—you know what?—you may not get to do it at a time of your choosing. Who knows what material WikiLeaks has on your cabinet and on what the Prime Minister knows. We will find out one way or another. Please, Prime Minister, take the lead and release this information. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

## **PETITIONS**

The Clerk: Petitions have been lodged for presentation as follows:

## **Baby Safe Havens**

To the Honourable President and Members of the Senate in Parliament assembled:

The petition of the undersigned draws to the attention of the Senate a need for legislation to be enacted to provide legal abandonment of newborn babies.

Your Petitioners therefore request that the Senate call on the States to consider enacting legislation so that young women would be discouraged from killing, causing physical harm or abandoning their babies if the Commonwealth provided "Baby Safe Havens" where the mothers would remain anonymous and immune from prosecution. It is the intention of the undersigned that this legislation will prevent any further tragic loss of infant life through abandonment.

by Senator Polley (from 768 citizens)

Petitions received.

# **NOTICES**

## Presentation

Senator Boyce To move:

That the Senate-

- (a) recognises:
- (i) the importance of World Plumbing Day on 11 March and its aim of highlighting the role that the plumbing industry plays in relation to health through the provision of safe water and sanitation, and
- (ii) the environmental role of the industry in water conservation and energy efficiency and the increasing use of renewable sources of energy;
- (b) notes that it is estimated that 3.1 million children die each year as a result of water related diseases; and
- (c) congratulates the World Plumbing Council on its role in promoting the importance of the plumbing industry,

both in developed countries and in developing countries where good plumbing could save lives.

# Senator Bernardi and Senator Stephens To move:

That the Senate-

- (a) supports freedom of religion as a universal human right;
- (b) does not support the imprisonment or persecution of individuals on the basis of their religious belief;
- (c) calls on the Iranian authorities to release Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, who has been sentenced to death for the sole reason of his refusal to recant his Christian faith:
- (d) recognises that this action is a breach of Iran's international obligations, its own constitution and stated religious values; and
- (e) stands in solidarity with Pastor Nadarkhani, his family and all those who seek to practise their religion without fear of persecution.

#### Senator Brandis To move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to establish a process for assisting victims of overseas terrorist acts, and for related purposes. Assisting Victims of Overseas Terrorism Bill 2012.

# Senator Hanson-Young To move:

That the Senate-

- (a) notes the deteriorating human rights situation in China and Tibet over recent months, including the following developments:
- (i) the imposition of a media blackout by Chinese authorities in Sichuan, Qinghai and the region of Tibet since 24 January 2012, including shutting down the presence of international and non-government media organisations and coverage of pro-Tibetan activities, which has been documented by global press freedom organisation Reporters Without Borders.
- (ii) the continuation of Tibetan people selfimmolating as a form of protest that now amounts to 23 selfimmolations and 15 deaths since February 2009,
- (iii) the increased Chinese military presence since early 2012 on the streets of Lhasa, Serthar and parts of eastern Tibet which has been described by the exiled Tibetan Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay as a state of 'undeclared martial law', and
- (iv) a reported increase in arbitrary arrests of hundreds of Tibetans by Chinese authorities since 6 February 2012 upon the Tibetans' return from the annual Buddhist Kalachakra ceremony in Bodhgaya, India, which has been condemned by international organisation Human Rights Watch; and
  - (b) calls on the Australian Government to:
- (i) urge the Chinese Government to restore press freedom and release any Tibetan people who have been arbitrarily arrested on account of their political or religious views, and
- (ii) support the call by exiled Tibetan Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay on 21 February 2012 for a United Nations special investigator to undertake a fact-finding mission in Tibet to better inform the international community of the situation